

The Child of the Covenant

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The Child of the Covenant A Study Guide to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha by Adib Taherzadeh George Ronald Oxford <piv> George Ronald, Publisher 46 High Street, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 2DN Adib Taherzadeh 2000

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445 <pvii> A Note from the Publisher The numbers identifying passages of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha refer to paragraphs rather than pages.

Thus a passage identified as 4-W refers to paragraph four of the Will and Testament.

Numbering begins with the paragraph 'All-Praise to Him...' and continues throughout the book to the final paragraph, number 56.

The passage in parentheses following paragraph 29 and beginning 'This written paper...' is unnumbered, as are the headings at the start of each section.

[NOTE:

The "References" listed the first endnote as appearing in this "...Note from the Publisher; however, there is no endnote noted in the text.

The note referenced is as follows: (1 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

144.)] <pviii> Preface The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha constitutes a fundamental document of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

It is described by Shoghi Effendi as 'the Child of the Covenant'[2] and 'the Charter of a future world civilization, which may be regarded in some of its features as supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitab-i-Aqdas'.[3] The necessity of a deeper study of this momentous document becomes obvious when we note that Shoghi Effendi has stipulated that one of the qualifications of a true believer is 'loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will'.[4] [2 Ibid. (Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

144.)] [3 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

328.] [4 Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p.

90.] With these statements in mind, the author of this book, having previously published *The Covenant of Baha'u'llah*, decided to prepare a detailed study guide for the Will and Testament itself.

The organizational principle behind this guide is the relationship of various aspects of the Covenant and its verities to almost every subject mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament.

In some instances a study is made of a full paragraph, in many cases of a sentence, and sometimes of certain words.

Parts of this book are extracted from my earlier volume *The Covenant of Baha'u'llah* and the reader will therefore find some materials familiar but will appreciate each subject in a different light in the context of the Will and Testament.

To deepen one's knowledge of the Faith is a personal obligation, achieved through the study of the holy writings in a spirit of humility and in a prayerful attitude.

This is especially true for an in-depth study of the Will and Testament, of which steadfastness in the Covenant is the major component.

Another factor to be borne in mind is the following warning uttered by Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf on 25 March 1930:

The contents of the Will of the Master are far too much for the present generation to comprehend.

It needs at least a century of actual working before the treasures of wisdom hidden in it can be revealed...[5] [5 From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 25 March 1930, quoted in *Compilation*, vol.

1, p.

366.] It is the hope of the author of this book that this study guide, however inadequate in scope and depth, will stimulate the believers in their own study of this weighty document.

To facilitate this, apart from the Table of Contents, a special table has been provided at the end of the book linking each paragraph of the Will and Testament to the corresponding chapters of the book.

Excerpts from the Baha'i holy writings are either from translations by Shoghi Effendi or those authorized by the Universal House of Justice.

Quotations from memoirs of Persian believers are all translated by the author.

Persian and Arabic names are transliterated in accordance with the system adopted for books on the Baha'i Faith.

I am deeply indebted to Dr Ann Boyles for her skilful editing of this book as

well as her valuable suggestions to improve its syntax.

My grateful thanks to Miss Alda Rendina for excellent typing of the manuscript from my scribbled and often illegible handwriting.

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I am also grateful to the Baha'i Publishing Trust of the United States for permission to quote their booklet A Tribute to Shoghi Effendi by Amelia Collins and to the Baha'i Publishing Trust of the United Kingdom for permission to quote passages from The Priceless Pearl by Ruhiiyyih Rabbani.

And last, but not least, my deepest appreciation is offered to my dear wife, Lesley, for her loving support and encouragement, which she has showered upon me throughout.

Adib Taherzadeh

Haifa, July 1999

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Introduction The Revelation of

Baha'u'llah has given birth to the institution of the Covenant, which endows the human race with undreamt-of potentialities and provides the means for man's infinite progress and spiritual development in this Dispensation.

The terms of this Covenant were revealed by Baha'u'llah's pen in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, followed by His Will and Testament, known as the Kitab-i-'Ahd.

Through these writings Baha'u'llah established a mighty and irrefutable Covenant with His followers, a Covenant unprecedented in the annals of past religions.

Never before has a Manifestation of God left behind an authoritative statement in which He has explicitly directed His people to turn, after Him, to a successor with the authority to promote the interests of His Faith, to interpret His words, to unravel the significance of His teachings and to expound the aim and purpose of His Revelation.

Nor has a Manifestation previously devised a system of administration for governing the religious affairs of the community.

The Gospels are silent on the question of successorship.

Only a vague and inconclusive statement, 'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church'[6] has led a section of the followers of Christ to consider Peter as His successor.

Such a claim, which is not upheld by a clear and unequivocal declaration in the Gospels, has caused bitter conflicts throughout the chequered history of Christianity.

As a result, the religion founded by Christ has been divided into major sects which have multiplied through time.

A similar situation arose in Islam.

The story of Muhammad and the statement He is reported to have made concerning 'Ali, His cousin and son-in-law, at Ghadir-i-Khumm[*] may be regarded merely as an allusion to the Prophet's successor and not an explicit and unequivocal appointment.

This episode, recounted by both the Shi'ah and Sunni sects of Islam, is interpreted differently by each.

The story is as follows: [* See also chapter 4] [6 Matt.

16:18.] Having completed the rites of pilgrimage to Mecca in the last year of His life, Muhammad, on His way back to Medina, ordered the large concourse of His followers to stop at a place known as Ghadir-i-Khumm.

In that vast plain a number of saddles were stacked up, <p2> making an improvised pulpit from which Muhammad delivered an important address to the congregation.

There, He is reported to have taken 'Ali by the hand and said, 'Whoever considers Me as his Lord, then 'Ali is also his Lord.' The Shi'ahs consider this verbal statement to be authoritative and on its basis believe 'Ali to be the lawful successor to the Prophet.

The Bab and Baha'u'llah also confirm this belief.

But the majority of the Muslims, the Sunnis, reject this view.

Almost immediately after Muhammad's passing, His followers were divided into these two major sects which multiplied with the passage of time.

In contrast, one of the distinguishing features of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is that its Author has established a mighty Covenant with His followers concerning His successor, a Covenant whose characteristics are delineated by Baha'u'llah Himself in His 'Book of My Covenant', written in His own hand, unequivocal in the provisions it makes for the future of His Cause and acknowledged as an authentic document even by those who violated it.

It is through this divinely-ordained instrument alone that the unity of the Baha'i community has been preserved, the purity of its teachings safeguarded and the incorruptibility of its institutions guaranteed.

This is 'the Day which shall not be followed by night'[7] is Baha'u'llah's own testimony in this regard. [7 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

245.] Revelation of the Word of God by His Manifestation resembles the down-pouring of rain.

In the same way that showers in the spring season vivify the world of nature,

the Word of God is creative and a source of life to human souls.

It penetrates people's hearts and imparts to them the spirit of faith.

This process continues throughout the Revelation of the Prophet but the vernal showers of the divine springtime cease with His passing.

During the rainy season pastures become verdant and the rain also creates pools of reviving waters.

Likewise, when the Manifestation of God is no longer with man, the words He has left behind become the source of spiritual life for His believers.

For the Christians the Gospels and for the Muslims the Qur'an have acted as the spiritual reservoir of the water of life and the repository of God's teachings.

However, the water that flows to all the people, who have free access to it, soon loses its purity, being mixed with the mud and pollution of man-made ideas.

In older Dispensations, the Manifestations of God left their words to posterity, with no clear provision made for further guidance.

Their followers had to interpret their utterances as best they could.

As a result, people disagreed in their understanding of the teachings.

The followers interfered with the Word of God: they compromised the laws and precepts which were promulgated by the Prophet.

Man-made dogmas and rituals were added, human <p3> innovations and practices were introduced and the purity of the teachings was lost.

Schisms occurred and sects and denominations were created within a religion.

The unity and love which had existed among the followers during the lifetime of the founder of the religion disappeared after Him and in the course of time were replaced by enmity and contention.

In the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah the revelation of the Word of God has taken a different form altogether.

Whereas in former times, with the exception of the Qur'an and the writings of the Bab, the words of the Prophets, in most cases, were recorded years after their revelation, the words of Baha'u'llah were taken down by His amanuensis the moment they were uttered.

In some cases He Himself inscribed the verses revealed to Him.

These writings, usually referred to as sacred text, or Tablets, are preserved and safeguarded and their authenticity is assured.

The words of God in this Dispensation have been revealed with such profusion that -- as Baha'u'llah Himself testifies -- were His writings to be compiled, they would produce no less than one hundred volumes of holy scripture for mankind in this age.

The analogy of the pool is no longer apt.

More appropriate is the analogy of an ocean created when the words of God were sent down as copious rain.

The Qur'an consists of over six thousand verses and was revealed by Muhammad in 23 years.

The speed of the revelation of the words of Baha'u'llah was about one thousand verses in an hour![8] For example, the Kitab-i-Iqan (Book of Certitude), one of the most important of Baha'u'llah's works, was revealed in the course of two days and two nights.

During the do-year ministry of Baha'u'llah the world of humanity was immersed in an ocean of divine revelation whose latent energies are destined to revitalize the whole of humankind. [8 For more information on the manner of revelation of Tablets, see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

1, pp.

23-4.] A distinguishing feature of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is that, until the Dispensations of the past, the Word of God, sent down for the spiritualization and guidance of man, has not been simply handed over to him freely.

To no one is given the right to interpret His words, to add even a dot or to take one away.

Baha'u'llah has preserved the purity of the water of His Revelation against all pollution.

On the one hand, He has revealed the Word of God for the benefit of all mankind; on the other, He has not allowed anyone to interfere with it.

He resolved these two contrasting features through the institution of the Covenant, firmly established in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and His Will and Testament which was written in His own hand and designated as 'The Book of My Covenant'.

Instead of leaving His Revelation freely to man and allowing him to interpret His writings and act upon them as he likes, Baha'u'llah has created, in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha, a pure channel for the <p4> interpretation of His Revelation and the guidance of the community.

As the primary recipient of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, He is the authorized interpreter of the sacred words.

His soul embraced every virtue and power which that Revelation conferred upon Him, virtues and powers which, through the operation of the institution of the Covenant, are to be vouchsafed progressively to humanity in the course of this Dispensation and which are the cause of the social, the intellectual and spiritual development of man on this planet until the advent of the next Manifestation of God. 'Abdu'l-Baha acts in this analogy as a receptacle.

Before a receptacle is filled, it must first be empty.

The person of 'Abdu'l-Baha had so surrendered His will to that of Baha'u'llah that He was utterly empty of self and had nothing to express or manifest in His being except self-effacement and absolute servitude.

His whole being became the incarnation of every goodly virtue, a stainless mirror reflecting the light of glory cast upon Him by Baha'u'llah.

'Abdu'l-Baha states that there are three stations in this vast creation: the station of God, which is unapproachable; the station of the Manifestations of God, which is equally inaccessible; and the station of man.

The only station befitting man is that of servitude.

To the extent that the individual believer abides on the plane of servitude, he will grow closer to God and become the recipient of His power, grace and bounties.

As 'Abdu'l-Baha reached the lowest depths of servitude, hence He became the embodiment of all divine qualities and attributes.

Although He genuinely considered Himself a servant of the servants of Baha'u'llah, He manifested a majesty and grandeur which no human being could ever hope to possess. 'Abdu'l-Baha was not a Manifestation of God but by virtue of His being the repository of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, 'the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized' in His person.[9] He knew the secrets of the hearts of men and His words were creative. [9 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

134.] The Most Great Infallibility mentioned by Baha'u'llah is inherent in the Manifestation of God and no one can share in it.[10] 'Abdu'l-Baha did not possess this but Baha'u'llah conferred infallibility upon Him.

The Manifestation of God is like a sun which generates its own heat and light; the moon does not possess its own light but receives it from the sun and reflects it towards the earth.

Similarly, Baha'u'llah acts as the Sun of Truth and 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Moon of this Dispensation. [10 See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4, pp.

143, 149-53.] 'Abdu'l-Baha should not be viewed as an ordinary human being who persevered in His efforts until He emptied Himself of selfish desire and consequently was appointed by Baha'u'llah as His successor Rather, He should be seen as having been created by God for the <p5> purpose of becoming the recipient of God's Revelation in this age.

We shall never know His real station because He was 'the Mystery of God', a title conferred upon Him by Baha'u'llah.

He was the priceless gift of Baha'u'llah to mankind.

In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has extolled the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha in

laudatory terms.

To cite an example, in the Suriy-i-Ghusn Baha'u'llah testifies to this truth:

We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple.

Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willeth through His inviolable, His infallible decree.

They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch, are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish.[11] [11 Baha'u'llah, in Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

135.] When 'Abdu'l-Baha was in His early teens in Baghdad, Baha'u'llah designated Him 'the Master'.

Other titles conferred upon Him in His youth are all indicative of a mysterious being who is the Centre of Baha'u'llah's Covenant.

Every Covenant has two sides, each with its own obligations.

Baha'u'llah has fulfilled His side of the Covenant by bequeathing to humanity two precious gifts: one, the outpouring of His Revelation; and the other, His Covenant with its centre in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

To revert to our analogy:

Baha'u'llah vouchsafed to mankind the ocean of His Revelation.

He also created an unbreachable reservoir for it in the Covenant, in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha, to provide an unfailing supply of pure water, no matter how much pollution men may try to introduce into the life-giving waters of that Revelation.

Having identified the part that Baha'u'llah fulfils in this Covenant, we note that the followers of Baha'u'llah, who constitute the other side of the Covenant, have the obligation to draw the life-giving waters of His Revelation from that reservoir, to become revived, to live in accordance with His teachings and be transformed into a new creation.

During the ministry of Baha'u'llah, the believers had the inestimable privilege of turning to Him in person; many were honoured to attain His presence.

These believers received the bounties of God directly from Baha'u'llah and were guided by Him in numerous Tablets revealed for them.

Consequently they were enabled to conduct their lives according to His good-pleasure.

Those souls who acquired spiritual qualities through their direct contact with the Supreme Manifestation of God were magnetized by Him and were transformed into spiritual giants of this Dispensation.

After the passing of Baha'u'llah, it was 'Abdu'l-Baha who, by virtue of the

Covenant of Baha'u'llah as revealed in His Will and Testament <p6> (the Kitab-i-'Ahd), possessed the authority and infallibility to guide the friends to the spiritual potencies of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

Thus the believers turned to 'Abdu'l-Baha for guidance and He imparted to them the soul-stirring truths which were enshrined in the teachings of Baha'u'llah and shared with them the inestimable gems of spirit which were hidden in the depths of the ocean of His Revelation.

Also during this period a number of faithless relatives of 'Abdu'l-Baha joined hands with some unscrupulous individuals in both the East and the West in an assault on the mighty wall of the Covenant which the hand of omnipotence had placed around the sanctuary of His Cause.

These persons asserted that their objections were founded on the Revelation of Baha'u'llah but, although they had access to the writings of Baha'u'llah, they distorted their meaning and betrayed their purpose.

Turning away from 'Abdu'l-Baha and denying the authority with which Baha'u'llah had invested Him, they deprived themselves of the centre of infallible interpretation and guidance and thus they extinguished the spirit of the Faith within their hearts.

In a Tablet emphasizing the importance of steadfastness in the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Baha states that in this day the confirmations of Baha'u'llah will reach only those who are firm in the Covenant.' [12] The Master affirms that even should one who was an embodiment of the Holy Spirit fail to turn to the Centre of the Covenant, he would become a dead body.

For a period of 29 years 'Abdu'l-Baha guided the Baha'is of the world to fulfil their part of the Covenant and at His passing He bequeathed an undivided Faith and the pure, life-giving water of the teachings to future generations. [12 Ma'idiy-i-Asmani, vol.

5, pp.

98-9.] With the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Apostolic Age of the Faith came to an end and the Faith entered the Formative Age.

The forces of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, which streamed forth from the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha during His ministry, had now ceased.

But 'Abdu'l-Baha had a plan for the believers.

He did not abandon them to their own devices.

He delineated in His Will and Testament the outline of a marvellous scheme to enable the believers to raise up the institutions created by Baha'u'llah for the governance of society in His Dispensation.

Thus the believers in the Formative Age were given the opportunity to play their part, as bidden by 'Abdu'l-Baha, in the building up of the institutions of the Faith which are to act as channels for carrying the spiritual energies

released by Baha'u'llah to every part of the planet.

Central to this design was the institution of the Guardianship, which continued the essential task of preserving the purity of the water of the revelation after 'Abdu'l-Baha, interpreted its provisions and guided the believers in erecting the administrative order of the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi has singled out the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha from among all His writings as being specially invested with <p7> divine authority capable of shaping the destiny of the Community of the Most Great Name during the Formative and Golden Ages of the Faith, saying:

It was 'Abdu'l-Baha Who, through the provisions of His weighty Will and Testament, has forged the vital link which must for ever connect the age that has just expired with the one we now live in -- the Transitional and Formative period of the Faith -- a stage that must in the fullness of time reach its blossom and yield its fruit in the exploits and triumphs that are to herald the Golden Age of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.[13]
[13 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

98.] The Will and Testament, described by Shoghi Effendi as the Charter of the New World Order, was written in 'Abdu'l-Baha's own hand and is signed and sealed by Him.

It consists of three parts, written at different times during the darkest days of 'Abdu'l-Baha's life, when He was living in the house of 'Abdu'llah Pasha. 'Abdu'l-Baha was incarcerated in the fortress city of 'Akka through the machinations and intrigues of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the arch-breaker of the Covenant, who was ably assisted by his brothers and other Covenant-breakers.

The date on which each part was written is not given but the first part of the Will is likely to have been written sometime in 1906 or later.[*] [* One clue to the date of the Will's completion is that Shu'a'u'llah, a son of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, sent a letter from the United States to Majdu'd-Din, the arch-enemy of 'Abdu'l-Baha, dated 27 Tashrin 2nd (27 November) 1905.

Somehow this letter came into the possession of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He refers to this letter in the first part of the Will and Testament (see Will and Testament para.

9).

Bearing in mind the time it took for the letter to reach the Holy Land by surface post, and not knowing when or how it fell into 'Abdu'l-Baha's hands, it is reasonable to assume that the first part of the Will was written sometime in 1906 or later.] The dangers surrounding 'Abdu'l-Baha were great.

Every day was fraught with perils and tribulations and 'Abdu'l-Baha took great care for the protection of the historic document, placing it under ground.

These are His own words:

This written paper hath for a long time been preserved under ground, damp having affected it.

When brought forth to the light it was observed that certain parts of it were injured by the damp, and the Holy Land being sorely agitated it was left untouched.[14] [14 'Abdu'l-Baha, Will and Testament, p.

15.] Concerning the significance of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi writes: <p8> We stand indeed too close to so monumental a document to claim for ourselves a complete understanding of all its implications, or to presume to have grasped the manifold mysteries it undoubtedly contains.

Only future generations can comprehend the value and the significance attached to this Divine Masterpiece, which the hand of the Master-builder of the world has designed for the unification and the triumph of the world-wide Faith of Baha'u'llah.[15] [15 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.8.] He also states: ...the full meaning of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, as well as an understanding of the implications of the World Order ushered in by that remarkable Document, can be revealed only gradually to men's eyes, and after the Universal House of Justice has come into being.

The friends are called upon to trust to time and to await the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, which, as circumstances require, will make pronouncements that will resolve and clarify obscure matters.[16] [16 Shoghi Effendi quoted in Wellspring of Guidance, pp.

54-5.] Of the genesis of the Will and Testament Shoghi Effendi writes:

The creative energies released by the Law of Baha'u'llah, permeating and evolving within the mind of 'Abdu'l-Baha, have, by their very impact and close interaction, given birth to an Instrument which may be viewed as the Charter of the New World Order which is at once the glory and the promise of this most great Dispensation.

The Will may thus be acclaimed as the inevitable offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who communicated the generating influence of His divine Purpose and the One Who was its vehicle and chosen recipient.

Being the Child of the Covenant -- the Heir of both the Originator and the Interpreter of the Law of God -- the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha can no more be divorced from Him Who supplied the original and motivating impulse than from the One Who ultimately conceived it.

Baha'u'llah's inscrutable purpose, we must ever bear in mind, has been so thoroughly infused into the conduct of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and their motives have been so closely wedded together, that the mere attempt to dissociate the teachings of the former from any system which the ideal Exemplar of

those same teachings has established would amount to a repudiation of one of the most sacred and basic truths of the Faith.[17] [17 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

144.] The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha has been described by Shoghi Effendi as the document which has fulfilled the prophecy of the Bab concerning the establishment of the World Order of Baha'u'llah, of which the Will and Testament is a charter.

Shoghi Effendi further identifies the Will and Testament as 'the Charter of a future world civilization, which may be regarded in some of its features as supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitab-i-Aqdas'.[18] [18 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

328.] A careful study of the relationship between the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Kitab-i-Aqdas may bring to light the workings of a process of organic evolution in the realm of divine revelation.

It appears that instead of revealing in detail every aspect of His laws and teachings, Baha'u'llah intentionally left certain aspects of His Revelation to mature and then be revealed during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha Thus 'Abdu'l-Baha's contribution to the Cause of Baha'u'llah may be described as the supreme act of enriching the vast ocean of Baha'u'llah's Revelation.

Shoghi Effendi describes this process in these words:

In fact, he who reads the Aqdas with care and diligence will not find it hard to discover that the Most Holy Book itself anticipates in a number of passages the institutions which 'Abdu'l-Baha ordains in His Will.

By leaving certain matters unspecified and unregulated in His Book of Laws, Baha'u'llah seems to have deliberately left a gap in the general scheme of Baha'i Dispensation, which the unequivocal provisions of the Master's Will have filled.

To attempt to divorce the one from the other, to insinuate that the Teachings of Baha'u'llah have not been upheld, in their entirety and with absolute integrity, by what 'Abdu'l-Baha has revealed in His Will, is an unpardonable affront to the unswerving fidelity that has characterized the life and labours of our beloved Master.[19] [19 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

4.] When the provisions of the Kitab-i-Aqdas and those of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha are realized at their appointed time, the World Order of Baha'u'llah will come into being, unveiling to mankind the glory and majesty of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

As we have already stated, 'Abdu'l-Baha, through His Will and Testament, left for the Baha'is of the Formative Age a master plan for the building of the institutions of the Administrative Order and it was Shoghi Effendi, whom 'Abdu'l-Baha extolled as a pearl, unique and priceless, the Sign of God, the Guardian of the Cause of God and the Expounder and Interpreter of His Word, who

guided the believers in the execution of this task.

In the course of his 36 years as Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, in addition to all his other achievements, expounded the relationship between the two divinely-ordained, uniquely guided institutions of the Faith: the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.

In his letter addressed on 21 March 1930 to the members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada he wrote, referring to the unique nature of the Administrative Order created by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha: <p10> Not only have they revealed all the directions required for the practical realization of those ideals which the Prophets of God have visualized, and which from time immemorial have inflamed the imagination of seers and poets in every age.

They have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institution of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.[20] [20 ibid. pp.

19-20. (Shoghi Effendi, World Order.)] Now, since the passing of Shoghi Effendi, it is the Universal House of Justice, the other of the two 'chosen successors' of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, which performs the function of protecting the purity of the Revelation.

It ensures that no one may infringe the exclusive prerogative of the Guardian by attempting to assert authoritative interpretations of the writings.

At the same time, it performs the various functions conferred upon it in the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and, through its legislative actions, provides that element of elasticity which enables the Faith to meet the challenging needs of a fast-evolving human society.

The world-vivifying forces of the Faith stream out from this divinely-ordained institution into a vast network of Assemblies, bestowing spiritual life upon multitudes in every part of the world.

Concerning the significance of these divinely-ordained channels, Shoghi Effendi makes this remarkable statement:

The moment had now arrived for that undying, that world-vitalizing Spirit that was born in Shiraz, that had been rekindled in Tihiran, that had been fanned into flame in Baghdad and Adrianople, that had been carried to the West, and was now illuminating the fringes of five continents, to incarnate itself in institutions designed to canalize its outspreading energies and stimulate its growth.[21] [21 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

324.] A deeper study of the writings of Shoghi Effendi makes it abundantly

clear that the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha is a momentous document endowed with undreamt-of potentialities whose import only the passage of time can reveal.

Its provisions are designed not only to guide the believers in the erection of the divinely-ordained institutions but it also provides, like the Kitab-i-'Ahd, rigorous tests of faith to every follower of Baha'u'llah.

As we study the following pages of this book, we will observe that many believers, including some outstanding but egotistical and ambitious teachers of the Cause, were severely tested. <p11> They failed to abide by the sacred provisions of these vital documents and consequently the flame of their faith was extinguished and they spiritually perished. <p12>

1 Prerequisites for the Study of the

Covenant of Baha'u'llah A true understanding of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah gained by focusing on the Kitab-i-'Ahd and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha is dependent upon one's wholehearted faith in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

To comprehend, however inadequately, the manifold mysteries contained in these two great documents and to appreciate the provisions enshrined in them, one must first and foremost recognize the station of Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God whose sublime and momentous Revelation has many unique features.

In the person of its Author, transcendental in His majesty, in the intensity of its glory, in the prolific outpouring of its holy writ, in the unifying power of its Covenant, in the revolutionizing influence of its teachings, in the release of its world-vitalizing forces, in the strength and vitality of its institutions, the Revelation of Baha'u'llah 'stands unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like'.^[22] It endows the human race with undreamt-of potentialities and provides the means for its progress and spiritual development in this Dispensation.

Baha'u'llah has extolled His Revelation in glowing terms.

His writings are replete with passages such as these: ^[22] Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p.

77.] None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.^[23] ^[23] *ibid.* (Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p.

77.)) I testify before God to the greatness, the inconceivable greatness of this Revelation.^[24] ^[24] *ibid.* (Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *Advent of Divine Justice*, p.

77.)) The purpose underlying all creation is the revelation of this most sublime, this most holy Day, the Day known as the Day of God, in His Books and Scriptures -- the Day which all the Prophets, and the Chosen Ones, and the holy ones, have wished to witness.^[25] ^[25] *ibid.*

(Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice, p.

77.)] This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out, 'Great is thy blessedness, O earth, for thou hast been made the footstool of thy God, and been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne.' [26] [26 ibid. p.

78. (Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice.)] <p13> Belief in the authenticity of such a momentous Revelation and firmness in the Covenant of Baha'u'llah are the first requirements for the successful study and understanding of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The next step is to recognize the limitations of the human mind in unravelling the divine mysteries concealed within the revealed Word and in appreciating the true station of its Author.

Although God has endowed every human being of sound mind with the capacity to recognize and to know the Manifestation of God, this capacity has its limitations.

We observe that in this material world God has not given creatures of the lower kingdoms the capacity to comprehend the qualities and powers of the higher ones.

In each kingdom there are barriers which the creatures cannot overstep.

Thus an animal, no matter how intelligent, cannot understand human intellectual and spiritual powers.

It can perceive people only as creatures similar to itself and judge their actions from its own limited outlook.

The same is true when we examine the relationship between the Manifestation of God and human beings.

One is on a level far above the other.

Although a Manifestation of God is physically human, to regard Him as being one with humanity is inadmissible.

To view man as an equal with Him is similar to the animal observing a human and considering itself to be his equal.

In one of His Tablets [27] Baha'u'llah mentions that a disease has afflicted many of those who, in their own estimation, have acquired a measure of knowledge and learning.

The disease is that such people consider themselves to be the equal of the Manifestation of God and on the same level.

He states that a great many people suffer from this disease and consequently they have deprived themselves of the bounties of God's Revelation. [27] Iqtiddarat, p.

85.] If we recognize that the Manifestation of God abides in a realm far above that of man, it becomes evident to us that the human intellect, when

freed from self and ego, will admit its inability to appreciate fully the inner realities of the Word of God and His Covenant.

Expatriating on this theme, Shoghi Effendi writes:

To strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Baha'u'llah's stupendous Revelation must, it is my unalterable conviction, remain the first obligation and the object of the constant endeavour of each one of its loyal adherents.

An exact and thorough comprehension of so vast a system, so sublime a revelation, so sacred a trust, is for obvious reasons beyond the reach and ken of our finite minds.[28] [28 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

100.] Although the human mind, with its limitations, is unable to apprehend fully the unique significance of the Word of God, it has the capacity to reach great heights of understanding.

Indeed, the power of the intellect is one of the greatest gifts bestowed by God upon man.

Through it man is enabled to discover many mysteries of creation, both spiritual and material.

Humanity is therefore indebted to men of learning, those souls endowed with high intellectual powers and who open the doors of knowledge to the face of mankind.

When this knowledge born of human intellect combines with faith in Baha'u'llah as the Supreme Manifestation of God, the individual can reach the pinnacle of true knowledge and understanding.

To such people, Baha'u'llah addresses these words in the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

Happy are ye, O ye the learned ones in Baha.

By the Lord!

Ye are the billows of the Most Mighty Ocean, the stars of the firmament of Glory, the standards of triumph waving betwixt earth and heaven.

Ye are the manifestations of steadfastness amidst men and the daysprings of Divine Utterance to all that dwell on earth.

Well is it with him that turneth unto you, and woe betide the froward.

This day, it behoveth whoso hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the Hands of the loving-kindness of the Lord his God, the Merciful, to pulsate even as the throbbing artery in the body of mankind, that through him may be quickened the world and every crumbling bone. [29] [29 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

173.] However, human reason, if not assisted by the spirit of faith, is insufficient as a tool by which a mortal being can comprehend the potentialities of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah or grasp the many divine

mysteries hidden within the Kitab-i-'Ahd and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The history of the Faith confirms this.

Many believers of proven ability, keen intelligence and deep knowledge, relying entirely on their own interpretations of these two momentous documents, failed to comprehend the true significance of their contents; they became deluded, were severely tested and lost their faith altogether.[*] [* See the stories of the Covenant-breakers in later chapters.] Although the human intellect has its limitations, through the power of prayer, the assistance of the Holy Spirit and reliance on the interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, it is possible to acquire a profound understanding of the Kitab-i-'Ahd and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The words of God are revealed for man to comprehend and to become revived by their life-giving influence.

How, then, should he approach the holy writings in order to fathom the inner reality of the Word of God and become exhilarated by its transforming power?

Baha'u'llah has shown the way by laying down certain conditions through which a soul can immerse itself in the ocean of His words and obtain the pearls of wisdom and knowledge hidden in its depths.

The criteria Baha'u'llah has established for understanding His Revelation and His Covenant are different from those usually advocated by men of learning and knowledge untouched by the light of His Faith.

Their criteria are generally based on the premise that to master any subject in depth, the individual must acquire academic knowledge and become an accomplished scholar.

Although Baha'u'llah has enjoined His followers to acquire knowledge and has praised the station of men of learning, He has not made recognition of His Cause, the true understanding of His words and the comprehension of the inner realities of His Revelation dependent upon acquired knowledge.

The opening paragraph of the Kitab-i-Iqan states:

No man shall attain the shores of the ocean of true understanding except he be detached from all that is in heaven and on earth.[30] [30 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p.

3.] Baha'u'llah continues:

The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning.

They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.

This is evidenced by those who, today, though without a single letter of the accepted standards of learning, are occupying the loftiest seats of

knowledge; and the garden of their hearts is adorned, through the showers of divine grace, with the roses of wisdom and the tulips of understanding.

Well is it with the sincere in heart for their share of the light of a mighty Day! [31] [31 *ibid.* p.

211. (Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Iqan*.) The writings of Baha'u'llah are replete with similar passages in which He states that man can acquire the knowledge of God and come to understand the significance of His words only through purity of heart, detachment from earthly things and humility and meekness before His servants.

These qualities, together with a staunch faith in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the guidance of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, constitute the two essential prerequisites for a deeper understanding of the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Apart from these two requirements, the study of the Will and Testament and of the *Kitab-i-'Ahd* calls for some general knowledge of the history of the Covenant and of the family of Baha'u'llah, particularly those who violated His Covenant.

Therefore, a brief history of the personal life of Baha'u'llah and of some who rose up against the Centre of the Covenant is provided here. <p16>

2 The Family of Baha'u'llah The

Covenant established by Baha'u'llah may be said to embody two contrasting features.

One facilitates the individual's integration and consolidation in the community of the Most Great Name, enabling believers to rise to the loftiest heights of heroism and self-sacrifice and of loyalty and devotion.

This process imparts a new life and vigour to the body of the Cause, thereby releasing progressively a world-vitalizing spirit that propels the onward march of the Faith towards its ultimate goal of the unification of the human race.

The other feature of the Covenant protects the stronghold of the Cause from all attacks by the unfaithful and, through the power inherent within the institution of the Covenant, defeats their evil doings.

The result is their expulsion from the Faith and their spiritual extinction.

This second feature can best be observed through the study of the fierce opposition of most members of Baha'u'llah's family to the Centre of the Covenant.

It created an unprecedented tempest which raged furiously within the community for several decades and threatened to disrupt its unity and shake its divinely-ordained but young and vulnerable institutions.

The onslaught of the family members and other Covenant-breakers upon the Cause of God, on the one hand, and their eventual extinction, on the other,

constitute the most dramatic episodes in the ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

These are some of the darkest pages in the history of the Faith yet they cast light upon the mysterious forces operating within the Cause of God -- forces that tear down every obstacle as the Cause marches towards its ultimate victory.

They clearly demonstrate the vitality and the indestructibility of the Faith and serve to delineate the pattern of crisis and victory that characterizes its worldwide growth and development.

Rebellion against the Covenant originated from the immediate family of Baha'u'llah -- His sons, daughters, wives and close relatives.

Since the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha refers to their manifold betrayals and evil doings, it is necessary to become informed about their relationship to Baha'u'llah and the manner in which He conducted His personal life. <p17> To attempt to study the life of Baha'u'llah purely from the human point of view is an unhelpful exercise.

Whereas man is motivated by the human spirit and lives his life as dictated by the laws of nature and his environment, Baha'u'llah, the Manifestation of God, lived His life in conformity with the standards of the Divine Realm and regulated His conduct in accordance with the dictates of the Most Great Spirit, which animated Him.

While the Manifestations of God all shine with the splendours of God's Revelation, they can reveal themselves in only two ways.

The first is to appear in their naked glory.

Should this happen, all human beings would witness their awesome power, would bow before their majesty and would submit their will entirely to God's Viceregent on earth.

People would thus become puppets of God and lose their free will; all would follow the path of truth, not by their own volition but by capitulating to the irresistible power of the Manifestation of God.

By the force of God's command, all would obey His teachings and would live a goodly life; no one would have the choice to be different.

The Covenant of God would become meaningless because if there were no free will, how could human beings observe the laws of the Covenant?

Should the Manifestation of God appear in this way and expose His august attributes to the generality of mankind, people would be devoid of the power of creativity, becoming creatures whose actions were controlled from a higher realm.

The principles of justice and of reward and punishment would then become inoperative in society.

The only other way that the Manifestations of God can reveal themselves, which ensures the preservation of human free will, is to conceal their divine power behind the veil of human characteristics.

Although they possess majestic, divine qualities, it is, according to Baha'u'llah, against the law of God for them to reveal these to the generality of mankind.

For instance, we observe with amazement that Baha'u'llah, the Supreme Manifestation of God, who held the powers of earth and heaven in His hands, and who, through the utterance of one word, as testified by Himself in His Tablets, could have conquered the hearts of His enemies, did not exercise His God-given spiritual powers to stay the hands of His oppressors.

Thus He appeared to the generality of mankind to be an ordinary human being devoid of any superhuman powers; only those who have spiritual eyes can see a glimpse of His radiant light and recognize His station, while the great majority of the people fail to discover His inner spiritual reality.

Through this method people can exercise their free will to accept or to reject the Message of God, to live in accordance with His teachings or to disobey Him.

<p18> A Manifestation of God has two sides: human and divine.

The human side performs a special role, veiling the splendours of the divine light that shines within His person.

Therefore, a Manifestation of God is bound to regulate His life so as to express all His human characteristics.

He has to eat, sleep and carry on His life like any other person.

These limitations of human nature can become barriers for people in recognizing Him as the Manifestation of God.

One of these is the marriage of the Manifestation -- an especially great obstacle for many of Christian background, who have been brought up to believe that celibacy befits a holy person and that marriage is inappropriate for a Manifestation of God.

On the other hand, the Manifestations of God are perfect in body as in spirit and attributing a lack of sexual urge to a holy person would amount to physical deficiency rather than a virtue.

Perhaps the Christian view stems from the fact that Christ seems not to have been married when He declared His mission.

However, Christ did not speak against marriage.

That He Himself did not marry may be because His ministry was short and for most of it He was homeless, going from place to place until He was crucified.

Since the Manifestations of God share with the people all characteristics of human nature, it follows that they may live a normal life, engage in a profession, have a home, marry and raise a family.

They also possess all human emotions.

They are sensitive beings who experience feelings of joy and sadness, of pain and comfort, of likes and dislikes.

What distinguishes them from the rest of mankind is that their spiritual side completely dominates their physical nature and they are absolutely detached from the material world.

Another feature of the life of a Manifestation of God which is essential for hiding His glory is that He lives in accordance with the laws and conventions of the society to which He belongs.

He eats the same type of food, wears the same type of clothes and carries out the same customs as the rest of the people of His culture and background.

He does not live in the pattern of the future society that will emerge centuries later as a result of His teachings and about which He has full knowledge.

For example, during the ministry of Jesus two thousand years ago, Christ lived in a manner similar to the Israelites of the time.

By following the customs of the people of His own land, the Manifestation of God does not appear conspicuously different from the rest of the people and this is how His glory is hidden behind His human facade.

Thus His contemporaries look upon Him as an ordinary man.

Baha'u'llah belonged to a noble family of Tihiran.

His father, Mirza 'Abbas-i-Nuri, known as Mirza Buzurg, held a very important ministerial position in the court of the Shah and was highly regarded by the dignitaries of the realm.

Circumstances of family life in Islamic countries were totally different from those of present-day Western society.

The law of Islam concerning polygamy prevailed, allowing men to have a maximum of four wives at the same time.

Mirza Buzurg married four wives and had three concubines and 15 children -- five daughters and ten sons.

Baha'u'llah was born on 12 November 1817 in Tihiran.

His mother, Kadijih Khanum, the second wife of Mirza Buzurg, had a son and two daughters from a previous marriage.

As a result, Baha'u'llah had ten brothers and seven sisters.

Some of them became steadfast believers, some followed Mirza Yahya and others remained indifferent or died before Baha'u'llah's declaration in the Garden of Ridvan.

Baha'u'llah received an elementary education during His childhood in Tihiran.

The nobility of those days usually employed the services of a teacher at home to tutor their children.

The main subjects were calligraphy, the study of the Qur'an and the works of the Persian poets.

This type of schooling ended after only a few years when the child was in his early teens.

Baha'u'llah's education did not go further than this.

He Himself testifies in His Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah that He did not attend any school in His life:

O King!

I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been.

This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing.

And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow.

The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not.

Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely.

This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred.

Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing?

Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes!

They move it as they list.[32] [32 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, Promised Day is Come, pp.

40-1.] It is necessary for the purpose of studying the Covenant to become informed of Baha'u'llah's marriages and His children.

Baha'u'llah had married three wives before the declaration of His mission in 1863.

As has already been stated, the Manifestation of God conducts His personal life according to the customs of the time.

Polygamy was a normal practice in those days; indeed, it would have been abnormal for a man who belonged to the nobility to be monogamous in that society.

In order to appreciate this subject, it is essential to become familiar with

some aspects of the Islamic world of the 19th century.

Among <p20> the Muslim communities of the Middle East, women lived entirely under the domination of men and were not allowed to take part in public affairs.

Girls grew up in the home of their parents, lived most of their time indoors and had no contact with the public.

When they were given in marriage to their husbands (an event over which they had no control), they moved into a different house and spent most of their time in complete seclusion until they died.

No man, except a very close relative, was ever allowed to see the face of a woman.

She had to wear a chadur[*] and veil her face.

It was considered a sin for a woman to show her face to any man.

When a male guest arrived at a home, all the women had to retire into the inner apartment, their sanctuary where no strange man would ever be admitted. [* A large piece of cloth which covers the entire body from top to toe and is wrapped around one's clothes.] Another restriction was that women, especially unmarried girls, were not to talk to men.

Neither would they be permitted to go out for shopping or other services; these were the exclusive preserve of men.

Such acts would have necessitated women taking part in public affairs and coming into contact with men.

So strong was this restriction that if ever a woman was seen talking to a strange man she would receive very severe punishment from her parents or husband.

The stigma attached to this behaviour was so repugnant that sometimes the poor victim would commit suicide.

Some Muslim clergy in Persia are known to have inflicted torturous chastisements upon a man who was accused of talking to a woman.

Usually a much more severe punishment awaited a non-Muslim man if he was found speaking to a Muslim woman.

Women in those days had no status in the community.

They were treated like objects.

Some members of the clergy went so far as to claim that women had no souls, much as Christian theologians had done seven hundred years earlier.

Within such a society a woman's life was spent almost entirely within the four walls of a house; caring for her family and the menfolk who lived there.

It was very rare for a young girl to receive any education.

The great majority of women were illiterate and were therefore left out of the mainstream of human progress and civilization.

Even the few who received some education were circumscribed in their activities.

Parents were responsible for providing a son with his livelihood, his home and all his needs -- including a wife, who would be given to him as a matter of routine.

Parents arranged their children's marriages and usually the parties most concerned had no say in the matter.

In the Western world today, a couple meet and get to know one another, fall in love and get married.

But in the time of Baha'u'llah <p21> this was not the case in the East and often not in the West either. 'Love' took second place to family duty, appropriate social ties and questions of inheritance.

It was customary to betroth a boy and a girl soon after they were born and when the boy reached his late teens he had to marry; the couple had no choice.

There was no question of the partners loving each other before their marriage; the boy was not even allowed to see the face of his bride until after the wedding.

If the two parties were not betrothed so young, the parents would usually seek a bride for their son once he was in his teens.

This was done by a female member of the family, his mother or a sister.

Once the choice was made, the marriage could take place.

All the young man saw of his future wife was a figure wrapped in a chadur and heavily veiled.

If he was fortunate, his female relatives had perhaps described to him what his bride really looked like.

Although couples were not in a position to choose their partners in marriage and had no possibility of knowing and loving each other, not all marriages were devoid of love and unity.

It is not difficult to visualize the case of a couple, unacquainted with each other initially, who develop a bond of friendship, love and harmony after marriage.

Yet within such an environment, the dominant position of the husband was noticeably upheld as he exercised unquestioned authority over his wife.

In these circumstances all the responsibility of running the home -- which entailed hard labour in those days -- was left to the wife, who would be lucky if there were other female members of the family to help her in her duties.

It was considered improper to employ a maid to assist in the work, since only a woman who was a close relative could be admitted into the household.

However, since polygamy was commonly practised, a man could usually marry up to four wives and they were expected to assist each other in managing the family home.

This often became a necessity where the husband was wealthy and influential and had to maintain a large household and conduct a lifestyle befitting his station in society.

It was usually the first wife who would seek out, or give her consent for, the second wife.

It is clear that marriage customs in Persia during the 19th century are not comparable to those now current in most parts of the world.

The mere mention of polygamy today will raise in people's minds associations of sex, lust and corruption.

But this was not true in the case of people who contracted marriages according to Islamic law over a hundred years ago.

Men practised polygamy not necessarily from lust but because they were conducting their lives within a society that had established certain customs and conventions to which all had to conform.

Thus a young man happily submitted his will to that of his <p22> parents and carried out their wish in marrying someone of their choosing; thereafter he contracted further marriages as a routine matter.

Baha'u'llah married Asiyih Khanum in Tihran in 1251 AH (1835) when He was over 18 years of age.

Asiyih Khanum, later surnamed Navvab by Baha'u'llah, was a daughter of a nobleman, Mirza Isma'il-i-Vazir.

Her date of birth is not known.

She was a most noble and faithful follower of Baha'u'llah who served her Lord until the end of her life in 1886.

There were seven children of the marriage, four of whom died in childhood.

The other three were 'Abbas, entitled the 'Most Great Branch', 'Abdu'l-Baha; Fatimih, entitled Bahiyyih Khanum, the Greatest Holy Leaf; and Mihdi, entitled 'the Purest Branch'.

The second wife of Baha'u'llah, whom He married in Tihran in 1849, was Fatimih Khanum, usually referred to as Mahd-i-'Ulya.

She was a cousin of Baha'u'llah and gave birth to six children, of whom four survived.

They were one daughter, Samadiyyih, and three sons, Muhammad-'Ali, Diya'u'llah

and Badi'u'llah.

These four, along with their mother, violated the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Mahd-i-'Ulya died in 1904.

The third wife, Gawhar Khanum, was not known by any other title.

The dates of her birth, marriage and death are not known.

Her marriage took place some time in Baghdad before the declaration of Baha'u'llah's mission.

While Navvab and Mahd-i-'Ulya travelled with Him in all His exiles, Gawhar Khanum remained in Baghdad with her brother, Mirza Mihdiy-i-Kashani.[33] For some years she was among the Baha'i refugees in Mosul[34] and later went to 'Akka at Baha'u'llah's instruction.

She gave birth to one daughter, Furughiyyih; mother and daughter both became Covenant-breakers after the passing of Baha'u'llah. [33 See 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, p.

95.] [34 See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2.] It is appropriate at this juncture to clarify a point that has puzzled many, namely the lack of detailed information about the wives of Baha'u'llah.

Here, again, one has to consider the social circumstances of the time.

As already stated, women in those days took no part in public affairs; their entire lives were spent at home in private life.

To enquire into the life of a woman was considered unethical, even insulting.

It was discourteous even to ask the name of someone's wife.

She would usually be referred to as 'the person in the house' or, if she had a son, as the 'mother of so and so'.

Within such a society historians (always male) usually could not invade the privacy of women by delving into their lives.

To do so would highly offend the men of the household.

Although one would not find such practices in the household of Baha'u'llah and those believers who were close to Him did come into contact with the female members of His family, nevertheless, owing to the customs of the time and the privacy to which women in general were entitled, very little has been recorded about their lives by oriental historians of the Faith.

Navvab, honoured by Baha'u'llah with the designation 'the Most Exalted Leaf', was the embodiment of true nobility.

She was utterly detached from the things of the world and was faithful to the Cause of God.

Her deep attachment to the Cause of Baha'u'llah was one of her great

distinguishing features.

She had a compassionate and loving nature, was patient, humble and utterly resigned to the will of Baha'u'llah.

Navvab suffered a great deal at the hands of those in the family who later broke the Covenant.

Her faith in Baha'u'llah, whom she knew as the Supreme Manifestation of God, was resolute and unshakable.

She served her Lord with exemplary devotion and complete self-effacement.

Her daughter, the Greatest Holy Leaf, has described her in these words:

I wish you could have seen her as I first remember her, tall, slender, graceful, eyes of a dark blue -- a pearl, a flower amongst women.

I have been told that even when very young, her wisdom and intelligence went remarkable.

I always think of her in those earliest days of my memory as queenly in her dignity and loveliness, full of consideration for everybody, gentle, of a marvellous unselfishness, no action of hers ever failed to show the loving-kindness of her pure heart; her very presence seemed to make an atmosphere of love and happiness whenever she came, enfolding all comers in the fragrance of gentle courtesy.[35] [35 Blomfield, Chosen Highway, pp.

39-40.] In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah bestows upon Navvab the unique distinction of being His perpetual consort in all the worlds of God.

'Abdu'l-Baha in a Tablet states that the 54th chapter of Isaiah refers to Navvab, the Most Exalted Leaf, whose 'seed shall inherit the Gentiles' and whose husband is the 'Lord of Hosts'. 'Abdu'l-Baha also refers to the verse, 'for more [are] the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife' and states that this refers to Navvab.

The three members of the family of Navvab occupy the highest rank in the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha is, of course, the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, the Perfect Exemplar and the embodiment of all divine virtues.

His sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf, is regarded as the noblest woman of this Dispensation and its outstanding heroine.

Her life was laden with unbearable sufferings in the path of Baha'u'llah and dedicated to the service of His Cause.

The third child of Navvab was her noble and long-suffering son, the Purest Branch.

He was the one who, in the prime of youth, offered. <p24> up his life in the path of his Lord when he fell through a skylight in the prison of 'Akka onto the floor below.

In a prayer revealed after the martyrdom of the Purest Branch, Baha'u'llah makes the following statement, which Shoghi Effendi describes as astounding:

I have, O my Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united.[36]

[36 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

188.] It has already been stated that all the children of Mahd-i-'Ulya and Gawhar Khanum became Covenant-breakers.

It is appropriate here to define the term Covenant-breaker.

A believer who recognizes Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God for this age will wholeheartedly obey His teachings and commandments.

One of these commandments is to turn to 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of the Covenant, to be submissive to Him and abide by His bidding.

The same is true in relation to Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice.

A true believer, therefore, is one who believes in Baha'u'llah and follows those upon whom He has placed the mantle of authority.

A Covenant-breaker is one who, while professing to believe in Baha'u'llah, arises in active opposition to Him or to the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Baha, or to Shoghi Effendi or today to the Universal House of Justice.

Baha'u'llah has described those who break the Covenant as 'birds of the night'[37] that dislike the rays of the sun and flee from light, preferring the darkness.

The nature of a Covenant-breaker is to perceive the spiritual power and ascendancy of the Centre of the Covenant but not to bring himself to submit to His authority.

Instead he rises in opposition against the one he knows to be invested with the potency of Baha'u'llah's Revelation. [37 Baha'u'llah, in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

148.] The Arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah was Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the eldest son of Baha'u'llah's second wife, Mahd-i-'Ulya.

He was born in Baghdad in the first year after Baha'u'llah's arrival there.

From the early days of his youth he found that he could not rise to the level of 'Abdu'l-Baha, who was nine years his senior.

He lacked the spiritual qualities that distinguished his eldest brother, who became known as 'the Master' from the early days in Baghdad.

The most essential prerequisites for the spiritual survival of all those who were close to Baha'u'llah were humility, self-effacement and utter nothingness in His presence.

If these qualities were missing in an individual, he would be in great danger of spiritual downfall and eventual extinction.

While 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Greatest Holy Leaf, the Purest Branch and their illustrious mother were all embodiments of servitude and selflessness, Muhammad-'Ali, his brothers, his sister and their mother were the opposite.

Although the latter were all sheltered <p25> beneath Baha'u'llah's protection and flourished through the outpouring of His favours, they were the victims of selfish desires and worldly ambitions.

During Baha'u'llah's lifetime they were subdued by His authority and kept under control through His admonitions.

At the same time, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his brothers were the recipients of a great many favours from the believers who, because of their love for Baha'u'llah, honoured and revered them too.

Thus these three sons acquired an undeserved prestige and basked in the sunshine of their father's glory and majesty.

Inwardly Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was faithless and led his two younger brothers in the same direction, while outwardly he used the power of the Faith and the resources of the community to bolster his own image in the eyes of Baha'u'llah's followers.

He emerged as an important person in the service of his father by transcribing some of His Tablets and by the use of calligraphy, of which he was a master.

From the days of his youth he entertained the ambition to occupy a position of eminence within the Faith, similar to that of 'Abdu'l-Baha, who, from early on, had distinguished Himself among the entire family.

Another Covenant-breaker was Mahd-i-'Ulya's daughter Samadiyyih.

With her husband Majdu'd-Din she joined hands with the arch-breaker of the Covenant and inflicted great sufferings upon 'Abdu'l-Baha The second son of Mahd-i-'Ulya, Mirza Diya'u'llah, was a vacillating person who wavered in his allegiance to the Centre of the Covenant.

He was easily manipulated and became a willing tool in the hands of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

He died six years after the passing of Baha'u'llah and therefore did not live long enough to take part in the act of opposition to the Master.

The youngest son, Badi'u'llah, was the closest ally of the Arch-breaker of the Covenant.

He died at an advanced age in 1950, leaving behind bitter memories of acts of treachery, deceit and arrogance.

His venomous attacks on 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi stained the annals of the glorious Faith his own father had founded.

Mahd-i-'Ulya herself, from the early days of Baghdad, harboured a great enmity towards 'Abdu'l-Baha and was a motivating force behind Mirza Muhammad-'Ali causing great suffering for the Master, whom she bitterly despised.

Gawhar Khanum, the third wife of Baha'u'llah, had only one daughter, Furughiyyih, who was married to Siyyid 'Ali Afnan,[38] a bitter enemy of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Led by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, both mother and daughter rebelled against the Centre of the Covenant.

Furughiyyih's children, especially her eldest son Nayyir, described by Shoghi Effendi as the 'pivot of machinations',[39] spread the virus of Covenant-breaking in the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha and caused all of its members to succumb to this deadly disease. [38 There is a further reference to him to chapter 13.] [39 Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, p.

24.] <p26> It is clear from the foregoing that the history of Baha'u'llah's family has two contrasting features: one, glory and faithfulness; the other, dishonour and treachery.

Navvab, her two sons 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Purest Branch, and her daughter the Greatest Holy Leaf, shine brilliantly above the horizon of Baha'u'llah's Revelation and occupy immeasurably exalted positions within His Cause.

The rest of the family including Mahd-i-'Ulya, Gawhar Khanum and their sons and daughters, all became darkened and perished spiritually, sinking miserably into ignominy and oblivion.

This contrast of light and darkness, of good and evil in Baha'u'llah's own family is one of the most thought-provoking and mysterious features of His ministry.

His eldest Son was the perfect mirror reflecting His light and the Centre of His mighty Covenant while another son turned into the 'centre of sedition' and the arch-breaker of that same Covenant.

Many people are puzzled by the fact that almost the entire family of Baha'u'llah defected.

Why is it that those who were nearest to Him, who were members of His household, His sons and daughters, should be foremost among the violators of His Covenant?

In normal circumstances, when a person attains a prominent position in the community, it is often the family members who rally around him and lend their whole-hearted support.

But in the case of Baha'u'llah it was the reverse and a similar situation was created within the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha after His passing.

To appreciate the reasons for this, we observe once again that the proper attitude of a believer towards the Manifestation of God should be a true

demonstration of servitude, self-effacement and complete obedience.

Whenever these qualities are absent, a barrier will be created between man and God.

In such a case the believer may be associating with the Manifestation of God in person, yet because of this barrier he will not be able to appreciate His glory or become enchanted with His Revelation.

One might, by way of analogy, compare such believers to those who, with no knowledge of mathematics, hear an eminent mathematician expound his theories.

They can see him in no other light than that of an ordinary human being whose words are incomprehensible to them.

They judge the scientist by their own standards and consequently remain unmoved by his intellectual powers.

The closer they are to him, the better they can see his human nature, which acts as a barrier and hides his greatness from them.

Only those who understand mathematics can appreciate the real genius of the scientist.

In their view, his scientific knowledge outweighs his human characteristics and therefore they do not focus their attention on his outward appearance and human limitations.

This analogy sheds light on the Covenant-breaking by most of the members of Baha'u'llah's family and on the reasons for their unfaithfulness <p27> to Him.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his kinsfolk who followed him did not possess that spiritual quality which makes a man humble and enables him to recognize the splendours of God's Revelation in this day.

Because of their ambitious nature and their lack of spirituality and self-effacement, their inner eyes were blinded -- unable to discern Baha'u'llah's spiritual powers.

They could see Him only with their outward eyes, and because they were closest to Him they saw Him as an ordinary human being.

They found Him to be, in their estimation, just a great man and nothing more.

In reality, they had not recognized Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God.

As long as Baha'u'llah was among them, they were subdued by His authority, basked in the light of His favours and were accorded honours and privileges by His followers.

But after His ascension, these same family members turned their backs on Him and broke the Covenant. <p28>

Tests of Faith One of the common features of the ministries of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha is that during their lifetimes neither of them identified their successors to the believers in general.

In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah extolled the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha and praised His outstanding qualities.

But at no time during His ministry did Baha'u'llah disclose to His followers the position of 'Abdu'l-Baha as His successor and the Centre of His Covenant.

He kept this a well-guarded secret and did not intimate to His followers in general that 'Abdu'l-Baha would be administering the affairs of the Cause after Him.

The same is true of 'Abdu'l-Baha; he did not disclose the identity of Shoghi Effendi to the believers.

In the case of Baha'u'llah, the only two references in His writings on the question of successorship are found in the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

In these passages He alludes in meaningful, profound and eloquent language to the one who will become the Centre of the Cause after Him but He does not explicitly mention His successor's name, only indicating that He has issued from Him.

When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.[40] [40 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

121.] When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.[41] [41 ibid. para.

174. (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas.)] It is known that 'Ali-Muhammad Varqa, the renowned Apostle of Baha'u'llah, asked Him about the identity of the person alluded to in the above verses.

In a Tablet addressed to Varqa[42] Baha'u'llah indicated that the intended person was the Most Great Branch and after Him the Greater Branch.

However, this disclosure was not shared with the Baha'i community. [42 Quoted by Fadil-i-Yazdi in his Manahiju'l-Ahkam, vol.

2, p.

657.] The passages cited above were revealed in the Kitab-i-Aqdas 19 years before the ascension of Baha'u'llah.

During the intervening years, no one who read them had any doubt as to the identity of the one Whom God had purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient <p29> Root'.

It was obvious to all, especially to every member of Baha'u'llah's family, that this was a reference to 'Abdu'l-Baha and no one else.

The only document that explicitly announced 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the one to whom all must turn after His ascension

was the Kitab-i-'Ahd (The Book of the Covenant), which was published among the believers only after Baha'u'llah's passing.

This historic document was probably written at least one year before His ascension, for it is alluded to in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf as the 'Crimson Book'.

Baha'u'llah kept His Will and Testament secret, retained it in His own possession and did not share its contents with anyone during His lifetime.

But there is evidence to suggest that He had intimated its contents to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Baha'u'llah entrusted the Kitab-i-'Ahd to 'Abdu'l-Baha during His last illness before His ascension and informed the members of His family a few days before He departed from this world that in a document entrusted by Him to 'Abdu'l-Baha, He had commended them all to His care.

The first time the Kitab-i-'Ahd was read aloud in the presence of a number of friends was on the ninth day after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, and soon afterwards its text was released to the believers.

Immediately after the ascension of Baha'u'llah the Covenant was violated and opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of the Covenant, began.

Those who are unfamiliar with the history and origins of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, or who have a superficial understanding of His Faith, may find it strange that while Baha'u'llah explained every subject to His followers and clarified their every question, He did not specifically name His successor during His lifetime.

It is customary, and indeed essential, for a monarch to nominate his heir to the throne before his death.

In this way his subjects will have every opportunity to become familiar with their future head of state and orient themselves towards him.

What prevented Baha'u'llah from doing this?

Could He not have announced to the entire Baha'i community during His own days the appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of His Covenant?

Looking at it from a purely human point of view, it appears that had Baha'u'llah made such an appointment during His lifetime, all the differences that arose after His ascension could have been avoided.

He, as the Manifestation of God, had the wisdom and authority to settle every misunderstanding, to suppress any opposition, to establish the position of 'Abdu'l-Baha on a firm foundation in the minds and hearts of the believers, and to ensure the loyal support of His successor by all the members of His family.

<p30> But Baha'u'llah did none of these things.

He did not disclose the identity of the person who was to succeed Him but kept it a well-guarded secret, to be divulged only after His passing. 'Abdu'l-Baha

also did the same thing in relation to His successor.

He did not reveal the identity of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God during His own lifetime.

That also was a well-guarded secret, disclosed only when His Will and Testament was read.

It is true that 'Abdu'l-Baha intimated the identity of His successor to one or two individuals but the generality of the Baha'i community remained unaware of it.

The person who was privy to this appointment was the Greatest Holy Leaf.

Another person was a non-Baha'i woman, Dr J.

Fallscheer, a German physician who lived in Haifa and attended the ladies of 'Abdu'l-Baha's household.

When Shoghi Effendi was a child, 'Abdu'l-Baha clearly stated to her that Shoghi Effendi would be His successor.

But this information was not communicated to anybody else.

In answer to a question from three believers as to whether there would be someone to succeed Him, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote a short reply: ...Know verily that this is a well-guarded secret.

It is even as a gem concealed within its shell.

That it will be revealed is predestined.

The time will come when its light will appear, when its evidences will be made manifest, and its secrets unravelled.[43] [43 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

1.] Another believer enquired about a verse in Isaiah (11:6), 'a little child shall lead them', wanting to know whether this was true and whether the child who would succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha was then living.

In response 'Abdu'l-Baha revealed the following Tablet:

O Maidservant of God!

Verily, that child is born and is alive and from him will appear wondrous things that thou wilt hear of in the future.

Thou shalt behold him endowed with the most perfect appearance, supreme capacity, absolute perfection, consummate power and unsurpassed might.

His face will shine with a radiance that illumines all the horizons of the world; therefore forget this not as long as thou dost live inasmuch as ages and centuries will bear traces of him.

Upon thee be greetings and praise 'Abdu'l-Baha

'Abbas[44] [44 ibid. p.

2. ('Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Rabbani, Priceless Pearl.)] However, in this Tablet 'Abdu'l-Baha did not reveal the identity of Shoghi Effendi as that child who would succeed Him.

That the successors of the Centre of the Covenant and of Shoghi Effendi were disclosed only after the ascension of Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha constitutes one of the most important features of the Covenant.

Not until one grasps the purpose and significance of such <p31> steps, whether in the appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha or Shoghi Effendi, will the believer be able to acquire a true comprehension of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Although such an understanding must come about primarily through the individual's meditations upon the holy writings, his study of the history, genesis and workings of the Covenant and his prayers that his heart may become the recipient of divine knowledge, the following explanation may throw some light on this important subject.

The main function of the Manifestation of God is to reveal the teachings of God for the age in which He appears.

In so doing, He is ready to explain to His followers the meaning and purpose of His Revelation and to answer any difficult questions for them.

Both in His association with the believers and in His Tablets, Baha'u'llah was always ready to explain the significance of His writings.

Many of His Tablets were revealed in response to questions asked by His followers and others on weighty religious and spiritual matters as well as minor problems that affected the lives and activities of the friends.

To all these questions Baha'u'llah responded.

He expounded His teachings; He interpreted the Scriptures of the past, clarifying many of their abstruse passages and statements; He revealed the mysteries surrounding some of His profound utterances; and He delineated the features of His New World Order, giving details of the application of His laws and ordinances, and explaining, in simple terms, the verities of His Faith.

On one subject, however, Baha'u'llah remained silent: designating the person who was to succeed Him.

There are many wisdoms in this.

Let us use the analogy of the teacher, whose duty is to impart knowledge to his pupils and help them in their work.

In so doing, he is always ready to explain the various subjects to his pupils and answer their questions but on one occasion he must remain silent and refrain from helping them or answering their questions.

On the examination day the students are left on their own and must find the

answers by themselves.

Those who pass the examination are elevated to a higher class and those who fail are not.

The history of the Faith demonstrates that the Covenant has always provided great tests for the believers.

The Bab-gave the glad-tidings of the coming of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' but did not specifically reveal His identity.

Baha'u'llah kept the appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha a secret, and so in the terms of the above analogy the Kitab-i-'Ahd became the believers' examination paper.

The winds of tests began to blow immediately once the contents of that historic document were published, engulfing the community of the Most Great Name in a tempest of unprecedented severity.

Many unfaithful and ambitious souls broke the Covenant and arose with all their might to <p32> wrest the leadership of the Cause from the hands of 'Abdu'l-Baha, persisting in their ignoble activities for years until, by their own deeds, they brought about their own extinction.

Those who were faithful to the Covenant, however, were elevated to greater heights of faith and devotion.

Tests[*] associated with so mighty an institution as the Covenant are inevitable and constitute an integral and enduring feature of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

Similar tests appeared when the contents of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha were made public.

Some ambitious people, among them most of the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's own family who sought leadership and proved to be insincere in their faith, broke the Covenant and rose up against Shoghi Effendi.

Here again, the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha became an examination paper for the believers. [*For further discussion of tests in this life see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3, and Taherzadeh, The Covenant of Baha'u'llah, pp.

364-5.] After the passing of Shoghi Effendi, too, the winds of tests blew and some misguided and egotistical personalities broke away and were cast out of the community of the Most Great Name.

This time the non-existence of a will and testament by Shoghi Effendi became the examination paper.

The Covenant of Baha'u'llah will continue to be a testing ground for the followers of Baha'u'llah.

Those few who may succumb to the dictates of their own selfish desires and arise in opposition to the divinely ordained institutions of the Faith will cut

themselves off from the tree of the Cause of God and will wither and perish in time.

Indeed, one of the distinguishing features of the Faith of Baha'u'llah is that although many of its outstanding followers rebelled against the Covenant and tried with all their might to undermine its foundations, they did not succeed in creating schisms and breaking the unity of the community.

While a small minority failed in the tests provided by the institution of the Covenant, the majority of Baha'u'llah's followers who were loyal to the Covenant became inspired by the Kitab-i-'Ahd and, at a later epoch, by the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

They enthusiastically rallied around the Centre of the Cause and devotedly endeavoured to carry out provisions embodied in these two great documents.

So important to the faith of the believer are the contents of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha that Shoghi Effendi has made their observance an article of faith for a true believer who, among other things, must adhere to 'every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will'[45] with loyalty and steadfastness. [45 Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p.

90.] The degree of a believer's adherence to every clause of the Master's Will and Testament determines the measure of his faith.

There are <p33> those who obey wholeheartedly the provisions of this sacred document and will not deviate a hair's breath from them though there may be a number of aspects which they do not fully understand.

Others, while ready to follow some of the directives of 'Abdu'l-Baha, may have some reservations about certain statements in the Will and Testament that they cannot accept.

Such believers experience doubts in their faith but, if sincere, may be able to dispel them through reading the writings, discussion with deepened Baha'is and prayer.

Others persist in their doubts and hold views contrary to the teachings of the Faith but cannot, for various reasons, resolve their misunderstandings and strengthen their faith.

Such people may remain members of the Baha'i community provided they keep their opinions strictly to themselves and do not propagate their misgivings to others.

Finally, there are those who, while confessing belief in Baha'u'llah, do not accept the provisions of His Covenant and rise against 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice.

Or they may acknowledge Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha but actively oppose Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice.

Such people are acting against the Covenant and, after adequate counsels and

warnings, may be declared Covenant-breakers.

One of the main factors that turns a believer into a Covenant-breaker is ambition to become prominent in the community, to rise to a high station within the Faith.

This is the common objective of most Covenant-breakers.

Such individuals have not realized that the only station God has destined for man is that of servitude -- to God and to his fellow-man.

Baha'u'llah has abolished the priesthood and has given no one authority to rule over others.

There are no individual leaders in the Baha'i community and the Faith does not harbour egotistical personalities.

Of course, there are learned Baha'is, outstanding teachers, administrators and pioneers, but none of these people, however eminent, can exert authority over the community.

Their greatness is in their humility, servitude and self-effacement.

Those who have rebelled against the Covenant have not understood or paid attention to this principle, which is the cornerstone of the Covenant of God with man.

We may understand the reality of Covenant-breaking by looking into one of the laws of nature.

In this life, opposites attract each other like the poles of a magnet, while similar poles repulse each other.

God and man may be said to be positioned on the two opposite poles.

God is the sovereign Lord of all and man a humble servant, hence there is a force of attraction between the two. 'I loved thy creation, hence I created thee', [46] is the voice of God addressing His servants.

While God is the possessor of all divine attributes, by reason of His sovereignty, He cannot be humble.

The best gift, then, which man can offer to God is the only one He does not already possess, namely, humility and servitude.

These are the most befitting attributes for man.

The lordship of God and the servitude of man are opposites bound together by the force of love.

On the other hand, in the analogy of the magnet, similar poles repel each other.

Therefore, should an individual, having recognized a Manifestation of God, aspire to reach His station or attempt to appear equal to Him, such an act will provoke the wrath of God and there will be a force of repulsion between the two

parties.

This is Covenant-breaking. [46 Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words, Arabic no.

4.] In the Tablet of the Holy Mariner,[47] whose main theme is the Covenant, Baha'u'llah confirms that should man desire to rise to that level which is beyond him and is solely ordained for God's Chosen Ones, he will be cast out from the realms on high.

These are His words: [47 The full text of this Tablet, with an explanation of its significance, is given in Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

1, chapter 14.] They have desired to ascend unto that state which the Lord hath ordained to be above their stations...

Whereupon the burning meteor cast them out from them that abide in the Kingdom of His Presence...

And they heard the Voice of Grandeur raised from behind the unseen pavilion upon the Height of Glory... 'O guardian angels!

Return them to their abode in the world below... 'Inasmuch as they have purposed to rise to that sphere which the wings of the celestial dove have never attained...[48] [48 Baha'u'llah, in Baha'i Prayers, pp.

223-4.] Through his actions Mirza Yahya proved to be the fulfilment of these words, for he longed to take the place of Baha'u'llah and, indeed, when formally apprised in Adrianople of Baha'u'llah's claim, made his counter-claim and declared himself to be the bearer of a new revelation.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was the same.

He knew the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of the Covenant, the One to whom all believers must turn.

Yet he wanted to be a partner with Him.

The fact that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali rose up with all his power to oppose 'Abdu'l-Baha is a clear sign that he considered himself equal to the Master.

A child will never challenge a giant to a fight because he knows that he is no match for the giant.

But a man who chooses to fight with another must believe that he possesses at least the same strength as his opponent; the act of opposition by one party indicates that it considers itself to be on a par with the other.

By their very act of opposition, all those who become Covenant-breakers seek to bring themselves to the same level as the Centre of the Covenant and to challenge His authority.

Consequently, as in the analogy of the poles <p35> of the magnet, they are rejected and are cast out from the community of the Most Great Name.

In His Tablets Baha'u'llah has stated that since His Revelation is unimaginably glorious and the spiritual forces to which it has given birth are immensely powerful, so will be the severity of the tests it provides for those who follow Him.

In a Tablet known as the Lawh-i-Fitnih (Tablet of Tests) revealed in honour of Princess Shams-i-Jihan, Baha'u'llah states that through His Revelation all creation will be tried.

He affirms that every atom, every created being, every accomplished man of learning, the servants of God and His sincere lovers, the angels that enjoy near access to God, the Concourse on high, every righteous man of discernment, every mature embodiment of wisdom, every prophet sent forth by God -- all will be tested.

The history of the Faith amply demonstrates this.

There were some disciples of Baha'u'llah whose faith and devotion had carried them to great heights.

They were very close to His person and had become renowned among the believers.

Yet because of their pride and ambition, when the winds of tests blew, the flame of faith was extinguished in their hearts.

As a result, they fell from grace and died spiritually.

The Covenant of Baha'u'llah, through the instrumentality of the Kitab-i-'Ahd and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, provides the means by which every believer is tested.

There is a tradition in Islam quoted by Shoghi Effendi in his Persian writings which sets forth the difficulties and perils encountered by man on his journey to God.

It describes how all men will perish and die except the believers; all the believers will perish and die except those who are tested, all who are tested will perish and die except those who are sincere, and those who are sincere will be in great danger.

The tests to which the believers are subjected are not all related to Covenant-breaking.

Indeed, tests are an integral part of life.

Even in the physical world there are tests: for example, where there is movement there is also resistance, and the faster one moves, the greater the resistance.

Therefore a fast-moving object meets enormous resistance from the air because of its sheer speed.

This is true in the human world too.

Depending on the individual and his circumstances, tests present themselves in

different forms.

Those whose outlook is predominantly materialistic experience tests that disturb their lives, creating pain and suffering.

This form of tests is described in the Qur'an in these words:

Surely We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and diminution of goods and lives and fruits... (Qur'an 2:155) <p36> But tests become much more purposeful when the individual recognizes the Manifestation of God and enters under the shadow of His Cause.

Again in the Qur'an we read:

Do men think that when they say 'we believe' they shall be left alone and not be put to proof? (Qur'an 29:2) In this day, because of the greatness of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, when a person embraces the Faith, his tests are far greater than in former Dispensations and he is tested in many ways, often without realizing it.

Each time he is successful in passing a test, he will acquire greater spiritual insight and grow stronger in faith.

He will then come closer to God and will be elevated to a higher level of service; the next time his tests will be more difficult.

We are not always able to pass a test but God in His mercy will provide other opportunities for us to overcome the barriers.

However, if through attachment to this world the ego dominates, tests will weaken one's faith, even causing one to lose it altogether.

To cite an example, the meeting of a Spiritual Assembly may be regarded as the greatest testing ground for its members.

The standards, which according to 'Abdu'l-Baha the members must uphold during their consultation, are high indeed.

He calls them to 'purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God ... humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties...[49] He further exhorts them to conduct their discussion in a spirit of love and harmony, of courtesy and dignity, care and moderation.

These are some of the prime requisites of Baha'i consultation. [49] 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections, p.

87.] The application of these spiritual standards makes Baha'i consultation a testing ground for every member of the Assembly.

All the virtues of the individual -- his faith, his courage and his steadfastness in the Covenant -- undergo a rigorous test as the members sit around the table to consult.

Here the spiritual battle within the soul of the individual begins and will

continue as long as the ego is the dictator.

Indeed, in many cases this battle lasts a lifetime.

In this battlefield the forces of light and darkness are arrayed against each other.

On the one side stands the spiritual entity, the soul of the believer; on the other, a great enemy, the self or ego.

Whenever the soul hearkens to the lofty standards set by 'Abdu'l-Baha and applies them during consultation, the ego, defeated, recedes into the background.

The soul emerges victorious in this battle and becomes radiant with the light of faith and detachment.

The application of these spiritual principles, however, must be genuine and not merely superficial.

The feelings of love, unity, detachment and harmony must come from the heart.

Humility and servitude, <p37> radiance, devotion, courtesy and patience, along with all the other virtues, are qualities of the spirit.

These cannot be manifested by paying lip service to them.

If this is the case, then the ego is the victor.

The best protection for the believer is steadfastness in the Covenant, which, in simple language, means obedience to Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi and, today, the Universal House of Justice.

This is a matter of faith and every Baha'i who has recognized Baha'u'llah as the Supreme Manifestation of God has already accepted this cardinal principle of the Cause.

There are many teachings or principles in the Faith with which a person may agree.

The faith of a believer is tested, however, when he comes across a statement that is contrary to his way of thinking.

In this instance, the degree of an individual's steadfastness in the Covenant is determined by the ready manner in which he or she sincerely acknowledges that Baha'u'llah and those upon whom He has conferred infallibility are divinely guided, that their words, their teachings and their guidance are free from error and that the mind of man is finite and his judgement often erroneous. <p38>

4 The
Covenant, A Shield for the Protection of the Faith
l-WT All-Praise to Him Who, by the Shield of His Covenant, hath guarded the Temple of His Cause from the darts of doubtfulness, Who by the Hosts of His Testament hath preserved the Sanctuary of His most Beneficent Law and protected His Straight and Luminous Path, staying thereby the

onslaught of the company of Covenant-breakers, that have threatened to subvert His Divine Edifice; Who hath watched over His Mighty Stronghold and All-Glorious Faith, through the aid of men whom the slander of the slanderer affect not, whom no earthly calling, glory and power can turn aside from the Covenant of God and His Testament, established firmly by His clear and manifest words, writ and revealed by His All-Glorious Pen and recorded in the Preserved Tablet.

The opening paragraph of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha is an anthem of praise and glorification to Baha'u'llah, the Founder of the Covenant; it is also a tribute to those believers who defended His Covenant with great courage and heroism.

This passage describes the Covenant as a shield protecting the temple of the Cause of God from the assaults of the Covenant-breakers.

The institution of the Covenant tests the faithfulness of the believers, separating the good from the evil.

It also provides the means for preserving the unity and ensuring the healthy development of the community.

During His ministry Baha'u'llah Himself was the protector of His own Cause.

The continuation of the Covenant, the most vital instrument for safeguarding and strengthening the foundations of the Cause of Baha'u'llah after His ascension, was established through the revelation of the Kitab-i-'Ahd.

What was only implicit in the Kitab-i-Aqdas was now made explicit in the Kitab-i-'Ahd: the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah was announced to the believers.

The passage, 'Turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root', revealed in the former book, was now clearly stated to mean <p39> 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Baha'u'llah unequivocally affirms 'The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch'.^[50] [50 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, p.

221.] This clear appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of the Covenant safeguards the unity of the Baha'i community and protects it against schism and all manner of division.

Similarly, the appointment of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament perpetuates the process of protection until the end of the Baha'i Dispensation.

No other religion, including that of the Bab, has brought into being an instrument designed so to ensure the unity of its community.

Through the institution of the Covenant, the mighty stronghold of the Cause of God has remained invincible in spite of the powerful assaults launched against it over a long period by the Covenant-breakers.

For example, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his supporters viciously attacked the Cause of God with such ferocity that the opposition against the faithful in previous Dispensations fades into insignificance compared to it.

In spite of this, the Covenant-breakers failed miserably and the Covenant of Baha'u'llah triumphed.

It was not so in past religions.

If we look at the history of Islam we note that after the Prophet passed away, His followers almost immediately became divided into the two major sects of Sunni and Shi'ah.

As previously recounted, Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, had made a verbal statement appointing 'Ali-Ibn-i-Abu Talib, known as Imam 'Ali, as His successor.

But this appointment was disputed as Muhammad left behind no document to support it.

There is an episode widely spoken of, especially among the Shi'ahs, concerning the last days of Muhammad's earthly life.

It is claimed that as He lay on His deathbed, four of His outstanding followers were with Him.

They were Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali.

Abu Bakr was the father-in-law of the Prophet and 'Ali was His cousin and son-in-law.

Muhammad is reported to have called for writing materials, wishing to leave some guidance for His followers.

But the scheming 'Umar, a shrewd tactician, did not allow the wish of the Prophet to be realized.

He said that the Prophet, so near the time of His death, was not of sound mind and therefore no writing materials should be given to Him.

The Shi'ahs, who follow Imam 'Ali, claim that had the Prophet been allowed to write His will He would have confirmed the verbal statement He had made at Ghadir-i-Khumm concerning the appointment of 'Ali as His successor.

When Muhammad passed away, 'Umar rallied the majority of the followers around the old and ailing Abu Bakr, who enjoyed a great deal of prestige among the people.

He became the first Khalif (Caliph) of Islam.

Two years later when Abu Bakr died, 'Umar became the second Khalif and under his direction the military conquests of <p40> the Muslims soon began.

Through the influence exerted by 'Umar the great majority of the followers of Muhammad, the Sunnis, rejected the claims of Imam 'Ali to successorship.

It is a fundamental belief of the Baha'is that Imam 'Ali was the lawful successor of the Prophet of Islam.

After him his lineal male descendants, known as the 'holy Imams', led the Shi'ah community until the year 260 AH.

Baha'u'llah regarded the Imams as the legitimate successors of the Prophet, acknowledged the value of their work in the elucidation of the Qur'an, confirmed many of their sayings as recorded in the books of 'Ahadith' (traditions), quoted several of these in His writings, interpreted their words, extolled their station (especially that of Husayn, the third Imam) in glowing terms and referred to them as 'those unquenchable lights of divine guidance'[51] and 'those lamps of certitude'.[52] [51 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p.

144.] [52 ibid. p.

153 (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan.)] Through his misguided opposition to 'Ali, 'Umar frustrated Muhammad's intentions regarding His successorship and the direction of the affairs of Islam.

When Imam 'Ali attempted to assert his position as Muhammad's verbally designated successor and the expounder of the Word of God as revealed in the Qur'an, 'Umar's response was the fateful remark: 'The Book of God is sufficient unto us.' This short statement has echoed through the centuries. 'Abdu'l-Baha, in His celebrated Tablet the Lawh-i-Hizar Bayti (Tablet of One Thousand Verses), describes its woeful consequences, saying that this statement caused the foundation of the religion of God in the Islamic Dispensation to be shattered and the ignoble worshippers of self and passion to rule over the righteous souls.

It became a deadly weapon by which the Imam 'Ali himself was martyred, which caused great divisions within the nation of Islam and which changed the loving spirit of that nation to one of armed warriors.

In His Tablet 'Abdu'l-Baha explains that as a result of this statement Imam Husayn, the most illustrious of the Imams, was decapitated on the plain of Karbila, the other holy Imams were inflicted with great suffering, imprisonment and death, and the blood of countless innocent souls was shed for almost twelve hundred years. 'Abdu'l-Baha further affirms that 'Umar's statement, 'The Book of God is sufficient unto us', was transformed centuries later into the hundreds of bullets that pierced the breast of the Bab in Tabriz; that it became the chains placed around the blessed neck of Baha'u'llah and brought about the untold suffering inflicted upon Him in the course of His successive exiles. 'Abdu'l-Baha attributes all these and many more atrocities committed during the Islamic Dispensation to the influence of the simple statement 'The Book of God is sufficient unto us'.

It deprived the greater part of the Islamic nation not only of divine guidance and <p41> the wealth of spiritual knowledge imparted by the holy Imams to their followers through their interpretation and elucidation of the many abstruse

passages in the Qur'an, but also of their illuminating prophecies concerning the advent of the Qa'im, the Promised One of Islam.

The course of history itself changed as a result of 'Umar's opposition to Imam 'Ali.

The successful breaking of the Covenant of Muhammad by 'Umar through his refusal to submit to Imam 'Ali as the lawful successor of the Prophet and the interpreter of His words brought about, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha, dim consequences for many nations and peoples.

Who knows in what manner the Faith of Islam would have spread and its community developed had all its followers remained faithful to the wishes of Muhammad and followed Imam 'Ali as His lawful successor. 'Abdu'l-Baha implies in the Lawh-i-Hizar Bayti that if the nation of Islam had been faithful to 'Ali, many of the atrocities and cruelties committed since the passing of Muhammad could have been mitigated or avoided.

Such are the dire consequences of man's violation of the Covenant.

Unlike past Dispensations when religions divided into many sects and denominations, in the Baha'i Dispensation the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, endowed with the mysterious power born of the divine Will, has been instrumental in preventing schisms from occurring within the Faith.

The institution of the Covenant has conferred authority on the central institutions of the Cause to expel anyone who publicly rises in opposition against the Centre of the Cause -- 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice.

It acts as a surging sea, casting onto its shores dead bodies and cleansing itself from their unwholesome effects.

It does not harbour those ambitious and learned individuals who, in the guise of reformers, might attempt to substitute, with subtlety and craftiness, the teachings of Baha'u'llah with their own doctrines or try to undermine the foundations of the Cause by casting doubt on the sacred verities of the Faith enunciated by the pen of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha or Shoghi Effendi.

Indeed, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah has been and will continue to be the inviolable guarantor of the invincibility of the Cause and its divinely-ordained institutions and the means of the fulfilment of Baha'u'llah's words, that this is 'the Day which shall not be followed by night'.^[53] [53 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

245.] In the opening paragraph of the Will and Testament reference is made to 'the onslaught of the company of Covenant-breakers'.

We shall see in the following pages the accounts of some of their vicious attacks against the Cause of Baha'u'llah and the Centre of His Covenant.

In the same passage, mention is made of the protection given to the Cause 'through the aid of men whom the slander of the slanderer affect not, whom no

earthly calling, glory and power can turn aside from the Covenant of God and His Testament, established <p42> firmly by His clear and manifest words, writ and revealed by His All-Glorious Pen and recorded in the Preserved Tablet'.

To appreciate the role of the believers in protecting the Cause, as mentioned in the foregoing passage, we observe that in every age God bestows upon humanity the precious gift of divine Revelation through the advent of the Manifestation of God who formulates the laws and teachings of a religion.

The part that man has to play is to propagate, promote and consolidate the religion.

This is the function of the believers and not of the Manifestation of God.

Baha'u'llah by Himself does not directly promote the interests of His Faith among people but He does assist all those who arise to serve His Cause.

If the believer does not arise, Shoghi Effendi states, 'The sustaining strength of Baha'u'llah Himself, the Founder of the Faith, will be withheld from every and each individual who fails in the long run to arise and play his part.'[54] In the Lawh-i-Tibb (Tablet of Medicine) and in other Tablets, Baha'u'llah states that if the friends had lived in accordance with His commandments, the majority of the peoples of the world would have embraced His Faith in His days. [54 Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, p.

131.] These statements clearly indicate that the progress and protection of the Cause depend upon the efforts of the believers which in turn attract the confirmations of Baha'u'llah.

In the passage above, 'Abdu'l-Baha confirms that Baha'u'llah 'watched over His Mighty Stronghold and All-Glorious Faith, through the aid of men whom the slander of the slanderer affect not, whom no earthly calling, glory and power can turn aside from the Covenant of God and His Testament'.

This passage extolling the devotion and exalted character of these men is partially quoted by 'Abdu'l-Baha from a verse of the Qur'an (24:37), to which He has added His own words.

The Baha'is of the East and the West were strengthened in their faith through the untiring and persistent efforts of these men spoken of by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

They were some of the most loyal and learned teachers of the Faith who not only deepened the believers in the subject of the Covenant but also rallied around the Master and, like lions, defended the Covenant against the onslaught of the Covenant-breakers.

These holy souls, 'the learned ones in Baha' whom Baha'u'llah describes as 'the billows of the Most Mighty Ocean' and 'the stars of the firmament of Glory',[55] were the four Hands of the Cause of God as well as outstanding teachers such as Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl[*] and several others.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl travelled to the United States where he succeeded in deepening

new believers in the subject of the Covenant and helped them to <p43> counteract the misrepresentations of the Covenant-breaker Khayru'llah and a few others.

Soon after the ascension of Baha'u'llah these teachers of the Cause travelled extensively throughout Persia and met with the entire community.

Lacking modern means of transport, these steadfast souls travelled by donkey to every town and village and met with all the believers, either individually or in gatherings.

They explained the verities of the Faith in great detail, helped the believers to study many of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, discussed the meanings enshrined in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and the Kitab-i-'Ahd, and convincingly clarified any questions raised.

These devoted promoters of the Cause were so imbued with the love of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha that wherever they went they imparted that same love to the believers.

Wholly detached from earthly things, they were truly 'a river of life eternal'[56] to the loved ones of God and were instrumental in strengthening the faith of the believers and confirming them in the Covenant of Baha'u'llah. [55 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

173.] [*For the life story of this great Baha'i scholar see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah vols.

2 and 3.] [56 Baha'u'llah, Tablet of Ahmad, Baha'i Prayers, p.

211.] Seldom in the history of the Cause do we find an occasion when the power of the Covenant manifested itself with such intensity and effectiveness as it did in Persia after the expulsion from the Faith of those who rebelled against the Centre of the Covenant.

The speed with which the pollution of Covenant-breaking was removed from the community of the Most Great Name in the Cradle of the Faith was spectacular. The reaction of the believers in that country to the news of the defection of some of the great teachers of the Faith was to shun them almost immediately.

No less significant was the fact that the entire Baha'i community of Persia, with the exception of a very few individuals, remained loyal to the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

The efforts of the Covenant-breakers to mislead the believers were so ineffective that towards the end of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry there were only a few individuals anywhere in that vast community who could be labelled Covenant-breakers.

In the West, too, the friends were steadfast in the Covenant and united in their love for and service to the Cause.

The efforts exerted by outstanding teachers of the Cause were not only directed

to the rank and file of the Baha'i community.

Indeed, here were occasions when some devoted believers asked 'Abdu'l-Baha's permission to counsel the arch-breaker of the Covenant himself that he might recognize his transgression against the Cause and repent for violating His father's Covenant.

For example, in the early days of the clandestine opposition by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, <p44> an interview took place between him and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, [*] a renowned teacher of the Faith.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was about to leave 'Akka and 'Abdu'l-Baha advised him, as a matter of courtesy, to visit the Mansion of Bahji to say farewell to the family of Baha'u'llah. 'Abdu'l-Baha intimated that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali might invite him to meet in private.

If this happened, the Haji was advised to accept the invitation and, in a spirit of humility and sincerity, to say whatever his heart and conscience dictated.

This is how the Haji records the story of the interview: [* For a brief account of his life and achievements see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2.] It was late at night when Mirza Muhammad-'Ali summoned me to his room.

He asked his son Shu'a'u'llah, who was present, to leave, because he wanted to talk to me confidentially.

After much conversation, he said: 'I wish to ask you a question in confidence.

Don't you think that I could have also inherited what my brother ['Abdu'l-Baha] has inherited from the Blessed Beauty?' I said to him: 'In all His references to 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Blessed Beauty has assigned to Him all the exalted names and praiseworthy attributes.

He enjoined on us all to show forth, for the exaltation of His Cause, the utmost love and humility towards His Person.

In the Kitab-i-'Ahd, He has clearly stated: "It is incumbent upon the Aghsan, the Afnan and My Kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch."

Therefore to the extent that you show forth humility, self-effacement and utter nothingness to His blessed Person ['Abdu'l-Baha], you will accordingly acquire the exalted qualities you wish to have.

Based on the same principle, you will lose these qualities to the extent that you lessen the measure of your humility and submissiveness towards Him.

The reason for this is that all the praise and honour which are bestowed

upon you by Baha'u'llah are dependent upon certain conditions.

Certain verses of the Kitab-i-Aqdas and their further elucidation in the Kitab-i-'Ahd are as unequivocal and clear as the sun in mid-sky.

God forbid, if for one moment in your heart you might think the passage in the Kitab-i-'Ahd ought to have directed the Aghsan, the Afnan and others to turn their faces to Ghusn-i-Akbar [the Greater Branch, i.e.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali].

It is clear that you do not possess what the Master possesses.

God, exalted be He, does not act hypocritically, nor does He create means of division among people.

It is impossible for the One True God to entrust the guardianship of His Cause to two individuals at the same time...

Apart from all this, who is it in this world of being that can claim to rival the Master on any level?' I was talking on these lines when he arose from his seat saying it was time to go to bed, so I left him.[57] [57 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, pp.

337-8.] <p45> The Covenant of Baha'u'llah may be regarded as a protective wall surrounding the great ocean of Baha'u'llah's Revelation.

There were many unscrupulous attempts to break through that wall and serious attacks by several outstanding followers of the Faith who rebelled against the Centre of the Covenant in order to promote their own selfish desires, to introduce their own ideas into the teachings, to divide the Faith of God and consequently to contaminate the heavenly stream of the Word of God; but they did not succeed in creating a breach in the Baha'i community.

Based on a firm foundation, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah was an impregnable wall around the ocean of His Revelation.

This great ocean surged within the soul of 'Abdu'l-Baha for 29 years and He bestowed its life-giving waters upon thousands of men and women throughout the East and the West.

He left for posterity the unadulterated Word of God, free of every trace of distortion and defilement. 'Abdu'l-Baha attributes all these achievements to the overshadowing confirmations of Baha'u'llah, which assisted those who championed His Cause and stood unswervingly firm and steadfast in 'the Covenant of God and His Testament, established firmly by His clear and manifest words, writ and revealed by His All-Glorious Pen and recorded in the Preserved Tablet'. <p46> 5

The Greatest of All Things 3-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word.

Ten thousand souls have shed streams of their sacred blood in this path, their precious lives they offered in sacrifice unto Him, hastened wrapt in holy ecstasy unto the glorious field of martyrdom, upraised the Standard of God's Faith and writ with their life-blood upon the Tablet of the world the verses of His Divine Unity. 'Abdu'l-Baha links the protection of the Cause to the heroism and self-sacrifice of countless souls who offered up their lives for the promotion of the Faith.

The history of the Cause indicates that the martyrs of the Faith, when faced with the choice of either recanting their faith or holding on steadfastly to the Cause of God, chose the latter.

They proclaimed the divine origin of the Faith, defended the integrity of its teachings, stood firm in the face of unbearable suffering and torture, and in the end sacrificed their lives in the path of their Beloved.

But protection of the Cause is not accomplished only through physical martyrdom.

By living his life in a spirit of faithfulness to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, a believer brings victory to the Cause.

Conversely, great damage is done to the reputation and good name of the Faith when a believer conducts himself in a way contrary to the commandments of God in this day.

Baha'u'llah has testified to this in many of His Tablets.

In one, He states:

He, Who is the Eternal Truth, beareth Me witness!

Nothing whatever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God.

Flee them, through the power of God and His sovereign aid, and strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.[58] [58 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

9.] 'Abdu'l-Baha, in one of His Tablets,[59] says that if someone mentioned in the presence of Baha'u'llah that there was somewhere a slight disunity among the believers, He would become so overwhelmed with <p47> grief that His face would display signs of intense pain and displeasure.

While human beings generally experience agony when afflicted by calamities pertaining to the material world and the Manifestations of God also feel the pain of physical afflictions, the greatest suffering they endure is when the Cause they manifest becomes tarnished by the reprehensible conduct of those who embrace it.

In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah affirms this fact: [59 Ma'idiy-i-Asma'ni, vol.

9, p.

128.] I sorrow not for the burden of My imprisonment.

Neither do I grieve over My abasement, or the tribulation I suffer at the hands of Mine enemies.

By My life!

They are My glory, a glory wherewith God hath adorned His own Self.

Would that ye know it!...

My sorrows are for those who have involved themselves in their corrupt passions, and claim to be associated with the Faith of God, the Gracious, the All-Praised...

They that have tarnished the fair name of the Cause of God, by following the things of the flesh -- these are in palpable error! [60] [60 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, pp.

100-1.] In another Tablet Baha'u'llah states:

My captivity cannot harm Me.

That which can harm Me is the conduct of those who love Me, who claim to be related to Me, and yet perpetrate what causeth My heart and My pen to groan. [61] [61 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

190.] My captivity can bring on Me no shame.

Nay, by My life, it conferreth on Me glory.

That which can make Me ashamed is the conduct of such of My followers as profess to love Me, yet in fact follow the Evil One. [62] [62 ibid. (Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

190.)] In another Tablet [63] Baha'u'llah mentions that when a believer commits a reprehensible misdeed, the ignorant people will ascribe it to the Founder of the Faith. [63 From an unpublished compilation, Iranian National Baha'i Archives, no.

18, p.

41.)] Thus each and every believer bears the responsibility of protecting the Cause of God.

He can either harm the Cause through unseemly conduct or exalt and protect it through goodly deeds and a saintly character.

Innumerable passages in the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha urge the believers to protect the Cause through righteous deeds.

They do not call on the believers to die for the Cause as the early martyrs did but to live and serve the Cause.

Baha'u'llah exhorts His followers:

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

Say:

O people of God!

That which can ensure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as clear and manifest as the sun.

These hosts are such righteous deeds, <p48> such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight.

Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused, throughout the whole world.[64] [64 Gleanings, p.

287.] Again He affirms:

O friends!

Help ye the one true God, exalted be His glory, by your goodly deeds, by such conduct and character as shall be acceptable in His sight.

He that seeketh to be a helper of God in this Day, let him close his eyes to whatever he may possess, and open them to the things of God.

Let him cease to occupy himself with that which profiteth him, and concern himself with that which shall exalt the all-compelling name of the Almighty.

He should cleanse his heart from all evil passions and corrupt desires, for the fear of God is the weapon that can render him victorious, the primary instrument whereby he can achieve his purpose.

The fear of God is the shield that defendeth His Cause, the buckler that enableth His people to attain to victory.

It is a standard that no man can abase, a force that no power can rival.[65] [65 ibid. p.

272. (Gleanings)] A believer cannot adequately discharge his responsibility to protect the Cause unless he is firm in the Covenant.

It is not sufficient for a Baha'i only to believe in Baha'u'llah and to carry out His teachings while remaining aloof from the Covenant or unresponsive to the guidance proceeding from the Head of the Faith upon whom Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha have placed the mantle of authority.

Someone with such an unhealthy attitude will not be able to assist the Cause of God; indeed he will hamper its progress.

While firmness in the Covenant is a relative term and differs from person to person, to the extent that a believer turns to the Centre of the Cause and

readily observes the obligations binding on him through the institution, of the Covenant, to the same extent will he be able to play his part in the protection of the Faith, which 'Abdu'l-Baha described as 'the greatest of all things'.

One aspect of the protection of the Cause is its defence against the onslaught of internal and external enemies.

Today, this function is mainly carried out by the institutions of the Faith,[66] although there is also great scope for the individual believer to play a significant part.

For example, refuting accusations or misrepresentations of those who oppose the Faith is an activity which certain learned believers can undertake.

Baha'u'llah confers upon such people great blessings, as affirmed in the following Tablet: [66 As an example, see the message of Shoghi Effendi dated 4 June 1957, 'Call to Hands of the Cause and National Assemblies', in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, pp.

122-3.] <p49> Warn, O Salman, the beloved of the one true God, not to view with too critical an eye the sayings and writings of men.

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

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

It is incumbent upon all men, each according to his ability, to refute the arguments of those that have attacked the Faith of God.

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

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

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

By the righteousness of Him Who, in this Day, crieth within the inmost heart of all created things: 'God, there is none other God besides Me!' If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honoured in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory.

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

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

Of this God is Himself a witness.[67] [67 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, pp.

329-30.] Finally, an important feature of the protection of the Faith is to safeguard it from intrusion by Covenant-breakers.

This subject will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter 24. <p50>

6 The Suffering of the Bab and

Baha'u'llah 3-WT The sacred breast of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be a sacrifice unto Him), was made a target to many a dart of woe... 'His Holiness, the Exalted One' is one of the titles of the Bab.

He offered up His life and through His supreme sacrifice, as testified by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, enormous spiritual forces were released for the advancement of the Cause of God.

In the first year after the Declaration of His Message, the Bab expressed His longing to lay down His life in the path of Baha'u'llah, to whom He refers as 'The Remnant of God' in the following celebrated passage from the Qayyumu'l-Asma':

O Thou Remnant of God!

I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love.

Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days.[68] [68 The Bab, Selections, p.

59.] About six years later He achieved His heart's desire when He was publicly executed in Tabriz on 9 July 1850.

While the circumstances of His martyrdom are recorded in books of history, a brief account of this supreme sacrifice is bound to enlighten the vision and enrich the heart and mind of any believer who embarks on a deeper study of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Here is a short account of this tragic and earth-shaking episode:

After securing the Bab's death warrant from the leading mujtahids of Tabriz, Mirza Hasan Khan, as instructed by his brother, the Grand Vizir, took charge of His execution.

As a mark of humiliation, the Bab's green turban and sash, the twin emblems of His noble lineage from the Prophet of Islam, were removed.

He was conducted by the farrash-bashi (the chief attendant) to a room in the barracks of the city where a few of His disciples, including His amanuensis, were also imprisoned.

Shoghi Effendi describes the circumstances leading to the execution of the Bab in these words: <p51> The farrash-bashi had abruptly interrupted the last conversation which the Bab was confidentially having in one of the rooms of the barracks with His amanuensis Siyyid Husayn, and was drawing the latter aside, and severely rebuking him, when he was thus

addressed by his Prisoner: 'Not until I have said to him all those things that I wish to say can any earthly power silence Me.

Though all the world be armed against Me, yet shall it be powerless to deter Me from fulfilling, to the last word, My intention.' To the Christian Sam Khan -- the colonel of the Armenian regiment ordered to carry out the execution -- who, seized with fear lest his act should provoke the wrath of God, had begged to be released from the duty imposed upon him, the Bab gave the following assurance: 'Follow your instructions, and if your intention be sincere, the Almighty is surely able to relieve you of your perplexity.' Sam Khan accordingly set out to discharge his duty.

A spike was driven into a pillar which separated two rooms of the barracks facing the square.

Two ropes were fastened to it from which the Bab and one of his disciples, the youthful and devout Mirza Muhnmad-'Ali-i-Zunuzi surnamed Anis, who had previously flung himself at the feet of his Master and implored that under no circumstances he be sent away from Him, were separately suspended.

The firing squad ranged itself in three files, each of two hundred and fifty men.

Each file in turn opened fire until the whole detachment had discharged its bullets.

So dense was the smoke from the seven hundred and fifty rifles that the sky was darkened.

As soon as the smoke had cleared away the astounded multitude of about ten thousand souls, who had crowded onto the roof of the barracks, as well as the tops of the adjoining houses, beheld a scene which their eyes could scarcely believe.

The Bab had vanished from their sight!

Only his companion remained, alive and unscathed, standing beside the wall on which they had been suspended.

The ropes by which they had been hung alone were severed. 'The Siyyid-i-Bab has gone from our sight!' cried out the bewildered spectators.

A frenzied search immediately ensued.

He was found, unhurt and unruffled, in the very room He had occupied the night before, engaged in completing His interrupted conversation with His amanuensis. 'I have finished My conversation with Siyyid Husayn' were the words with which the Prisoner, so providentially preserved, greeted the appearance of the farrash-bashi, 'Now you may proceed to fulfil your intention.' Recalling the bold assertion his Prisoner had previously

made, and shaken by so stunning a revelation, the farrash-bashi quitted instantly the scene, and resigned his post.

Sam Khan, likewise, remembering, with feelings of awe and wonder, the reassuring words addressed to him by the Bab, ordered his men to leave the barracks immediately, and swore, as he left the courtyard, never again, even at the cost of his life, to repeat that act.

Aqa Jan-i-Kamsih, colonel of the body-guard, volunteered to replace him.

On the same wall and in the same manner the Bab and His companion were again suspended, while the new regiment formed in line and opened fire upon them.

This time, however, their breasts were riddled with bullets, and their bodies completely dissected, with the exception of their faces which were but little marred. 'O wayward generation!' were the last words of the Bab to the gazing multitude, as the regiment prepared to fire its volley, 'Had you believed in Me every one of you would have followed the example of this youth, who stood in rank above most of you, and would have willingly sacrificed himself in My path.

The day will come when you will have recognized Me; that day I shall have ceased to be with you.' Nor was this all.

The very moment the shots were fired a gale of exceptional violence arose and swept over the city.

From noon till night a whirlwind of dust obscured the light of the sun, and blinded the eyes of the people.

In Shiraz an 'earthquake', foreshadowed in no less weighty a Book than the Revelation of St John, occurred in 1268 AH. which threw the whole city into turmoil and wrought havoc amongst its people, a havoc that was greatly aggravated by the outbreak of cholera, by famine and other afflictions.[69] [69 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

52-4.] Baha'u'llah, as well as the Bab, suffered grievously at the hands of His enemies, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has testified:

3-WT ...and in Mazindaran, the blessed feet of the Abha Beauty (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) were so grievously scourged as to bleed and be sore wounded.

The story of Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in Amul is recorded in numerous history books but it is appropriate here to give a brief account of His suffering in His native land, Mazindaran.

In the winter of 1848 Baha'u'llah, accompanied by a few believers including His half-brother Mirza Yahya, set out from Nur for the fortress of Shaykh Tabarsi.

Government forces had besieged the fortress and the defenders inside were in great danger.

Baha'u'llah's intention was to aid them.

To Nabil-A'zam, the famous chronicler of The Dawn-Breakers, He recounted the following: ...We had intended to send 'Abdu'l-Vahhab, one of Our companions, in advance of Us, and to request him to announce Our approach to the besieged.

Though encompassed by the forces of the enemy, We had decided to throw in Our lot with those steadfast companions, and to risk the dangers with which they were confronted.

This, however, was not to be.

The hand of Omnipotence spared Us from their fate and preserved Us for the work We were destined to accomplish.

In pursuance of God's inscrutable wisdom, the intention We had formed was, before Our arrival at the fort, communicated by certain inhabitants of Nur to Mirza Taqi, the <p53> governor of Amul, who sent his men to intercept Us.

While We were resting and taking Our tea, We found Ourselves suddenly surrounded by a number of horsemen, who seized Our belongings and captured Our steeds.

We were given, in exchange for Our own horse, a poorly saddled animal which We found it extremely uncomfortable to ride, The rest of Our companions were conducted, handcuffed, to Amul.

Mirza Taqi succeeded, in spite of the tumult Our arrival had raised, and in the face of the opposition of the 'ulamas, in releasing Us from their grasp and in conducting Us to his own house.

He extended to Us the warmest hospitality.

Occasionally he yielded to the pressure which the 'ulamas were continuously bringing to bear upon him, and felt himself powerless to defeat their attempts to harm Us.' [70] [70 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Nabil, Dawn-Breakers, pp.

583-4.] The suffering Baha'u'llah underwent at the hands of the 'ulama is truly heartrending.

Nabil describes how the bastinado[*] was inflicted on Him in public with such ferocity that His feet bled.

Here is Nabil's account of the circumstances leading to this tragic outcome:

[*The victim is made to lie on his back on the ground while his feet are inserted into a loop and held up by two men.

The soles are then beaten with a cane or a whip.] ...Baha'u'llah had signified His wish that they should proceed directly to their destination and allow no pause in their journey.

His intention was to reach that spot at night, inasmuch as strict orders had been issued ... that no help should be extended, under any circumstances, to the occupants of the fort.

Guards had been stationed at different places to ensure the isolation of the besieged.

His companions, however, pressed Him to interrupt the journey and to seek a few hours of rest.

Although He knew that this delay would involve a grave risk of being surprised by the enemy, He yielded to their earnest request.

They halted at a lonely house adjoining the road.

After supper, His companions all retired to sleep.

He alone, despite the hardships He had endured, remained wakeful.

He knew well the perils to which He and His friends were exposed, and was fully aware of the possibilities which His early arrival at the fort involved.

As He watched beside them, the secret emissaries of the enemy informed the guards of the neighbourhood of the arrival of the party, and ordered the immediate seizure of whatever they could find in their possession.

'We have received strict orders,' they told Baha'u'llah, whom they recognized instantly as the leader of the group, 'to arrest every person we chance to meet in this vicinity, and are commanded to conduct him, without any previous investigation, to Amul and deliver him into the hands of its governor....' <p54>

At daybreak, as they were approaching the town, a message was sent in advance to the acting governor, informing him of the arrival of a party that had been captured on their way to the fort of Tabarsi...

As soon as the message reached him, he went to the masjid of Amul and summoned the 'ulamas and leading siyyids of the town to gather and meet the party.

He was greatly surprised as soon as his eyes saw and recognized Baha'u'llah, and deeply regretted the orders he had given.

He feigned to reprimand Him for the action He had taken, in the hope of appeasing the tumult and allaying the excitement of those who had gathered in the masjid. 'We are innocent', Baha'u'llah declared, 'of the guilt they impute to us.'

Our blamelessness will eventually be established in your eyes.

I would advise you to act in a manner that will cause you eventually no regret.' The acting governor asked the 'ulama who were present to put any question they desired.

To their enquiries Baha'u'llah returned explicit and convincing

replies...

The circumstances which Baha'u'llah proceeded to relate in connection with the reply, no less than the manner of His delivery, convinced the arrogant mujtahid of his stupidity and blunder.

Unable to contradict so weighty a statement, he preferred to keep silent.

A siyyid angrily interjected: 'This very statement conclusively demonstrates that its author is himself a Babi and no less than a leading expounder of the tenets of that sect.' He urged in vehement language that its followers be put to death. 'These obscure sectarians are the sworn enemies', he cried, 'both of the State and of the Faith of Islam!

We must, at all costs, extirpate that heresy.' He was seconded in his denunciation by the other siyyids who were present, and who, emboldened by the imprecations uttered at that gathering, insisted that the governor comply unhesitatingly with their wishes.

The acting governor was much embarrassed, and realized that any evidence of indulgence on his part would be fraught with consequences for the safety of his position.

In his desire to hold in check the passions which had been aroused, he ordered his attendants to prepare the rods and promptly inflict a befitting punishment upon the captives. 'We will afterwards', he added, 'keep them in prison pending the return of the governor, who will send them to Tihran, where they will receive, at the hands of the sovereign, the chastisement they deserve.' The first who was bound to receive the bastinado was Mulla Baqir. 'I am only a groom of Baha'u'llah,' he urged. 'I was on my way to Mashhad when they suddenly arrested me and brought me to this place.' Baha'u'llah intervened and succeeded in inducing his oppressors to release him.

He likewise interceded for Haji Mirza Jani, who He said was 'a mere tradesman' whom He regarded as His 'guest', so that He was 'responsible for any charges brought against him'.

Mirza Yahya, whom they proceeded to bind, was also set free as soon as Baha'u'llah had declared him to be His attendant. 'None of these men', He told the acting governor, 'are <p55> guilty of any crime.

If you insist on inflicting your punishment, I offer Myself as a willing Victim of your chastisement.' The acting governor was reluctantly compelled to give orders that Baha'u'llah alone be chosen to suffer the indignity which he had intended originally for His companions...

Baha'u'llah and His companions remained for a time imprisoned in one of the rooms that formed part of the masjid.

The acting governor, who was still determined to shield his Prisoner from the assaults of an inveterate enemy, secretly instructed his

attendants to open, at an unsuspected hour, a passage through the wall of the room in which the captives were confined, and to transfer their Leader immediately to his home.

He was himself conducting Baha'u'llah to his residence when a siyyid sprang forward and, directing his fiercest invectives against Him, raised the club which he held in his hand to strike Him.

The acting governor immediately interposed himself and, appealing to the assailant, 'adjured him by the Prophet of God' to stay his hand. 'What!' burst forth the siyyid. 'How dare you release a man who is the sworn enemy of the Faith of our fathers?'

A crowd of ruffians had meanwhile gathered around him, and by their howls of derision and abuse added to the clamour which he had raised.

Despite the growing tumult, the attendants of the acting governor were able to conduct Baha'u'llah in safety to the residence of their master, and displayed on that occasion a courage and presence of mind that were truly surprising.

Despite the protestations of the mob, the rest of the prisoners were taken to the seat of government, and thus escaped from the perils with which they had been threatened.

The acting governor offered profuse apologies to Baha'u'llah for the treatment which the people of Amul had accorded Him. 'But for the interposition of Providence,' he said, 'no force would have achieved your deliverance from the grasp of this malevolent people.'

But for the efficacy of the vow which I had made to risk my own life for your sake, I, too, would have fallen a victim to their violence, and would have been trampled beneath their feet.' He bitterly complained of the outrageous conduct of the siyyids of Amul, and denounced the baseness of their character.

He expressed himself as being continually tormented by the effects of their malignant designs.

He set about serving Baha'u'llah with devotion and kindness, and was often heard, in the course of his conversation with Him, to remark: 'I am far from regarding you a prisoner in my home.'

This house, I believe, was built for the very purpose of affording you a shelter from the designs of your foes.' I have heard Baha'u'llah Himself recount the following: 'No prisoner has ever been accorded the treatment which I received at the hands of the acting governor of Amul.'

He treated Me with the utmost consideration and esteem.

I was generously entertained by him, and the fullest attention was given to everything that affected My security and comfort.' [71] [71 Nabil,

ibid. pp.

368-75. (Dawn-Breakers.)) <p56> A few days later arrangements were made for the safe departure of Baha'u'llah and His companions for Tihiran.

Thus the intention of Baha'u'llah to join the defenders of the fortress of Tabarsi did not materialize.

The protecting Hand of the Almighty preserved Him for His future mission of revealing Himself as the Supreme Manifestation of God for all time.

Referring to the suffering of Baha'u'llah, the Master states in His Will and Testament:

3-WT His neck also was put into captive chains and His feet made fast in the stocks.

In every hour, for a period of fifty years, a new trial and calamity befell Him and fresh afflictions and cares beset Him.

One of them: after having suffered intense vicissitudes, He was made homeless and a wanderer and fell a victim to still new vexations and troubles.

This statement refers to Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran.

Since this is a well-known story, a brief summary of events will suffice.

In the summer of 1852, obsessed by the tragedy of the martyrdom of the Bab and many of His outstanding disciples, a few irresponsible Babis made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah to avenge the blood shed by his orders.

Immediately afterwards a fierce onslaught was unleashed against anyone suspected of being a Babi and a ruthless campaign of killing resulted in the martyrdom of a great many souls.

Baha'u'llah's position as an outstanding figure in the Babi community was well-known to the Shah and his government.

His open championship of the Bab, His irresistible eloquence when expounding upon the newly born Faith to groups of learned divines and the public, together with His resourcefulness, His penetrating judgement and His unobtrusive yet effective leadership of the Babi community during the imprisonment of the Bab and following His martyrdom, were widely known.

He was thus suspected as the chief director of this assassination attempt by the Shah and especially his mother, who openly denounced Baha'u'llah as the would-be murderer of her youthful son.

But again the Hand of God protected Baha'u'llah and His life was miraculously spared.

He was arrested and forced to walk before royal horsemen at their pace from

Niyavaran to Tihiran, a distance of about 15 miles, in the burning heat of a summer day, barefoot and in chains.

To further humiliate Him, they removed His hat, which in those days was the symbol of a man's dignity.

His destination was the Siyah-Chal (Black Pit).

The Siyah-Chal was no ordinary prison but a huge underground pit which had once served as a reservoir for one of the public baths <p57> of the city.

It had only one entrance.

It was situated in the heart of Tihiran close to a palace of the Shah and adjacent to the Sabzih-Maydan, where the Seven Martyrs of Tihiran were executed.

This dungeon was occupied by many prisoners, some of whom were without clothes or bedding.

Its atmosphere was humid and dark, its air fetid and filled with a loathsome smell, its ground damp and littered with filth.

These conditions were matched by the brutality of the guards and officials towards the Babi victims who were chained together in that dismal place.

The notorious chains of Qara-Guhar and Salasil, one of which was placed around Baha'u'llah's neck at all times, cut through His flesh and left their marks on His blessed body until the end of His life.

They were so heavy that a special wooden fork was provided to support their weight.[*] [* Qara-Guhar, heavier than Salasil, weighed about 17 'man' (51 kilos).] Through the kindness of one of the prison officials who was friendly towards Baha'u'llah, His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, then nine years of age,[**] was taken one day to visit His father at the Siyah-Chal.

He had come only half-way down the steps when Baha'u'llah caught sight of Him and ordered that the child be taken out immediately. 'Abdu'l-Baha was permitted to wait in the prison yard until noon, when the prisoners were allowed an hour of fresh air. 'Abdu'l-Baha saw His father in chains and tied to His nephew, Mirza Mahmud.

Baha'u'llah walked with great difficulty, His beard and hair were unkempt, His neck bruised and swollen from the pressure of a heavy steel collar, and His back was bent with the weight of the chain.

On witnessing this sight 'Abdu'l-Baha fainted and was carried home, unconscious. [** According to the lunar calendar. 'Abdu'l-Baha was born on 23 May 1844 and was at this time in His ninth year.] While breathing the foul air of the Siyah-Chal, with His feet in stocks and His head weighed down by the mighty chain, Baha'u'llah received, as attested by Him in His Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, the first intimations of His station as the Supreme Manifestation of God -- He whose appearance had been foretold by the Prophets of old in such terms as the 'reincarnation of Krishna', the 'fifth Buddha', the

'Shah Bahram', the 'Lord of Hosts', the Christ returned 'in the glory of the Father', the 'Spirit of God', and by the Bab as 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

These are Baha'u'llah's words describing this initial experience of the 'Most Great Spirit' stirring within His soul:

During the days I lay in the prison of Tihran, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if <p58> something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain.

Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire.

At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.[72]
[72 Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

22.] While Baha'u'llah lay in the prison of Tihran, Nasiri'd-Din Shah ordered his prime minister, Mirza Aqa Khan, to send troops to the province of Nur and arrest the followers of the Bab in that area.

The prime minister -- who also came from Nur and was related to Baha'u'llah by the marriage of his niece to Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, Baha'u'llah's half-brother -- made efforts to protect Baha'u'llah's relatives in Nur but failed.

Baha'u'llah's properties were confiscated by the Shah and His house in Nur was razed to the ground.

Even the prime minister took advantage of the situation and, without recompense, transferred the deeds of some of Baha'u'llah's properties into his own name.

The luxurious house of Baha'u'llah in Tihran was plundered and its valuable furnishings were removed.

Some unique articles, together with many more of great value, fell into the hands of the prime minister Among them were part of a Tablet, inscribed on leather by the hand of Imam 'Ali, successor to Muhammad, which was over a thousand years old and known to be priceless, and a rare manuscript of the poems of Hafiz written by a celebrated calligrapher.[*] [* Muhammad Shah had once been eager to own this manuscript but when he learned that for each of its twelve thousand verses he would have to pay one golden sovereign, he abandoned the idea.] Although most of the Babis were taken from the prison, one by one, and martyred in the adjoining market square of Sabzih-Maydan, Baha'u'llah's life was providentially spared.

After four months He was released but was ordered to leave Persia within a month.

When Baha'u'llah came out of prison, stripped of His possessions, His back bent by the weight of the fetters, His neck swollen and injured and His health

impaired, He did not intimate to anyone His experience of divine revelation.

Yet those who were close to Him could not fail to witness a transformation of spirit, a power and a radiance never seen in Him before.

The following is an extract from the spoken chronicle of the Greatest Holy Leaf recounting her impressions of Him at the time of His release from the Siyah-Chal:

Jamai-Mubarak [lit. the Blessed Beauty, referring to Baha'u'llah] had a marvellous divine experience whilst in that prison. <p59> We saw a new radiance seeming to enfold him like a shining vesture, its significance we were to learn years later.

At that time we were only aware of the wonder of it, without understanding, or even being told the details of the sacred event.[73]
[73 Quoted in Blomfield, Chosen Highway, p.

45.] Baha'u'llah spent the month preceding His exile in the house of His half-brother Mirza Rida-Quli, a physician.

The latter was not a believer, though his wife Maryam, a cousin of Baha'u'llah, had been converted by Him in the early days of the Faith and was one of His most sincere and faithful followers within the family.

With great care and affection Maryam, together with Asiyih Khanum, nursed Baha'u'llah until His condition improved and, though not fully recovered, He had gathered sufficient strength to enable Him to leave Tihran for Iraq.

Those who accompanied Him on this great journey were members of His family, including 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Greatest Holy Leaf, Navvab and His two brothers Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Muhammad-Quli.

The journey to Baghdad, undertaken in the middle of a severe winter across the snow-bound mountains of western Persia, inflicted much hardship and suffering on the exiles.

The following is an extract from one of the prayers revealed by Baha'u'llah at that time; it portrays the suffering and hardship which befell Him in the early days of His ministry:

My God, My Master, My Desire!...

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

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

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

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

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

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

Both bread and water which Thou hast, through Thy all-embracing mercy, allowed unto the beasts of the field, they have, for a time, forbidden unto this servant, and the things they refused to inflict upon such as have seceded from Thy Cause, the same have they suffered to be inflicted upon Me, until, finally, Thy decree was irrevocably fixed, and Thy behest summoned this servant to depart out of Persia, accompanied by a number of frail-bodied men and children of tender age, at this time when the cold is so intense that one cannot even speak, and ice and snow so abundant that it is impossible to move.[74] [74 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

109.] <p61> 7

Baha'u'llah's Retirement to the Mountains of Kurdistan

3-WT In 'Iraq, the Day-Star of the world was so exposed to the wiles of the people of malice as to be eclipsed in splendour.

This passage refers to Baha'u'llah's retirement to the mountains of Kurdistan.

On 8 April 1853, Baha'u'llah and His family arrived in Baghdad, from which centre the light of the new Revelation was progressively diffused throughout the Babi community.

Soon after Baha'u'llah's arrival, through the outpouring of His guidance, new courage and new confidence were instilled in the minds and hearts of the Bib's followers in Iraq.

The power of divine authority emanating from Baha'u'llah was so compelling that the fortunes of a Faith that had seemed ready to sink into oblivion were revived.

In the first year of Baha'u'llah's residence in Baghdad, the Babis, both the locals and those who trickled into Baghdad from Persia, evinced an ever deepening veneration of Him.

Their hearts were filled with a new spirit of devotion and adoration for His person.

Many inhabitants of the city were also drawn to Baha'u'llah during this period, their numbers increasing day by day.

Among them were outstanding personalities and government officials, including the city's governor.

Thus the circle of His admirers steadily extended and His fame spread throughout the land.

While these highly encouraging developments were taking place, a grim crisis, purely internal and with far-reaching consequences, erupted in the community.

Instigated by the notorious Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahni[*] an embodiment of evil and the .Antichrist of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, a clandestine opposition to Baha'u'llah was set in motion by His half-brother Mirza Yahya.

Yahya was a cowardly yet ambitious person who, at the suggestion of Baha'u'llah, had been appointed as the nominal head of the Babi community.

In Baghdad, while hiding himself from the members of the community and wearing the disguise of an Arab, he, prompted by Siyyid Muhammad, <p62> spread his preposterous claim to be the successor of the Bab and began secretly to misrepresent Baha'u'llah's activities, kindling dissension and conflict within the community.

Shoghi Effendi describes the shameful behaviour of Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad in these words: [* For information about him see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2.] A clandestine opposition, whose aim was to nullify every effort exerted, and frustrate every design conceived, by Baha'u'llah for the rehabilitation of a distracted community, could now be clearly discerned.

Insinuations, whose purpose was to sow the seeds of doubt and suspicion and to represent Him as a usurper, as the subverter of the laws instituted by the Bib, and the wrecker of His Cause, were being incessantly circulated.

His Epistles, interpretations, invocations and commentaries were being covertly and indirectly criticized, challenged and misrepresented.

An attempt to injure His person was even set afoot but failed to materialize.[75] [75 ibid. p.

117. (Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] The cup of Baha'u'llah's sorrows was now running over.

All His exhortations, all His efforts to remedy a rapidly deteriorating situation, had remained fruitless.

The velocity with which His manifold woes grew was hourly and visibly increasing.

Upon the sadness that filled His soul and the gravity of the situation confronting Him, His writings, revealed during that sombre period, throw abundant light.

In some of His prayers He poignantly confesses that 'tribulation upon tribulation' had gathered about Him, that 'adversaries with one consent' had fallen upon Him, that 'wretchedness' had grievously touched Him and that 'woes

at their blackest' had befallen Him. 'In these days,' He, describing in the Kitab-i-Iqan the virulence of the jealousy which, at that time, was beginning to bare its venomous fangs, has written, 'such odours of jealousy are diffused, that ... from the beginning of the foundation of the world ... until the present day, such malice, envy and hate have in no wise appeared, nor will they ever be witnessed in the future.'...

Mirza Aqa Jan[*] himself has testified: 'That Blessed Beauty evinced such sadness that the limbs of my body trembled.' He has, likewise, related, as reported by Nabil in his narrative, that, shortly before Baha'u'llah's retirement, he had on one occasion seen Him, between dawn and sunrise, suddenly come out from His house, His night-cap still on His head, showing such signs of perturbation that he was powerless to gaze into His face, and while walking, angrily remark: 'These creatures are the same creatures who for three thousand years have worshipped idols, and bowed down before the Golden Calf.'

Now, too, they are fit for nothing better.

What relation <p63> can there be between this people and Him Who is the Countenance of Glory?

What ties can bind them to the One Who is the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable?' 'I stood,' declared Mirza Aqa Jan, 'rooted to the spot, lifeless, dried up as a dead tree, ready to fall under the impact of the stunning power of His words.'

Finally, He said: "Bid them recite: 'Is there any Remover of difficulties save God?'

Say:

Praised be God!

He is God!

All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!' Tell them to repeat it five hundred times, nay, a thousand times, by day and by night, sleeping and waking, that haply the Countenance of Glory may be unveiled to their eyes, and tiers of light descend upon them."

He Himself, I was subsequently informed, recited this same verse, His face betraying the utmost sadness...

Several times during those days, He was heard to remark: "We have, for a while, tarried amongst this people, and failed to discern the slightest response on their part."

Oftentimes He alluded to His disappearance from our midst, yet none of us understood His meaning.' [*Baha'u'llah's amanuensis.

For his life story see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, chapter 15.]

Finally, discerning, as He Himself testifies in the Kitab-i-Iqan,

'the signs of impending events', He decided that before they happened He would retire. 'The one object of Our retirement', He, in that same Book affirms, 'was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto Our companions, the means of injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart.' 'Our withdrawal', He, moreover, in that same passage emphatically asserts, 'contemplated no return, and Our separation hoped for no reunion.' Suddenly, and without informing any one even among the members of His own family, on the 12th of Rajab 1270 A.H. (April 10, 1854), He departed, accompanied by an attendant, a Muhammadan named Abu'l-Qasim-i-Hamadani, to whom He gave a sum of money, instructing him to act as a merchant and use it for his own purposes.

Shortly after, that servant was attacked by thieves and killed, and Baha'u'llah was left entirely alone in His wanderings through the wastes of Kurdistan, a region whose sturdy and warlike people were known for their age-long hostility to the Persians, whom they regarded as seceders from the Faith of Islam, and from whom they differed in their outlook, race and language.

Attired in the garb of a traveller, coarsely clad, taking with Him nothing but his kashkul (alms-bowl) and a change of clothes, and assuming the name of Darvish Muhammad, Baha'u'llah retired to the wilderness, and lived for a time on a mountain named Sar-Galu, so far removed from human habitations that only twice a year, at seed sowing and harvest time, it was visited by the peasants of that region.

Alone and undisturbed, He passed a considerable part of His retirement on the top of that mountain in a rude structure, made of stone, which served those peasants as a shelter against the extremities of the weather.[76]
[76 *ibid.* p.

118-20. (Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By.*) <p64> With Baha'u'llah's retirement to the mountains of Kurdistan, a new chapter opened in the history of His Revelation.

Here He lived in utter seclusion far away from the world; He left behind His loved ones and admirers, as well as those who had betrayed Him and brought about, through their evil designs, the near extinction of the Cause of the Bab.

After Baha'u'llah had spent some time in that area, a certain Shaykh Isma'il, the leader of the Khalidiyyih Order, a sect of Sunni Islam, came in contact with Him and was intensely attracted to His person.

In the end he succeeded in persuading Baha'u'llah to leave His abode for the town of Sulaymaniyyih.

There, within a short period of time, His greatness became manifest not only to the leaders of religion and men of learning but also to all the inhabitants of the area.

Their recognition of Him as a man of outstanding qualities and knowledge occurred when His exquisite penmanship was first noticed, as well as His masterly composition and the stylistic beauty of the letters He wrote acknowledging receipt of messages from a few religious leaders.

Some of these letters written by Baha'u'llah to eminent personalities such as Shaykh 'Abdu'r-Rahman, the leader of the Qadiriyyih Order, Mulla Hamid, a celebrated divine of Sulaymaniyyih, and a few others, have been left to posterity and testify to His sorrow and anguish in those days.

In a letter He wrote to Shaykh 'Abdu'r-Rahman He laments the loss of His trusted Muslim servant, Abu'l-Qasim-i-Hamandini, who accompanied Him from Baghdad and was attacked and killed by brigands.

Baha'u'llah's fame spread to Sulaymaniyyih and to neighbouring towns.

He soon became the focal point for many who thirsted after true knowledge and enlightenment.

Without disclosing His identity, He appeared among them day after day, and with simplicity and eloquence answered their questions on various abstruse and perplexing features of their religious teachings.

Soon the people of Kurdistan, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has testified, were magnetized by His love.

Some of His admirers even believed that His station was that of a Prophet.

Baha'u'llah has left in His own handwriting a few Tablets and odes revealed during this period.

Notable among them is the Qasidiy-i-Varqa'iyyih, the revelation of which had an electric effect on the leaders of the Kurdish community.[*] The reputation of 'Darvish Muhammad', the name Baha'u'llah assumed during His two-year absence from Baghdad, now spread beyond Kurdistan.

When the reports of His innate greatness and knowledge reached Baghdad, His family and friends realized that this figure could be none other than <p65> Baha'u'llah Himself.

This was confirmed when officials discovered the will of Abu'l-Qasim-i-Hamadam, Baha'u'llah's murdered servant, bequeathing all his possessions to a Darvish Muhammad in the mountains of Kurdistan.

His family immediately dispatched the venerable Shaykh Sultan, the father-in-law of Baha'u'llah's faithful brother Mirza Musa, to Kurdistan to seek out Baha'u'llah.

He and a servant travelled for two months before being led to Him in the neighbourhood of Sulaymaniyyih.

After a time, Baha'u'llah responded favourably to Shaykh Sultan's insistent pleading that He end His two-year retirement.

He returned to Baghdad, leaving behind a host of admirers and supporters who bitterly lamented His departure. [* For more information see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

1.] The physical hardships that Baha'u'llah endured as a result of inadequate food and clothing, and living alone in the wilderness of a desolate and uninhabitable mountain in extreme weather conditions, are unimaginable.

These hardships, however, were dwarfed by the intensity of the suffering He felt as He contemplated the harm inflicted by the unfaithful on the Cause of which He was the only divinely chosen Author.

Yet, in spite of the great difficulties and privations of a solitary life in such inhospitable surroundings, He communed with the Divine Spirit and chanted aloud many prayers and odes extolling the attributes and glorifying the character of His Revelation.

While these outpourings could have revived the souls of men and illuminated the world of humanity, they were instead confined to this remote land and were, alas, forever lost.

Baha'u'llah also meditated on such things as the Cause of God which He would manifest, the fierce opposition His enemies would launch, the adversities that had already befallen Him and those that were still to come, and the perversity and unfaithfulness of the leaders of the Babi community who had stained the good name of the Cause of the Bab and brought shame upon it.

Shoghi Effendi, quoting the words of Baha'u'llah Himself, highlights the agony of His soul:

At times His dwelling-place was a cave to which He refers in His Tablets addressed to the famous Shaykh 'Abdu'r-Rahman and to Maryam, a kinswoman of His. 'I roamed the wilderness of resignation' He thus depicts, in the Lawh-i-Maryam, the rigours of His austere solitude, 'travelling in such wise that in My exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish.

The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates.' 'From My eyes,' He, referring in the Kitab-i-Iqan to those days, testifies, 'there rained tears of anguish, and in My bleeding heart surged an ocean of agonizing pain.

Many a night I had no food for sustenance, and <p66> many a day My body found no rest...

Alone I communed with My spirit, oblivious of the world and all that is therein.' [77] [77 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

120.] As a result of Baha'u'llah's retirement, the Babi community in general and the lovers of His Beauty in particular were entirely cut off from the effulgence of His light.

How fitting are the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha describing this period as a time

when:

3-WT ...the Day-Star of the world was ... eclipsed in splendour. <p67>

8

Baha'u'llah's Exiles

3-WT Later on He was sent an exile to the Great City (Constantinople) and thence to the Land of Mystery (Adrianople), whence grievously wronged, He was eventually transferred to the Most Great Prison ('Akka).

He Whom the world hath wronged (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) was four times banished from city to city, till at last, condemned to perpetual confinement, He was incarcerated in this prison, the prison of highway robbers, of brigands and of man-slayers.

All this is but one of the trials that have afflicted the Blessed Beauty, the rest being even as grievous as this.

Baha'u'llah in Baghdad With the return of Baha'u'llah from Kurdistan to Baghdad in March 1856, a new day opened for the company of exiles in Iraq.

During His absence it had become apparent to friend and foe alike that the Babi community, left for so long to the leadership of unfaithful persons such as Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, had degenerated completely.

Most of its members were now dispirited; unlike the early heroes and martyrs who only a decade before had demonstrated with their lifeblood the staunchness of their faith, the loftiness of their character, and the depth of their love, the Babis were now devoid of such virtues and were spiritually dead.

They were also divided among themselves.

The degradation to which many of the so-called followers of the Bab in Iraq had sunk was evident in the eyes of the public.

They were involved in the most shameful crimes.

The Kurds and Persians heaped abuse upon them in the streets and denounced their Faith in vile language.

When the fortunes of the Babi community had reached their lowest ebb, Baha'u'llah returned and took the reins of the Cause into His hands.

The clouds of uncertainty and misfortune which had hung over the community's members during His absence now began to lift.

Through His exhortations and encouragement, both verbal and written, He breathed a new life into the dying community and, in a <p68> short time, succeeded in transforming some of its members into the spiritual giants of His Dispensation.

Baha'u'llah Himself has testified:

By the aid of God and His divine grace and mercy, We revealed, as a copious rain, Our verses, and sent them to various parts of the world.

We exhorted all men, and particularly this people, through Our wise

counsels and loving admonitions, and forbade them to engage in sedition, quarrels, disputes or conflict.

As a result of this, and by the grace of God, waywardness and folly were changed into piety and understanding, and weapons of war converted into instruments of peace.[78] [78 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

133.] The influence that Baha'u'llah exerted on the public in Iraq was no less impressive.

For eight years the Supreme Manifestation of God lived freely among the inhabitants of Baghdad.

He walked among them, sat with them and poured out His affection and bounties upon them.

Although He did not disclose His station to them, multitudes of people from all walks of life were attracted to His person and longed to attain His presence, to hear His words, or even to catch a glimpse of Him as He walked in the streets or paced along the bank of the Tigris rapt in meditation.

During this period, also, many Babis from Persia came into contact with Baha'u'llah and some became great heroes of His Faith.

The transformation which took place in the lives of the companions of Baha'u'llah, the outpouring of His Revelation which revitalized the faith of many dispirited believers in Persia, the range and magnificence of Baha'u'llah's rising power and the high esteem in which He was held by many high-ranking government officials alarmed the authorities in Persia.

Consequently the government of Nasiri'd-Din Shah asked the Ottoman government to hand Baha'u'llah over to the Persian authorities.

This request was met with outright refusal because the authorities in Baghdad had been highly impressed with His person.

Having failed to carry out its intention, the Persian government brought much pressure to bear upon 'Ali Pasha the Grand Vizir, to remove Baha'u'llah from Baghdad, which was close to its frontiers.

Government representatives complained that Baha'u'llah's influence in the area was creating a serious problem for Persian pilgrims to the Islamic holy sites.

Eventually the Grand Vizir issued orders to Namiq Pasha, the Governor of Baghdad, to invite Baha'u'llah to travel to Constantinople as a guest of the government.

Namiq Pasha was an ardent admirer of Baha'u'llah whom he regarded as one of the lights of the age.

So profound was the measure of his esteem that he could not bring himself to convey the government's decision to Him personally.

Instead He sent his deputy to apprise Baha'u'llah of the invitation <p69> extended to Him by the Sultan to transfer His residence to the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

Shoghi Effendi describes this interview in these words:

By the following day the Deputy-Governor had delivered to Baha'u'llah in a mosque, in the neighbourhood of the governor's house, 'Ali Pasha's letter, addressed to Namiq Pasha, couched in courteous language, inviting Baha'u'llah to proceed, as a guest of the Ottoman government, to Constantinople, placing a sum of money at His disposal, and ordering a mounted escort to accompany Him for His protection.

To this request Baha'u'llah gave His ready assent, but declined to accept the sum offered Him.

On the urgent representations of the Deputy that such a refusal would offend the authorities, He reluctantly consented to receive the generous allowance set aside for His use, and distributed it, that same day, among the poor.

The effect upon the colony of exiles of this sudden intelligence was instantaneous and overwhelming. 'That day,' wrote an eyewitness, describing the reaction of the community to the news of Baha'u'llah's approaching departure, 'witnessed a commotion associated with the turmoil of the Day of Resurrection.

Methinks, the very gates and walls of the city wept aloud at their imminent separation from the Abha Beloved.

The first night mention was made of His intended departure His loved ones, one and all, renounced both sleep and food...

Not a soul amongst them could be tranquillized.

Many had resolved that in the event of their being deprived of the bounty of accompanying Him, they would, without hesitation, kill themselves...Gradually, however, through the words which He addressed them, and through His exhortations and His loving-kindness, they were calmed and resigned themselves to His good-pleasure.' [79] [79 Quoted in *ibid.* pp.

147-8. (Shoghi Effendi quoted, *God Passes By.*)] The expressions of love and devotion for Baha'u'llah were not confined to the Babi community in Iraq.

The love and admiration of the people for Baha'u'llah was fully demonstrated on the day of His departure from His 'Most Great House' in Baghdad.

Then His majesty and greatness were evident to both friend and foe.

The news of His forthcoming departure for Constantinople had spread rapidly among the inhabitants of Baghdad and its neighbouring towns, and large numbers wished to attain His presence and pay their last tributes to Him.

But soon it became apparent that His house was too small for the purpose.

Arrangements were made for Baha'u'llah to proceed to the garden-park of Najibiyyih.

This beautiful garden, designated by His followers as the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise), was situated on the outskirts of Baghdad, across the river from His house. <p70> Thirty-one days after Naw-Ruz, on 22 April 1863,[*] in the afternoon, Baha'u'llah moved to this garden, where He remained for twelve days.

On the first day He declared His mission to His companions.[**] These twelve days are celebrated by the Baha'is as the Festival of Ridvan. [* Thirty-one days after Naw-Ruz usually falls on 21 April.

Occasionally, as in the year 1863, when the vernal equinox takes place after sunset, Naw-Ruz is celebrated on 22 March.] [** This is stated by 'Abdu'l-Baha in a talk given at Bahji on 29 April 1916.] The departure of Baha'u'llah from His house witnessed a commotion the like of which Baghdad had rarely seen.

People of all walks of life, men and women, rich and poor, young and old, men of learning and culture, princes, government officials, tradesmen and workers, and above all His companions, thronged the approaches to His house and crowded the streets and rooftops situated along His route to the river.

They were weeping and lamenting the departure of One who, for a decade, had imparted to them the warmth of His love and the radiance of His spirit, who had been a refuge and guide for them all.

When Baha'u'llah appeared in the courtyard of His house, His companions, grief-stricken and disconsolate, prostrated themselves at His feet.

For some time He stood there, amid the weeping and lamentations of His loved ones, speaking words of comfort and promising to receive each of them later in the garden.

In a Tablet Baha'u'llah mentions that when He had walked some way towards the gate, amid the crowds, a child[***] of only a few years ran forward and, clinging to His robes, wept aloud, begging Him in his tender young voice not to leave.

In such an atmosphere, where emotions had been so deeply stirred, this action on the part of a small child moved the hearts and brought further grief to everyone. [*** He was Aqa 'Ali, the son of Haji Mirza Kamalu'd-Din-Naraqi.]

Outside the house, the lamentation and weeping of those who did not confess to be His followers were no less spectacular and heartrending.

Everyone in the crowded street sought to approach Him.

Some prostrated themselves at His feet, others waited to hear a few words and yet others were content with a touch of His hands or a glance at His face.

A Persian lady of noble birth, who was not herself a believer, pushed her way into the crowd and with a gesture of sacrifice threw her child at the feet of

Baha'u'llah.

These demonstrations continued all the way to the riverbank.

Before crossing the river, Baha'u'llah addressed His companions who had gathered around Him, saying: <p71> O My companions, I entrust to your keeping this city of Baghdad, in the state ye now behold it, when from the eyes of friends and strangers alike, crowding its housetops, its streets and markets, tears like the rain of spring are flowing down, and I depart.

With you it now rests to watch lest your deeds and conduct dim the flame of love that gloweth within the breasts of its inhabitants.[80] [80

Baha'u'llah, quoted in *ibid.* p.

149. (God Passes By.)] Baha'u'llah was then ferried across the river, accompanied by three of His sons: 'Abdu'l-Baha, Mirza Mihdi (the Purest Branch) and Muhammad-'Ali, who were 18, 14 and 10 years of age, respectively.

With them also was His amanuensis, Mirza Aqa Jan.

The identity of others who may have accompanied Him, of those in the garden who pitched His tent and made preparations for His arrival, or of those who might have followed Him on that day, is not clearly known.

The call to afternoon prayer was raised from the mosque and the words 'Allah'u'Akbar' (God is the Greatest), chanted by the muezzin,[*] reverberated through the garden as the King of Glory entered it.

There, Baha'u'llah appeared in the utmost joy, walking majestically in its flower-lined avenues and among its trees.

The fragrance of the roses and the singing of the nightingales created an atmosphere of beauty and enchantment. [*The one who calls to prayer.]

Baha'u'llah's companions had, for some time, known the declaration of His station to be imminent.

This realization came to them not only as a result of many remarks and allusions made by Him during the last few months of His sojourn in Baghdad but also through a noticeable change in His demeanour.

Another sign which unmistakably pointed to this approaching hour was His adoption, on the day of His departure from His house in Baghdad, of a different type of headdress known as *taj*. (tall felt hat), which He wore throughout His ministry. 'Abdu'l-Baha has described how, upon His arrival in the garden, Baha'u'llah declared His station to those of His companions who were present and announced with great joy the inauguration of the Festival of Ridvan.[81] Sadness and grief vanished and the believers were filled with delight.

Although Baha'u'llah was being exiled to far-off lands and knew the sufferings and tribulations which were in store for Him and His followers, yet through this historic declaration He changed all sorrow into blissful joy and spent the most delightful time of His ministry in the Garden of Ridvan.

Indeed, in one of His Tablets He referred to the first day of Ridvan as the 'Day of supreme felicity' and called on His followers to 'rejoice with exceeding gladness' in remembrance of that day.[82] [81 'Abdu'l-Baha, Risaliy-i-Ayyam-i-Tis'ah, p.

330.] [82 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

35.] <p72> Departure for Constantinople Baha'u'llah left the Garden of Ridvan on the first leg of His journey to Constantinople on 3 May 1863.

Shoghi Effendi recounts this historic journey in these words:

The departure of Baha'u'llah from the Garden of Ridvan, at noon, on the 14th of Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1279 A.H. (May 3, 1863), witnessed scenes of tumultuous enthusiasm no less spectacular, and even more touching, than those which greeted Him when leaving His Most Great House in Baghdad. 'The great tumult', wrote an eyewitness, 'associated in our minds with the Day of Gathering, the Day of Judgement, we beheld on that occasion.

Believers and unbelievers alike sobbed and lamented.

The chiefs and notables who had congregated were struck with wonder.

Emotions were stirred to such depths as no tongue can describe, nor could any observer escape their contagion.' Mounted on His steed, a red roan stallion of the finest breed, the best His lovers could purchase for Him, and leaving behind Him a bowing multitude of fervent admirers, He rode forth on the first stage of a journey that was to carry Him to the city of Constantinople. 'Numerous were the heads Nabil himself a witness of that memorable scene, recounts, 'which, on every side, bowed to the dust at the feet of His horse, and kissed its hoofs, and countless were those who pressed forward to embrace His stirrups.' 'How great the number of those embodiments of fidelity,' testifies a fellow-traveller, 'who, casting themselves before that charger, preferred death to separation from their Beloved!

Methinks, that blessed steed trod upon the bodies of those pure-hearted souls.' 'He (God) it was,' Baha'u'llah Himself declares, 'Who enabled Me to depart out of the city (Baghdad), clothed with such majesty as none, except the denier and the malicious, can fail to acknowledge.' [83] [83 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

155.] The journey to Constantinople was arduous and fatiguing, taking 110 days to reach the Port of Samsun on the Black Sea.

The route took the party across uplands, woods, valleys and mountain passes which entailed the careful negotiation of narrow roads above dangerous precipices.

Accompanying Baha'u'llah were members of His family, including His faithful brothers Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Muhammad-Quli, and 26 men, among them His disciples and Siyyid Muhammad Isfahani, as well as Mirza Yahya, who joined the

party en route. <p73> A mounted guard of ten soldiers accompanied the caravan of 50 mules and seven howdahs.[*] Most of the time Baha'u'llah sat in one pannier with His wife Navvab in the other.

Although the howdah was considered a comfortable means of transportation in those days, on long journeys it could be extremely tiring, for one has to sit cross-legged for hours while the panniers continually rise and fall with the movement of the mule's body. 'Abdu'l-Baha describes how many a night He and Jinab-i-Munib, a devoted lover of Baha'u'llah, walked on either side of the howdah.

Every time the party approached a village, or was about to depart from it, Baha'u'llah would mount His horse -- a practice befitting His station as He appeared in public.

On such occasions 'Abdu'l-Baha would replace Him in His howdah.

By virtue of a written order of Namiq Pasha, the Governor of Baghdad, Baha'u'llah was enthusiastically welcomed by various high-ranking officials at every village and town as He travelled northward.

Shoghi Effendi writes: [* A litter consisting of a pair of panniers in which two individuals can ride to balance each other's weight.

It is carried by a beast of burden, in this case a mule.] In Karkuk, in Irbil, in Mosul, where He tarried three days, in Nisibin, in Mardin, in Diyar-Bakr, where a halt of a couple of days was made, in Kharput, in Sivas, as well as in other villages and hamlets, He would be met by a delegation immediately before His arrival, and would be accompanied, for some distance, by a similar delegation upon His departure.

The festivities which, at some stations, were held in His honour, the food the villagers prepared and brought for His acceptance, the eagerness which time and again they exhibited in providing the means for His comfort, recalled the reverence which the people of Baghdad had shown Him on so many occasions.[84] [84 *ibid.* p.

156. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By.*)] Those who have travelled in the deserts or the valleys and uplands of the Middle East on the backs of mules and horses know how slow and monotonous the pace is.

For miles there is no sign of life and those who travel in the party are not always able to talk and communicate easily with each other.

Under these circumstances nothing can be more exhilarating than to hear a pleasant voice singing beautiful songs.

Jinab-i-Munib was one of those whose melodious voice, chanting various odes and poems, rang out through the open fields and mountains of Turkey and brought joy and relaxation to those who travelled with Baha'u'llah.

The odes that he sang were all indicative of his love for Baha'u'llah, and the prayers he chanted in the dead of night were a testimony to the yearning of his

heart for his Lord. <p74> On this journey many undesirable problems had to be dealt with, apart from providing food and shelter for a large party of men, women and children, and the daily feeding of mules and horses.

The organization of such tasks was undertaken by 'Abdu'l-Baha, who chose a number of men to assist him in carrying out various duties.

Aqa Mirza Mahmud of Kashan, together with Aqa Rida of Shiraz, went all the way to the port of Samsun ahead of the howdah of Baha'u'llah.

They would arrive at each halting place hours before the party and would take up the task of preparing and cooking the food for everyone.

These two souls were so dedicated that, in spite of the fatigue and rigours of the journey, they were constantly engaged until midnight in serving the friends with great devotion.

Not only did they cook the meals and wash the dishes but they ensured that every person was comfortable and had sufficient rest.

They were the last to retire at night and the first to arise in the morning, rendering this vital service with an exemplary dedication each day of the journey from Baghdad to Constantinople.

Yet another person who performed a difficult task on this journey was the learned divine Mirza Ja'far-i-Yazdi.

In spite of his great learning he was humble and self-effacing and for some time served in the household of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad.

On the way to Constantinople he served the friends in every possible manner.

While everyone was resting or sleeping at a stopping-place, Mirza Ja'far and 'Abdu'l-Baha would go to surrounding villages to purchase straw and other provisions for the mules and horses.

Sometimes this would take hours as there was a famine in the area and it was very difficult to obtain food.

Another soul who was truly enamoured of Baha'u'llah was Darvish Sidq-'Ali.

He begged Baha'u'llah to allow him to join the party travelling to Constantinople and when permission was granted he undertook to serve as groom on the journey.

He would walk all day beside the convoy, singing poems which brought joy to the friends, and at night would attend to the horses.

There were others also who carried out various duties with the utmost devotion and self-sacrifice.[*] Apart from the notorious Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani who travelled with Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya, who joined Him on the way, the disciples of Baha'u'llah, as always, demonstrated such love, devotion and humility towards Him as no pen can ever describe.

The inestimable privilege conferred upon them of accompanying Him to

Constantinople completely overwhelmed them.

They were so inspired with joy and contentment that <p75> the hardships of the journey, whether on foot or by mule, had very little effect upon their health.

[* For more information see Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah*, vol.

1].

The marks of respect and veneration shown to Baha'u'llah by the people along the way continued until He reached the port of Samsun.

From there He travelled by sea to Constantinople, a journey recounted by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*:

In Samsun the Chief Inspector of the entire province, extending from Baghdad to Constantinople, accompanied by several pashas, called on Him, showed Him the utmost respect, and was entertained by Him at luncheon.

But seven days after His arrival, He, as foreshadowed in the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, was put on board a Turkish steamer and three days later was disembarked, at noon, together with His fellow-exiles, at the port of Constantinople, on the first of Rabi'u'l-Avval 1280 A.H. (August 16, 1863).

In two special carriages, which awaited Him at the landing-stage, He and His family drove to the house of Shamsi Big, the official who had been appointed by the government to entertain its guests, and who lived in the vicinity of the Khirqiy-i-Sharif mosque.

Later they were transferred to the more commodious house of Visi Pasha in the neighbourhood of the mosque of Sultan Muhammad.[85] [85 *ibid.* p.

157. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*.)] Baha'u'llah in Constantinople The arrival of Baha'u'llah in Constantinople, the capital city of the Ottoman Empire, marks a significant milestone in the unfoldment of His mission.

It was during His sojourn in the capital that the conciliatory attitude of the authorities changed to one of hostility as a direct consequence of the intrigues and misrepresentations of Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Persian ambassador.

It was also during the same eventful period that the initial phase of the proclamation of the message of Baha'u'llah to the kings and rulers of the world was ushered in by the revelation of a Tablet addressed to Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz and his ministers, sternly rebuking them for their actions against the new-born Faith of God and its leader.

The house of Visi Pasha, like most houses in those days, consisted of an inner and an outer apartment.

Each consisted of three storeys.

Baha'u'llah resided in the inner section on the first floor and His family occupied the remainder.

In the outer apartment, 'Abdu'l-Baha lived on the first floor, the believers on the ground floor and the top floor was turned into a store and a kitchen.

Shamsi Big, on behalf of the government, would call every morning and attend to any matter pertaining to the needs and well-being of Baha'u'llah and His companions.

In the courtyard a tent was pitched <p76> for two Christian servants sent by the government to attend to shopping and various other duties.

Several eminent personalities, including state ministers, called on Baha'u'llah to pay their respects to Him.

Among them was Kamal Pasha, a former Sadr-i-A'zam (prime minister), who was at that time one of the ministers of the Sultan.

He knew several languages well and prided himself on this accomplishment.

Now that Baha'u'llah was in Constantinople, the Persian ambassador was making a desperate bid to misrepresent Him to the authorities and thereby secure their support for banishing Him further.

The day after Baha'u'llah's arrival in Constantinople, the ambassador sent Prince Shuja'u'd-Dawlih and Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Safa, the two most prominent men in his circle, to call on Baha'u'llah on his behalf.

He expected that Baha'u'llah would return the call and see him in person but he soon found that this was not going to happen.

In those days it was customary for prominent guests of the government, soon after their arrival in the capital, to call on the prime minister and other high-ranking officials.

It was on the occasion of these visits that people solicited all kinds of favours, made deals and secured the support of the authorities for themselves.

Baha'u'llah refused to do this and did not even return the visits of some of the Sultan's ministers who had already called on Him to pay their respects.

Kamal Pasha and a few others went so far as to remind Baha'u'llah of this custom.

Baha'u'llah responded by saying that He was aware of the practice but had no demands to make of anyone nor did He require favours from them; therefore there was no reason for Him to call.

This attitude of detachment played into the hands of the Persian ambassador who introduced Baha'u'llah to the Sublime Porte as one who was arrogant and proud, considering Himself subject to no law.

The ambassador did this mainly through the influence of Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Safa.

At last the machinations of the Persian ambassador yielded their fruit. 'Ali Pasha the prime minister, presented a report to the Sultan informing him of the

Persian government's request that Baha'u'llah be banished either to Bursa or Adrianople.

He asked the Sultan's approval for banishment to Adrianople and suggested that an allowance of 5,000 qurush per month be given to Baha'u'llah for subsistence, adding that during His stay in Constantinople He had been a guest of the government.

He also enclosed the list of all those who had accompanied Him from Baghdad to Constantinople.

Immediately upon receipt of this report the Sultan endorsed these measures and the edict was issued the following day.

Shoghi Effendi has summarized the events leading to Baha'u'llah's further banishment in these words: <p77> No less a personage than the highly-respected brother-in-law of the Sadr-i-A'zam was commissioned to apprise the Captive of the edict pronounced against Him -- an edict which evinced a virtual coalition of the Turkish and Persian imperial governments against a common adversary, and which in the end brought such tragic consequences upon the Sultanate, the Caliphate and the Qajar dynasty.

Refused an audience by Baha'u'llah that envoy had to content himself with a presentation of his puerile observations and trivial arguments to 'Abdu'l-Baha and Aqay-i-Kalim, who were delegated to see him, and whom he informed that., after three days, he would return to receive the answer to the order he had been bidden to transmit.

That same day a Tablet, severely condemnatory in tone, was revealed by Baha'u'llah, was entrusted by Him, in a sealed envelope, on the following morning, to Shamsi Big, who was instructed to deliver it into the hands of 'Ali Pasha, and to say that it was sent down from God. 'I know not what that letter contained,' Shamsi Big subsequently informed Aqay-i-Kalim, 'for no sooner had the Grand Vizir perused it than he turned the colour of a corpse, and remarked: "It is as if the King of Kings were issuing his behest to his humblest vassal king and regulating his conduct."

So grievous was his condition that I backed out of his presence.' 'Whatever action,' Baha'u'llah, commenting on the effect that Tablet had produced, is reported to have stated, 'the ministers of the Sultan took against Us, after having become acquainted with its contents, cannot be regarded as unjustifiable.

The acts they committed before its perusal, however, can have no justification.' That Tablet, according to Nabil, was of considerable length, opened with words directed to the sovereign himself, severely censured his ministers, exposed their immaturity and incompetence, and included passages in which the ministers themselves were addressed, in which they were boldly challenged, and sternly admonished not to pride

themselves on their worldly possessions, nor foolishly seek the riches of which time would inexorably rob them.

Baha'u'llah was on the eve of His departure, which followed almost immediately upon the promulgation of the edict of His banishment, when, in a last and memorable interview with the afore-mentioned Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Safa, He sent the following message to the Persian Ambassador: 'What did it profit thee, and such as are like thee, to slay, year after year, so many of the oppressed, and to inflict upon them manifold afflictions, when they increased a hundredfold, and ye find yourselves in complete bewilderment, knowing not how to relieve your minds of this oppressive thought...

His Cause transcends any and every plan ye devise.

Know this much:

Were all the governments on earth to unite and take My life and the lives of all who bear this Name, this Divine Fire would never be quenched.

His Cause will rather encompass all the kings of the earth, nay all that hath been created <p78> from water and clay...

Whatever may yet befall Us, great shall be our gain, and manifest the loss wherewith they shall be afflicted.'[86] [86 ibid. pp.

159-61. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] In one of the coldest Decembers that Turkey had seen for years, Baha'u'llah and, His family -- including His two faithful brothers Mirza Musa, entitled Aqay-i-Kalim, and Mirza Muhammad-Quli, together with Mirza Yahya[*] -- set out on their journey to the city of Adrianople.

The officer commissioned to take charge of the journey was 'Ali Big Yuz-Bashi.

According to a statement by Mirza Aqa Jan, it appears that Baha'u'llah was accompanied by 12 of His companions.

Among them was the notorious Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, whose evil spirit was increasingly casting its shadow upon the exiles.

Through his satanic influence he brought much pain and anguish to their hearts and created severe tests and trials for them. [* On leaving Baghdad he had acquired a passport in the name of Mirza 'Ali, a newly assumed name.

During his sojourn in Adrianople and later in Cyprus, the authorities referred to him by this name.] In the Suriy-i-Muluk, addressing Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, Baha'u'llah speaks of His arrival in the city of Constantinople in conspicuous glory and His departure 'with an abasement with which no abasement on earth can compare'. [87] He also describes the manner in which He and His loved ones were banished to Adrianople and the sufferings they were made to endure both on their way to that city and on their arrival there.

These are some of His words: 'Neither My family, nor those who accompanied Me,

had the necessary raiment to protect them from the cold in that freezing weather,' and 'The eyes of Our enemies wept over Us, and beyond them those of every discerning person.'[88] [87 Baha'u'llah, quoted in *ibid.* p.

161. (God Passes By.)] [88 *ibid.* (Baha'u'llah, quoted in *God Passes By*, p.

161.)] The circumstances of Baha'u'llah's banishment were tragic as well as humiliating.

The authorities did not give Him and His party adequate time to prepare themselves for this long and hazardous journey.

The weather was unusually cold, many rivers were frozen and the only way to obtain water on the journey was by lighting a fire and melting ice.

The members of the party, which included women and children, were inadequately clad, yet some of them were made to ride in wagons normally used for carrying goods, while others had to ride on animals.

Of this journey Shoghi Effendi writes:

Travelling through rain and storm, at times even making night marches, the weary travellers, after brief halts at Kuchik-Chakmachih, Buyuk-Chakmachih, Salvari, Birkas, and Baba-Iski, arrived at their destination, on the first of Rajab 1280 A.H. (December 12, 1863), and were lodged in the Khan-i-'Arab, a two-story caravanserai, near the house of 'Izzat-Aqa.

Three days later, <p79> Baha'u'llah and His family were consigned to a house suitable only for summer habitation, in the Muradiyyih quarter, near Takyiy-i-Mawlavi, and were moved again, after a week, to another house, in the vicinity of a mosque in that same neighbourhood.

About six months later they transferred to more commodious quarters, known as the house of Amru'llah (House of God's command) situated on the northern side of the mosque of Sultan Salim.[89] [89 *ibid.* pp.

161-2. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By.*)] Soon after their arrival the companions of Baha'u'llah found their own accommodation and, as instructed by Him, engaged in trades and professions in the city.

Baha'u'llah in Adrianople Adrianople's inhabitants soon became aware of Baha'u'llah's greatness and were deeply impressed by His genuine love and exalted character.

Their leaders, including the governor of the city and other high-ranking officials, as well as men of culture and learning, were drawn to Him and soon discovered that He was the source of all knowledge and the embodiment of virtues.

Some of these people earnestly sought His presence, sat at His feet and received spiritual enlightenment from Him.

Such were the marks of honour and esteem shown to Baha'u'llah that on occasions

when He walked in the streets and bazaars the people spontaneously stood and bowed before Him.

Their veneration for Him was profound and whole-hearted.

Among the people He was referred to as 'Shaykh Effendi', a designation that carried great prestige.

In Adrianople Baha'u'llah did not appear in public as much as He had in Baghdad.

Instead He allowed 'Abdu'l-Baha to do this for Him.

But He did occasionally visit the mosques of Muradiyyih and Sultan Salim where some of the learned and devout came in contact with Him, recognized His greatness and became His admirers.

This is one of the remarkable features of the life of Baha'u'llah -- that although the powerful machinery of a despotic and tyrannical government was directed against Him, bringing about untold personal suffering and persecution, He yet evinced such glory and imparted such love that a great many people were magnetized by Him and were deeply affected by His peerless and exalted character.

That a prisoner and an exile could exert such abiding influence upon both high and low is one of the evidences of His divine power and a sign of His authority as the Supreme Manifestation of God.

In spite of the hardships and rigours of yet another exile, the outpourings of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah continued unabated in Adrianople.

In one of his writings dated 17th Jamadi 1281 A.H. (19 <p80> October 1864), Mirza Aqa Jan has testified that from Baha'u'llah's time in Iraq up to that day, Tablets had been sent down successively and unceasingly from the heaven of the Will of God.

This process acquired still greater momentum in Adrianople.

From the tone of these Tablets it became clear that the Revelation of Baha'u'llah had already entered a new phase and that He, who in previous years had only alluded to His station, was now openly summoning the believers to Himself as the Supreme Manifestation of God.

The five years that Baha'u'llah spent in Constantinople and Adrianople may be regarded as one of the most eventful and momentous times in His ministry.

In this short period the sun of His Revelation mounted to its zenith and, in the plenitude of its splendour, shed its radiance upon all mankind.

This was also a most turbulent period in which He bore with much resignation and fortitude the pains, the betrayals and calamities heaped upon Him by His unfaithful brother Mirza Yahya who broke the Covenant of the Bab and rose up in rebellion against the One whom the world had wronged.

Shoghi Effendi describes the outpourings of Baha'u'llah's Revelation in these words:

A period of prodigious activity ensued which, in its repercussions, outshone the vernal years of Baha'u'llah's ministry. 'Day and night,' an eye-witness has written, 'the Divine verses were raining down in such number that it was impossible to record them.

Mirza Aqa Jan wrote them as they were dictated, while the Most Great Branch was continually occupied in transcribing them.

There was not a moment to spare.' 'A number of secretaries,' Nabil has testified, 'were busy day and night and yet they were unable to cope with the task.

Among them was Mirza Baqir-i-Shirazi...

He alone transcribed no less than two thousand verses every day.

He laboured during six or seven months.

Every month the equivalent of several volumes would be transcribed by him and sent to Persia.

About twenty volumes, in his fine penmanship, he left behind as a remembrance for Mirza Aqa Jan' Baha'u'llah, Himself, referring to the verses revealed by Him, has written: 'Such are the outpourings ... from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed.' 'So great is the grace vouchsafed in this day that in a single day and night, were an amanuensis capable of accomplishing it to be found, the equivalent of the Persian Bayan would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness.' 'I swear by God!' He, in another connection has affirmed, 'In those days the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforetime unto the Prophets hath been revealed.' 'That which hath already been revealed in this land (Adrianople),' He, furthermore, referring to the copiousness of His writings, has declared, 'secretaries are incapable of transcribing.

It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed.' [90] [90 ibid. pp.

170-1. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*.) <p81> During Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Adrianople the proclamation of His message to the kings was made.

He addressed the Suriy-i-Muluk to the kings of the world collectively.

He revealed the Lawh-i-Sultan for Nasiri'd-Din Shah -- a Tablet sent to him from 'Akka.

He also addressed His first Tablet to Napoleon III.

The first Suriy-i-Ra'is addressed to 'Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir of the Sultan, was revealed on the way to the port of Gallipoli.

And finally, the proclamation of His message reached its consummation when in 'Akka He revealed individual Tablets to certain monarchs and ecclesiastical leaders.[*] [* For more information about Baha'u'llah's proclamation to the kings and rulers see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vols.

2, 3 and 4.] While the foundations of the Cause of God were being strengthened through the outpouring of revelation in Adrianople, a crisis of unprecedented severity -- namely the rebellion of Mirza Yahya -- overtook the Faith and shook it to its roots.

This act of treachery created a major internal convulsion in the Faith and brought untold suffering to Baha'u'llah, which left its mark on His person until the end of His life.

Neither the proclamation of the Cause nor the internal disruption it was undergoing escaped the attention of Baha'u'llah's enemies in the capital city.

The revelation of so many important Tablets and the proclamation of Baha'u'llah's message to the kings and rulers of the world had endowed the Faith with such ascendancy that by the summer of 1868 the authorities in Constantinople had become apprehensive of its rising prestige and power.

The exaggerated reports and calumnies of Mirza Yahya, Siyyid Muhammad and his accomplice Aqa Jan,**] together with further representations by the Persian ambassador to the Sublime Porte, induced the Ottoman government to remove the author of such a dynamic Faith from the mainland and sentence Him to solitary confinement in a far-off prison. [** He was known as 'Kaj Kula', a retired officer in the Turkish army.] The authorities in Constantinople were alarmed by the news that several outstanding personalities, including Khurshid Pasha, the Governor of Adrianople, were among the fervent admirers of Baha'u'llah, were frequenting His house and were showing Him veneration worthy of a king.

They knew that the consuls of foreign governments had also been attracted to Him and often spoke about His greatness.

The movement of many pilgrims in and out of Adrianople further aggravated the situation.

Fu'ad Pasha, the Turkish foreign minister, passed through Adrianople, made a tour of inspection and submitted exaggerated reports about the status and activities of the community. <p82> Furthermore, a few among the authorities had come across some of Baha'u'llah's writings and had become aware of His stupendous claims.

All these were important factors in deciding the fate of Baha'u'llah and His companions.

Those mainly responsible for Baha'u'llah's final banishment were the prime minister, 'Ali Pasha, the foreign minister, Fu'ad Pasha, and the Persian ambassador, Haji Mirza Husayn Khan (the Mushiru'd-Dawlih).

These three worked together closely until they succeeded in their efforts to

banish Baha'u'llah to 'Akka and to impose on Him life imprisonment there. 'Ali Pasha secured from Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz an imperial edict dated 5th Rabi'u'l-Akhir 1285 A.H. (26 July 1868) ordering Baha'u'llah's exile to the fortress of 'Akka and His life imprisonment within the walls of that prison city.

In the same edict five others, mentioned by name, were to be exiled with Him.

They were the two faithful brothers of Baha'u'llah, Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Muhammad-Quli; His faithful servant Darvish Sidq-'Ali; the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani; and his accomplice Aqa Jan Kaj Kulah.

Mirza Yahya was condemned to life imprisonment in Famagusta along with four of Baha'u'llah's followers:

Mirza Husayn entitled Mishkin Qalam, 'Aliy-i-Sayyah, Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi and 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar.

Strict orders were issued in the edict to the authorities in 'Akka directing them to accommodate the prisoners inside a house in the fortress, to guard it most effectively and to ensure that the exiles did not associate with anyone.

When Khurshid Pasha the Governor of Adrianople, was informed of the edict and learned of Baha'u'llah's immediate banishment he knew that he could not bring himself to notify Baha'u'llah of the contents of the Sultan's order.

He was so embarrassed that he absented himself from his office and left the task to the registrar.

Shoghi Effendi has briefly described Baha'u'llah's departure from Adrianople:

On the twenty-second of the month of Rabi'u'th-Thani 1285 A.H. (August 12, 1868) Baha'u'llah and His family, escorted by a Turkish captain, Hasan Effendi by name, and other soldiers appointed by the local government, set out on their four-day journey to Gallipoli, riding in carriages and stopping on their way at Uzun-Kupru and Kashanih, at which latter place the Suriy-i-Ra'is was revealed. 'The inhabitants of the quarter in which Baha'u'llah had been living, and the neighbours who had gathered to bid Him farewell, came one after the other,' writes an eye-witness, 'with the utmost sadness and regret to kiss His hands and the hem of His robe, expressing meanwhile their sorrow at His departure.

That day, too, was a strange day.

Methinks the city, its walls and its gates bemoaned their imminent separation from Him.' 'On that day,' writes another eye-witness, 'there was a wonderful concourse of Muslims and Christians at the door of our Master's house.

The hour of departure was a memorable one.

Most of those present were weeping and wailing, especially the Christians.' 'Say,' Baha'u'llah Himself declares in the Suriy-i-Ra'is, 'this Youth hath departed out of this country and deposited beneath every tree and every stone a trust, which God will ere long bring forth through the power of truth.' Several of the companions who had been brought from Constantinople were awaiting them in Gallipoli.

On his arrival Baha'u'llah made the following pronouncement to Hasan Effendi, who, his duty discharged, was taking his leave: 'Tell the king that this territory will pass out of his hands, and his affairs will be thrown into confusion.' 'To this,' Aqa Rida the recorder of that scene has written, 'Baha'u'llah furthermore added: "Not I speak these words, but God speaketh them."

In those moments He was uttering verses which we, who were downstairs, could overhear.

They were spoken with such vehemence and power that, methinks, the foundations of the house itself trembled.' Even in Gallipoli, where three nights were spent, no one knew what Baha'u'llah's destination would be.

Some believed that He and His brothers would be banished to one place, and the remainder dispersed, and sent into exile.

Others thought that His companions would be sent back to Persia, while still others expected their immediate extermination.

The government's original order was to banish Baha'u'llah, Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Muhammad-Quli with a servant to 'Akka, while the rest were to proceed to Constantinople.

This order, which provoked scenes of indescribable distress, was, however, at the insistence of Baha'u'llah, and by the instrumentality of 'Umar Effendi, a major appointed to accompany the exiles, revoked.

It was eventually decided that all the exiles, numbering about seventy, should be banished to 'Akka.

Instructions were, moreover, issued that a certain number of the adherents of Mirza Yahya, among whom were Siyyid Muhammad and Aqa Jan, should accompany these exiles, whilst four of the companions of Baha'u'llah were ordered to depart with the Azalis for Cyprus.

So grievous were the dangers and trials confronting Baha'u'llah at the hour of His departure from Gallipoli that He warned His companions that 'this journey will be unlike any of the previous journeys,' and that whoever did not feel himself 'man enough to face the future' had best 'depart to whatever place he pleaseth, and be preserved from tests, for hereafter he will find himself unable to leave' -- a warning which His companions unanimously chose to disregard.

On the morning of the 2nd of Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1285 A.H. (August 21, 1868) they all embarked in an Austrian-Lloyd steamer for Alexandria, touching at Madelli, and stopping for two days at <p84> Smyrna, where Jinab-i-Munir, surnamed Ismu'llahu'l-Munib, became gravely ill, and had, to his great distress, to be left behind in a hospital where he soon after died.

In Alexandria they transshipped into a steamer of the same company, bound for Haifa, where, after brief stops at Port Said and Jaffa, they landed, setting out, a few hours later, in a sailing vessel, for 'Akka, where they disembarked, in the course of the afternoon of the 12th of Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1285 A.H. (August 31, 1868).

It was at the moment when Baha'u'llah had stepped into the boat which was to carry Him to the landing-stage in Haifa that 'Abdu'l-Ghaffar, one of the four companions condemned to share the exile of Mirza Yahya, and whose 'detachment, love and trust in God' Baha'u'llah had greatly praised, cast himself, in his despair, into the sea, shouting 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha', and was subsequently rescued and resuscitated with the greatest difficulty, only to be forced by adamant officials to continue his voyage, with Mirza Yahya's party, to the destination originally appointed for him. [91] [91 ibid. pp.

180-2. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] Baha'u'llah in 'Akka Baha'u'llah's journey from Adrianople to 'Akka was laden with enormous hardship and suffering.

It once again highlighted the abasement to which Baha'u'llah and His companions were subjected and the indignities heaped upon Him by the actions of His enemies.

When He arrived in the prison of 'Akka these sufferings were intensified to such an extent that He designated that city as the 'Most Great Prison'.

Referring to the first nine years of His exile in 'Akka, the Pen of the Most High has recorded these moving words in one of His Tablets:

Know thou that upon Our arrival at this Spot, We chose to designate it as the 'Most Great Prison'.

Though previously subjected in another land (Tihran) to chains and fetters, We yet refused to call it by that name.

Say:

Ponder thereon, O ye endued with under-standing![92] [92 Baha'u'llah, quoted in ibid. p.

185. (God Passes By)] At Haifa, Baha'u'llah and His companions -- 70 in all -- disembarked from the ship in sailing boats.[*] All their belongings were also ferried across with them.

There, the prisoners were all counted and handed over to government officials.

A few hours later they were all taken aboard a sailing vessel which took them to 'Akka in the afternoon of <p85> the same day.

As there were no landing facilities at 'Akka, the men had to wade ashore from the boat and the women were to be carried on the backs of men.

But at 'Abdu'l-Baha's insistence the women were carried ashore one by one, seated on a chair which He Himself procured. [* According to the shipping records, the Austrian Lloyd steamer was due to leave Alexandria at 11 a.m. on Friday, arriving at Port Said on Saturday at 5 p.m., at Jaffa on Sunday at 6 p.m., at Haifa on Monday at 8 a.m. and in Cyprus at noon two days later.]

When Baha'u'llah arrived in 'Akka the city was a penal colony.

Its population in the 1880s was estimated to be about nine thousand.

The Turkish government had consigned to it from its vast empire a great number of criminals, murderers, political detainees and every type of troublemaker.

The inhabitants, whom Baha'u'llah had stigmatized as the 'generation of vipers',[93] had sunk to a very low level.

Just prior to the arrival of Baha'u'llah and His followers wild rumours and false accusations circulated.

The company of exiles, those God-intoxicated heroes who had accompanied their Lord to this most desolate of cities, were considered to be evil men, criminals of the worst type who deserved to be treated most cruelly.

Great numbers from among the inhabitants of 'Akka assembled at the landing site to jeer at them and at their leader, to whom they referred as 'the God of the Persians'. [93 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

345.] Yet among the crowd there were some endowed with a measure of spiritual perception.

These, as they gazed upon the countenance of Baha'u'llah, were struck by His majesty and witnessed a glory they had never seen before.

Among them was a certain Khalil Ahmad 'Abdu, a venerable old man who used to say to the inhabitants of 'Akka that he could see in the face of Baha'u'llah signs of greatness and of majesty and truthfulness.

He often said that the people of 'Akka should rejoice and be thankful to God for having ennobled their homeland by the footsteps of this great personage.

He prophesied that through Him the inhabitants would be blessed and prosper, and this, of course, literally came to pass.

How incomparable is the difference between the vision of those assembled at the sea gate of 'Akka to jeer at the company of exiles and their leader, and the vision of Baha'u'llah.

A few years before, in the Tablet of Sayyah foreshadowing His arrival in the city of 'Akka He had disclosed to those endowed with spiritual insight a vastly

different spectacle:

Upon Our arrival We were welcomed with banners of light, whereupon the Voice of the Spirit cried out saying: 'Soon will all that dwell on earth be enlisted under these banners.' [94] [94 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

184.] The reaction of these onlookers, blind to the world of the spirit and the all-encompassing vision of Baha'u'llah, is characteristic of man's attitude to the Revelation of God in every age.

Over one hundred years have passed since Baha'u'llah uttered these words.

The majority <p86> of mankind, its rulers and wise men, have so far failed to recognize their truth, either remaining unaware of the coming of the Lord or turning a deaf ear to His voice.

But those who have embraced His Cause believe in the vision of their Lord that 'soon will all that dwell on earth be enlisted under these banners'.

Baha'u'llah and His party entered 'Akka through the sea gate and were conducted to the barracks along the city's narrow and twisting streets.

The hardships of the long and arduous journey from Adrianople to 'Akka in the burning heat of the midsummer season, with inadequate and primitive facilities on board the crowded ships, had exhausted everyone.

Now, added to all this were the appalling conditions of their confinement in the barracks, especially during the first night after their arrival.

Baha'u'llah was placed in a filthy room that was completely bare.

Later He was moved into a room on the upper floor of the barracks; this room, the interior of which is now kept in good condition and visited by Baha'i pilgrims, was in the days of Baha'u'llah unfit for habitation.

He Himself has recounted in a Tablet that its floor was covered with earth and what plaster remained on the ceiling was falling.

Baha'u'llah's followers were huddled into another room, the floor of which was covered with mud.

Ten soldiers were posted at the gate to guard the prisoners.

The foul air and the stench in the prison, coupled with the sultry heat of the summer, were so offensive that on arrival Bahiyyih Khanum, the daughter of Baha'u'llah entitled the 'Greatest Holy Leaf', was overcome and fainted.

There was no drinking water except that in a small pool which had already been used for washing and was so filthy that the mere thought of drinking it would make one sick.

That first night, in those hot surroundings when everyone was so thirsty that some of the women and children were overcome, water was withheld from the prisoners.

Mothers with suckling babes were unable to feed them and for hours the children cried for food and water. 'Abdu'l-Baha made several appeals to the guards to show mercy to the children and even sent a message to the governor of 'Akka but to no avail.

At last in the morning some water was given to the prisoners and each received three loaves of bread as a daily ration.

The bread was unfit to eat but after some time they were allowed to take it to the market and exchange it for two loaves of a better quality.

Soon after the arrival of the prisoners the governor visited the barracks for inspection. 'Abdu'l-Baha, accompanied by a few believers, went to see him.

But the governor was discourteous and spoke to them in a provocative manner.

He threatened to cut the supply of bread if one of the prisoners, went missing and then ordered them back to their room.

Husayn-i-Ashchi, one of 'Abdu'l-Baha's attendants, could not bear to remain silent after such insulting treatment.

He retorted with rage and hurled back at the governor some offensive remarks. 'Abdu'l-Baha immediately chastised Husayn by slapping him hard in the face in front of the governor and ordering him to return to his room.

This action by 'Abdu'l-Baha not only defused a dangerous situation but also opened the eyes of the governor to the existence of a real leader among the prisoners, who would act with authority and justice.

Husayn-i-Ashchi, who has recorded this incident in his memoirs, and who prided himself on being chastised by the Master on that occasion, recalls that because of this action the governor's attitude towards 'Abdu'l-Baha changed.

He realized that, contrary to the wild rumours circulating in 'Akka at the time, 'Abdu'l-Baha and His family were from a noble background and not criminals as he had been led to believe.

The governor therefore began to act in a more humane way towards the prisoners.

He eventually agreed to substitute a sum of money for the allotted ration of bread and allowed a small party of the prisoners, escorted by guards, to visit the markets of 'Akka daily to buy their provisions.

Three days after the arrival of Baha'u'llah and His companions, the edict of the Sultan condemning Him to life imprisonment was read out in the mosque.

The prisoners were introduced as criminals who had corrupted the morals of the people.

It was stated that they were to be confined to prison and were not allowed to associate with anyone.

In the course of a talk[95] to the friends in Haifa years later, 'Abdu'l-Baha described His being summoned by the governor of 'Akka to hear the contents of

the edict.

When it was read out to Him that they were to remain in prison forever,[*] 'Abdu'l-Baha responded by saying that the contents of the edict were meaningless and without foundation.

Upon hearing this remark, the governor became angry and retorted that the edict was from the Sultan and he wanted to know how it could be described as meaningless. 'Abdu'l-Baha replied that it was impossible for His imprisonment to last forever, for man lives in this world only for a short period and sooner or later the captives would leave this prison, whether dead or alive.

The governor and his officers were impressed by the vision of 'Abdu'l-Baha and felt easier in His presence. [95 'Abdu'l-Baha, Asrau'l-Athar, vol.

4. p.

349.] [*In Arabic the term used for life imprisonment is often 'prisoner forever'.] In the meantime, life in the prison of 'Akka in the early days was extremely difficult.

The conditions were appallingly unhygienic.

The heat was severe during the day and there was no adequate water for <p88> washing.

For three months the authorities did not allow Baha'u'llah to go to the public bath, which in those days was the only place where people could take a bath.

The guards had been given strict orders not to allow any person to visit Him.

Even when a barber came to attend to Baha'u'llah's hair, he was accompanied by a guard and was not allowed to talk to Him. 'Abdu'l-Baha had to live in a room on the ground floor which had been formerly used as a morgue.

Its moist air affected His health for the rest of His life.

As for the other prisoners, the filthy conditions under which they were living, the lack of proper food and hygiene and the severity of restrictions took their toll.

Shortly after their arrival in the barracks all but two fell sick and nine of the ten guards were also struck down by illness.

Malaria and dysentery added to their ordeal.

The only two unaffected at that stage were 'Abdu'l-Baha and Aqa Riday-i-Qannad, although both of them were taken ill later.

The Master, helped by this believer, attended to the needs of the sick, nursing them day and night.

The authorities did not call for a doctor to administer medicine and with the few provisions at His disposal all that 'Abdu'l-Baha could do was to cook them a simple broth and some rice each day.

In these circumstances three people died.

The first victim was a certain Abu'l-Qasim-i-Sultan Abadi.

Then two brothers, Ustad Muhammad-Baqir and Ustad Muhammad-Isma'il, both tailors by profession, died one evening within a few hours of each other, locked in each other's arms as they lay on the floor.

Baha'u'llah particularly expressed His grief at these tragic deaths and stated that never before had two brothers passed away from this dark world and entered the realms of glory in such unity.

As stated in a Tablet, He praised them, showered His bounties upon them and blessed their parents.

The burial of these three posed a difficult problem for the company of exiles.

The government refused to allow anyone from among the prisoners to bury them, nor did they provide funds for their burial.

The guards demanded payment of necessary expenses before removing the bodies, and as there were very few possessions which could be sold, Baha'u'llah gave up the only luxury He had, a small prayer carpet.

When the proceeds of the sale were handed to the guards, they pocketed the money and buried the dead in the clothes they wore, without coffins and without the customary Muslim rites of washing and wrapping the bodies in shrouds.

As they were not allowed to be buried inside the Muslim cemetery, they were laid to rest outside it.

Some years later 'Abdu'l-Baha arranged for one of the believers to build their graves, which are joined together.

After the death of these three men, Baha'u'llah revealed a short healing prayer especially for the believers in the barracks and asked <p89> them to chant it repeatedly and with absolute sincerity.

This the friends did and soon everyone recovered.

In the meantime, the Persian ambassador to the Sublime Porte did everything in his power to enforce Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in 'Akka.

The following is a translation of a letter he wrote to his government a little over a year after Baha'u'llah's arrival in 'Akka.

I have issued telegraphic and written instructions, forbidding that He (Baha'u'llah) associate with any one except His wives and children, or leave under any circumstances, the house wherein He is imprisoned. 'Abbas-Quli Khan, the Consul-General in Damascus ...

I have, three days ago, sent back, instructing him to proceed direct to 'Akka ... confer with its governor regarding all necessary measures for the strict maintenance of their imprisonment ... and appoint, before his return to Damascus, a representative on the spot to insure that the

orders issued by the Sublime Porte will, in no wise, be disobeyed.

I have, likewise, instructed him that once every three months he should proceed from Damascus to 'Akka, and personally watch over them, and submit his report to the Legation.[96] [96 Persian ambassador, quoted in *ibid.* p.

186. (Asrau'l-Athar, vol.

4.)] Long before His departure from Adrianople, Baha'u'llah had prophesied the impending calamities which were to befall Him in His forthcoming exile to 'Akka.

In some of His Tablets revealed in Adrianople He had alluded to that city, in others He had mentioned 'Akka by name as being the next place of His exile.

For instance, in the Lawh-i-Sultan, the Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah of Persia, He had clearly prophesied that the next place of His exile would be 'Akka.

Concerning that city He wrote: 'According to what they say, it is the most desolate of the cities of the world, the most unsightly of them in appearance, the most detestable in climate, and the foulest in water.'[97] [97

Baha'u'llah, quoted in *ibid.* (Asrau'l-Athar, vol.

4.)] In another Tablet, as yet unpublished, revealed soon before His departure from Adrianople, He predicted a new wave of calamities that would soon encompass Him in the fortress of 'Akka.

He described the conditions of the city in terms similar to those in the Lawh-i-Sultan but declared that soon its climate would improve because its builder would enter it and adorn it with the ornament of His Greatest Name.

The foulness of 'Akka's air was summed up in the proverb that a bird flying over the city would drop dead.

But the climate changed soon after Baha'u'llah's arrival.

To this the inhabitants of 'Akka testified and many attributed it to the presence of Baha'u'llah.

The edict of the Sultan condemning Baha'u'llah to solitary life imprisonment and forbidding Him to meet anyone, including His companions, was at the beginning carried out strictly.

But soon the prison authorities <p90> became aware of the striking majesty of Baha'u'llah, the loftiness of His standards and the exalted character of His person.

They were also deeply impressed by the loving disposition of the Master, His divine qualities and virtues; they increasingly turned to Him for advice and guidance.

As a result, the authorities became lenient and relaxed some of the restrictions.

As time went on the companions of Baha'u'llah were allotted rooms in different parts of the barracks.

Some of them took on essential duties such as cooking, cleaning, water delivery or shopping, and some were able to spend their free time in other useful work.

As restrictions became more relaxed the companions were able to communicate with Baha'u'llah and even attain His presence.

Although the barracks was a depressing place to live, soon the companions of Baha'u'llah, mainly through 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership and guidance, organized their daily lives in such a way as to create the best possible conditions for the whole community.

Their greatest source of joy was nearness to their Lord and sometimes Baha'u'llah visited them in their quarters where they entertained Him with what meagre food or refreshments they could provide.

The sufferings of Baha'u'llah in 'Akka were so intense in their severity and so extensive in their range that it would require volumes to recount them.

Not confined only to what He endured in the barracks, culminating in the martyrdom of the Purest Branch, these distressing afflictions continued throughout His entire ministry in the Holy Land.

These are Baha'u'llah's own words:

Ponder a while on the woes and afflictions which this Prisoner hath sustained.

I have, all the days of My life, been at the mercy of Mine enemies, and have suffered each day, in the path of the love of God, a fresh tribulation.

I have patiently endured until the fame of the Cause of God was spread abroad on the earth.[98] [98 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

203.] And again:

O My servant that believest in God!

By the righteousness of the Almighty!

Were I to recount to thee the tale of the things that have befallen Me, the souls and minds of men would be incapable of sustaining its weight.

God Himself beareth Me witness.[99] [99 ibid. p.

148. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings.)] Baha'u'llah's trials and tribulations were not only those inflicted on Him by His enemies.

He suffered greatly from the reprehensible conduct of those who were reckoned among His own followers.

In His Tablets, Baha'u'llah testifies to this truth. <p91>

of His trials was the hostility, the flagrant injustice, the iniquity and rebellion of Mirza Yahya.

Although that Wronged One, that Prisoner, had through His loving-kindness nurtured him in His own bosom ever since his early years, had showered at every moment His tender care upon him, exalted his name, shielded him from every misfortune, endeared him to them of this world and the next, and despite the firm exhortations and counsels of His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Bab) and His clear and conclusive warning; -- 'Beware, beware, lest the Nineteen Letters of the Living and that which hath been revealed in the Bayan veil thee!' Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal, was a paternal half-brother of Baha'u'llah.

He was about 14 years younger and when their father died he was only a boy of eight.

He thus grew up under the care and protection of Baha'u'llah, Who paid special attention to his education and upbringing.

When the Bab declared His mission in 1844, Mirza Yahya was 13 years old.

When the message of the Bab reached Baha'u'llah, He helped Mirza Yahya to recognize the station of the Bab and to embrace the newly born Faith and encouraged him to read the writings of the Bab and become familiar with their style of composition.

A few months before the Bab was martyred in 1850, Sayyah, one of His distinguished disciples, attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Tihiran.

On this occasion Baha'u'llah sent a communication to the Bab through Sayyah, about which Nabil-i-A'zam writes:

Ere the departure of Sayyah from Tihiran, Baha'u'llah entrusted him with an epistle, the text of which He had dictated to Mirza Yahya, and sent it in his name.

Shortly after, a reply, penned in the Bab's own handwriting, in which He commits Mirza Yahya to the care of Baha'u'llah and urges that attention be paid to his education and training, was received.[100] [100 Nabil, Dawn-Breakers, p.

433.] Thus Mirza Yahya grew up under the guidance of Baha'u'llah and became conversant with the writings of the Bab. <p92> In those days the believers who were educated used to make handwritten copies of the holy word.

In order to deepen his half-brother's understanding of the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah especially assigned Mirza Yahya the task of transcribing them.

Consequently Mirza Yahya learned not only the style of the composition of the Bab's writings but was also able to write in the same fashion and imitate the Bab's handwriting -- an art which served him well some years later when he rebelled against Baha'u'llah and, by forging the Bab's handwriting, interpolated his own words into the Bab's writings to produce texts in his own

favour.

The appointment by the Bab of Mirza Yahya as the leader of the Babi community took place on the advice of Baha'u'llah. 'Abdu'l-Baha states that some time after the death of Muhammad Shah it became evident that Baha'u'llah's fame had spread far and wide in Persia and it was essential to divert public attention away from His person.

To achieve this aim Baha'u'llah advised the Bab to appoint Mirza Yahya as His nominee.

This advice was communicated through the medium of a trusted believer, Mulla 'Abdu'l-Karim of Qazvin, otherwise known as Mirza Ahmad, who was able to make contact with the Bab.

The appointment of Mirza Yahya, who was then in his late teens, had the obvious advantage of enabling Baha'u'llah to direct the affairs of the community behind the scenes through the instrumentality of Mirza Yahya, who, in reality, was merely the ostensible head until the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

The Babi community was not informed of the reasons behind this appointment.

It must have come as a surprise to many when they realized that the appointee of the Bab was a youth in his teens and those who knew his personality were aware of his shallowness and vanity.

Apart from Mulla 'Abdu'l-Karim, the only other person who was privy to this secret arrangement was Baha'u'llah's faithful brother Mirza Musa, entitled Aqay-i-Kalim.

It must be stated here that the Bab in all His writings urged the believers to be ready for the manifestation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' and no one else.

So imminent was His advent that the Bab never contemplated the appointment of a successor to Himself.

Indeed, He confirms this in the Bayan saying that in His Dispensation there was to be no mention of successorship.

Yet Mirza Yahya, as we shall see later, broke the Covenant of the Bab and claimed to be His successor.

Mirza Yahya was devoid of outstanding qualities.

He was easily influenced by people, ambitious and, above all, very timid by nature.

At the age of 19 he married his cousin and for some time they lived in the village of Takur in the province of Nur.

The Babi community of Takur was one of the most thriving communities in Persia at the time because as soon as the news of the declaration of the Bab had <p93>

reached Baha'u'llah, He had arisen to teach the Faith to the members of His family and others in Nur.

Many relatives and friends in that area had embraced the Faith and through the influence of Baha'u'llah had become staunch believers.

When the news of the martyrdom of the Bab reached Mirza Yahya, he was so frightened for his own life that he disguised himself in the garb of a dervish and, leaving his wife and child behind, fled into the mountains of Mazindaran.

Two years later, when Baha'u'llah was exiled from Persia to Iraq, Mirza Yahya could no longer avail himself of His protection and guidance.

Thus he roamed the countryside in fear and trepidation.

This behaviour, especially at a time when Baha'u'llah was absent from Persia, had a deadly effect upon the believers in the province of Nur.

Through Mirza Yahya's cowardly behaviour and lack of faith in the religion of the Bab, many believers were disappointed in him as a leader, became disenchanted and left the Faith altogether.

This tragic situation brought great sorrow to Baha'u'llah.

Some years later in 'Akka, He uttered these words on the subject, as recounted by Nabil:

God knows that at no time did We attempt to conceal Ourselves or hide the Cause which We have been bidden to proclaim.

Though not wearing the garb of the people of learning, We have again and again faced and reasoned with men of great scholarship in both Nur and Mazindaran, and have succeeded in persuading them of the truth of this Revelation.

We never flinched in Our determination; We never hesitated to accept the challenge from whatever direction it came.

To whomsoever We spoke in those days, We found him receptive to our Call and ready to identify himself with its precepts.

But for the shameful behaviour of the people of Bayan, who sullied by their deeds the work We had accomplished, Nur and Mazindaran would have been entirely won to this Cause and would have been accounted by this time among its leading strongholds.[101] [101 Baha'u'llah, quoted in *ibid.* p.

583. (Dawn-Breakers.)] When the attempt was made on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah by a few mentally disturbed Babists in 1852, the Babi community was engulfed by a wave of persecution.

Many of the followers of the Bab were martyred in the most cruel circumstances and Baha'u'llah, along with others, was imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal.

The Shah ordered his prime minister, Mirza Aqa Jan,[*] a native of Nur himself,

to send troops to Nur and arrest all the followers of the Bab in that area.

The <p94> troops carried out their orders; some believers were killed and some were taken to the Siyah-Chal, their houses demolished and their properties confiscated.

The house of Baha'u'llah, which was royally furnished, was turned into ruins.

Its roof was destroyed and all its exquisite furnishings confiscated.

So terrified was Mirza Yahya as a result of these persecutions that once again he fled, this time to Gilan in disguise and then to Kirmanshah in the west of Persia.

There he decided to engage himself in a profession so that no one could identify him.

He took work as a salesman with a certain 'Abdu'llah-i-Qazvini, a maker of shrouds. [* He was related to Baha'u'llah through the marriage of his niece to Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, an elder half-brother of Baha'u'llah.] Some months later Baha'u'llah and His family passed through Kirmanshah on their way to Baghdad.

In Kirmanshah several people of rank and position came to visit Baha'u'llah to pay their respects but Mirza Yahya was afraid to contact Him.

Such was his state of mind that when Aqay-i-Kalim, Baha'u'llah's faithful brother, called on him, Mirza Yahya was apprehensive lest someone should recognize his true identity.

After some persuasion by Aqay-i-Kalim, he went and visited Baha'u'llah, knowing that Baha'u'llah would extend to him His protection and guidance.

Feeling secure in His presence, he expressed the desire to go to Baghdad and live alone, incognito, in a house close to Baha'u'llah's, and engage in a trade there.

Baha'u'llah gave him a small sum of money and he bought a few bales of cotton, disguised himself as an Arab and, soon after Baha'u'llah's arrival in Baghdad, found his way to that city.

Being a master in the art of disguise, he arrived at Baha'u'llah's doorstep in Baghdad dressed as a dervish, kashkul (alms box) in hand.

So well was he disguised that Aqay-i-Kalim, who answered the door, did not recognize him at first.

He stayed for a few days in the house of Baha'u'llah but asked that neither his identity nor his arrival in the city be divulged to the believers in Iraq.

He was helped to secure a residence in the Arab quarter of the city where no Persians resided.

There he spent his time in hiding during the day, emerging only at night when he would go to the house of Baha'u'llah, meet with Aqay-i-Kalim and then return

home in the late hours.

He even had threatened that if anyone insisted on visiting him and revealing his identity, he would excommunicate him from the Babi community.

The majesty of Baha'u'llah was apparent to the, members of His family.

In the light of this the two faithful brothers, Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Muhammad-Quli, who accompanied Baha'u'llah on His exile, showed the utmost humility to Him.

Even Mirza Yahya showed great respect to Baha'u'llah until he fell under the spell of Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, who duped him.

Some individuals who were close to Mirza Yahya have testified that he felt so inadequate to meet with Baha'u'llah that whenever he entered into His presence and came face <p95> to face with His majestic person, he was unable to put forward his thoughts and became utterly speechless.

Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis, was at first surprised to find Mirza Yahya so helpless and mute in the presence of Baha'u'llah until later he realized that Mirza Yahya was like anyone else.

Since the martyrdom of the Bab, it was Baha'u'llah who had guided the Babi community.

During the days before Mirza Yahya's rebellion, at times when he was in a place accessible to Him, Baha'u'llah used to call him into His presence and dictate to him His utterances.

His message would then be communicated to the Babi community in Mirza Yahya's name.

Many years after Mirza Yahya's rebellion, Baha'u'llah, in the following passage in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, reminds him of earlier days when he used to attain His presence and take down His words:

Granted that the people were confused about thy station, is it conceivable that thou thyself art similarly confused?

Tremble before thy Lord and recall the days when thou didst stand before

Our throne, and didst write down the verses that We dictated unto thee -- verses sent down by God, the Omnipotent Protector, the Lord of might and power.[102] [102 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

184.] The main reason that the Bab, at the suggestion of Baha'u'llah, appointed Mirza Yahya the leader of the Babi community was to protect Baha'u'llah from the assaults of an implacable enemy.

Thus the Bab diverted public attention from Baha'u'llah and at the same time provided a means for Him to unobtrusively direct the affairs of the Babi community until such time as His station was revealed.

The fact that various communications to the Babis were issued in the name of

Mirza Yahya caused certain uninformed Babis to think that he was the author.

Around the time that the followers of Mirza Yahya were cast out of the community of the Most Great Name, Baha'u'llah revealed a beautiful Tablet in Adrianople, known as the Tablet of Zagh va Bulbul (the Raven and the Nightingale)[*] Its imagery depicts a delightful drama in which several figures conduct two-way dialogues.

Among them are the rose and the nightingale, both symbolic of Baha'u'llah.

There are also birds disguised as nightingales, symbolizing the unfaithful.

The raven represents Mirza Yahya and the owl one of his <p96> followers.

Here is a summary of part of the Tablet, paraphrased by the author: [*For further information about this Tablet see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2, pp.

241-3.

In Persian literature the raven's coarse croak is symbolic of evil while the owl is a symbol of doom and ruin.] The owl argues that the song of the crow is much more melodious than that of the nightingale.

Challenging this statement, the nightingale demands some evidence and invites the owl to investigate by listening to the melody of each bird, so that the sweet music of the Bird of Heaven can be distinguished from the croaking of the raven.

But the owl refuses and says, 'Once from inside a rose-garden the enchanting voice of a bird reached my ears and when I enquired its origin, I was informed that the voice was that of the raven.

Simultaneously, a raven flew out of the garden and it became clear to me who the singer was.' 'But that was my voice,' said the nightingale to the owl, 'and to prove it I can warble similar if not more beautiful melodies now.' 'I am not interested in hearing thy songs,' the owl replied, 'for I saw the raven and have been assured by others that the melody from inside the garden was his.

If the tune of this heavenly music was thine, how is it that thou wert hidden from the eyes of men and thy fame did not reach them?' 'Because of my beauty,' replied the nightingale, 'I have been despised by my enemies.

They were resolved to put an end to my life and for this reason my melodies were noised abroad in the name of the raven.

But those with unsullied hearts and sanctified ears have been able to distinguish the voice of the true nightingale from the croaking of the raven.' It must be remembered that ever since the days of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad the great majority of the believers in Persia had turned to Him as the

focal point of the Babi community.

To Him they went for help and enlightenment and from Him received their guidance.

His spiritual ascendancy and influence were so strikingly manifest that even the enemies of the Cause felt their fame.

To a great many believers Mirza Yahya was only a name.

There were some, however, who, either because of their ignorance of the facts, or through their devotion to the Bab who had appointed him as His nominee, were eager to meet Mirza Yahya.

One such person was Siyyid 'Abdu'r-Rahim-i-Isfahani, a well-known believer who had collected certain extracts from the Bayan and other books of the Bab which he used to prove that Baha'u'llah was the Promised One of the Bayan and that Azal was only a name without a reality, like a body without a soul.

As a result of such pronouncements Aqa Siyyid 'Abdu'r-Rahim was denounced by some.

He used to give the following account: <p97> After the martyrdom of the Bab when Azal had become famous, I travelled from Isfahan to Tihran with the express purpose of meeting him.

In the bazaar I met Baha'u'llah, the Day-Star of Revelation, the Speaker of Sinai ... the mention of whose name has adorned the Books and Tablets of the Bab.

I attained His presence at a time when His glory was hidden behind a myriad veils of light.

He asked me if I had come to meet Azal.

I answered in the affirmative.

I had actually attained the presence of Baha'u'llah before this at Badasht.

I had recognized His glory and greatness, His uniqueness and magnanimity by the manner in which Quddus and Tahirih used to bow before Him.

I also knew the deeds and actions of Azal; nevertheless, since he was known as the nominee of the Bab I considered meeting with him as a means of nearness to God.

I went, in the company of Baha'u'llah, to His house.

He asked for tea to be served.

Thereupon Azal brought the samovar and served the tea.

He was standing in the presence of Baha'u'llah, from Whose tongue were flowing the rivers of wisdom and knowledge.

After drinking tea, Baha'u'llah rose, and turning to Azal said, 'He has come to see you' and then went into the inner court of the house.

Azal sat down, I bowed and expressed my devotion to him, but he had nothing to say to me.[103] [103 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, pp.

22-4.] Another person of wide repute who was eager to meet Mirza Yahya was Shaykh Salman,[*] honoured by Baha'u'llah as the 'Messenger of the Merciful' and one of the outstanding believers who for almost 40 years carried Tablets and messages from Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha to the believers.

This encounter occurred in the early days of Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Baghdad.

After much pleading by Shaykh Salman, Mirza Yahya agreed to meet him outside the city on a hill-top.

When the interview took place, Mirza Yahya had nothing to say except trivialities.

He was interested in the telegraph poles (a novelty in those days) and wanted Shaykh Salman to guess the distance between two poles!

The few others who succeeded in meeting Mirza Yahya in Baghdad also quickly recognized his ignorance and shallow-mindedness. [* See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

1.] In His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha quotes the exhortations of the Bab:

4-WT Beware, beware, lest the Nineteen Letters of the Living and that which hath been revealed in the Bayan veil thee!

As we survey the ministry of the Bab, which lasted a little over six years, we note that the most significant part of His writings was devoted to establishing a mighty Covenant with His followers concerning <p98> the Revelation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' -- Baha'u'llah.

Indeed, no Manifestation of God before Him ever devoted so much of His Revelation to the subject of the Covenant.

When we carefully study the Bayan, the Mother Book of the Babi Dispensation, we note that on practically every page of that book there is a mention of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', stating some aspect of His Revelation but always extolling His station and mentioning His name with a reverence that staggers the imagination.

The Bab mentioned 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' in the Persian Bayan more than three hundred times and in the Arabic Bayan more than 70.

There are also references to Him without mentioning this designation.

In several instances the Bab identifies 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' with the designation Baha'u'llah.

The announcement of the Revelation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' is not limited to the Bayan.

In the great majority of His writings the Bab directed the attention of the Babis to that great Revelation which was to follow Him, established a firm Covenant with them and directed all the forces of His Revelation towards the spiritual enrichment of the Babi community in order to rear a new race of men worthy to attain the presence of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', recognize His station and embrace His Cause.

The laws He promulgated, some very severe, were designed to shake up the lethargic people of Persia and to inflame His own followers with the zeal and fervour of a new and dynamic Faith.

In past Dispensations, the energies latent within God's Revelation have taken about a thousand years to be fully released and diffused gradually throughout human society.

In the Dispensation of the Bab, however, the energies of a mighty Revelation had to be released within a very short period of time.

Therefore, everything associated with His Faith -- His laws, His teachings, His own public appearances, His ministry, His personal life and His martyrdom -- were all characterized by a dynamism and forcefulness unparalleled in the annals of past religions and which exerted a most potent and electrifying influence upon friend and foe alike.

The laws of the Bayan were promulgated for the sake of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

The aim of the Bab in revealing the laws of His Dispensation was to edify the souls of His followers and mould their conduct so they would be worthy to embrace the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

In the Kitab-i-Asma', one of His celebrated writings, He reveals these thought-provoking words:

But for the sole reason of His being present amongst this people, We would have neither prescribed any law nor laid down any prohibition.

It is only for the glorification of His Name and the exaltation of His Cause that We have enunciated certain laws at Our behest, or forbidden the acts to which We are averse, so that at the hour of His manifestation ye may attain through Him the good-pleasure of God and abstain from the things that are abhorrent unto Him.[104] [104 The Bab, Selections, p.

149.] The Covenant that the Bab made with His followers concerning 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' was firm and irrevocable.

Because His advent was unquestionable, assured as the midday sun, the Bab did not appoint a successor.

Instead, He appointed Mirza Yahya as the leader of the community until the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

So real was His advent that the Bab in the early days of His Revelation in Shiraz despatched Mulla Husayn, the first to believe in the Bab, to Tihiran for the sole purpose of searching for and establishing contact with 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', the One who was the source of the Revelation of the Bab, the object of His adoration and the One in whose path He longed to lay down His life.

Innumerable are the passages in the Bab's writings in which He extols the station of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', portrays His person as majestic, awe-inspiring, incomparable and infinitely glorious, describes the inconceivable greatness of His Revelation, regards Himself as the lowliest servant of His threshold, recognizes Him as the Source of His own Revelation and the object of His adoration and cherishes the desire to lay down His life in His path.

Indeed, no Manifestation of God has ever made such a mighty Covenant with His followers regarding the Manifestation who was to follow.

The following passages from the writings of the Bab are among those that reveal the greatness of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the exalted station of its author.

He writes:

Of ail the tributes I have paid to Him who is to come after Me, the greatest is this, My written confession, that no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference to Him in My Book, the Bayan, do justice to His Cause.[105] [105 The Bab, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

100.] The Bab has clearly stated to His followers that His Revelation is entirely dependent upon 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' and that He is only a servant at His threshold.

In His Qayyumu'l-Asma', the first emanations of His pen, the Bab communes with Baha'u'llah in these words:

Out of utter nothingness, O great and omnipotent Master, Thou hast, through the celestial potency of Thy might, brought me forth and raised me up to proclaim this Revelation.

I have made none other but Thee my trust; I have clung to no will but Thy will...[106] [106 ibid. (The Bab, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

100.)] And in the same book He craves for martyrdom in the path of Baha'u'llah, whom He addresses as the 'Remnant of God'. ...O Thou Remnant of God!

I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love.

Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days.[107] [107 ibid. (The Bab, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, World

Order, p.

100.)] In a Tablet addressed to 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', the Bab writes:

This is an epistle from this lowly servant to the All-Glorious Lord -- He Who hath been aforetime and will be hereafter made manifest.

Verily He is the Most Manifest, the Almighty.[108] [108 The Bab, Selections, p.

3.] There are many passages in the writings of the Bab in which He states that He will be the first to acknowledge the Cause of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' and bow before Him as a lowly servant.

A few examples follow:

Were He to appear this very moment, I would be the first to adore Him, and the first to bow down before Him.[109] [109 The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

171.] 'I, verily, am a believer in Him, and in His Faith, and in His Book, and in His Testimonies, and in His Ways, and all that proceed from Him concerning them.

I glory in My kinship with Him, and pride Myself on My belief in Him.' And likewise, He saith: 'O congregation of the Bayan and all who are therein!

Recognize ye the limits imposed upon you, for such a One as the Point of the Bayan Himself hath believed in Him Whom God shall make manifest, before all things were created.

Therein, verily, do I glory before all who are in the kingdom of heaven and earth.'[110] [110 ibid. p.

154. (The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)] 'The whole of the Bayan is only a leaf amongst the leaves of His Paradise.' And likewise, He saith: 'I am the first to adore Him, and pride Myself on My kinship with Him.'[111] [111 ibid. p.

158. (The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)] The following are utterances of the Bab gleaned from His various writings as He extols the person of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

In the Persian Bayan, the Bab states that 'He Whom God shall make manifest', as the Mouthpiece of God, will proclaim: <p101> Verily, verily, I am God, no God is there but Me; in truth all others except Me are My creatures.

Say, O My creatures!

Me alone, therefore, should ye fear.[112] [112 The Bab, Selections, p.

98.] and again:

He, verily is the One Who, under all conditions, proclaimeth: 'I, in very truth, am God.[113] [113 The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp 154-5.] The glory of Him Whom God shall make manifest is immeasurably above every other glory, and His majesty is far above every other majesty.

His beauty excelleth every other embodiment of beauty, and His grandeur immensely exceedeth every other manifestation of grandeur.

Every light paleth before the radiance of His light, and every other exponent of mercy falleth short before the tokens of His mercy.

Every other perfection is as naught in the face of His consummate perfection, and every other display of might is as nothing before His absolute might.

His names are superior to all other names.

His good-pleasure taketh precedence over any other expression of good-pleasure.

His pre-eminent exaltation is far above the reach of every other symbol of exaltation.

The splendour of His appearance far surpasses that of any other appearance.

His divine concealment is far mote profound than any other concealment.

His loftiness is immeasurably above every other loftiness.

His gracious favour is unequalled by any other evidence of favour.

His power transcendeth every power.

His sovereignty is invincible in the face of every other sovereignty.

His celestial dominion is exalted far above every other dominion.

His knowledge pervadeth all created things, and His consummate power extendeth over all beings.[114] [114 The Bab, Selections, p.

157.] If ye seek God, it behooveth you to seek Him Whom God shall make manifest...[115] [115 ibid. p.

131. (The Bab, Selections.)] Similarly He states:

From the beginning that hath no beginning all men have bowed in adoration before Him Whom God shall make manifest and will continue to do so until the end that hath no end.

How strange then that at the time of His appearance ye should pay homage by day and night unto that which the Point of the Bayan hath enjoined upon you and yet fail to worship Him Whom God shall make manifest.[116] [116 ibid. p.

155. (The Bab, Selections.)] In the Persian Bayan the Bab states that attaining unto the presence of God as promised in the Holy Books would be none other than attaining the presence of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', for man has no access to the Essence of God.[117] In another <p102> passage'[118] He mentions Baha'u'llah by name and categorically states that He is the 'Primal Will' of God.

In several other instances the Bab refers to Baha'u'llah by name.

In a celebrated passage in the Persian Bayan He states: [117 The Bab, Persian Bayan, III, 7.] [118 ibid.

III, 15. (The Bab, Persian Bayan.)] Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Baha'u'llah, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord.

For He will assuredly be made manifest.

God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayan.[119] [119 The Bab, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

25.] The Bab considered His own Revelation to be a gift to 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

These are some of His utterances concerning the Bayan, the Mother Book of the Babi Dispensation:

Suffer not yourselves to be shut out as by a veil from God after He hath revealed Himself For all that hath been exalted in the Bayan is but as a ring upon My hand, and I Myself am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest -- glorified be His mention!

He turneth it as He pleaseth, for whatsoever He pleaseth, and through whatsoever He pleaseth.

He, verily, is the Help in Peril, the Most High.[120] [120 The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp.

154-5.] The whole of the Bayan is only a leaf amongst the leaves of His Paradise.[121] [121 ibid., p.

152. (The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)]

The Bayan is from beginning to end the repository of all of His attributes, and the treasury of both His fire and His light.[122] [122 ibid, p.

174. (The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)] I swear by the most holy Essence of God -- exalted and glorified be He -- that in the Day of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest a thousand perusals of the Bayan cannot equal the perusal of a single verse to be revealed by Him Whom God shall make manifest.[123] [123 The Bab, Selections, p.

104.] I swear by the most sacred Essence of God that but one line of the Words uttered by Him is more sublime than the words uttered by all

that dwell on earth.

Nay, I beg forgiveness for making this comparison.

How could the reflections of the sun in the mirror compare with the wondrous rays of the sun in the visible heaven?[124] [124 ibid. p.

100. (The Bab, Selections.)] The year-old germ that holdeth within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of the whole of the Bayan.[125] [125 The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

151.)] In a Tablet to Mulla Baqir, a Letter of the Living, the Bab testifies, in these words, to the exalted character of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest':
<p103> I have written down in My mention of Him these gem-like words: 'No allusion of Mine can allude unto Him, neither anything mentioned in the Bayan' ... 'Exalted and glorified is He above the power of any one to reveal Him except Himself, or the description of any of His creatures.

I Myself am but the first servant to believe in Him and in His signs, and to partake of the sweet savours of His words from the first-fruits of the Paradise of His knowledge.

Yea, by His glory!

He is the Truth.

There is none other God but Him.

All have risen at His bidding.'[126] [126 ibid. p.

141 (The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)] The Bab repeatedly gave the year nine as the date of the appearance of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

The declaration of the Bab took place in the year 1260 AH (AD 1844).

The year nine is 1269 AH, which began about the middle of October 1852 when Baha'u'llah had already been imprisoned for about two months in the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran, the scene of the birth of His Revelation.

The following are a few passages concerning the year nine: 'In the year nine ye will attain unto all good.' On another occasion He saith: 'In the year nine ye will attain unto the Presence of God.[127] [127 ibid. (The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

141.)] Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause, the realities of the created things will not be made manifest.

All that thou hast as yet seen is but the stage from the moist germ until We clothed it with flesh.

Be patient, until thou beholdest a new creation.

Say: 'Blessed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of Makers!'[128]

[128 ibid. p.

152. (The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)] The Bab also mentioned the year nineteen with regard to the Revelation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

This is a reference to the public declaration of Baha'u'llah in the Garden of Ridvan in Baghdad which occurred 19 years after the inception of the Baha'i Era in 1844:

The Lord of the Day of Reckoning will be manifested at the end of Vahid (19) and the beginning of eighty (1280 AH).[129] [129 The Bab, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

29.] Although the Bab has made several references to the years nine and nineteen, nevertheless He makes it abundantly clear that the time of the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' is entirely in His own hands.

Whenever He appears, all must follow Him.

There are innumerable passages in the Bab's writings exhorting His followers to be watchful, and as soon as the Supreme Manifestation of God reveals Himself, to recognize and follow Him immediately He counsels them to allow no doubt to enter their minds when informed of the appearance of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

He warns them repeatedly to beware lest anything in the world, including the Bayan or any other of the Bab's writings, should become a barrier between them and 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

The following utterance of the Bab, urging His followers to be faithful to 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', is one quotation gleaned from among many:

At the time of the manifestation of Him Whom God shall make manifest everyone should be well trained in the teachings of the Bayan, so that none of the followers may outwardly cling to the Bayan and thus forfeit their allegiance unto Him.

If anyone does so, the verdict of 'disbeliever in God' shall be passed upon Him.[130] [130 The Bab, Selections, p.

85.] The Bab enjoined His followers to read once every 19 days chapter VI:8 of the Bayan so that they might prepare themselves for the Revelation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest':

Beware, beware lest, in the days of His Revelation, the Vahid of the Bayan (eighteen Letters of the Living) shut thee not out as by a veil from Him, inasmuch as this Vahid is but a creature in His sight.

And beware, beware that the words sent down in the Bayan shut thee not out as by a veil from Him.[131] [131 The Bab, quoted in Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

153.] <p105>

of the Covenant of the Bab 4-WT ...notwithstanding this, Mirza Yahya denied Him, dealt falsely with Him, believed Him not, sowed the seeds of doubt, closed his eyes to His manifest verses and turned aside therefrom.

Shortly after Mirza Yahya had settled in Baghdad he decided to engage in a profession to hide his identity.

At first he changed his headgear, adopting a large turban and assuming the name of Haji 'Ali, the Las-Furush[*] He then took a shop in a bazaar in a dilapidated part of the city and started working.

In the meantime, a man of great evil, described by Baha'u'llah as 'the embodiment of wickedness and impiety', 'the prime mover of mischief' and 'one accursed of God', entered the scene to influence Mirza Yahya.

He was the notorious Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, known as the 'Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation'. [132] In the early days of the Faith this man was a student at a theological school in Isfahan but was expelled for reprehensible conduct.

He embraced the Faith during the early part of the ministry of the Bab and later went to Karbila where he joined the ranks of the believers.

In the Kitab-i-Iqan Baha'u'llah alludes to him as that 'one-eyed man, who ... is arising with the utmost malevolence against Us'. [133] Of him Shoghi Effendi writes: [* Las-Furush means a dealer in silk.

It is interesting that Mirza Yahya was known in official circles as Haji 'Ali until the end of his life.] [132 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

164.] [133 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p.

248.] The black-hearted scoundrel who befooled and manipulated this vain and flaccid man [Mirza Yahya] with consummate skill and unyielding persistence was a certain Siyyid Muhammad, a native of Isfahan, notorious for his inordinate ambition, his blind obstinacy and uncontrollable jealousy.

To him Baha'u'llah had later referred in the Kitab-i-Aqdas as the one who had 'led astray' Mirza Yahya and stigmatized him, in one of His Tablets, as the 'source of envy and the quintessence of mischief', while 'Abdu'l-Baha had described the relationship existing between these two as that of 'the sucking child' to the 'much-prized breast' of its mother. [134] [134 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp.

112-13.] <p106> Siyyid Muhammad was in Karbila when Baha'u'llah visited that city in 1851.

As soon as he met Baha'u'llah, whom he considered as merely another Babi, he was struck by His authority and majesty, and when he saw the honour and reverence shown to Him by the Babis and the Shaykhis, he was filled with an uncontrollable envy which never left him till the end of his tragic life.

As already stated, when Baha'u'llah was exiled to Iraq in 1853, the Babis were in great disarray.

They were frightened and helpless people who since the martyrdom of the Bab had been driven underground.

They did not dare associate with each other in public for fear of being persecuted.

When Baha'u'llah arrived in Iraq, He inspired them to come out into the open and gradually through His wise and loving leadership the Babi community acquired a new lease of life.

The ascendancy of Baha'u'llah in public and His rising prestige intensified the fire of jealousy now burning fiercely in Siyyid Muhammad's heart.

Describing the circumstances in which some of the followers of the Bab in Baghdad recognized the station of Baha'u'llah and turned to Him in adoration, Shoghi Effendi recounts the reaction shown by Siyyid Muhammad:

To these evidences of an ever deepening veneration for Baha'u'llah and of a passionate attachment to His person were now being added further grounds for the outbreak of the pent-up jealousies which His mounting prestige evoked in the breasts of His ill-wishers and enemies.

The steady extension of the circle of His acquaintances and admirers; His friendly intercourse with officials including the governor of the city; the unfeigned homage offered Him, on so many occasions and so spontaneously, by men who had once been distinguished companions of Siyyid Kazim; the disillusionment which the persistent concealment of Mirza Yahya, and the unflattering reports circulated regarding his character and abilities, had engendered; the signs of increasing independence, of innate sagacity and inherent superiority and capacity for leadership unmistakably exhibited by Baha'u'llah Himself -- all combined to widen the breach which the infamous and crafty Siyyid Muhammad had sedulously contrived to create.[135] [135 ibid, p.

117. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*)] Knowing Mirza Yahya's weaknesses and fully aware of his ambitions, this scheming Siyyid allied himself closely with him.

His influence upon Mirza Yahya was as effective as it was satanic.

As a result of this close association, Mirza Yahya began to sow the seeds of doubt in the minds of those who had become Baha'u'llah's ardent admirers and were attracted to His person.

By various means, sometimes openly and sometimes subtly, he began to try to discredit Baha'u'llah and misrepresent His motives in reviving the declining fortunes of the Babi community.

While in hiding, Mirza Yahya employed a Persian merchant named Abu'l-Qasim as an intermediary between himself and the believers.

As the nominee of the Bab, Mirza Yahya began, with the help of Siyyid Muhammad and through Abu'l-Qazim, to disseminate his misguided directives to all the Babis in Baghdad.

As this campaign of misrepresentation gathered momentum, the fortunes of the Faith began to decline and many Babis became confused and disenchanted.

It was during these days, too, that Siyyid Muhammad and Mirza Yahya found a way to legitimize their own foul conduct in the community.

This they did by abusing the proclamation which had been made at Badasht concerning the abrogation of the laws of Islam.[*] They claimed that the Babi Dispensation had lifted the bounds (Kasr-i-Hudud) which the laws of God had imposed upon the faithful.

This refers to the annulment of the laws of Islam which had indeed been swept away through the Dispensation of the Bab and not to the annulment of the bounds of human decency and morality.

Mirza Yahya misinterpreted this 'lifting of the bounds' to mean the abrogation of moral principles as well.

Thus he began to commit many reprehensible acts.

For instance, he ordered his servant to assassinate several outstanding individuals among the Babis, as we shall see. [* See Shoghi Effendi, God p.

403 and Nabil, Dawn-Breakers. pp.

193-8] Baha'u'llah is referring to this misleading concept when He admonishes the believers in the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

We verily, have commanded you to refuse the dictates of your evil passions and corrupt desires, and not to transgress the bounds which the Pen of the Most High hath fixed...[136] [136 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

2.] Encouraged by Siyyid Muhammad, Mirza Yahya then made the preposterous claim of being the successor of the Bab -- a position never contemplated by Him.

Indeed, He categorically states in the Persian Bayan that He appointed no successor to Himself.

As a result of such harmful propaganda and acts of treachery and deceit, which kindled dissension among the believers, 'the fire of the Cause of God', as testified by Nabil, 'had been well-nigh quenched in every place'.[137] [137 Nabil, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

113.] Baha'u'llah, in some Tablets revealed during that period, fore-shadows the appearance of severe tests and trials as a result of the machinations of Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad.

In one Tablet He utters these words of warning: <p108> The days of tests are now come.

Oceans of dissension and tribulation are surging, and the Banners of Doubt are, in every nook and corner, occupied in stirring up mischief and in leading men to perdition.[138] [138 Baha'u'llah, quoted in *ibid.* p.

115. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By.*) In the Tablet of Qullu't-Ta'am,[*] Baha'u'llah alludes to His intention to depart from Baghdad; this He did when tests and tribulations reached a climax. {**} When Baha'u'llah left Baghdad and retired to the mountains of Kurdistan, Mirza Yahya, disguised as a shopkeeper and sometimes hidden in a house, was emboldened by His absence.

Directed by Siyyid Muhammad, he embarked upon some of his cowardly activities, both within and outside the Babi community.

As we shall see later, the atrocities committed in his name and on his orders constitute some of the most shameful events in the history of the Faith, events which helped to bring about the near extinction of the Babi religion. [* For a more detailed study of this Tablet see Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Baha'u'llah*, vol.

1, p.

55.] [** See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp.

117-24, quoted in chapter 7 above, for a description of the circumstances leading to Baha'u'llah's retirement to the mountains of Kurdistan.] It must be noted that in order to preserve the integrity of the Faith, Baha'u'llah for several years neither questioned the validity of Mirza Yahya's appointment as the leader of the Babi community nor announced the nullification of his leadership.

The separation between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya took place in Adrianople when a complete break occurred between the Baha'i and Babi Faiths.

The following account by the Greatest Holy Leaf depicting the hardships and difficulties suffered by the Holy Family during Baha'u'llah's absence in the mountains of Kurdistan throws light on their relationship with this unfaithful brother of Baha'u'llah and reveals some of his reprehensible conduct:

At length my father decided to leave Baghdad for a time.

During his absence, Subh-i-Azal [Mirza Yahya] could convince himself whether or no the Babis desired to turn their faces to him as their leader, as he, in the petty conceit of a small mind and undisciplined nature, asserted, would, if given an opportunity, prove to be the case.

Before my father left for his retreat into the wilderness, he commanded the friends to treat Subh-i-Azal with consideration.

He offered him and his family the shelter and hospitality of our house.
<p109> He asked Mirza Musa, my mother and me, to care for them and to do everything in our power to make them comfortable.

Our grief was intense when my father left us.

He told none of us either where he was going or when he would return.

He took no luggage, only a little rice, and some coarse bread.

So we, my mother, my brother 'Abbas and I, clung together in our sorrow and anxiety.

Subh-i-Azal rejoiced, hoping to gain his ends, now that Jamal-i-Mubarak [Baha'u'llah] was no longer present.

Meanwhile, he was a guest in our house.

He gave us much trouble, complaining of the food.

Though all the best and most dainty things were invariably given to him.

He became at this time more than ever terrified lest he should one day be arrested.

He hid himself, keeping the door of our house locked, and stormed at anybody who opened it.

As for me, I led a very lonely life, and would have liked sometimes to make friends with other children.

But Subh-i-Azal would not permit any little friends to come to the house, neither would he let me go out!

Two little girls about my own age lived in the next house.

I used to peep at them; but our guest always came and shouted at me for opening the door, which he promptly locked.

He was always in fear of being arrested, and cared for nothing but his own safety.

We led a very difficult life at this time as well as a lonely one.

He would not even allow us to go to the Hammam to take our baths.

Nobody was permitted to come to the house to help us, and the work therefore was very hard.

For hours every day I had to stand drawing water from a deep well in the house; the ropes were hard and rough, and the bucket was heavy.

My dear mother used to help, but she was not very strong, and my arms were rather weak.

Our guest never helped.

My father having told us to respect and obey this tyrannical person, we tried to do so, but this respect was not easy, as our lives were made so unhappy by him.

During this time the darling baby brother, born after our arrival in Baghdad, became seriously ill.

Our guest would not allow a doctor, or even any neighbour to come to our help.

My mother was heart-broken when the little one died; even then we were not allowed to have anybody to prepare him for burial.

The sweet body of our beautiful baby was given to a man, who took it away, and we never knew even where he was laid.

I remember so clearly the sorrow of those days.

A little while after this, we moved into a larger house -- fortunately Subh-i-Azal was too terrified of being seen, if he came with us -- so he preferred to occupy a little house behind ours.

We still sent his food to him, also provided for his family, now increased, as he had married another wife, a girl from a neighbouring village.

His presence was thus happily removed from our daily life; we were relieved and much happier.[139] [139 Greatest Holy Leaf, quoted in Blomfield, Chosen Highway, pp.

50-2.] <p110> During Baha'u'llah's absence, news reached Baghdad of the martyrdom of a certain believer of Najaf-Abad, near Isfahan.

Mirza Yahya was highly alarmed, fearing that an outbreak of persecution could lead the enemies of the Faith to him, the nominee of the Bab, and cost him his life.

With these thoughts in mind, he decided to change his residence.

With the help of a certain Mirza 'Aliy-i-Tabrizi, he bought a consignment of shoes, disguised himself as a Jew and went to Basra where he remained for some time and occupied himself in his newfound profession of shoe merchant.

Later, when he realized that there was no need for alarm, he returned to Baghdad.

It was during this period under the leadership of Mirza Yahya, inspired by his wicked advisor Siyyid Muhammad, that some of the most heinous atrocities were committed.

Mirza Asadu'llah of Khuy, who was surnamed Dayyan by the Bab and was one of His outstanding followers, was murdered on Mirza Yahya's orders.[*] Another victim was Mirza 'Ali-Akbar, a paternal cousin of the Bab.

These criminal activities of Mirza Yahya were matched only by certain acts of infamy which he committed, bringing dishonour to the Cause of the Bab.

He betrayed the honour of the Bab while Baha'u'llah was in Kurdistan by marrying Fatimih, the Bab's second wife,[**] and after a few days giving her in marriage to Siyyid Muhammad.

When Baha'u'llah learned of this shameful act, His grief knew no bounds.

In several Tablets He severely condemned this outrageous betrayal by one who professed to be the nominee of the Bab.

In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, He states: [* For more information about Dayyan and other atrocities committed by Mirza Yahya see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vols.

1 and 2, and Taherzadeh.

Covenant of Baha'u'llah.] [**See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol. 2, p.

262.] Reflect a while upon the dishonour inflicted upon the Primal Point.

Consider what hath happened.

When this Wronged One, after a retirement of two years during which He wandered through the deserts and mountains, returned to Baghdad, as a result of the intervention of a few, who for a long time had sought Him in the wilderness, a certain Mirza Muhammad-'Ali of Rasht came to see Him, and related, before a large gathering of people, that which had been done, affecting the honour of the Bab, which hath truly overwhelmed all lands with sorrow.

Great God!

How could they have countenanced this most grievous betrayal?

Briefly, We beseech God to aid the perpetrator of this deed to repent, and return unto Him.

He, verily, is the Helper, the All-Wise.[140] [140 Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp.

176-7.] <p111> Those who were in close contact with Mirza Yahya were fully aware of his immoderate sexual appetites.

In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah alludes to this when He addresses Hadiy-i-Dawlat-Abadi[*] in these words: [* Successor of Mirza Yahya.

For details see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4.] Regardest thou as one wronged he who in this world was never dealt a single blow, and who was continually surrounded by five of the handmaidens of God?

And imputest thou unto the True One, Who, from His earliest years until the present day, hath been in the hands of His enemies, and been tormented with the worst afflictions in the world, such charges as the Jews did not ascribe unto Christ?

Hearken unto the voice of this Wronged One, and be not of them that are in utter loss.'[141] [141 ibid. p.

173. (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)] 'Abdu'l-Baha mentions that one of Mirza Yahya's preoccupations was to marry one wife after another.

He mentions eleven wives but some historians have counted three more.

When Baha'u'llah was in the mountains of Kurdistan, Mirza Yahya was driven by an insatiable appetite to satisfy his base and carnal desires.

In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah describes an episode which brought further shame to his already shameful career.

Mirza Yahya sent a message to a certain believer, Aqa Muhammad-Karim, asking for the hand of his daughter in marriage.

The parents of the girl refused to comply and instead gave their daughter in marriage to Abu'l-Qasim, the Persian merchant who had been in the service of Mirza Yahya for some years.

No sooner had this happened than Mirza Yahya ordered the elimination of Abu'l-Qasim and he was never seen again.

As a result of such atrocities committed in the name of religion, the Babi community was utterly degraded in the eyes of the public.

When Baha'u'llah returned from the mountains of Kurdistan the Babis were dispirited and spiritually as dead.

Once again Baha'u'llah took the reins of the Cause in His hands.

He breathed new life into the dying community of the Bab, and through His loving advice and exhortations, both verbally and in writing, raised the morale of the believers in Baghdad and the neighbouring towns.

As indicated earlier, Baha'u'llah Himself testified to the change in these words:

After Our arrival, We revealed, as a copious rain, by the aid of God and His Divine Grace and mercy, Our verses, and sent them to various parts of the world.

We exhorted all men, and particularly <p112> this people, through Our wise counsels and loving admonitions, and forbade them to engage in sedition, quarrels, disputes and conflict.

As a result of this, and by the grace of God, waywardness and folly were changed into piety and understanding, and weapons converted into instruments of peace.[142] [142 *ibid.*, p.

22. (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.)] 'Abdu'l-Baha also states:

Baha'u'llah after His return (from Sulaymaniyyih) made such strenuous efforts in educating and training this community, in reforming its numbers, in regulating its affairs and in rehabilitating its fortunes, that in a short while all these troubles and mischiefs were quenched, and the utmost peace and tranquillity reigned in men's hearts.[143] [143

'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

133.] This transformation of spirit and the ascendancy of the community in Iraq and Persia, in spite of Mirza Yahya, continued until the end of Baha'u'llah's stay in that country.

The outpouring of Baha'u'llah's Revelation in Baghdad began to revive the community of the Bab, not only in Iraq but also in Persia, where thousands of Babis had been left leaderless.

The many Tablets and Epistles which flowed from the Pen of the Most High, especially the *Kitab-i-Iqan* and *Hidden Words*, inspired the believers and breathed a new spirit into their souls.

At the same time, the evidences of ascendancy and grandeur which were increasingly manifested by Baha'u'llah served to inflame the fire of jealousy smouldering in the heart of Mirza Yahya.

Since he could never find the courage to utter a word of opposition to Baha'u'llah when he came into His presence, he sowed the seeds of doubt in the minds of the believers and spread false rumours concerning Baha'u'llah throughout the community in Persia.

The person who conceived and carried out these misguided plans aimed at discrediting Baha'u'llah was Siyyid Muhammad.

To cite one example:

Soon after the *Kitab-i-Iqan* was revealed in honour of Haji Siyyid Muhammad, the uncle of the Bab, several copies were made and circulated among the believers.

This book came as a shattering blow to Mirza Yahya, who could see its overpowering influence on the friends.

Siyyid Muhammad circulated rumours that the *Kitab-i-Iqan* was the work of Mirza Yahya which had been published in Baha'u'llah's name.[*] Such a preposterous claim and similar falsehoods did not influence the rank and file of the believers who, by then, had recognized the corruption and perfidy of Mirza Yahya as compared <p113> with Baha'u'llah's righteousness and divine virtues.

In spite of Mirza Yahya's iniquitous deeds, whether carried out clandestinely or in the open, Baha'u'llah always counselled him to uprightness and purity.

This state of affairs continued until Baha'u'llah was invited to move to Constantinople. [* For more information about this see Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Baha'u'llah*, vol.

2, pp.

68-73.] The news of Baha'u'llah's imminent departure from Baghdad to Istanbul disturbed and frightened Mirza Yahya.

He who had hidden himself from the public eye in Baghdad over the years and who, in spite of his iniquitous deeds, relied heavily on Baha'u'llah's

protection and loving-kindness, found himself suddenly plunged into a grievous situation.

The thought of remaining alone in Baghdad was deeply distressing to him.

Baha'u'llah advised him that since he was free to travel, he should proceed to Persia and there disseminate the writings of the Bab among the believers.[*]

But Mirza Yahya had no interest in teaching the Cause of the Bab or in disseminating its holy scriptures.

He refused to comply with Baha'u'llah's advice on the grounds that the authorities in Persia were ruthlessly persecuting the Babis and therefore his life would be in great danger if he went there. [* At Baha'u'llah's direction these writings had been transcribed by Mirza Yahya some years before and were ready to be taken to Persia.] At one point Mirza Yahya decided to flee to India or Abyssinia (Ethiopia), where he thought he would be free from persecution.

But soon he changed his mind and resigned himself to remaining in Iraq, asking Baha'u'llah to arrange the building of a secure hiding place for him.

He wanted a cottage in Huvaydar, near Baghdad, in a garden owned by Shaykh Sultan.

Baha'u'llah acceded to his request and asked Shaykh Sultan, who was one of His devoted Arab followers, to build the cottage for him.

But as the building work proceeded Mirza Yahya felt increasingly insecure and eventually cancelled his plans in favour of going to Istanbul incognito.

However, he made it clear that he did not intend to travel with Baha'u'llah, for he was very suspicious of the authorities' intention in inviting Baha'u'llah to Istanbul.

He feared that Baha'u'llah and his companions might either be handed over to Persian officials or killed on the way.

To go on this long journey Mirza Yahya needed a passport.

Not wishing to identify himself to the authorities, he sent a certain Haji Muhammad-Kazim, who resembled him, to the government house to procure a passport for him in his newly assumed name of Mirza 'Aliy-i-Kirmanshahi.

He then proceeded to Mosul in disguise, accompanied by an Arab servant, and reached there before Baha'u'llah's caravan arrived.

Baha'u'llah allowed Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani to be included in the party that accompanied Him to Istanbul.

Whenever possible, <p114> Baha'u'llah ensured that the trouble-makers and those who were not inwardly faithful to Him were not left at large among the believers, often keeping such people close to His own person so as to be able to check their mischief.

Although Siyyid Muhammad was a treacherous individual who caused untold difficulties for Baha'u'llah and His devoted companions, he was never barred, while in Baghdad, from attaining His presence or taking part in the gatherings of the believers.

By allowing Siyyid Muhammad to accompany Him in His exile, Baha'u'llah protected the believers in Iraq and elsewhere from the man's satanic influence.

Of course, the faithful companions of Baha'u'llah, both those who travelled with Him and those who remained behind, were fully aware of the iniquitous deeds of that evil and hypocritical individual who used to pretend, whenever he came into their gatherings, to be a loyal believer himself.

Mirza Yahya waited in Mosul until Baha'u'llah's caravan arrived.

Then he sent his servant to inform Aqay-i-Kalim (Baha'u'llah's most faithful brother, known also as Mirza Musa) of his whereabouts in the city.

In one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha tells the story in these words:

When we reached Mosul, and a camp was set up on the bank of the Tigris, where the notables of the town flocked group after group to come into His blessed presence [Baha'u'llah's], on a midnight that aforementioned Arab, Zahir, came to say that his Honour [Mirza Yahya] was staying at an inn outside the city, and wished to meet someone.

My uncle, Mirza Musa, went there at midnight and met him.

Mirza Yahya asked about his family, and was told that they were there and had their own tent and he could visit them.

He said that he did not at all consider it advisable to do so, but he would accompany the caravan with which his family too would be travelling.

Thus he continued to Diyarbakr, a black cord round his head, and a begging-bowl in his hand, consorting only with the Arabs and the Turks in the caravan.

At Diyarbakr, he sent word that he would visit his family at night and join the main body of the caravan in the morning.

That was done.

Since Haji Siyyid Muhammad knew him, he gave out that he was a Persian dervish, an acquaintance of his, and visited him, but other friends because they had never seen him [Mirza Yahya], did not recognize him.[144] [144 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Balyuzi, King of Glory, pp.

183-4.] Mirza Yahya, who was now introducing himself as Haji 'Ali, pretended that he did not know anybody in the party, including Baha'u'llah, and claimed to be returning from Mecca.

He was not recognized by most of the companions because he had been living in

disguise and hiding himself from the believers while in Iraq.

The crafty Siyyid Muhammad had the nerve to introduce Mirza Yahya as a dervish friend of his to Baha'u'llah's companions but they discovered his real identity as they approached their destination.

In this fashion Mirza Yahya, whose <p115> wives were among the female group travelling with Baha'u'llah, accompanied them until they reached the shores of Istanbul.

There his identity was disclosed and everyone knew who he was.

But during his stay 'in Istanbul, Mirza Yahya did not dare to reveal his true identity to the authorities.

To Shamsi Big, who was appointed by the government to act as host to Baha'u'llah, he introduced himself as a servant in Baha'u'llah's household and he would sometimes sleep in the servants' quarters to prove his case.

When Baha'u'llah was exiled to Adrianople, Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad went with him.

Baha'u'llah, in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, mentions that Mirza Yahya followed Him from place to place:

Wherever this Wronged One went Mirza Yahya followed Him...

The Siyyid of Isfahan, however, surreptitiously duped him.

They committed that which caused the greatest consternation.' [145] [145 Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

168.] <p116>

11

Open

Rebellion of Mirza Yahya 4-WT Would that he had been content therewith!

Nay, he even attempted to shed the sacred blood (of Baha'u'llah) and then raised a great clamour and tumult around him, attributing unto Baha'u'llah malevolence and cruelty towards himself.

What sedition he stirred up and what a storm of mischief he raised whilst in the Land of Mystery (Adrianople)!

At last, he wrought that which caused the Day-Star of the world to be sent an exile to this, the Most Great Prison, and sorely wronged, and in the West of this Great Prison He did set.

Shedding of the sacred blood is a reference to Mirza Yahya's attempt on the life of Baha'u'llah.

Soon after his arrival in Adrianople, Mirza Yahya realized that there was no longer any danger to his life because within a short period Baha'u'llah had won the respect and admiration of the dignitaries, including the governor of Adrianople.

The inhabitants of the city showed such a spirit of friendliness and

cooperation towards the exiled community that Baha'u'llah instructed the believers to engage in some work or profession and integrate themselves into the community.

Since there was no apparent reason for persecution of the Baha'is, Mirza Yahya emboldened by Siyyid Muhammad, decided to emerge from his self-imposed seclusion.

Through his constant association with Siyyid Muhammad and a certain Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani, an infamous mischief-maker notorious for his vulgar conduct and foul language, Mirza Yahya began openly to sound his rebellion against Baha'u'llah.

He who always felt so insignificant when he came face to face with Baha'u'llah and fell speechless in His presence, was now, prompted by his wicked lieutenant, to rise up against Him and attempt to wrest the leadership of the community from His hands.

To achieve this long-cherished ambition, Mirza Yahya embarked upon a plan which involved him in further acts of crime.

He decided that the only way to accomplish his goal was to take Baha'u'llah's life, for he knew that he had neither the courage nor the personality to confront Him.

Indeed, it was not unthinkable for a man who had already masterminded the assassination of several believers in <p117> Baghdad, including the Bab's own cousin, to contemplate ways and means of taking Baha'u'llah's life.

The first attempt was carried out by Mirza Yahya's own hands when he poisoned Baha'u'llah with a deadly substance.

Shoghi Effendi describes this shameful episode:

Desperate designs to poison Baha'u'llah and His companions, and thereby reanimate his own defunct leadership, began, approximately a year after their arrival in Adrianople, to agitate his mind.

Well aware of the erudition of his half-brother, Aqay-i-Kalim, in matters pertaining to medicine, he, under various pretexts, sought enlightenment from him regarding the effects of certain herbs and poisons, and then began, contrary to his wont, to invite Baha'u'llah to his home, where, one day, having smeared His tea-cup with a substance he had concocted, he succeeded in poisoning Him sufficiently to produce a serious illness which lasted no less than a month, and which was accompanied by severe pains and high fever, the aftermath of which left Baha'u'llah with a shaking hand till the end of His life.

So grave was His condition that a foreign doctor, named Shishman, was called in to attend Him.

The doctor was so appalled by His livid hue that he deemed His case hopeless, and, after having fallen at His feet, retired from His presence

without prescribing a remedy.

A few days later that doctor fell ill and died.

Prior to his death Baha'u'llah had intimated that doctor Shishman had sacrificed his life for Him.

To Mirza Aqa Jan, sent by Baha'u'llah to visit him, the doctor had stated that God had answered his prayers, and that after his death a certain Dr Chupan, whom he knew to be reliable, should, whenever necessary, be called in his stead.[146] [146 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp.

165-6.] Despite this heinous crime, Baha'u'llah advised His followers not to spread the news of the poisoning.

But Mirza Yahya lost his nerve and shamefully accused Baha'u'llah of trying to poison him, and as a result, the story had to be told.

The believers and those who were in close contact with them then became aware that the poison administered by Mirza Yahya had been the cause of Baha'u'llah's serious illness.

The contrast between light and darkness, between truth and falsehood, Baha'u'llah's sin-covering eye and Mirza Yahya's corruption and wickedness, was evident to all.

This episode created deep turmoil and agitation within the community.

Some time passed and the situation was beginning to simmer down when another serious attempt by Mirza Yahya to assassinate Baha'u'llah brought about an unprecedented commotion within the community, resulting in the final parting of the ways between Baha'u'llah and His unfaithful half-brother. <p118> This time Mirza Yahya made plans to carry out his sinister designs in the public bath[*] frequented by Baha'u'llah.

For some time he began to show favours to Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani,[**] a barber who served in the household of Baha'u'llah and was His bath attendant. eventually Mirza Yahya intimated to Salmani in a subtle way that he could render a great service to the Cause if he were to assassinate Baha'u'llah while attending Him in the bath. [* Public baths, known in the West as Turkish baths, were the only type available to people in those days because houses had no baths built in them.

These baths, with their warm and steamy atmosphere, were used by people as a place to wash and relax for hours.

This meant that a public bath was a place for social occasions where people gathered, exchanged news and discussed many topics.

In these baths people were not fully naked and wore loin-cloths.

Often, friends used to go to the bath on the same day in order to spend time together.

The baths provided customers with attendants who washed them and performed other services such as the applying of henna, shaving and massaging.

Important people usually had their own bath attendants.] [** For a story of his life and services, see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2 p.

155.

Salmani should not be confused with Shaykh Salman.] The following is a summary translation of Salmani's memoirs describing this shameful incident:

One day I went to the bath and awaited the arrival of the Blessed Beauty.

Azal [Mirza Yahya] arrived first.

I attended to him and applied henna.

He began to talk to me.

For some time he had been trying hard to make me his follower but he was doing this in a secret way.

He said to me: 'Last night I dreamt that someone had a sweeping brush in his hand and was sweeping the area around me.'***] He gave me to understand that this person was the Blessed Beauty.

From the tone of his conversation, I knew that he wanted me to do something for him but he did not tell me anything and soon left the bath... [*** The connotation of these words in Persian is that Baha'u'llah was a humble servant of Mirza Yahya.] I was deep in my thoughts concerning the words of Azal.

I did not understand his purpose in implying that the Blessed Beauty was sweeping the floor around him.

However, it was quite clear that he wanted me to carry out a special task for him.

At the same time I noted that Haji Mirza Ahmad was trying to convert me to follow Azal.

During the course of several days he persisted in trying to win me over.

He said, 'A certain Mirza Na'im, the former Governor of Nayriz, killed many believers and perpetrated many crimes against the Cause.' He then praised courage and bravery in glowing terms. He said that some were brave by nature and at the right time they would manifest that quality in their actions.

He then continued the <p119> story of Mirza Na'im. 'From the persecuted family of the believers there remained a young boy aged ten or eleven.

One day, when Mirza Na'im went into the bath, this boy went in with a knife.

As he was coming out of the water, the boy stabbed him and ripped his belly open.

Mirza Na'im screamed and his servants who were in the ante-room rushed in.

They went for the boy, attacked and beat him.

Then they went to see how their master was.

The boy, although wounded, rose up and stabbed him again.' Azal praised courage again and said, 'How wonderful it is for a man to be brave.

Now, see what they are doing to the Cause of God.

Everybody harms it, everyone has arisen against me, even my brother.

I have no comfort whatsoever and am in a wretched state.' His tone implied that he, the nominee of the Bab, was the wronged one, and his Brother (I take refuge in God!) was the usurper and aggressor.

Then he once more praised courage and said that the Cause of God needed help.

In all this talk, the tone of his remarks, the story of Mirza Na'im, the praise of courage and his encouragement to me, he was in fact telling me to kill Baha'u'llah.

The effect of all this upon me was so disturbing that in all my life I had never felt so shattered.

It was as if the whole building was falling upon my head.

I was frightened; without uttering a word I went out to the ante-room:

My mind was in a state of the utmost agitation.

I thought to myself that I would go inside and cut Azal's head off regardless of consequences.

Then I thought, to kill him is easy but perhaps I would offend the Blessed Beauty.

One thing which prevented me from carrying out my intention was the thought that if I killed him and then went into the presence of the Blessed Beauty, and He asked me why I had killed him, what answer could I give?

I returned to the bath and being extremely angry, I shouted at him, 'Go and get lost, clear of!' He whimpered and trembled and asked me to pour water over him.

I complied.

Washed or unwashed he went out in a state of great trepidation and I have never seen him since.

My state of mind, however, was such that nothing could calm me.

As it happened, that day the Blessed Beauty did not come to the bath, but Aqa Mirza Musay-i-Kalim [Baha'u'llah's faithful brother] came.

I told him that Azal had set me on fire with his sinister suggestion.

Aqa Mirza Musa said: 'He has been thinking of this for years, this man has always been thinking in this way.

Do not pay any attention to him.' He counselled me to disregard the whole thing and went inside the bath.

However, when my work was finished in the bath, I went to the Master [Abdu'l-Baha] and reported to Him what Mirza Yahya had told me, and how I was filled with rage and wanted to kill him ... the Master said, 'This is something that you alone know.

Do not mention it to anyone, it is better that it remain hidden.' I then went to Mirza Aqa Jan, reported the details of the incident, and asked <p120> him to tell Baha'u'llah.

He returned and said, 'Baha'u'llah says to tell Ustad Muhammad-'Ali not to mention this to anyone.' That night I collected all the writings of Azal and went to the tea-room[*] of Baha'u'llah's house and burnt them all in the brazier.

Before doing so, I showed them to seven or eight of the believers who were present.

They all saw that they were the writings of Azal.

They all protested to me and asked me the reason for doing this.

I said, 'Until today I esteemed Azal highly, but now he is less than a dog in my sight.' [**] [** Reception room of Baha'u'llah where the believers usually gathered.] [** In Persian, this designation is much more insulting than it sounds in English.] Because of Baha'u'llah's sin-covering eye and His loving kindness towards Mirza Yahya and because Yahya was Baha'u'llah's half-brother, the faithful believers treated him with respect and consideration.

But after these vicious attacks on Baha'u'llah, it was natural for them to turn their backs on him.

After Salmani failed to keep the details of the incident to himself, the news spread and created a great upheaval in the community.

At this point Baha'u'llah decided to formally declare to Mirza Yahya as the nominee of the Bab, His claim to be the Author of a new Revelation, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', as foretold by the Bab.

Of course, Mirza Yahya was well aware of Baha'u'llah's declaration in the Garden of Ridvan and the Tablets subsequently revealed by Him.

But now the time had come for the Supreme Manifestation of God to formally announce His station to the one who was nominated by the Bab to be the leader of His followers until the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

In order to communicate this message to Mirza Yahya, Baha'u'llah revealed the Suriy-i-Amr (Surih of Command) in His own handwriting and instructed His amanuensis Mirza Aqa Jan to take the Tablet to Mirza Yahya, read it aloud and demand a conclusive reply from him.

On being apprised of the contents of the Tablet and the claims of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Yahya indicated that he needed some time during which to meditate on the subject.

The following day he sent a message to Baha'u'llah that he himself had become the recipient of divine Revelation and it was incumbent upon all to obey and follow him.

Such a claim maintained by so perfidious a person evoked the wrath of God and brought about the eventual split between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya.

It must be remembered that the majority of the believers in Adrianople were faithful to Baha'u'llah and until then had associated freely with Mirza Yahya and a small number of his henchmen; now the situation changed.

Mirza Yahya's response to the Suriy-i-Amr- was a clear signal for separation.

Baha'u'llah, who was then residing in the house of Amru'llah, changed His residence to the house of Rida Big.

This was on 10 March 1866.

Only the members of His own family and one servant moved to this house and He allowed no one else to attain His presence.

As a result, the community of exiles was cut off from His blessed person and left entirely on its own.

This withdrawal, similar to His withdrawal to the mountains of Kurdistan a few years earlier, plunged the community into a grievous state and created severe tests and trials for the believers.

On the other hand, it afforded each one of the exiles the opportunity to choose between Baha'u'llah and His unfaithful brother.

Baha'u'llah's faithful followers, those lovers of His beauty, became dispirited.

The light had departed from their midst and they were enveloped in a darkness that obscured their vision and left them helpless and disconsolate.

Aqay-i-Kalim, Baha'u'llah's faithful brother who carried the weight of responsibility during Baha'u'llah's retirement in the house of Rida Big, recounted to Nabil these words:

That day witnessed a most great commotion.

All the companions lamented in their separation from the Blessed Beauty.[147] [147 Quoted in ibid. p.

167. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] Another witness to those grievous days has recorded:

Those days were marked by tumult and confusion.

We were sore-perplexed and greatly feared lest we be permanently deprived of the bounty of His presence.[148] [148 Quoted in ibid. p.

167. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] Even those who were unfaithful to Baha'u'llah were disturbed by His withdrawal, as they knew only too well that it was through His guiding influence that they were living in relative safety and security.

These men were now left to their own devices and were soon engulfed in a most troublesome situation created by their own hands.

The retirement of Baha'u'llah to the house of Rida Big and His refusal to meet with any of the exiles created a situation in which everyone was left by himself to decide his own spiritual destiny.

Those few who were inclined towards Mirza Yahya congregated together and began to launch their attacks on the faithful ones, while the rest occupied their time mostly in prayer and devotions, supplicating God to relieve them of this grievous separation from their Lord.

Before taking up residence in the house of Rida Big, Baha'u'llah ordered His brother Aqay-i-Kalim to send half of the furniture, bedding <p122> and utensils to the house of Mirza Yahya.

He also sent him certain historic relics such as the rings of the Bab, His seals and manuscripts.

These were the items which the Bab had sent to Baha'u'llah prior to His martyrdom and which were coveted by Mirza Yahya.

Baha'u'llah also asked Darvish Sidq-'Ali, one of His faithful followers, to act as a servant in the household of Mirza Yahya.

Although loath to serve the one who was in his sight the embodiment of deceit and falsehood, this devoted soul wholeheartedly obeyed Baha'u'llah and engaged himself in Mirza Yahya's service.

Soon other circumstances relieved him of this most unpleasant task.

As already mentioned, those few individuals who were weak and vacillating in their faith joined Mirza Yahya and, emboldened by the absence of Baha'u'llah, began their contemptible activities against the Faith of God.

Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad started a vigorous letter-writing campaign to discredit Baha'u'llah in the eyes of the believers and the authorities.

They loaded their letters with lies and disgraceful calumnies, accusing

Baha'u'llah of the very crimes they themselves had committed, and disseminated them far and wide among the believers in Persia and Iraq.

These slanderous letters disturbed the Babi community and confused many.

Some weaker believers lost their faith altogether; a small number were inclined towards Mirza Yahya.

A few wrote to Baha'u'llah for clarification.

As a result several Tablets were revealed in this period describing the true state of affairs.

However, the majority of the believers remained faithful to the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

These souls arose with determination and dedication to vindicate the truth of the Cause of God.

Many of them, such as Nabil-A'zam, Munib and Ahmad-i-Yazdi,[*] who travelled throughout Persia, championed the Cause of Baha'u'llah and defended it valiantly against the onslaught of the unfaithful. [* See Taherzadeh, Revelation of vol.

2 for accounts of these two.] It was through Mirza Yahya's own actions that the news of his infidelity to the Cause of God was effectively communicated to the community in Persia and signalled the permanent rupture between him and his illustrious brother.

While Baha'u'llah had withdrawn Himself from the community in Adrianople, Siyyid Muhammad and Mirza Yahya were actively engaged in damaging His reputation in government circles.

The latter sent a petition to the governor, Khurshid Pasha, and his assistant, 'Aziz Pasha.

It was couched in obsequious language, contained false statements about Baha'u'llah, and was aimed at discrediting Him in the eyes of the governor who was one of His ardent admirers. <p123> Later, the governor shared this letter with Baha'u'llah and its contents became known to the believers.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali,[*] who arrived in Adrianople a few months after this shameful episode, writes of Mirza Yahya's petition to the authorities in these words: [* For his story see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2.] When Azal arose in hostility with his satanic spirit to oppose and challenge the Blessed Beauty, through calumnies and false accusations, he wrote a letter to the Governor of Adrianople.

We all saw this letter:

It opened with these words: 'May my soul and body be a sacrifice to thee.' It went on to say: 'O thou 'Aziz ['Aziz Pasha], we come to you in destitution, grant us some corn.' He continues falsely to accuse the

Ancient Beauty of having cut off his livelihood.

The opening sentence of his letter, the statement of his needs and the complaints all demonstrate that God cannot be confused with man, and that there is no likeness between the two.

We see the contrast, for instance, in these words of the Ancient Beauty as He addressed the late Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz: [**] 'O thou Ra'is [Chief], hearken to the voice of God, the Supreme Ruler, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

He verily calleth between earth and heaven and summoneth mankind to the scene of effulgent glory.' [** This Tablet is actually addressed to 'Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir of the Sultan.] In this blessed Tablet, Baha'u'llah prophesies that the Sultan will lose his throne and the country will pass out of his hands...

To return to our subject:

Baha'u'llah had, through an intermediary, proved to the Governor that these allegations [by Mirza Yahya] were false and, in a message, explained to him that these calumnies were designed to hurt and humiliate Him.' [149] [149 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, p.

76.] Concerning these distasteful events, Shoghi Effendi writes:

He [Baha'u'llah] was soon after informed that this same brother [Mirza Yahya] had despatched one of his wives to the government house to complain that her husband had been cheated of his rights, and that her children were on the verge of starvation -- an accusation that spread far and wide and, reaching Constantinople, became, to Baha'u'llah's profound distress, the subject of excited discussion and injurious comment in circles that had previously been greatly impressed by the high standard which His noble and dignified behaviour had set in that city. [150] [150 Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

167-8.] Some time later in a Tablet [***] to Shaykh Salman, Baha'u'llah reveals the agony of His heart during this period and recounts the calumnies <p124> of Mirza Yahya concerning his share of the government allowance, which was always divided equitably between the exiles.

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah explains that had it not been for the sake of His companions in exile, He would have never accepted any allowance from the authorities.

Indeed, soon after these heart-rending events, Baha'u'llah refused to draw this allowance and sometimes had to sell some of His belongings in order to provide for His daily needs. [*** See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2, ch.

13, and vol.

1, pp.

109-13.] As a result of the many calumnies which were circulating in Adrianople and were extremely hurtful to Him and His loved ones, Baha'u'llah ended His retirement which had lasted about two months and came forward to check the misdeeds of His wicked opponents.

It was at this time that Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani was finally and effectively expelled from the community and the parting of Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya -- referred to as 'the Most Great Separation' -- became official.

The two-month withdrawal of Baha'u'llah was an act of providence in that it identified the unfaithful.

When Baha'u'llah emerged every one of the exiles knew to which side he belonged.

The few gathered around Mirza Yahya intensified their evil activities and spread their shameful calumnies further to the heart of the Ottoman Empire, poisoning the minds of the Grand Vizir and the Sultan against Baha'u'llah.

The announcement by Baha'u'llah of 'the Most Great Separation' had an electrifying effect on the community of believers in Persia.

The great majority of the followers of the Bab, estimated by Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali in his immortal Bihjatu's-Sudur to be about 99 percent, embraced the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

From that time onward those who followed Mirza Yahya were identified as the breakers of the Covenant of the Bab and became known as Azalis, after Mirza Yahya's title Subh-i-Azal.

At the same time the followers of Baha'u'llah were designated as the people of Baha, the Baha'is.

The separation between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya was a clear signal for the followers of Baha'u'llah to dissociate themselves from Mirza Yahya and those who had gathered around him.

Mirza Yahya was now living with his family in a separate house and Siyyid Muhammad was among the Muslims.

For about 18 months these two continued to devise ways and means of discrediting Baha'u'llah and His faithful companions.

They spread calumnies and falsehoods among the citizens of Adrianople and the authorities in Istanbul, all aimed at undermining the foundations of the Cause of God and tarnishing the good reputation and honour of its Author.

In Persia, too, Mirza Yahya distributed among the believers his letters loaded with untrue stories.

The confusion created by his venomous statements gave rise to much conflict and disturbance in that community. <p125> About one-and-a-half years passed and

Mirza Yahya's intrigues and machinations had reached their climax when suddenly the hand of God struck him down, brought about his doom and degraded him in the eyes of his supporters and the authorities in Adrianople.

The incident that precipitated this downfall was entirely of his own making.

Siyyid Muhammad was heavily engaged in his activities aimed at publicly discrediting Baha'u'llah.

In the course of his plottings he came up with the idea of arranging a public confrontation between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya.

In advocating this confrontation, Siyyid Muhammad was confident that Baha'u'llah would never accept such a challenge because he had observed over the years that Baha'u'llah usually did not seek to appear in public.

He also knew of His forbearance and sin-covering attitude whenever He was confronted with those who opposed Him.

For these reasons he apprised his Muslim associates of his plans.

This type of event, known in Islam as 'mubahilih', goes back to the days of Muhammad when a deputation of the unbelievers of Najran in Medina challenged the Prophet to a confrontation.

It is a challenge between truth and falsehood.

The two parties come together face to face and it is believed that in such a confrontation the power of truth will destroy the ungodly.

Siyyid Muhammad confidently asserted to the Muslim community that whereas Mirza Yahya was ready and willing to take part in a public confrontation, Baha'u'llah was not.

While these wild statements were circulating in Adrianople, the believers in Persia were in a state of agitation because of Mirza Yahya's false propaganda.

One of the believers from Shiraz, a certain Mir Muhammad-i-Mukari (driver of beasts of burden) came to Adrianople.

This believer had accompanied the Bab as a caravan-driver from Baghdad to Mecca and, later, accompanied Baha'u'llah from Baghdad to Istanbul.

Mir Muhammad was of the opinion that a public confrontation would help to clarify the situation.

He urged Siyyid Muhammad to induce Mirza Yahya to meet Baha'u'llah in a public place for all to see and he himself promised to invite Baha'u'llah to accept the challenge.

This he did and Baha'u'llah responded positively to his request.

Shoghi Effendi describes this episode:

Foolishly assuming that his illustrious Brother would never countenance such a proposition, Mirza Yahya appointed the mosque of Sultan Salim as

the place for their encounter.

No sooner had Baha'u'llah been informed of this arrangement than He set forth, on foot, in the heat of midday, and accompanied by this same Mir Muhammad, for the afore-mentioned mosque, which was situated <p126> in a distant part of the city, reciting, as He walked, through the streets and markets, verses, in a voice and in a manner that greatly astonished those who saw and heard Him. 'O Muhammad!', are some of the words He uttered on that memorable occasion, as testified by Himself in a Tablet, 'He Who is the Spirit hath, verily, issued from His habitation, and with Him have come forth the souls of God's chosen ones and the realities of His Messengers.

Behold, then, the dwellers of the realms on high above Mine head, and all the testimonies of the Prophets in My grasp.

Say:

Were all the divines, all the wise men, all the kings and rulers on earth to gather together, I, in very truth, would confront them, and would proclaim the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

I am He Who feareth no one, though all who are in heaven and all who are on earth rise up against Me...

This is Mine hand which God hath turned white for all the worlds to behold.

This is My staff; were We to cast it down, it would, of a truth, swallow up all created things.' Mir Muhammad, who had been sent ahead to announce Baha'u'llah's arrival, soon returned, and informed Him that he who had challenged His authority wished, owing to unforeseen circumstances, to postpone for a day or two the interview.

Upon His return to His house Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet, wherein He recounted what had happened, fixed the time for the postponed interview, sealed the Tablet with His seal, entrusted it to Nabil, and instructed him to deliver it to one of the new believers, Mulla Muhammad-i-Tabrizi, for the information of Siyyid Muhammad, who was in the habit of frequenting that believer's shop.

It was arranged to demand from Siyyid Muhammad, ere the delivery of that Tablet, a sealed note pledging Mirza Yahya, in the event of failing to appear at the trysting-place, to affirm in writing that his claims were false.

Siyyid Muhammad promised that he would produce the next day the document required, and though Nabil, for three successive days, waited in that shop for the reply, neither did the Siyyid appear, nor was such a note sent by him.

That undelivered Tablet, Nabil, recording twenty-three years later this

historic episode in his chronicle, affirms was still in his possession, 'as fresh as the day on which the Most Great Branch had penned it, and the seal of the Ancient Beauty had sealed and adorned it', a tangible and irrefutable testimony to Baha'u'llah's established ascendancy over a routed opponent.[151] [151 ibid pp.

168-9. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, the celebrated Baha'i teacher, was in Adrianople at the time and recounts the events as he witnessed them on that memorable day The following is a summary translation of his memoirs:

The meeting was to be on Friday at the mosque of Sultan Salim at the time of the congregational prayer when the Muslims gather <p127> inside in great numbers...

Mir Muhammad-i-Mukari from Shiraz who was a Babi ... could not imagine that Azal had broken the Covenant.

So he begged the Blessed Beauty to enlighten him.

Baha'u'llah said to him that if ever Azal came face to face with Him at a meeting-place, then he could consider Azal's claims to be true.

Mir Muhammad accepted this statement as a criterion for distinguishing between truth and falsehood and he endeavoured to bring this meeting about.

The news and date of the confrontation became known among the peoples of the Muslim, Christian and Jewish religions in the city.

All of them had heard of the miracles of Moses and the story of His confrontation with Pharaoh.

And now they were expecting the meeting face to face in the mosque between His Holiness the Shaykh Effendi [a designation by which the people called Baha'u'llah to express their reverence for Him] and Mirza 'Ali [for fear of being recognized, Azal called himself by this name], who had denied Him.

Therefore, from the morning of Friday until noon, a large multitude drawn from the followers of these three religions had thronged the area between the house of Amru'llah ... and the entrance to the mosque.

The crowd was so large that it was difficult to move about.

Baha'u'llah, the Day-Star of Glory, emerged from His home ... and as He passed through the crowd, people showed such reverence as is difficult to describe.

They greeted Him with salutations, bowed and opened the way for Him to pass.

Many of them prostrated themselves at His feet and kissed them.

Baha'u'llah, the countenance of majesty and omnipotence, in acknowledgement greeted the crowd by raising His hands (as was customary among the Ottomans), and expressed His good wishes.

This continued all the way to the mosque.

As soon as He entered the mosque, the preacher, who was delivering his discourse, became speechless or perhaps he forgot his words.

Baha'u'llah went forward, seated Himself and then gave permission for the preacher to continue.

Eventually the preaching and prayers came to an end.

But Azal did not turn up.

We heard that he had feigned illness and asked to be excused.

...When Baha'u'llah was about to leave the mosque He said: 'We' owe a visit to the Mawlavis.

We had better go to their takyih.' As He rose to go, the Governor of Adrianople and other dignitaries, together with the divines, availed themselves of the opportunity to be in His presence and so they accompanied Him.

As a token of their humility and courtesy, the Governor, the Shaykhu'l-Islam, the 'ulama [divines and men of learning] and other dignitaries walked four or five steps behind Baha'u'llah while the stream of His utterance was flowing.

Sometimes, through His grace and loving-kindness, Baha'u'llah would stop and beckon the Governor and the others to walk in front. [*] But they would refuse to do so.

In this way, with majesty and glory born of God, Baha'u'llah arrived in the takyih.[152] [* When an important person walked, it was considered discourteous if his subordinates walked in front of, or abreast of, him except at night, when someone would carry a lantern before him.

In order to show their humility, subordinates always walked a few steps behind.

For example, this is how the oriental believers conducted themselves when they were walking with Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha or Shoghi Effendi.] [152 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, pp.

77-8.] Mirza Yahya was now discredited in the eyes of many in Adrianople.

In Persia the news of this episode spread among the believers.

A Tablet known as Lawh-i-Mubahilih, addressed to Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani and describing this event, reached the Baha'i community in that land and caused some wavering souls among the friends to recognize the power and majesty of Baha'u'llah in breaking up, once and for all, this great 'idol' of the Babi community.

This dramatic downfall of Mirza Yahya was, as testified by Shoghi Effendi, clearly foretold by St Paul in the following passage:

Let no man deceive you by any means; for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God...

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming...[153] [153 2 Thess.

2:3,4, 8.] The downfall of this perfidious figure who betrayed his Lord and rose up against Him coincided with an unprecedented outpouring from the Supreme Pen.

The verses of God were sent down in great profusion and resulted, soon afterwards, in the proclamation of His Message to the kings and rulers of the world.

The casting out of Mirza Yahya and his followers from the community of the Most Great Name brought about his gradual downfall and ultimate extinction in later years.

In the summer of 1868 the edict of Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, which condemned Baha'u'llah to life-long imprisonment in the fortress-city of 'Akka in the Holy Land, sent Mirza Yahya to the island of Cyprus.

There he was confined in the city of Famagusta until 1878 when the island passed from Turkish to British rule.

He then decided to remain in Cyprus and receive a pension from the British government, living freely on that island until his death in 1912.

During this time he achieved nothing significant. <p129> 'Abdu'l-Baha, in one of His talks, describes how in all these years Mirza Yahya did not succeed in converting a single soul on that island to his cause.

Instead he spent his life in the company of his many wives and was father to several ill-bred children of low intelligence and capacity.

4-WT At last, he wrought that which caused the Day-Star of the world to be sent an exile to this, the Most Great Prison, and sorely wronged, and in the West of this Great Prison He did set.

The circumstances that brought about the exile of Baha'u'llah to the Most Great Prison in 'Akka are briefly described in chapter 8.

One of the main contributory factors prompting 'Ali-Pasha, the Grand Vizir, to submit to the Sultan his recommendation for Baha'u'llah's exile, was the exaggerated reports and falsehoods he received from Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad.

Their campaign of misrepresentation, lasting almost 18 months, included letters from Mirza Yahya to government officials.

These were filled with calumnies confirmed by a constant flow of anonymous letters written by Siyyid Muhammad and his accomplice, Aqa Jan Big, known as Kaj Kulah, and were all aimed at discrediting Baha'u'llah.

They perverted the writings of Baha'u'llah and accused Him, among other things, of having conspired, with the aid of His Persian followers, with the Bulgarian leaders and high-ranking officials of certain European powers, to conquer Constantinople and overthrow the government.

Such preposterous claims alarmed the authorities and hastened their resolve to banish Baha'u'llah to the prison city of 'Akka where they thought His Cause would die away and be consigned to oblivion forever!. <p130>

12 The Arch-Breaker of
the Covenant of Baha'u'llah 5-WT O ye that stand fast and firm in the
Covenant!

The Centre of Sedition, the Prime Mover of mischief Mirza Muhammad 'Ali
bath passed out from under the shadow of the Cause, hath broken the
Covenant...

In many of His Tablets, as in His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha has referred to His half-brother Mirza Muhammad-'Ali as the Centre of Sedition, the Prime Mover of Mischief and the Arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

These designations indicate that it was he who, immediately after the passing of Baha'u'llah, initiated the act of Covenant-breaking, was the motivating force misleading many believers and was the one who, for over half a century, led the Covenant-breakers against 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

Ambition for leadership of the Baha'i community is the most common feature of those who have violated the Covenant.

In the case of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, an excessive lust for leadership so possessed him that he was driven to commit acts of infamy and crime in his struggle to wrest the reins of the Cause of God from 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Another factor contributing greatly to his downfall was the uncontrollable jealousy he entertained in his heart for 'Abdu'l-Baha.

A feeling of inferiority in relation to Him had been engendered in his mind from childhood, mainly through the resentful attitude which his mother, Mahd-i-'Ulya, showed towards 'Abdu'l-Baha The fire of jealousy burning in his heart intensified as a result of the outpouring of Baha'u'llah's abundant favours upon the one He designated as the Master when 'Abdu'l-Baha was in His early teens in Baghdad.

The many expressions of praise and glorification flowing from the Pen of Baha'u'llah as He extolled the virtues and superhuman qualities of 'Abdu'l-Baha whom He appointed as the Centre of His Covenant and the Interpreter of His

words, aggravated the feeling of enmity towards 'Abdu'l-Baha which Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had concealed in his heart.

Indeed, one of the reasons that 'Abdu'l-Baha did not join Baha'u'llah when He moved His residence from 'Akka to the Mansion of <p131> Mazra'ih and then to Bahji was to ensure that by staying away from Baha'u'llah the fire of jealousy in Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's heart would be somewhat dampened.

Baha'u'llah always cherished being close to 'Abdu'l-Baha and whenever the Master came to visit Him, Baha'u'llah would show great excitement and, in glowing terms, would extol His station.

On these occasions the radiance of His countenance betrayed such adoration and love towards the Master that the sincere believers became joyful and the few unfaithful became envious and dispirited.

During the lifetime of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his mother, brothers and sisters were all subdued by His authority and kept under control through His loving exhortations.

In those days, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, as a son of Baha'u'llah, was highly respected by the believers and basked in the sunshine of his father's majesty and greatness.

His insincerity and lack of spirituality were apparent, however, to some of the believers who were endowed with insight and pure hearts.

One such example is drawn from Khatirat-i-Malmiri, the memoirs of Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri[*] when he describes his arrival in 'Akka around 1878 and his first meeting with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali: [* The father of the author.

For a brief account of his life see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

1.] When we[**] arrived in Haifa ... we were taken to the home of Aqa Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Kashani.

He was directed by Baha'u'llah to make his residence in Haifa, to handle the distribution of letters and to give assistance and hospitality to Baha'i pilgrims.

When Baha'u'llah was informed that the three of us had arrived, He advised, through Mirza Aqa Jan ... that in 'Akka I should stay with my brother Haji 'Ali.[***] We were driven from Haifa to 'Akka in 'Abdu'l-Baha's carriage.

I was taken to Haji 'Ali's residence, which was situated in the Khan-i-Suq-i-Abiyad (White Market), in close proximity to the residence of Mirza Musa, Baha'u'llah's brother, and several other Baha'is such as Nabil-A'zam...

That day I was most happy.

Joy and ecstasy filled my soul.

The next day, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, accompanied by his two brothers, Mirza Diya'u'llah and Mirza Badi'u'llah, came to Nabil-i-A'zam's quarters to meet me.

Very eagerly my brother and I went there to meet them.

But no sooner had I met Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and Badi'u'llah than I became depressed and all the joy in my heart was transformed into sadness and grief.

I was distressed ... and bitterly disappointed with myself.

I was wondering what had happened so suddenly that, in spite of all the eagerness and excitement which had filled my <p132> being on arrival in 'Akka, I had become so utterly gloomy and dispirited.

I was convinced at that time that I had been rejected by God... [**Haji Muhammad-Tahir and two of his fellow pilgrims.] [*** See Baha'i World, vol. 9, pp.

624-5.] I was plunged into such a state of distress and anguish that I wanted to leave that gathering forthwith but did not dare to do so.

In my heart I was communing with God ... anxiously waiting for the visitors to leave so that I could go out and try to find a solution for my sad condition.

I noticed that whereas my brother and Nabil-i-A'zam were enjoying themselves talking most happily with these sons of Baha'u'llah, I was in a state of mental turmoil and agony throughout the meeting...

After about an hour, when the visitors were leaving, my brother thanked them most warmly and joyfully.

In the evening he informed me that we were to go and attain the presence of the Master in His reception room.

Although depressed and grief-stricken as a result of meeting Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, I went with him.

As soon as I came into the presence of the Most Great Branch, a new life was breathed into me.

My whole being was filled with such joy and felicity that all the agonies and disturbances of the past vanished in an instant.

A few days later my brother invited me to go with him to meet Mirza Muhammad-'Ali again, but in spite of much persuasion on his part I refused to go...

During the period that I stayed in 'Akka, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali came several times to the residence of Nabil-A'zam but I always found some excuse not to go there.

The breaking of the Covenant by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali began immediately after the passing of Baha'u'llah.

Indeed, 28 May 1892 marks the beginning of the most turbulent period within the Baha'i community, which witnessed the onslaught of the unfaithful against the Cause on a far greater scale than any so far encountered in the course of its eventful history, including the rebellion of Mirza Yahya.

The blessed remains of Baha'u'llah were not yet laid to rest when Mirza Muhammad-'Ali revealed his true self.

Until then he had given the appearance of being loyal to his father and to 'Abdu'l-Baha but now he launched his ignoble plans to undermine the foundation of the Covenant and overthrow 'Abdu'l-Baha, its Centre.

In a celebrated Tablet, the Lawh-i-Hizar Bayti (Tablet of One Thousand Verses) 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the grievous events-which occurred immediately before and just after the ascension of Baha'u'llah.

He states that during the days of Baha'u'llah's illness, He, 'Abdu'l-Baha was in attendance on His blessed person by day and by night, most of the time in a state of deep sorrow and depression.

One day as He lay in His sick-bed, Baha'u'llah ordered 'Abdu'l-Baha to gather all of His papers that were in the room and place them in two special cases.

It was Baha'u'llah's practice that whenever He left the Mansion for 'Akka or elsewhere, He would put all His papers in these <p133> large cases.

Aware of the implications of this command, 'Abdu'l-Baha was shaken to the very depths of His being.

As He hesitated to comply, Baha'u'llah reiterated His orders.

With trembling hands and tearful eyes, 'Abdu'l-Baha was beginning to gather the papers when Majdu'd-Din entered the room.

Majdu'd-Din was a son of Baha'u'llah's faithful brother Aqay-i-Kalim but he was utterly different from his father.

The most treacherous among the family, he was 'Abdu'l-Baha's most formidable enemy.

Indeed, as we shall see later, he was the backbone, if not the principal instigator, of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the Arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

In the Lawh-i-Hizar Bayti, 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the agony of His heart as He forced Himself to gather Baha'u'llah's papers.

Seeing Majdu'd-Din, He asked for his assistance so that this task, so extremely painful to Him, might soon be finished.

When all the papers, the seals and other items had been locked into the cases, Baha'u'llah said to 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'These two now belong to you.' These words,

implying the approach of the final hours of Baha'u'llah's earthly life, pierced 'Abdu'l-Baha's heart like an arrow.

When the ascension took place, 'Abdu'l-Baha's grief knew no bounds.

The shock He sustained as a result of this calamitous event was so intense that He found it difficult to describe.

He says that in the morning, along with His brother, He began the task of preparing the remains for burial.

When they were about to wash Baha'u'llah's blessed body, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali suggested to 'Abdu'l-Baha that since the floor would become wet, it would be better to move the two cases into Badi'u'llah's room. 'Abdu'l-Baha was at that point in such a state of shock and grief that He was almost unconscious of His surroundings.

He never thought that behind this suggestion could be a treacherous plot designed to rob Him of that precious trust.

He agreed, and the two cases were taken out and that was the last He saw of them.

The sacred remains were laid to rest that same day. 'Abdu'l-Baha was disconsolate and heartbroken.

He says that for three consecutive days and nights He could not rest a single moment.

He wept for hours and was in a state of unbearable grief.

The Light of the World had disappeared from His sight and all around Him had been plunged into darkness.

On the fourth night after the ascension, He arose from His bed around midnight and walked a few steps, hoping that it might help to bring a measure of tranquillity to His agonized heart.

As He began to pace the room, He saw through the window a scene His eyes could scarcely believe.

His unfaithful brothers had opened the cases and were looking through Baha'u'llah's papers -- those papers that had been entrusted to Him!

<p134> 'Abdu'l-Baha was deeply disturbed by the treachery of His brothers so soon after the ascension of their father.

This act of unfaithfulness, committed so dishonourably against the most sacred trust of God, inflicted further pain and suffering upon His sorrow-laden heart.

He returned to His bed immediately after this incident, for He did not wish His brothers to know He had seen them interfering with the contents of the cases.

At this point 'Abdu'l-Baha thought that since His brothers had not seen the Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah, which was in 'Abdu'l-Baha's possession, they were trying to find some document among His writings with which to justify

their intended action of undermining the foundation of the Cause of God and creating a division within the ranks of its avowed supporters.

However, 'Abdu'l-Baha hoped that when they saw the Will and Testament, their efforts would be frustrated and they would then return His trust to Him.

But alas, this did not happen!

The Kitab-i-'Ahd was read by Aqa Riday-i-Qannad[*] on the ninth day after the ascension of Baha'u'llah in the presence of nine witnesses chosen from among Baha'u'llah's companions and members of His family, including Mirza Muhammad-'Ali On the afternoon of the same day it was read by Majdu'd-Din in the Shrine of Baha'u'llah before a large company of the friends, consisting of the Aghsan, the Afnan, the pilgrims and resident believers. 'Abdu'l-Baha says that after the Kitab-i-'Ahd was read and its contents noted, some rejoiced with exceeding gladness and some grieved with great sorrow.

The faces of the faithful were illumined with the light of joy and those of the falsehearted were covered in the dust of despondency and gloom.

On that day, 'Abdu'l-Baha states, the foundations of Covenant-breaking were laid, the ocean of vain imagining began to surge, and the fire of dissension and strife was lit, its flame burning more fiercely with the passage of time and consuming the hearts and souls of the faithful in its tormenting heat. [* For a brief account of his life see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2.] Soon after the reading of the Kitab-i-'Ahd, one of the Afnan asked 'Abdu'l-Baha to use one of Baha'u'llah's seals on a Tablet which had been revealed by Baha'u'llah in his honour.

When 'Abdu'l-Baha asked His brothers to give Him the seals which had been placed in the two cases, they pleaded ignorance, saying they did not know anything about the cases!

Bewildered and perplexed by such a remark, 'Abdu'l-Baha was plunged further into sorrow and grief.

He describes how His whole being began to tremble when He heard such a response from His brothers and He knew that great tests and trials lay ahead.

<p135> Indeed the Kitab-i-'Ahd had the same effect on the believers as an examination paper does on pupils: they were divided into two categories, those who pass and those who fail.

Those who remained faithful to its sacred provisions rose to exalted realms of certitude and entered the ark of salvation.

Those who violated the provisions were spiritually cast out of the community and returned to the deadly abodes of their own selves and passions.

Although the violation of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah began in earnest immediately after His ascension, 'Abdu'l-Baha tried very hard to stop the foul odour of Covenant-breaking from spreading among the believers of the East and the West.

He succeeded, through pains-taking effort; the news of the Covenant-breakers' defection was not made public for about four years.

This four-year lapse was made possible because the rebellion was at first covert and only those who were close to the Holy Family were aware of it.

As the years went by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali became more vociferous in his opposition and the news of his dissension gradually leaked out.

During these four years 'Abdu'l-Baha instructed that all letters written by the believers in the Holy Land addressed to the friends in Persia were to be submitted to Him for approval.

He usually placed His seal on the letters if the contents met with His approval.

Even most of the dissidents used to comply.

In this way 'Abdu'l-Baha tried to contain the deadly disease of Covenant-breaking within the Holy Land.

During this period He also made every effort to guide these misguided souls to the straight path of truth.

He even intimated to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali that since Baha'u'llah had appointed him to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha he could achieve his heart's desire at a later time.[*] But Mirza Muhammad-'Ali is reported have responded: 'How can I be sure that I shall survive you?' [* For the significance and far-reaching consequences of this appointment by Baha'u'llah see chapter 26.] Unfortunately, the more 'Abdu'l-Baha showered loving counsel upon the Covenant-breakers, the more haughty and rebellious they became.

At last it was they themselves who announced their rebellion by distributing their messages of calumny and falsehood to the believers in the East.

They made subtle remarks in their letters to Persia designed to undermine the faith of the believers in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha The following is a summary translation of an account given by Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, that renowned teacher of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, of a letter he received in Persia from Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini,[**] <p136> one of the Covenant-breakers resident in the Holy Land. [** See chapter 13.] Since the days of Baha'u'llah in Adrianople I had a close relationship with Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini.

He was my correspondent through whom I used to dispatch my letters to His Holy Presence.

I received a confidential letter from Javad [during the early years of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry] in which he advised me that in my letters to the friends, I should not write the usual words 'May my life be a sacrifice for you' nor begin my letters [to 'Abdu'l-Baha] with words of praise or supplication to Him.

Neither should I address them to any single Ghusun [Branch], instead they

should be addressed to the Aghsan [Branches].

This letter indicated to me that some form of secret opposition to the Centre of the Covenant was taking place and that Muhammad-Javad himself was one of the dissidents...

In reply I wrote him a letter in which I rejected his proposals and stated that unless 'Abdu'l-Baha made such a demand, I would not pay any attention to such advice.

I also told him not to write to me again.

Since Muhammad-Javad did not respond to my letter I was assumed that the buds of darkness were on the move and the clamour of the foreboders of evil would be heard soon.

I felt certain that Javad and Jamal-i-Burujirdi[*] were both secretly involved, so with all my heart and soul I used to pray on their behalf so that the might return to the path of truth.

I kept this matter confidential, but it never occurred to me that the source of sedition was Mirza Muhammad-'Ali along with other members of Baha'u'llah's family because I did not think they were so foolish and egotistical.[154] [* A teacher of the Cause who rebelled against the Covenant.

See Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, pp.

308-25.] [154 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, pp.

326-31.] Soon after these developments, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, with 'Abdu'l-Baha's permission, proceeded to the Holy Land.

En route he visited the believers in many towns and villages including Ishqabad, Baku Nakhjavan, Ganjih and Tiflis (Tbilisi).

Everywhere he found the believers steadfast in the Covenant, enchanted by the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Tablets and serving the Faith with enthusiasm and devotion.

Being assured in his heart that severe tests and trials were about to engulf the community, Haji encouraged the believers to turn with heart and soul to no one but the Master, to regard His words and utterances to be as valid as the words of Baha'u'llah Himself and to refrain from any action which ran counter to His good-pleasure.

The loving counsels of Haji were warmly welcomed everywhere and the <p137>believers vowed to remain steadfast in the Covenant, come what might.

When Haji arrived in Beirut he stayed with a devoted believer, Aqa Muhammad-Mustafay-i-Baghdadi, who intimated to him the opposition and rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and a few others, contained so far by 'Abdu'l-Baha within the family and a small circle of friends.

Immediately upon his arrival at the pilgrim house in 'Akka, Haji wrote a letter

to the Master.

In his memoirs he talks about his letter, tells the story of attaining the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha and of other events associated with his pilgrimage during those turbulent months.

This is a summary translation of his reminiscences:

In this letter I stated that I do not turn to anybody except the Master and I do not wish to meet with any believer except those whom the Beloved wishes me to meet.

Even praying at the Holy Shrine of Baha'u'llah and circumambulating that exalted spot around which circle in adoration the Concourse on high, are dependent on the will of the Master.

Praise and thanksgiving be to God that on the day of my arrival I was given the privilege of praying at and circumambulating the Shrine in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha who chanted the Tablet of Visitation Himself.

In what a radiant condition I found myself and to what heights of spirituality I was carried as a result of this experience are impossible for me to describe.

With my inner eyes I saw the Heavenly Kingdom, witnessed the Blessed Beauty, exalted by His glory, seated upon the Throne of His majesty and authority, and was assured of the penetration of His Holy Word in the hearts of men...

Through the flattery and empty compliments of some hypocrites, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, in the prime of his youth, entertained the thought of rebellion, cherished the inordinate ambition of becoming great, and lusted for leadership ... and a few others were watering the tree of his rebelliousness.

They were secretly engaged in intrigues and satanic ambitions.

Some believers were aware of their condition but for the sake of God they did not reveal it.

This situation continued until the last years of the ministry of the Day-Star of the World [Baha'u'llah], when Muhammad-Javad-Qazvini and Jamal-i-Burujirdi secretly united with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in their plots to create discord and dissension within the community.

They succeeded in enlisting a few others within their fold.

These two men convinced Mirza Muhammad-'Ali that since the bulk of the believers in Persia were looking up to them, he would become the one to whom all would turn and he could present himself as the Centre of the Cause.

Their deceitfulness and hypocrisy were fully disclosed through their misdeeds after the setting of the Sun of Truth...

These insinuations continued until the believers noticed that 'Abdu'l-Baha treated Mirza Muhammad-'Ali with much greater respect than at the time of Baha'u'llah.

On the other hand, the Arch-breaker of the Covenant and his entourage had considerably lessened the measure of honour and respect that they humbly used to show the Master in the days of the Blessed Beauty.

Added to this treatment, the Covenant-breakers through their words and deeds and by subtle hints were attempting to belittle the Master and to dishonour Him.

When the believers realized this, they kept away from the unfaithful and as far as possible did not seek to associate with them in private.

Two devoted believers, Aqa Muhammad-Riday-Shirazi and Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani, went together to meet Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

They showed the utmost respect to him, and in a spirit of humility and loving kindness counselled him with genuine concern.

By giving some hints or relating certain stories, they conveyed to him the dire consequences of his rebellion.

But instead of taking to heart their admonitions and heeding their loving advice to change his ways, he was hurt that they counselled him in this manner.

The Master continued to overlook Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's wrongdoings and treated him with the utmost love and kindness in spite of his rebellion.

Whereas in the days of the Blessed Beauty Mirza Muhammad-'Ali showed so much respect to 'Abdu'l-Baha that he would not take a seat in His presence without His permission, now it was different; it was the Master who as a sign of loving respect would arise from His seat when he or his associates arrived in a gathering.

At first 'Abdu'l-Baha's counsels were given to them in private, through hints and suggestions which pointed the way to their everlasting salvation and glory.

But since through their rebellion they gradually tore apart the veil which had until then concealed their wrongdoings, the Master began to counsel them publicly in words such as these: 'Do not by your actions quench the fire and extinguish the light of God.

Take not a step that would lead to the degradation of the Word of God.

Do not behave in such a way as to cause the enemies to rejoice and the loved ones to lament.'[*] 'Abdu'l-Baha warned them lovingly and repeatedly about the dire consequences of their evil doings but all these counsels fell on deaf ears and they followed the path of pride, hate and

rebellion. [* These are not the exact words of 'Abdu'l-Baha but they convey the gist of what He said on that occasion.] About three months after my arrival in the Holy Land, the Master sent me to Egypt.

Since 'Abdu'l-Baha had warned the friends not to discuss the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, I addressed a letter to him when I was in Egypt, the gist of which was as follows: 'The people of Baha expected that after the setting of the Sun of Truth, you would show the same measure of humility, submissiveness and obedience to the Centre of the Covenant that you demonstrated in the Holy Presence of Baha'u'llah.

We have all observed that in the days of the Blessed Beauty, you would not have <p139> taken your seat in the presence of the Master without His permission.

Each time that He came to Bahji to attain the presence of His beloved Father, you along with others, as commanded by Baha'u'llah, went as a welcoming party as far as the Garden of Jammal[*] to greet Him.

Now we see that when any one of you arrives in the room, it is the Master who as a token of respect for you arises from His seat and will not sit down until the person takes his seat.

We have also noticed that when His Blessed Person arrives at Bahji after having walked all the way from 'Akka as a token of His utter humility to the sacred Threshold,[**] not only do you refuse to go out to welcome Him but after He enters the Sacred Shrine, those who are in your company come down the steps of the Mansion slowly one by one and go towards the Shrine, and you yourself are the last one to appear.

Again, when He has come out of the Shrine and is about to depart for 'Akka, you walk away towards the Mansion before being dismissed from His presence.[***] Indeed, you are back inside the Mansion before He leaves.

Now that you do not go to welcome Him at the entrance of the Garden of Jammal, you could at least ask permission to leave His presence or wait outside the Shrine until He departs. [* Properties lying at the south entrance to the Mansion.] [** It is an expression of humility and self-effacement for a servant to walk to his master rather than to ride.] [*** It was considered highly discourteous for a man to take his seat in the presence of an eminent person without his permission.

Similarly, it was discourteous to leave his presence before being dismissed.

The believers always observed the utmost courtesy when they came into the presence of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.] 'In the past you always addressed Him as "the Master" but now refer to Him as "my brother".

We are surprised and do not know the reason for all this humiliating treatment to which you have subjected His blessed Person.

Is your contemptuousness because of all the services that He has rendered to the Cause and to the Person of the Blessed Beauty?

Or is it because He was the One who brought about your exaltation and honour among the people and enabled you to live in the utmost comfort and luxury?

While you enjoyed a life of pleasure and engaged in pastimes such as hunting and other recreations, His blessed Person did not have a moment to rest.

Do you behave towards Him in a disdainful manner because it was He who, from the early days of the rising of the Day-Star of the World [Baha'u'llah] from the horizon of Tihiran and Iraq was the Master and the leader of all the people of Baha?

Or is your behaviour towards Him due to all the sufferings and hardships that were, and are, being inflicted upon His blessed Person from every quarter?

He has stood up with the utmost firmness and strength in resisting the onslaught of the enemy and has, singly and alone, exerted every effort in the promotion of the word of God and the diffusion of its fragrances, while you are conducting a life of luxury and spending your time in riding and sightseeing.

Does the particular text of the Kitab-i-Aqdas which was later confirmed in the Kitab-i-'Ahd, that all the Aghsan must turn to Him, and gird up their loins in His obedience, provide justification for you to belittle His exalted station? Besides all this, when this servant and other believers notice the extraordinary loving kindness and humility the Centre of the Covenant shows to you, while you appear proud and haughty before His peerless and incomparable Person, what conclusion do we reach?

In the light of all this, whom should we regard as a true believer in the Blessed Beauty and whom should we consider steadfast in His Covenant?

"The believers have endured all manner of oppression.

They have suffered imprisonment and exile and been inflicted with hardship and persecution.

These souls will not deviate from the straight path.

They will cling fast to the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and its Centre, He "who hath branched from this Ancient Root".

They will not loosen their hold on that "excellent and priceless heritage" which Baha'u'llah has bequeathed to His heirs...[155] [155 ibid. p.

323. (Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur.)] As the years passed, the clandestine opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha gathered further momentum.

Soon after his violation of the Covenant, Muhammad-'Ali established secret links with Jamal-i-Burujiridi and a few others in Persia.

Together they designed a strategy which was kept secret until, at a propitious time, they would make their rebellion public and divide the community.

While the rank and file of the believers in Persia were not fully informed of what was happening in the Holy Land during this four-year period, a number of prominent Baha'is felt that there was a serious problem at the World Centre of the Faith.

Some decided not to make any statements concerning the situation, except that they remained steadfast in the Covenant and adhered to the provision of the Kitab-i-'Ahd, the Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah.

Notable among them was the renowned scholar of the Faith Mirza Abu'l-Fadl.

For a few years, he, who used to write profusely to defend the Faith or to expound its teachings for the believers and others, refused to make a statement about the affairs of the Cause.

Later he explained the reason for his silence on the matter, saying that he was waiting for 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of the Covenant, to make a statement, fearing that one word uttered by him could be the wrong one and might harm the Faith.

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

49-WT When, in all parts of the earth, the enemies of God profiting by the passing away of the Sun of Truth, suddenly and with all their might launched their attack; at such a time and in <p141> the midst of so great a calamity, the Covenant-breakers arose with the utmost cruelty, intent upon harm and the stirring up of the spirit of enmity.

At every moment a misdeed they did commit and bestirred themselves to sow the seeds of grievous sedition, and to ruin the edifice of the Covenant.

But this wronged one, this prisoner, did his utmost to hide and veil their doings, that haply they might regret and repent.

His long-suffering and forbearance of these evil deeds, however, made the rebellious ones still more arrogant and daring; until, through leaflets written with their own hands, they sowed the seeds of doubt, printing these leaflets and scattering them broadcast throughout the world, believing that such foolish doings would bring to naught the Covenant and the Testament.

32-WT Adversities have waxed still more severe as they rose with unbearable cruelty to overpower and crush me, as they scattered far and wide their scrolls of doubt and in utter falsehood hurled their calumnies upon me.

As previously stated, for four years 'Abdu'l-Baha did everything in His power

to guide these people to the straight path and He did not reveal their breaking of the Covenant to the Baha'is outside the Holy Land.

However, after four years of strengthening their position, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his party felt that it was time to unmask themselves.

They did this by printing letters loaded with falsehoods, misleading statements and calumnies against the Centre of the Covenant, casting themselves as the voice of truth trying to purify the Cause which they shamelessly claimed to have been polluted by those who were faithful to 'Abdu'l-Baha. In his propaganda, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali did not contest the authenticity of the Kitab-i-'Ahd, rather he expressed his grievance that he had been barred from partnership with 'Abdu'l-Baha in directing the affairs of the Cause.

He wanted to share with Him the station of the Centre of the Covenant.

As a result of these letters by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Tablets began openly to refer to the breaking of the Covenant by His unfaithful brother; from then on, right up to the end of His life, He explained in innumerable Tablets the significance of the Covenant, expelled the Covenant-breakers from the community of the Most Great Name and urged the friends to remain steadfast in the Cause of God.

Concerning the dispatch for the first time of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's letters to Persia, Dr Yunis Khan-i-Afrukhtih, one of the faithful secretaries of the Master, relates the following story. 'Abdu'l-Baha often used to say: 'One day Mirza Diya'u'llah came to see Me.

I noticed he was looking at his fingers which were <p142> stained with ink and was expecting Me to comment on them.

I did not say anything, so he himself volunteered the information, saying, "Last night until the early hours of the morning we were engaged in writing letters and gelatine printing, consequently my fingers have been stained.

My brother [Mirza Muhammad-'Ali] had written a letter of which we printed several copies and sent them away this morning."

I asked him:

Did you really write and dispatch them?

And when he answered in the affirmative, I said:

I swear by the Righteousness of God, a day shall come when Mirza Muhammad-'Ali would wish that his fingers had been cut off so that he could not have taken the pen to announce his breaking of the Covenant.

For four years I have concealed this matter so that the beloved of God might not learn of your unfaithfulness to the Covenant.

It is now beyond my power to conceal it any longer.

You have announced yourselves to the believers.'[156] [156 Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-Salih, pp.

51-2.] The timing of the public announcement of the Covenant-breakers' rebellion was no doubt influenced by their apparent success in converting a considerable number to their side, as well as the encouragement they received from Jamal-i-Burujirdi and others in Persia who were anxiously waiting and hoping to become the leaders of the community there -- hopes which, through the power of the Covenant, were dashed forever.

However, for some time, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali used to dispatch his letters of propaganda which were stigmatized by the believers as Awraq-i-Nariyyih (the Infernal Letters).

Soon after receiving the initial dispatches, the believers, as advised by the Hands of the Cause, did not open the envelopes and used to send them back to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali an intelligent way to deter him from sending further letters. <p143> 13

Attacks on the Centre of the Covenant 5-WT [Mirza Muhammad-'Ali] hath falsified the Holy Text...[*] [* For a full discussion of this subject see chapter 16.] 5-WT ...[Mirza Muhammad-'Ali] hath inflicted a grievous loss upon the true Faith of God, hath scattered His people, hath with bitter rancour endeavoured to hurt 'Abdu'l-Baha and hath assailed with the utmost enmity this servant of the Sacred Threshold.

Every dart he seized and hurled to pierce the breast of this wronged servant, no wound did he neglect to grievously inflict upon me, no venom did he spare but he poisoned therewith the life of this hapless one.

I swear by the most holy Abha Beauty and by the Light shining from His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my soul be a sacrifice for Their lowly servants), that because of this iniquity the dwellers in the Pavilion of the Abha Kingdom have bewailed, the Celestial Concourse is lamenting, the Immortal Maids of Heaven in the All-Highest Paradise have raised their plaintive cries and the angelic company sighed and uttered their meanings.

The cruelties heaped upon 'Abdu'l-Baha by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, supported by most members of Baha'u'llah's family, were ruthless and unrelenting.

That 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the agony and lamentations of the Concourse on high is indicative of the grievous nature of the attacks carried out by a faithless band of Covenant-breakers. 'Abdu'l-Baha's account of the sufferings He endured at their hands, as mentioned in the section of the Will and Testament cited above, will become clear to readers with the perusal of the forthcoming pages of this book.

Further, in the Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha makes the following statement:

5-WT So grievous the deeds of this iniquitous person became that he struck with his axe at the root of the Blessed Tree, dealt a heavy blow

at the Temple of the Cause of God, deluged with tears of blood the eyes of the loved ones of the Blessed Beauty, cheered and encouraged the enemies of the One True God, by his repudiation of the Covenant turned many a seeker after Truth aside from the Cause of God, revived the blighted hopes of Yahya's following, made himself detested, caused the enemies of the Greatest Name to become audacious and arrogant, put aside the firm and conclusive verses and sowed the seeds of doubt.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, for four years Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's rebellion was kept a well-guarded secret by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

During this period and afterwards, almost the entire family of Baha'u'llah, including three of His sons and two daughters, together with their families, as well as the two surviving wives of Baha'u'llah and their relatives, rose up against 'Abdu'l-Baha.

They fought Him fiercely on every issue which related to His being the Head of the Faith and the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Indeed, members of Baha'u'llah's family were foremost among those who violated the Covenant.

After Baha'u'llah's passing the only members of His family who remained firm in the Covenant, in the face of great opposition, were Mirza Muhammad-Quli and his family, 'Abdu'l-Baha and His family and the Greatest Holy Leaf.

Mirza Muhammad-Quli, the youngest half-brother of Baha'u'llah, was about seven years older than 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He was very young when his father died and was brought up by Baha'u'llah.

He travelled with Him on His exiles and shared, in a spirit of resignation and fortitude, the sufferings inflicted on him in the course of four successive banishments.

He had a quiet and loving disposition and took great pride in serving Baha'u'llah in domestic affairs.

In order to survey, however briefly, the nefarious activities of the Covenant-breakers during 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry, it is necessary to mention a few individuals who were the props and mainstays of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in his activities.

Foremost among them in the Holy Land was Majdu'd-Din, the son of Aqay-i-Kalim, the noble brother of Baha'u'llah.

Majdu'd-Din was the backbone, the motivating force behind Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

He had married Samadiyyih, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's sister, and was a bitter enemy of 'Abdu'l-Baha. 'Abdu'l-Baha prophesied that Majdu'd-Din would live a long life to see the triumph of the Cause and the frustration of his evil plots.

This prophecy was fulfilled: he lived to be over a hundred years old and saw the birth of the Administrative Order, the child of the Covenant, and the

strengthening of its foundations by Shoghi Effendi.

Majdu'd-Din died in 1955, two years after the Ten Year Crusade was launched by the Guardian, having witnessed the indisputable ascendancy of the Covenant and the extinction of his hopes and evil designs. <p145> Another ally and close companion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was his youngest brother Mirza Badi'u'llah.

His shameful activities against the Centre of the Covenant and his opposition at a later date to Shoghi Effendi will be referred to in the following pages.

Mirza Badi'u'llah also lived a long life and died at an advanced age.

Baha'u'llah's other son, Mirza Diya'u'llah, was a vacillating person who wavered in his allegiance to the Centre of the Covenant; he was easily manipulated and became a willing tool in the hands of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

He lived in the Mansion of Bahji along with the rest of the family, all of whom were affected by the spirit of Covenant-breaking.

Mirza Diya'u'llah died in 1898, only six years after the passing of Baha'u'llah.

He did not live to take an effective part in all the hostile activities which his brother conducted against 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Another veteran Covenant-breaker was Haji Siyyid 'Ali Afnan, a son of the venerable Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan, entitled Afnan-i-Kabir (Great Afnan),[*] brother of the wife of the Bab.

Siyyid 'Ali joined hands with the Arch-breaker of the Covenant and became one of 'Abdu'l-Baha's great enemies.

He had risen to eminence through the efforts of the wife of the Bab, who sent a special message to Baha'u'llah through Munirih Khanum, the wife of 'Abdu'l-Baha, when she visited her in Shiraz.

Munirih Khanum has written the following account: [* For an account of his life see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4.] The wife of the Bab said: 'Please supplicate the Blessed Perfection to grant two wishes of mine.

One, that one of the exalted Leaves[**] of the blessed Family may be permitted to join in wedlock with a member of the family of the Bab, so that the two holy Trees may be outwardly knit together.

The other, to grant me permission to attend His presence.' I conveyed this message when I attained the presence of Baha'u'llah; He readily assented to both her requests.[157] [** Baha'u'llah referred to His male descendants as Aghsan (Branches) and His female descendants of Varaqat (Leaves).] [157 Khatirat-i-Afnan, pp.

165-6.] The person the wife of the Bab had in mind was Haji Siyyid 'Ali.

Baha'u'llah granted her wish and he was joined in wedlock with Furughiyyih, a

daughter of Baha'u'llah.

As a token of his appreciation, Siyyid 'Ali promised his aunt, the wife of the Bab, that he would accompany her to the Holy Land if Baha'u'llah accepted the proposal for his marriage.

However, when the time arrived he left for 'Akka alone.

Thus he broke his promise and with it the heart of that noble lady.

Being unable to travel on her own, she was sorrowful and <p146> disconsolate as a result of this cruel treatment.

Soon her health was impaired and a few months later she passed away.

After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Siyyid 'Ali and his wife Furughiyyih sided with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and rose up in opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

After inflicting much pain upon the Centre of the Covenant for several years, Siyyid 'Ali repented of his iniquitous deeds and the Master forgave him.

But his repentance was short-lived; he returned to his den again and resumed his odious activities against 'Abdu'l-Baha.

It was the members of his family who were chiefly responsible for delivering the most painful blows upon the person of Shoghi Effendi during his ministry.

They caused havoc in the family of the Master and tore it apart altogether.

Apart from these members of Baha'u'llah's family who rose up against 'Abdu'l-Baha, there were others in the Holy Land who joined hands with them.

Notorious among them was Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis, who had fallen from grace during the last months of Baha'u'llah's ministry.[*] His rebellion against the Centre of the Covenant erased his 40-year record of service to Baha'u'llah and stained the annals of the Faith. [* See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah. chapter 15.] Another opponent of the Covenant was Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini.

He first attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad; some years later he went to Adrianople and remained in the service of Baha'u'llah there.

He was among those who accompanied Him to 'Akka, was the recipient of His boundless favours, transcribed His writings and was entitled 'Tsmu'llahu'l-Javad' (the Name of God Javad) by Him.

Muhammad-Javad was an arrogant man who after the ascension of Baha'u'llah betrayed his Lord and became one of the adversaries of 'Abdul-Baha in spite of His efforts to protect him from Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's wicked designs.

But the Master did not succeed in His efforts to save Javad, for Javad had been irremediably corrupted by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, especially as he had established a family link by marrying a sister of one of the wives of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

Although he was devoid of knowledge and learning, he attacked the Centre of the

Covenant in his venomous writings, which contain many inaccuracies, falsehoods and calumnies.

Professor Edward Browne of Cambridge was misled by him when he translated some of Javad's writings and published them in one of his works.

At the same time as the believers in the Holy Land were being tested by the disease of Covenant-breaking, a number of outstanding teachers of the Faith in Persia who were ambitious for the leadership of that community also defected and rose up in opposition to the Centre of the Covenant.

The main source of rebellion was the proud and egotistical Jamal-i-Burujirdi.[*] For many years during Baha'u'llah's ministry this ambitious and deceitful man was foremost among the teachers of the Faith and his fame had spread throughout the community.

Baha'u'llah concealed his faults, revealed many Tablets in his name, entitled him 'Ismu'llahu'l-Jamal' (the Name of God Jamal), exhorted him to faithfulness and purity of motive, at times admonished him for those of his actions which were harmful to the Faith and overlooked his shortcomings with forbearance and magnanimity.

However, his hypocrisy was known to those who were close to him.

Before embracing the Faith of Baha'u'llah, Jamal had been a learned mujtahid from the town of Burujird.

Many Baha'is in Persia who could not see his deceitful and egotistical nature looked upon him as a man of God and treated him with great respect.

It was after the passing of Baha'u'llah that Jamal showed his true colours, rejected the Covenant and rebelled against its Centre. [* For a detailed story of his nefarious activities see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, chapter 15.] There were other teachers of the Faith in Persia who were also proud and ambitious.

Notorious among them was Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji entitled by Baha'u'llah 'Ismu'llahu'l-Mihdi' (the Name of God Mihdi).[**] He too was treated with loving kindness and forbearance by Baha'u'llah, was an eloquent teacher of the Cause and was highly esteemed by the believers.

Jalil-i-Khu'i[***] was another well-known believer, for whom Baha'u'llah revealed the Tablet of Ishraqat.

These men and several others who were engaged in the service of the Cause during Baha'u'llah's ministry lusted in their hearts for glory and leadership of the community and were tested through the institution of the Covenant.

When they failed to comply with the provisions of the Kitab-i-'Ahd and broke the Covenant, they were expelled from the community. [** For more information see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2.] [*** For more information see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4.] Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's campaign of opposition against 'Abdu'l-Baha acquired greater momentum as the years went by.

Soon after the passing of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, who had already won the support of most members of Baha'u'llah's family, began secretly to undermine the faith of the believers in 'Akka, to weaken their love and loyalty towards the Master and eventually win them over to his own camp.

The first thing he did was to launch among the believers a clandestine campaign of calumny against 'Abdu'l-Baha.

At a time when He <p148> had, as a sign of humility among the believers, adopted the title of 'Abdu'l-Baha' (Servant of Baha'u'llah) and requested the friends to call Him by this new name rather than by such exalted titles as the 'Master', 'the Most Great Branch' and others conferred upon Him by Baha'u'llah, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali spread rumours that 'Abdu'l-Baha had claimed to be an independent Manifestation of God.

He shamelessly accused 'Abdu'l-Baha of aiming to destroy Baha'u'llah's Faith, to abrogate its laws and to completely wipe out every trace of His Revelation.

He went so far as to impute to 'Abdu'l-Baha the claim of divinity for Himself.

To strengthen these false accusations, the Covenant-breakers began to preach to everyone the principle of the oneness of God and that no one can claim partnership with Him.

In order to draw attention to this point, they called themselves Muvahhidin (Believers in the Unity of God).

It is this appellation to which 'Abdu'l-Baha refers in the following passage of His Will and Testament:

17-WT ...the Centre of sedition waxed haughty and rebellious and with Divine Unity for his excuse deprived himself and perturbed and poisoned others.

So widespread was this propaganda that even in the early days when the believers in Persia heard of this they were puzzled by the emphasis placed on the oneness of God.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali wrote about this.

The following is a summary translation of his words:

As the Day-Star of the Incomparable Beauty hid itself from the eyes of men and began to shed its light from the Realm of Glory upon the peoples of the world, and His confirmations and assistance were showered upon the Centre of His Covenant, these unfaithful ones began to promote their designs.

When they came in contact with the believers, whether residents or pilgrims, they opened the subject of the oneness of God saying that God is one, there is no partner with Him, and the Most Great Infallibility

belongs to Him, exalted be His Glory.

The believers were surprised and bewildered at such statements.

They could not understand to whom they were imputing their strange suggestions, for no one had claimed to be a partner with God or be a possessor of the Most Great Infallibility.[158] [158 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, p.

328.] Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates tried by various methods to undermine the faith of some believers and convert them to their side.

For example, they knew those who were steadfast in the Covenant and those who were weak, simple-hearted or proud and ambitious.

They bypassed the former and concentrated on sowing <p149> the seeds of doubt in the hearts of the latter, adopting different methods to achieve their purpose.

In all these they hid themselves under the cloak of hypocrisy and did their best to pose as the most devoted, the most pious and the most humble Baha'is in the land.

For example, one way of misleading a simple-hearted believer was for a few agents of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali to get close to him personally and establish bonds of friendship with him.

The Covenant-breakers posed as the most humble followers of 'Abdu'l-Baha and in the course of conversation praised the Master with unusual exaggeration, saying that He was a Manifestation of God, that His station was equal to Baha'u'llah's, that He was the embodiment of divinity Himself and that in their prayers they turned to Him instead of God.

One after the other would convey to the individual such preposterous thoughts and assure him falsely that 'Abdu'l-Baha had claimed such a station for Himself.

When they were sure that the loyal Baha'i was beginning to have doubts about 'Abdu'l-Baha's station, they would then despatch other persons to him who would disprove and strongly criticize fabricated claims which they had slanderously attributed, to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

In this way, through deceit and falsehood, they would weaken the faith of the believer to a point where he would be invited to join the group of dissidents.

Another trick played by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was to shower praise upon an outstanding teacher of the Faith who was steadfast in the Covenant.

Consequently some believers would conclude that the famous Baha'i teacher must have joined the ranks of the Covenant-breakers.

This could result in the defection of some weak and uninformed believers.

Once, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's associates published a paper in which they paid

great tribute to the famous Baha'i scholar Mirza Abu'l-Fadl and extolled him in superlative terms.

No sooner was Mirza Abu'l-Fadl informed of this than he wrote an open letter saying that they had no right to praise him and that this action alone had exposed their hypocrisy, for he was abhorred in their sight.

If any praise was due to him, it ought to come from the friends of 'Abdu'l-Baha. He handed this letter to the Master who directed that it be read aloud at a meeting of the friends.

For some years the Covenant-breakers used to mix freely with the believers, especially a few who cast themselves as the most steadfast in the Covenant but who, in reality, were acting as spies.

In the gatherings of the friends, these men would speak with eloquence and feigned sincerity about the importance of firmness in the Covenant.

At every meeting they would urge the believers to remain loyal to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Having established their credibility in the community, they would then intimate to the friends that a certain steadfast believer whom they knew to be rather naive and simple-hearted had secretly joined the Covenant-breakers.

Such an accusation, which was entirely false, would disturb the steadfast believers but these unscrupulous men would bring forth all kinds of reasons in support of their claim.

For instance, one would say, I saw this person in the street bowing to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

Another would say, I saw many pages of the writings of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in his possession.

One would say, I saw him in the street turning his back to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Naturally, having heard and believed such accusations against this poor individual, the faithful believers would avoid his company.

Having isolated this person from the community, then Mirza Muhammad-'Ali would send his men to win him over to his side through artful manipulations and stories about 'Abdu'l-Baha and the steadfast believers.

There were also other deceitful practices through which the Covenant-breakers succeeded in gathering a number of people around themselves.

By such means a temporary breach was made in the ranks of the believers but the Covenant-breakers did not limit their activities to the Baha'i community.

Soon after the ascension of Baha'u'llah they began a campaign of defamation against 'Abdu'l-Baha among prominent people in 'Akka and other cities of Syria.[*] The breaking of the Covenant and rising against its Centre brought great sorrow to the hearts of the believers.

Dr Yunis Khan, a trusted secretary of 'Abdu'l-Baha and a well-known defender of

the Covenant, wrote an account of the condition of the believers and Covenant-breakers in 'Akka.

The following is a summary translation of his observations during a period when the Covenant-breakers were openly attacking the Cause: [* See chapter 17 for a detailed account of their efforts to discredit 'Abdu'l-Baha.] Each one of the Aghsan played a special role.

The Arch-breaker of the Covenant, similar to Mirza Yahya, kept out of sight and retired to the sanctuary of the Mansion of Bahji.

Instead, he dispatched Mirza Badi'u'llah into the field of action.

The vacillating Mirza Diya'u'llah, a person who was undecided and shifted his position from one side to the other, often acted as a link between the believers and the Covenant-breakers.

Mirza Badi'u'llah was actively engaged, from morning till night, in stirring up sedition in the land.

He was an artful player as he moved in different circles.

He was a two-faced hypocrite who adapted himself to every situation and changed his style and disposition to conform to the often conflicting customs of various groups of people.

He even attended private merrymaking parties held for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures.

The late Diya'u'llah, that poor wavering person, did not have a steady outlook.

At times he was friendly towards the believers, at other times unfriendly; <p151> for a while he would be steadfast in the Covenant, then he would change his allegiance and join the Covenant-breakers.

He was always vacillating and often would bring messages from the Covenant-breakers to the Master. [159] [159 Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-Salih, pp.

59-60.] Dr Yunis Khan also observed that the Covenant-breakers could be divided into three categories:

The first were those who had completely cut themselves off from the community; they showed their animosity quite openly and had the audacity to speak disrespectfully to 'Abdu'l-Baha whenever they met Him.

The second group were those who were cut off from the community and were at a loose end, wandering in the streets of Haifa and 'Akka.

The third were the hesitating and wavering types who used to associate freely with the believers and usually were the cause of mischief.

They acted as spies and informers, would pass on the news of the believers to the Covenant-breakers who, acting upon the information,

would then formulate their stratagem accordingly.

Dr Yunis Khan described the state of the believers in those days.

Here is a summary translation of his words:

In those difficult times, the believers had special feelings and concerns which are impossible to appreciate in these days, unless one has lived through the events of that period.

For instance, those steadfast believers, especially the older ones, had witnessed from the early days of Baha'u'llah's successive banishments until the final transfer of His residence to the Mansion of Bahji, the manner in which the Centre of the Covenant was cherished in the presence of

Baha'u'llah.

They remembered how He was treated with extreme reverence, honour and deepest affection.

They recalled the attitude of the Aghsan and the Afnan as they showed the utmost submissiveness, humility and obedience to Him.

All these had changed and the believers were now utterly heartbroken and filled with grief as they observed Him woefully wronged and treated with malice.

Each day the Covenant-breakers created a new mischief.

They spread so much calumny against the Master throughout the land that the public in the whole of Syria were perplexed and led astray.

Even those people whose daily sustenance had been provided through the generosity of the Master arose against Him.

Many prominent people of Haifa and 'Akka who used to attribute miracles to Him in the past now shunned Him and secretly joined hands with Covenant-breakers against Him...

Each day the number of His admirers reduced while the number of stirrers of sedition increased. <p152> It is because of these developments that the believers who were steadfast in the Covenant were sorrowful and grieved.

The extent of their distress and anguish was beyond description.

But when they attained the presence of the Master and heard His inspiring words and came into contact with His heavenly spirit, a new life was breathed into their souls and the light of hope shone forth in their sorrowful hearts.

In those days the Cause of God had been promoted in the West.

Each week a bundle of letters of declaration of faith or questions about

spiritual matters was received.

These were translated and read to the friends in the biruni (outer quarters) of the Master's house.

The believers were highly exhilarated by hearing the news of the spread of the Cause in the West...

Such exciting news was instantly carried to the Mansion of Bahji by a few individuals who acted as spies in the midst of the friends.

This would activate the Covenant-breakers to intensify their campaign of opposition by fabricating new calumnies against the Master and publishing them in their inflammatory letters.[160] [160 ibid. pp.

40-3. (Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-Salih.)] The Covenant-breakers tried very hard, with the help of the notorious Jamal-i-Burujirdi and a few others, to undermine the faith of the believers in Persia but they failed miserably.

Only a very small handful of ambitious men carried on a campaign of opposition against the Covenant but they were effectively silenced by a devoted and steadfast community whose members were deepened in the Covenant and were brought up with an intense love for the Master.

Jamal, who was foremost amongst the teachers of the Cause in Persia, became very tense and agitated after the ascension of Baha'u'llah.

When he saw the first message sent by 'Abdu'l-Baha to the Baha'is of the East, he dismissed it, saying, 'The Aghsan are young and immature.' This remark was a reference to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Jamal was the first among the Baha'is of Persia to travel to the Holy Land, very soon after the ascension.

He went there without seeking permission from 'Abdu'l-Baha, met with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, stayed there for a few months and returned to Persia.

From that time onwards, his attitude and feelings disturbed the hearts of those who came into close contact with him.

The words and counsels of 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorting him to servitude and detachment went unheeded.

The poison of Covenant-breaking had been effectively injected into his whole being by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, and although outwardly he professed loyalty to 'Abdu'l-Baha, inwardly he was preparing himself for the day when he would become the head of the Faith in Persia.

To this end, he influenced certain individuals in each province to act as his representatives.

This was not difficult for him to achieve, since several teachers of the Faith in different parts of the country were his supporters.

Because the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was kept a secret for <p153> a few

years, Jamal had no choice but to continue his activities within the Baha'i community.

Over the course of several decades Jamal had acquired many admirers.

For example, many believers in the city of Qazvin were his staunch supporters and he considered that city to be his stronghold and refuge.

He was also very popular among the believers in the province of Mazindaran.

During this time, 'Abdu'l-Baha continually exhorted Jamal to steadfastness in the Covenant and to purity of motive, in Tablets indicative of His loving concern for Jamal's spiritual survival.

But, alas, in the end Jamal lost this battle.

When the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali became public knowledge and his circular letters misrepresenting the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha reached the Baha'is of Persia, Jamal threw in his lot with the Arch-breaker of the Covenant.

By transferring his loyalty to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, Jamal expected to become the indisputable head of the Faith in Persia, a position promised him by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali himself, but after Jamal became involved in activities against the Covenant, he was expelled from the Faith by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

No sooner did the believers become informed of this than the entire Baha'i community in Persia, with the exception of a handful of people, shunned his company.

Those very few individuals who joined him in his odious activities were likewise cast out of the community and isolated.

The manner in which the believers swiftly cut their association with Jamal came as a surprise to many observers.

For example, he was rejected by almost the entire community in Qazvin, where he had his most ardent admirers.

The same thing happened in Mazindaran.

While the believers had previously given him respect and veneration, after his defection he was shunned so effectively that he could not find even one family to offer him hospitality in that province.

In some places, for example in Adhirbayjan, he found a few individuals who harboured him but he and his dwindling associates swiftly sank into oblivion.

At the height of Jamal's popularity and success, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote him a Tablet[161] in which He emphasized the importance of steadfastness in the Covenant, stating that in this day the confirmations of Baha'u'llah will reach only those who are firm in the Covenant.

He affirmed that even should the one who was an embodiment of the Holy Spirit fail to turn to the Centre of the Covenant, he would become a dead body,

whereas a child who remained steadfast in the Covenant would be assisted by the hosts of the Supreme Concourse.

Ironically, this Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha found its fulfilment in Jamal and his few assistants, who withered away spiritually. [161 Ma'idiy-i-Asmani, vol.

5, pp.

98-9.] <p154> There were a few other teachers in Persia who also rebelled against the Covenant.

Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji was one.

Like Jamal he was a learned man and a very capable teacher of the Faith.

As mentioned above, Baha'u'llah had conferred upon him the title of 'Ismu'llahu'l-Mihdi' (the Name of God Mihdi) and had revealed many Tablets in his honour.

Siyyid Mihdi was a native of Dahaj in the province of Yazd.

He attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, Adrianople and 'Akka and received His unfailing bounties.

Like Jamal, he traveled widely throughout Persia and was much honoured by the believers.

Yet people who were endowed with discernment found him to be insincere, egotistical and deeply attached to the things of this world.

Notable among those who have written their impressions of him is Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, who also wrote about Jamal-i-Burundi.

A perusal of his narratives makes it clear that these two men had at least one thing in common, namely their insatiable lust for leadership.

For example, Siyyid Mihdi always entered Baha'i gatherings with an air of superiority.

He loved to have a retinue of the faithful walk behind him and at night, in the absence of public lighting, he was preceded by a number of believers who carried lanterns for him.

This made a spectacular scene in those days, for normally only one servant or a friend with a lantern accompanied a prominent person at night.

In Siyyid Mihdi's case some believers even vied with each other to perform this service and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali recalls an evening when no less than 14 men, with lanterns in hand, escorted him to a meeting!

Men such as these always fall.

The Faith of Baha'u'llah does not harbour people who are egotistical and seek to glorify themselves.

Its hallmark is servitude and the standard it demands is sincerity and purity

of motive.

It is not therefore surprising that, like Jamal, Siyyid Mihdi was toppled to the ground when the winds of tests began to blow.

He ultimately broke the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and, in the hope of becoming one of the undisputed leaders of the Faith in Persia, joined hands with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and rebelled against the appointed Centre of the Cause of God.

When this became known, the believers left him to his own devices and soon his glory was turned into abasement and the power of the Covenant swept him into the abyss of ignominy and perdition.

The swift downfall of the Covenant-breakers in Persia and the complete frustration of their evil plans resulted in a great upsurge of activity in the Baha'i community, which had cleansed itself from this pollution.

Notwithstanding such an achievement, the believers were deeply distressed by the acts of treachery and deceit perpetrated by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates.

Their grief knew no bounds as they contemplated the wrongs inflicted upon the Centre of the Covenant.

The news of the uprising of Baha'u'llah's family members against 'Abdu'l-Baha, known by the public as the Head of the Faith, was greeted enthusiastically by the enemies of the Cause in Persia who, as the years went by, increased their attacks against the community.

These reached their climax in the summer of 1903 with the massacre of great numbers of Baha'is in the city of Yazd and neighbouring villages -- the greatest upheaval since the blood-bath of 1852 in Tihiran.

Another consequence of the calumnies which the Covenant-breakers published widely against 'Abdu'l-Baha was the disillusionment of many prominent people who were His admirers.

The dwindling followers of Mirza Yahya who were influential in political circles in Persia also took advantage of propaganda against 'Abdu'l-Baha and, highlighting the leadership crisis in the Baha'i community, hoped to revive the fortunes of their tottering movement. <p156>

14 Confirmations of Baha'u'llah Bestow Victory 5-WT
Had not the promised aid of the Ancient Beauty been graciously vouchsafed at every moment to this one, unworthy though he be, he [Mirza Muhammad-'Ali] surely would have destroyed, nay exterminated the Cause of God and utterly subverted the Divine Edifice.

But, praised be the Lord, the triumphant assistance of the Abha Kingdom was received, the hosts of the Realm above hastened to bestow victory.

The Cause of God was promoted far and wide, the call of the True One was noised abroad, ears in all regions were inclined to the Word of God, His standard was unfurled, the ensigns of Holiness gloriously waved

aloft and the verses celebrating His Divine Unity were chanted. 'This one, unworthy though he be' is how 'Abdu'l-Baha refers to Himself.

Throughout His life, 'Abdu'l-Baha attributed all His achievements to the confirmations of Baha'u'llah.

Here He affirms that He was the recipient of 'the promised aid of the Ancient Beauty'.

One may come to the obvious conclusion that Baha'u'llah would assist 'Abdu'l-Baha, whom He had appointed as the Centre of His Covenant, unconditionally and at all times but Baha'u'llah has promised the believers that they, too, will receive His confirmations upon the fulfilment of certain conditions.

The study of the holy writings makes it clear that the growth and progress of the Faith and the development of its institutions depend upon the interaction of two forces.

One is released from the realms on high while the other is generated through the efforts of the believers who serve the Cause with devotion and sincerity.

When these two forces combine, the Faith of God is promoted.

In His bounty, God has ordained that the believers will receive divine confirmations only when they make the effort to serve Him.

The progress of the Cause of Baha'u'llah is dependent upon the actions of the believers.

Every pure deed attracts the confirmations of Baha'u'llah, which in turn bring victory to the Cause.

But the first step must be taken by the individual; without it, God's assistance cannot reach the Baha'i community.

This is one of the irrevocable laws of the Covenant of God, which has two sides:

God's and man's.

God's <p157> part of the Covenant cannot be confused with man's.

God pours out His bounties and grace upon man but man must take the necessary action to receive them.

Unless he opens his heart and submits himself, God's gifts cannot reach him.

In the Hidden Words Baha'u'llah has laid down the law of this Covenant in these words:

Love Me, that I may love thee.

If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee.

Know this, O servant.[162] [162 Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words, Arabic no.

5.] Indeed, the greatest source of strength for a Baha'i is to draw from the power of Baha'u'llah.

It is the only way through which the believer can effectively promote His Cause.

The essential prerequisite for gaining access to this limitless source of spiritual energy is to have faith in Baha'u'llah and to believe wholeheartedly that this power exists.

Without a sincere belief that Baha'u'llah is the Manifestation of God for this age and that He, and He alone, is the source of all creative energies destined to vivify the souls of all men, a Baha'i cannot succeed in tapping this mighty reservoir of celestial strength.

It is the same in nature.

How can a person use a form of energy without knowing its source?

To have certitude in the Faith is the first condition for success in drawing on the power of Baha'u'llah.

The second condition is to become humble and consider oneself as utter nothingness in relation to God and His Manifestation.

To appreciate this, let us turn to the laws of nature, which are similar to those of the spiritual world.

This is because God's creation, both physical and spiritual, is one.

The laws of the lower kingdom exist in the higher one but are applied on a higher level.

In the physical world, energy can be generated between two points where there is a difference of levels.

Water can flow from a higher plane onto a lower one.

Electrical energy may be generated when there is a difference of potential between two points in the circuit.

Similarly, to draw on the power of Baha'u'llah, the believer must assume a lowly position in relation to Baha'u'llah's lofty station.

Baha'u'llah may be likened to the summit of a mountain and the believers to the valley below.

In the same way that water pours from the mountaintop into the valley, the energies of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the token of His power and might can reach a Baha'i who turns to Him in a spirit of true humility and servitude.

The writings of the Central Figures of the Faith bear abundant testimony to this basic principle which governs the relationship of man to his Creator.

In the Hidden Words Baha'u'llah prescribes: 'Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee.' [163] When the believer assumes the position of

humility and utter nothingness towards God, he will long to commune with Him in a spirit of prayer that is without desire and 'transcends the murmur of syllables and sounds'[164] -- a prayer of praise and glorification of God.

[163 *ibid.*

Arabic no.

42. (Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words.)] [164 Baha'u'llah, Baha'i Prayers, p.

71.] To have faith, to become humble and to raise one's voice in prayer and glorification of God are not sufficient prerequisites for drawing on the power of Baha'u'llah.

There is yet another vital condition which the individual must fulfil, namely, to arise to serve the Cause.

If he does not act, the channels of grace will remain closed and no amount of devotion to Baha'u'llah or humility before Him can release the powers from on high.

The very act of arising is, in itself, bound to attract the confirmations of Baha'u'llah.

In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has assured His followers that if they arise with faith and devotion to promote His Cause, the unseen hosts of His confirmations will descend upon them and make them victorious.

The following passage gleaned from the Kitab-i-Aqdas is one such statement among many:

Verily, we behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favoured angels.[165] [165 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

53.] The belief that the power of Baha'u'llah can, by itself, accomplish the promotion and establishment of the Faith throughout the world without the believers fulfilling their obligations to teach and build up the institutions of the Cause, is unfounded and completely against the laws of the Covenant of God.

Indeed, the hands of Baha'u'llah are tied if the individual does not arise to serve His Cause.

In some of His writings going as far back as the days of 'Akka, Baha'u'llah has stated[166] that if all the believers had fully carried out His teachings in their daily lives, the great majority of the peoples of the world would have recognized Him and embraced His Cause in His days. [166 Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Tibb (Tablet of Medicine) in Majmu'iy-i-Alwah.] From the beginning of this Dispensation up to the present time, every victory that the Faith of Baha'u'llah has achieved is due to divine confirmations and assistance; and it shall be so in the future.

The power released from on high has been responsible for the progress of the Cause and the building of its embryonic institutions.

With insignificant resources, handicapped by the lack of facilities and manpower, and often devoid of much knowledge and learning, thousands of men and women have scattered throughout the world and pioneered to the most inhospitable areas of the globe.

And yet, in spite of their powerlessness and inadequacy, these souls have won astounding victories for the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

All who have arisen with devotion have experienced the unfailing confirmations of Baha'u'llah reaching them in miraculous ways, enabling them to teach the Faith and build its institutions in spite of great and at times seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

The outpouring of confirmations pledged in the Kitab-i-Aqdas is clearly conditional upon the activity of the individual believer.

It depends upon one action which may be summed up by the single word 'arise'.

It is to the believer's inner urge to teach the Faith and his act of 'arising' that God responds, releasing His powers from on high to sustain and strengthen him in his efforts to promote the word of God.

Through the mere act of stepping forward to serve the Cause, great bounties will flood the soul, transforming its weakness into strength and its ignorance into wisdom and understanding.

In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah makes similar promises.

For example, He utters these assuring words:

By the righteousness of God!

Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light.

Thus hath it been foreordained in the realm of God's Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful. [167] [167 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

280.] From 'Abdu'l-Baha, in many Tablets, have come similar assurances, such as this one:

By the Lord of the Kingdom!

If one arise to promote the Word of God with a pure heart, overflowing with the love of God and severed from the world, the Lord of Hosts will assist him with such a power as will penetrate the core of the existent beings. [168] [168 'Abdu'l-Baha, in Compilation, vol.

2, p.

211.] And Shoghi Effendi, too, reaffirms these overwhelming promises, writing through his secretary:

Today, as never before, the magnet which attracts the blessings from on high is teaching the Faith of God.

The Hosts of Heaven are poised between heaven and earth, just waiting, and patiently, for the Baha'i to step forth, with pure devotion and consecration, to teach the Cause of God, so they may rush to his aid and assistance...

Let those who wish to achieve immortality step forth and raise the Divine Call.

They will be astonished at the spiritual victories they will gain.[169]
[169 .

From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 28 March 1953, in *ibid.* p.

223. (Compilation, vol.

2)] In the passage of the Will and Testament cited above, 'Abdu'l-Baha attributes the progress of the Cause to the confirmations of Baha'u'llah.

When He wrote the Will and Testament the Covenant-breakers were at the height of their activities against the Master but those who <p160> were steadfast in the Covenant rallied around 'Abdu'l-Baha and arose with vigour and devotion to defend the Covenant and thus attracted the bountiful confirmations of Baha'u'llah to themselves.

These souls were enabled to turn the machinations of the Covenant-breakers into victory for the Cause.

This is why 'Abdu'l-Baha states that 'the Cause of God was promoted far and wide...' A study of the history of the Faith during this period demonstrates that in spite of great opposition from Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his followers, who created much confusion among the Baha'is, the believers succeeded in promoting the Faith and increasing the number of its steadfast and avowed supporters in the East and the West.

In Persia the expansion of the Faith continued over the years and the martyrdom of many released a new power and strength within the Baha'i community.

As already mentioned, the efforts of Covenant-breakers in Persia soon ended in failure, which in turn created much enthusiasm and devotion in the hearts of the believers.

Steadfastness in the Covenant was the main challenge of the day and every Baha'i turned his heart and soul to the Master.

Many Baha'i families chose new surnames, consisting of derivatives of the words

'Covenant', 'steadfast', 'firm', etc.

The more Mirza Muhammad-'Ali spread falsehoods about 'Abdu'l-Baha, the greater became the zeal and fervour with which the friends extolled His station.

The Message of Baha'u'llah was introduced to the West in the early days of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry.

The first person who began to teach the Faith in Chicago in 1894 was a Syrian doctor by the name of Ibrahim Khayru'llah.

In the following passages, Shoghi Effendi describes the conversion of the early believers in North America: [Dr Khayru'llah] established his residence in Chicago, and began to teach actively and systematically the Cause he had espoused.

Within the space of two years he had communicated his impressions to 'Abdu'l-Baha, and reported on the remarkable success that had attended his efforts.

In 1895 an opening was vouchsafed to him in Kenosha, which he continued to visit once a week, in the course of his teaching activities.

By the following year the believers in these two cities, it was reported, were counted by hundreds.

In 1897 he published his book, entitled the Babu'd-Din, and visited Kansas City, New York City, Ithaca and Philadelphia, where he was able to win for the Faith a considerable number of supporters.

The stout-hearted Thornton Chase, surnamed Thabit (Steadfast) by 'Abdu'l-Baha and designated by Him 'the first American believer', who became a convert to the Faith in 1894, the immortal Louisa A.

Moore, the mother teacher of the West, surnamed Liva (Banner) by 'Abdu'l-Baha, Dr Edward Getsinger, to whom she was later married, Howard McNutt [sic], Arthur P.

Dodge, Isabella D.

Brittingham, Lillian E Kappes, Paul K.

Dealy, Chester I.

Thacher and Helen S.

Goodall, whose names will ever remain associated with the first stirrings of the Faith of Baha'u'llah in the North American continent, stand out as the most prominent among those who, in those early years, awakened to the call of the New Day, and consecrated their lives to the service of the newly proclaimed Covenant.

By 1898 Mrs Phoebe Hearst, the well-known philanthropist (wife of Senator George E Hearst), whom Mrs Getsinger had, while on a visit to California, attracted to the Faith, had expressed her intention of visiting

'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land, had invited several believers, among them Dr and Mrs Getsinger, Dr Khayru'llah and his wife, to join her, and had completed the necessary arrangements for their historic pilgrimage to 'Akka.

In Paris several resident Americans, among whom were May Ellis Belles, whom Mrs Getsinger had won over to the Faith, Miss Pearson, and Ann Apperson, both nieces of Mrs Hearst, with Mrs Thornburgh and her daughter, were added to the party, the number of which was later swelled in Egypt by the addition of Dr Khayru'llah's daughters and their grand-mother whom he had recently converted.

The arrival of fifteen pilgrims, in three successive parties, the first of which, including Dr and Mrs Getsinger, reached the prison-city of 'Akka on December 10, 1898; the intimate personal contact established between the Centre of Baha'u'llah's Covenant and the newly arisen heralds of His Revelation in the West; the moving circumstances attending their visit to His Tomb and the great honour bestowed upon them of being conducted by 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself into its innermost chamber; the spirit which, through precept and example, despite the briefness of their stay, a loving and bountiful Host so powerfully infused into them; and the passionate zeal and unyielding resolve which His inspiring exhortations, His illuminating instructions and the multiple evidences of His divine love kindled in their hearts -- all these marked the opening of a new epoch in the development of the Faith in the West, an epoch whose significance the acts subsequently performed by some of these same pilgrims and their fellow-disciples have amply demonstrated.[170] [170 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp.

256-8.] The pilgrims returned home exhilarated and filled with a new spirit of love and devotion to the Faith.

Some went to France and others to the United States.

But soon the believers in the West were confronted with a devastating crisis.

Khayru'llah,[*] who had taught the Faith to many of them, joined hands with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and arose <p162> in opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha creating great turmoil.

To support his activities, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali dispatched his son Shu'a'u'llah, accompanied by Ghulamu'llah, a son of Javad-i-Qazvini,**] to the United States.

Along with Khayru'llah, these two tried to undermine the faith of the believers.

But the power of the Covenant overwhelmed them and they failed utterly to carry out their designs.

A number of devoted souls, some of whom had attained the presence of the Master, arose with heroic spirit and defended the Covenant.

The friends turned away from Khayru'llah and ignored his misguided claims.

He was soon cast out of the community as a Covenant-breaker; his influence ebbed and eventually declined into the abyss of ignominy and perdition. [* For more information about him see, see chapter 18.] [** See chapter 13]

Cleansed from the pollution of Covenant-breaking, the North American Baha'i community became stronger.

Teaching work acquired a new vitality and more souls embraced the Faith.

Consequently centres were opened in Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Buffalo, Pittsburg, Seattle, St Paul and other places.

In Europe, the first centre was established in Paris when May Bolles, after having attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha, returned to that city.

There she taught the Faith to Thomas Breakwell and Hippolyte Dreyfus, the first English and French believers respectively.

In England the nucleus of the Baha'i community was created through the efforts of Mrs Thornburgh-Cropper and Miss Ethel Rosenberg, both of whom had visited the Master in 'Akka.

Another significant development was the publication of Baha'i literature in the United States.

Shoghi Effendi states:

In 1902 a Baha'i Publishing Society, designed to propagate the literature of a gradually expanding community, was formed in Chicago.

A Baha'i Bulletin, for the purpose of disseminating the teachings of the Faith was inaugurated in New York.

The 'Baha'i News', another periodical, subsequently appeared in Chicago, and soon developed into a magazine entitled 'Star of the West'.

The translation of some of the most important writings of Baha'u'llah, such as the 'Hidden Words', the 'Kitab-i-Iqan', the 'Tablets to the Kings', and the 'Seven Valleys', together with the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha, as well as several treatises and pamphlets written by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl and others, was energetically undertaken.

A considerable correspondence with various centres throughout the Orient was initiated, and grew steadily in scope and importance.

Brief histories of the Faith, books and pamphlets written in its defence, articles for the press, accounts of travels and pilgrimages <p163> ages, eulogies and poems, were likewise published and widely disseminated.[171]
[171 ibid. pp.

260-l. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] Many other developments took place in the West, all indicative of the onward march of the Faith.

Although the Baha'i community in Persia was also progressing rapidly, news of the advancement of the Cause in the United States was greeted with much more excitement in the Holy Land.

This was because the Persian believers had, from the early days of the Faith, longed to witness a day when the people of the West would enter the Cause of God and lend their assistance in its promotion.

That the Baha'i community was steadily growing in both East and West at a time when the Covenant-breakers seemed to be successful in their attacks against the Faith was mainly due to the outpouring of love and encouragement by the Master upon the believers.

During a period when He was being attacked on every side by the Covenant-breakers and the believers were dispirited and disconsolate, He cheered the friends, strengthened their faith, assured them of the invincibility of the Covenant and widened their vision to see the greatness of the Cause and its ultimate victory. 'Abdu'l-Baha's trusted secretary and confidant Dr Yunis Khan has left to posterity his reminiscences of the Master during this most turbulent period of His ministry.

The following is a summary translation of his celebrated memoirs:

In those days when the showers of sedition and conspiracy were raining down and the storms of tests and trials were blowing with fury, a fierce hurricane was raging around the Ark of the Cause of God.

But it was the Centre of the Covenant who was at the helm.

Through the potency of His words and the authority of His directives, He was navigating the Sacred Ark towards the shores of salvation.

The sway of His pen and the influence of His utterances were both means whereby He was guiding the people to the highway of blissfulness and prosperity.

In the same way that the traces of His pen are imprinted for all time upon the pages of His Tablets, His blessed words were engraved upon the hearts of those who were privileged to hear Him and their recollections were transmitted from heart to heart.

His utterances in those days were as varied as His writings.

In His talks He often used to share with us many glad-tidings of the future progress of the Cause of God.

He likened our days of anguish and sadness to the early days of Christianity and Islam which had also been very turbulent; but these religions were later exalted in the land.

Similarly, He assured us in clear terms of the ascendancy and victory of the Cause of Baha'u'llah...

His utterances on the future of the Cause were delivered with eloquence

and <p164> effectiveness and were imbued with a power and authority born of the heavenly realms such that they penetrated the depths of our hearts.

Our souls were so assured and uplifted that we, His hearers, did not have to imagine forthcoming events.

Rather, we found ourselves experiencing all the bountiful happenings of the future.

The eternal glory and ultimate successes of the Cause of God were so vividly portrayed by Him that the passage of time was irrelevant, for we saw the past, present and the future at the same time.

All of this was because the promises of the Master concerning the ascendancy of the Cause were absolutely clear, explicit and irrevocable...

Now [after a few decades] many of the prophecies of 'Abdu'l-Baha have already been fulfilled.

For instance who could ever have imagined that the small village of Haifa would become, within so short a period, as foreshadowed by 'Abdu'l-Baha, a great city and an important port...[172] [172 Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih, pp.

63-6.] Thus through the spiritual powers conferred upon Him by Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha strengthened the faith of those loved ones who attained His presence and enabled them to withstand the onslaught of the Covenant-breakers.

This privilege was the experience of those believers who were resident in the Holy Land and the pilgrims who arrived from time to time.

But the great majority of the friends who were living in other parts of the world received their spiritual sustenance from the Master through the innumerable Tablets which flowed from His pen.

Again we turn to Dr Yunis Khan's memoirs for a glimpse of the manner in which 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote Tablets or dictated them in the presence of the believers:

There are various accounts by Baha'i pilgrims and visitors concerning the revelation of Tablets by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Some have said that at the time of revelation their souls were transported into realms of the spirit while their whole beings were shaking with excitement.

Others have testified that they saw with their own eyes that while the Master was entertaining believers and non-believers and speaking to them in Turkish he was, at the same time, dictating His Tablets in Arabic and the secretary was taking down His words.

Some have said that they saw the Master Himself writing Tablets in Arabic while speaking in Turkish to the friends.

Others have seen Him writing a Tablet in His own hand in Persian, while at the same time dictating one to His secretary in Arabic.

Some speak of the unusual speed of His writing as well as the majesty of His utterances.

There are no exaggerations in the above statements.

Each person has described his observations in accordance with his own understanding...

The revelation of Tablets had a greater effect on the believers than other experiences in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

His <p165> Tablets were written in the following manner.

Whenever 'Abdu'l-Baha was freed from His various daily engagements, He summoned Mirza Nuru'd-Din, His secretary, and began dictating to him.

At times He would simultaneously review the Tablets previously revealed, inscribed and ready for His signature.

It was on such occasions that He wrote and dictated at the same time.

He was truly the embodiment of the verse: 'Nothing whatsoever keepeth Him from being occupied with any other thing.' There was no thought or action which could distract Him.

As the revelation of Tablets continued, the believers, who were usually gathered in the room below or in the Pilgrim House or were walking in the streets of 'Akka were all eager to attain the presence of the Master and hear His words as He dictated to His secretary in answer to letters He had received.

When summoned, they would arrive and be seated.

After greeting them lovingly, the revelation of Tablets would begin.

Sometimes He would dictate in a loud, clear voice; sometimes He would chant His dictation in the same melodious voice He used to chant the Tablet of Visitation at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

As a result of this marvellous experience, those present were immersed in the sea of astonishment.

Some would find that their questions were answered and some learned a lesson from this heavenly experience.

As the revelation of the Tablets continued, all became exhilarated and turned their hearts and souls to the Kingdom on high.

But alas, such meetings of fellowship and love would often be interrupted by visiting strangers.

The house of the Master was open to all.

There being no guards posted at the gate, people would come in.

If the new arrivals were not antagonistic towards the Faith and were worthy to listen to the exalted words of the Master, then after welcoming them and showing His loving kindness to each one, He would resume dictating His words to His secretary.

But if they were not worthy, or if they overcrowded the room, the Master dismissed the believers and dealt with the situation as He deemed proper.

This was how 'Abdu'l-Baha dictated to His secretary.

But most of the time He wrote the Tablets with His own hand in the circumstances described above.

Whenever He was free, He would take the pen and begin to write.

But as He did not wish the believers who were assembled in the room to become tired or bored, He would talk to them while He was writing...

As others arrived, He would welcome each and shower upon all His loving kindness, and yet His pen was moving.

Occasionally He would read aloud what He was writing.

There were also periods of silence.

The Master, as He continued to write, often broke the silence saying: 'Talk among yourselves.

I will be able to hear you.' However, the believers were so carried away by His peerless Beauty that they would remain silent.

Only the new arrivals, those who had not been invited, such as an Arab Shaykh or an Ottoman dignitary, would break the silence. <p166> After the usual greetings and words of welcome which befitted the guests, the pen of 'Abdu'l-Baha would begin to move while He conversed with them.

Whenever there was silence, He would ask the newly-arrived guests to broach a subject and discuss it together.

Then He Himself entered the conversation...

Sometimes the guests conducted heated arguments and yet throughout the noise and clamour they created, the Master's pen kept on moving on His Tablets...

My purpose in describing the revelation of the Tablets in detail is to enable the people to appreciate the manner in which these Tablets, which uplift the souls and exhilarate the hearts, were written under such difficult and trying circumstances.

Another amazing aspect of these Tablets is that it was not only the believers who heard the Master reciting them who were inspired but also the deniers and mischief-makers, who were deeply moved and humbled by

this experience.[173] [173 ibid. pp.

259-65. (Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih.)] During those turbulent years when the Covenant-breakers were engaged in making mischief in the Holy Land, the believers' only refuge was the shelter of 'Abdu'l-Baha's presence.

He could be likened to a vast ocean at whose shores His loved ones gathered in order to receive a portion of its life-giving waters.

Each believer received his share in accordance with his capacity.

Some who had come empty-handed merely enjoyed seeing that vast and fathomless ocean.

Others who had more capacity had come with a vessel in hand and each one received a draught of the water of life.

Still others, yet unsatisfied, immersed themselves in that ocean and found some of the inestimable pearls of wisdom and knowledge which lay concealed in its depths.

That ocean -- the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha -- appeared in various forms on different occasions.

At times it was calm, at others surging with mighty waves.

When it was calm, every beholder would find himself in a state of joy and tranquillity.

When its billowing waves surged, it cast gems of inestimable value upon the shores.

At such times, the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha captivated the hearts of His loved ones, who were carried away into spiritual realms utterly oblivious of their own selves and wholly devoted to Him.

The effect of the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha upon the believers cannot be adequately explained by the above analogy.

Suffice it to say that the pure in heart who attained His presence were transformed into a new creation; they became spiritual giants who championed the Cause of the Covenant and defended it with heroism and sacrifice.

In his memoirs Dr Yunis Khan asserts that the mere glance of 'Abdu'l-Baha upon a believer released mysterious forces which at times were capable of transforming his life.

This is a summary of his observations as he describes the various effects of the Master's glances: <p167> One glance, which thankfully did not appear except on rare occasions, was that of wrath and anger.

It reflected the wrath of God from which one had to flee for refuge to Him...

There was a glance of love and compassion which was evident at all times.

It conferred life and brought joy to everyone...

Another glance was that which enchanted the hearts and attracted the souls.

I observed many a time in the narrow and dark streets of 'Akka that with one look, the strangers were so attracted to 'Abdu'l-Baha as to follow Him until He dismissed them.

This particular glance has many aspects which I am not in a position to describe...

There was a glance by which He expressed His satisfaction and pleasure to a person, as if to say, 'I am pleased with you.' This glance was shown to both the obedient and the rebellious.

Another glance was one which released great spiritual potency.

If ever He cast such a glance upon a person, that person's greatest wish would have been granted, if he so desired.

But who is it that in such an atmosphere could have any desire other than to seek the good-pleasure of His Lord?

I myself have seen this type of a glance many a time.

In this mood, one longs for sufferings in the path of God.

And some, like Varqa,[*] have, under the influence of this glance, gone to the field of martyrdom. [* For a story of his life see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4.] There was a glance through which a person realized that all that was hidden in his heart, whether of the past or of the future, was known to the Master.

Above all, there was a glance which, if ever it was directed to an individual, caused that individual to become the recipient of knowledge and understanding.

At one time we all saw two believers who were enchanted by this glance and became the possessors of divine knowledge.

One was Fadil-i-Shirazi,**] the other Shaykh 'Ali-Akbar-i-Quchani***]...[174] **An outstanding teacher of the Faith. [*** He was martyred during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha.] [174 ibid. pp.

570-3. (Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih.)] <p168>

15 Mirza Muhammad-'Ali Claims

Partnership with Baha'u'llah 5-WT Now, that the true Faith of God may be shielded and protected, His Law guarded and preserved and His Cause remain safe and secure, it is incumbent upon everyone to hold East unto the Text of the clear and firmly established blessed verse, revealed about him.

None other transgression greater than his can be ever imagined.

He (Baha'u'llah) sayeth, glorious and holy is His Word: -- 'My foolish loved ones have regarded him even as my partner, have kindled sedition in the land and they verily are of the mischief-makers.' Consider, how foolish are the people!

They that have been in His (Baha'u'llah's) Presence and beheld His Countenance, have nevertheless noised abroad such idle talk, until, exalted by His explicit words, He said: -- 'Should he for a moment pass out from under the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught.' Reflect!

What stress He layeth upon one moment's deviation: that is, were he to incline a hair's breadth to the right or to the left, his deviation would be clearly established and his utter nothingness made manifest.

The basis for Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's expulsion from the Faith and his disqualification to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha as anticipated in the Kitab-i-'Ahd is found in the above passage in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Central to this subject is the word 'deviation'.

In the next five paragraphs of the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha further elaborates on the same topic and establishes, beyond the shadow of doubt, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's ineligibility to succeed Him.

To appreciate 'Abdu'l-Baha's exhortation in the above passage, it is necessary to study a shameful episode in Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's life when he was a young teenager in Adrianople.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was about ten years old when he accompanied Baha'u'llah to Adrianople.

He left that city at the age of 15.

Baha'u'llah granted him a special ability in his childhood -- the power of utterance -- and this became obvious to everybody who came into contact with him.

But instead of using this gift to promote the Cause of God, he embarked on a career which hastened his downfall.

When <p169> he was in his early teens in Adrianople, he composed a series of passages in Arabic and, without Baha'u'llah's permission, disseminated them among some of the Persian Baha'is, introducing them as verses of God which, he claimed, were revealed to him.

He intimated to the believers that he was a partner with Baha'u'llah in divine revelation.

In Qazvin several believers were influenced by him and drawn to him, creating a great controversy and resulting in disunity among some of the believers there.

The city was already notorious for its different factions among the Babis and them were some followers of Mirza Yahya actively disseminating false propaganda against the followers of Baha'u'llah.

Now, in the midst of these conflicting groups, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's claim to be the revealer of the verses of God brought about an added confusion among Baha'u'llah's followers.

In his writings, which are of considerable length, the teenaged Muhammad-'Ali refers to himself as, among other things, 'the King of the spirit'; he calls on the believers to 'hear the voice of him who has been manifested to man', admonishes those who deny his verses revealed in his childhood, declares his revelation to be 'the greatest of God's revelations', asserts that 'all have been created through a word from him', considers himself to be 'the greatest divine luminary before whose radiance all other suns pale into insignificance', and proclaims himself to be 'the sovereign ruler of all who are in heaven and on earth'.^[175] [175 Rahiq-i-Makhtum, vol.

2, p.

850.] Such preposterous claims and such a display of personal ambition evoked the wrath of Baha'u'llah, who rebuked him vehemently and chastised him with His own hands.

Meanwhile, the controversy in Qazvin continued for some time.

Three believers in particular fell under the spell of Muhammad-'Ali:

Mirza 'Abdu'llah, Haji Hasan and his brother, Aqa 'Ali.

They and a few others, who considered their youthful candidate to be a partner with Baha'u'llah and of equal station to Him, entered into argument with several believers who refuted their claims.

Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar,^[*] a tower of strength for the Baha'is of Qazvin, emphatically rejected the claims of Muhammad-'Ali and declared that his writings amounted to no more than a string of Arabic sentences which in no way could be the Word of God. [* See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3, pp.

88-91.] This controversy prompted Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim, entitled Khalil, to write a letter to Baha'u'llah begging Him to clarify His own station and the station of His sons.

Haji Khalil was already confused about the claims of Mirza Yahya and wished to be enlightened and <p170> find the truth.

In his petition he also asked other questions.

Baha'u'llah responded by revealing a Tablet in his honour, known as the Lawh-i-Khalil (Tablet of Khalil).^[*] [* Parts of this Tablet are translated by Shoghi Effendi in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, nos.

XXXIII, XXXVIII, LXXVII and CXXVII.] In this Tablet He declares His own station and states that as long as His sons observe the commandments of God, persevere in edifying their souls, testify to what has been revealed by God, believe in 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', do not create divisions in His Cause and do not deviate from His revealed laws, they can be considered as the leaves and branches of His tree of holiness and members of His family.

Through them will the light of God be diffused and the signs of His bounty be made manifest.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali did not live up to these standards.

Apart from his shameful claim of equality with Baha'u'llah, he became a source of sedition in the community, inflicted severe injuries upon the Cause of God and, after Baha'u'llah's ascension, broke His Covenant and rose up to extinguish the light of His Faith.

In the Tablet of Khalil Baha'u'llah alludes to 'Abdu'l-Baha in terms which immensely exalt Him above His other sons.

He refers to Him as One 'from Whose tongue God will cause the signs of His power to stream forth' and as the One Whom 'God hath specially chosen for His Cause'. [176] [176 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

242.] In another Tablet [177] revealed at this time when a few believers had been influenced by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's claim, Baha'u'llah asserts that when Muhammad-'Ali was a child of tender years He conferred upon him the power of utterance, so that people might witness His might and glory.

He grieves in this Tablet at the state of some of His foolish followers who have thought to recognize a partner with Him in revelation and who have made great mischief in the land.

He expresses astonishment at the behaviour of some who have attained His presence and witnessed the outpouring of His Revelation and yet have spread such shameful rumours among the believers.

Referring to Muhammad-'Ali in this Tablet, He further states: [177
Ma'idiy-i-Asmani vol.

8, p.

40.] He verily, is but one of My servants...

Should he for a moment pass out from under the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught. [178] [178 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

251.] In this Tablet Baha'u'llah further confirms that all beings are created through a word from Him and that no one can claim equality, likeness or partnership with Him.

He and He alone is the possessor of the <p171> Most Great Infallibility which is the prerogative of every Manifestation of God.

Concerning the three believers in Qazvin who were misled by Muhammad-'Ali's claim, Baha'u'llah invited Haji Hasan and his brother to come to Adrianople.

Here they attained His presence and fully recognized their folly.

In distinct contrast to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's claim was 'Abdu'l-Baha's utter self-effacement.

Many believers during Baha'u'llah's ministry used to write letters to 'Abdu'l-Baha but He would not respond to them.

For instance, Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad-i-Varqa,[*] who was later martyred, wrote a great many letters to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

To none of these did 'Abdu'l-Baha send a reply.

In the end, Varqa wrote to Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis, and complained.

When Baha'u'llah was informed about this He summoned 'Abdu'l-Baha to His presence and directed Him to send a reply to Varqa. 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote a brief letter to him saying that when the Pen of the Most High is moving upon His Tablets, how could 'Abdu'l-Baha be expected to write?

Indeed, whatever 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote during the lifetime of Baha'u'llah was directed by Him and received His sanction.

This episode alone demonstrates the vast difference between the two: 'Abdu'l-Baha, a true servant, humble and lowly before His Lord; Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, ambitious, vain and faithless. [* See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4.] Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's claim was not the only sign pointing to his ambitious nature and his craving for leadership from this early age.

His daily behaviour, even during Baha'u'llah's lifetime, gave clear indications of his lack of spirituality and purity of motive, and his jealousy of 'Abdu'l-Baha was apparent to those who were close to him.

As Mirza Muhammad-'Ali grew older, he acquired great prestige among the believers.

He thrived on the special consideration shown him by Baha'u'llah's followers in order to honour his father.

But many of Baha'u'llah's disciples who had spiritual eyes soon discovered his real nature and found him devoid of those divine virtues and spiritual qualities that characterize a true believer.

Long before he broke the Covenant they were able to detect in him an air of superiority and self-glorification and a craving for leadership and power.[179]

[179 As an example, see chapter 12, the story of Haji Muhammad Tahir-i-Malmiri's first meeting with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.] <p172>

(1) 6-WT What deviation can be greater than breaking the Covenant of God!

What deviation can be greater than interpolating and falsifying the words and verses of the Sacred Text, even as testified and declared by Mirza Badi'u'llah!

32-WT Not content with this, their chief, O my God, hath dared to interpolate Thy Book, to fraudulently alter Thy decisive Holy Text and falsify that which hath been revealed by Thy All-Glorious Pen.

He did also maliciously insert that which Thou didst reveal for the one that hath wrought the most glaring cruelty upon Thee, disbelieved in Thee and denied Thy wondrous Signs into what Thou didst reveal for this servant of Thine that hath been wronged in this world.

All this he did that he might beguile the souls of men and breathe his evil whisperings into the hearts of Thy devoted ones.

Thereunto did their second chief testify, confessing it in his own handwriting, setting thereupon his seal and spreading it throughout all regions.

O my God!

Could there be a more grievous injustice than this?

38-WT Ye know well what the hands of the Centre of Sedition, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, and his associates have wrought.

Among his doings, one of them is the corruption of the Sacred Text whereof ye are all aware, the Lord be praised, and know that it is evident, proven and confirmed by the testimony of his brother, Mirza Badi'u'llah, whose confession is written in his own handwriting, beareth his seal, is printed and spread abroad.

This is but one of his misdeeds.

Can a transgression be imagined more glaring than this, the interpolation of the Holy Text?

Nay, by the righteousness of the Lord!

His transgressions are writ and recorded in a leaflet by itself.

Please God, ye will peruse it.

These passages refer to one of the most ignoble acts perpetrated by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, namely interpolation of the sacred writings of Baha'u'llah, which took place after His ascension.

This was not the first time that the Arch-breaker of the Covenant had committed this offence.

During the last years of Baha'u'llah's ministry he succeeded in altering

certain passages of the revealed word.

We shall refer to this episode further in this chapter.

However, the interpolation of the <p173> writings described in the Will and Testament relates to the period after the ascension.

Having observed the ascendancy of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the loyalty of the rank and file of the believers to the Covenant, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in the early days of his rebellion embarked upon various dishonourable schemes to undermine 'Abdu'l-Baha's influence in the community.

An account of his stealing two cases containing various Tablets by Baha'u'llah which had been entrusted to 'Abdu'l-Baha has been given in chapter 12.

He went through these original Tablets and found certain ones, condemnatory in tone, which referred to Mirza Yahya.

He easily removed Mirza Yahya's name and substituted that of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

As the ink used in those days was soluble in water or saliva, it was a usual practice by all scribes to remove part of a written page by licking it and, once it had dried, to write on it again.

Being a writer himself, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was accustomed to this practice.

One of the people who informed the Master about Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's interpolation of the writings was Mirza Badi'u'llah, who conveyed the information to 'Abdu'l-Baha by releasing a document known as the 'Epistle of Repentance'.

We have, in chapter 13, referred to Mirza Badi'u'llah's iniquitous activities against the Covenant, when he acted in concert with his older brother, the Centre of Sedition.

For some years he continued in this way until early in 1903 when rumours began to circulate that he intended to repent and return to the fold.

While the friends who were steadfast in the Covenant were apprehensive that if the rumours were true there might be a fresh plan by the Covenant-breakers to deceive the believers, the news was soon confirmed and Mirza Badi'u'llah announced his repentance for all his activities against the Covenant.

This move proved to be of great material benefit to him because he had lived extravagantly and had spent all his possessions in promoting the cause of Covenant-breaking.

When he found himself in financial need and realized that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's assistance was not forthcoming owing to a rift between the two brothers, Mirza Badi'u'llah took revenge by announcing his decision to leave the band of Covenant-breakers.

He repented for his past actions, turned to 'Abdu'l-Baha and begged for forgiveness.

Of course the Master knew that he was not sincere and that his repentance was an expedient measure to satisfy his needs.

But with the Master's characteristic loving kindness, he was forgiven.

Arrangements were made for him to make a public statement about this matter.

On the appointed day, Mirza Badi'u'llah arrived in the Master's house where all the friends had gathered.

He showed the utmost respect to everyone, prostrated himself at the feet of the Master, begged forgiveness and read his 'Epistle of Repentance'.

Dr Yunis Khan in his memoirs describes that day as an historic occasion and states that some of the friends endowed with spiritual insight readily recognized Mirza Badi'u'llah's insincerity in that meeting.

They knew that his association with the friends would create great problems for the community which certain unfaithful individuals had already infiltrated.

Soon their fears were realized.

For some time after this event Mirza Badi'u'llah attended the gatherings of the friends who showed him every courtesy.

The Master provided him and his family with a suitable residence in 'Akka and supplied his needs.

He would often go to the Master's house and attain His presence.

During this period Mrs Lua .Getsinger, an outstanding believer of the West, referred to by Shoghi Effendi as a Disciple of 'Abdu'l-Baha, was in the Holy Land.

Mirza Badi'u'llah asked her to teach him English.

Lua very happily agreed, thinking that by coming in contact with him, she would become the recipient of knowledge, spirituality and divine virtues.

But very soon, after the first two lessons, she realized her great mistake in this undertaking.

She found him devoid of spiritual qualities and knowledge of the Faith and felt the influence of his dishonesty and treacherous nature.

Knowing that if he learned English he could poison the minds of the Western believers, she refused to continue teaching him and told him, in no uncertain terms, to abandon the plan altogether.

The 'Epistle of Repentance', which was addressed to the people of Baha, was translated from Persian into English and printed and published in both languages.

The original manuscript bears Mirza Badi'u'llah's signature and seal.

In this document he reveals, among other things, some of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's

ignoble works, including the interpolation of the writings carried out immediately after the ascension of Baha'u'llah.

The following is a summary translation of his account of this episode:

During His last illness, Baha'u'llah directed 'Abdu'l-Baha to place His papers and Tablets in two special large cases...

These were entrusted by Him to 'Abdu'l-Baha...

When the time came to wash the sacred body of Baha'u'llah, they brought water into the room.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali said to 'Abdu'l-Baha that since water would be poured around the room, it would be better to remove the two cases to another room so that they would not get wet. 'Abdu'l-Baha assented and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali asked Majdu'd-Din to move them to my room.

This was done and the cases were placed in a special cabinet and locked.

Three days after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali asked me to give him the keys so that he might open the cases.

He said: 'Baha'u'llah has placed a certain document in these <p175> cases which needs to be studied.' He took the keys from me.

The next thing I noticed was that with the help of Majdu'd-Din, 'Ali Rida,[*] his sister, and the mother of Shu'a'u'llah the cases were taken out of the window onto the balcony of the mansion and from there into the room of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

He took out all the Tablets of Baha'u'llah which were addressed to individual believers.

When I protested at his action, he explained, among other things, that the responsibility of the protection of the holy writings had been given to him by Baha'u'llah and that he had a Tablet to this effect.

However, he did not show me any such Tablet...

He also indicated to me in a subtle way that the Most Great Branch was against the Cause of Baha'u'llah and if these holy writings were to fall into His hands, He would destroy them and would obliterate the name and every trace of the Blessed Beauty from this world! [* A son of Aqay-i-Kalim, i.e.

Majdu'd-Din's brother.] Another violation by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was the interpolation of the holy writings.

For a long time ... he used to say that he possessed a Tablet from the Supreme Pen concerning the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha and that if he were to publish it, the credibility of 'Abdu'l-Baha would be finished and His name effaced forever.

He spoke of this on numerous occasions to members of the family.

Some time elapsed, during which a few individuals questioned me concerning the Tablet in question.

I, therefore, asked Mirza Muhammad-'Ali to show it to us but every time I mentioned it to him, he offered me an excuse and sought a pretext to avoid it.

Then one day he took out of the case a blessed Tablet which was revealed before Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in the Most Great Prison and gave it to me to read.

In it Baha'u'llah condemns the iniquities and wicked deeds perpetrated by His brother Mirza Yahya, whom He addresses as 'My brother'.

I said to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali that this Tablet had no relevance to the present situation.

He said: 'I have permission from Baha'u'llah to use my pen and interpolate His writings for the protection of the Cause.'

Now since some individuals have exaggerated the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Master claims to be the embodiment of divinity, I will erase the words "My brother" and insert in its place "My Greatest Branch".

This I will show to some people in order to check His influence.'

...Alter a few minutes, he carried out this interpolation in front of my eyes.

Successfully, he changed the words 'My brother' to 'My Greatest Branch'.

I pointed out to him that this action amounted to the betrayal of God's trust and constituted a sin.

I warned him that if he showed the Tablet in this form to anyone, I would divulge the whole event and report the act of interpolation...

On hearing these words he became disturbed and promised that he would not show the Tablet to anyone.

He also requested me not to reveal the matter. <p176> In his 'Epistle of Repentance' Mirza Badi'u'llah discloses further interpolations of the holy Tablets.

He states that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali interpolated all other Tablets which were addressed to the Babis who had rebelled against Baha'u'llah, replacing Mirza Yahya's name with that of the Most Great Branch.

Mirza Badi'u'llah's repentance was short-lived.

It did not take him long to realize that there was no room for leadership in the Baha'i community for him, especially as in those days 'Abdu'l-Baha chose to talk at great length about the glorious future of the Faith under the leadership of the Universal House of Justice.

Mirza Badi'u'llah did not attend the friends' meetings for some time,

established secret links with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and eventually rejoined him and resumed his nefarious activities against the Centre of the Covenant.

During the time that he was with the steadfast believers he created great tension within the community and it brought the friends a sense of relief when he left them and rejoined the ignoble band of Covenant-breakers.

This matter is referred to by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the following passage of the Will and Testament:

40-WT Gracious God!

After Mirza Badi'u'llah had declared in his own handwriting that this man (Muhammad 'Ali) had broken the Covenant and had proclaimed his falsification of the Holy Text, he realized that to return to the True Faith and pay allegiance to the Covenant and Testament would in no wise promote his selfish desires.

He thus repented and regretted the thing he had done and attempted privily to gather in his printed confessions, plotted darkly with the Centre of Sedition against me. and informed him daily of all the happenings within my household.

He has even taken a leading part in the mischievous deeds that have of late been committed.

Praise be to God affairs recovered their former stability and the loved ones obtained partial peace.

But ever since the day he entered again into our midst, he began afresh to sow the seeds of sore sedition.

Some of his machinations and intrigues will be recorded in a separate leaflet.

It is interesting to note that Baha'u'llah had revealed a special Tablet addressed to His son Badi'u'llah.

Had he followed the exhortations of His father in that celebrated Tablet, he could have become a brilliant light in the firmament of the Cause but his close association with the Arch-breaker of the Covenant extinguished the light of faith in his heart.

The following is the text of the Tablet by Baha'u'llah:

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.

Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.

Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of <p177> thy pledge.

Be fair in thy judgement, and guarded in thy speech.

Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.

Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression.

Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts.

Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive.

Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.[180] [180 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

285.] This Tablet begins with 'O Badi' and ends with a passage (not yet translated into English) in which Baha'u'llah prays that God may protect Mirza Badi'u'llah from the all-consuming fire of envy and jealousy.

However, through his violation of the Covenant, Baha'u'llah's prayer for him remained unfulfilled.

Returning to the activities of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, it is a well-known fact that he had also interpolated the writings of Baha'u'llah during His ministry.

This may be regarded as his most successful act of interfering with the holy writings because the passage he altered was printed and published in a book whereas the other interpolations were made to Tablets that remain unpublished.

The story behind this disloyal act is as follows.

Since Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was highly skilled in the art of calligraphy, Baha'u'llah sent him from 'Akka on a mission to India to help print a few books including the Kitab-i-Aqdas and a selected compilation of His writings.

This compilation, known as the Kitab-i-Mubin, contains some of His most important Tablets, including the Suriy-i-Haykal.[*] The book was printed in the handwriting of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali by the printing firm of Nasiri, which was part of a business organization established in Bombay by a few members of the Afnan family.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali took advantage of this opportunity and betrayed Baha'u'llah by changing an important passage in this book.

The passage refers to the one who will come after Baha'u'llah.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali considered this passage to allude to 'Abdu'l-Baha and therefore he deleted all reference to Him and substituted it with a few words

of his own.

Of course this treacherous act of interpolation was soon exposed by comparing the passage with the authentic writings of Baha'u'llah. [* See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3] <p178>

17

Deviations of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali (2) 6-WT What deviation can be greater than calumniating the Centre of the Covenant himself!

In studying this subject it is helpful to look into the living conditions of the family of Baha'u'llah and their attitude towards the Master.

As stated in previous chapters, 'Abdu'l-Baha and His family lived in 'Akka but the rest of Baha'u'llah's family resided in the Mansion of Bahji.

Only a few rooms on the ground floor were reserved for 'Abdu'l-Baha's use when He visited and even these were taken over by the Covenant-breakers once their opposition to Him intensified and became public.

At that time 'Abdu'l-Baha took over the rooms, known as the pilgrim house, in the vicinity of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, for His own use.

Here He rested after the fatigue of the journey from 'Akka and received the believers.

The members of Baha'u'llah's family who became Covenant-breakers led a very comfortable life in the Mansion of Bahji.

During Baha'u'llah's lifetime His three sons and His amanuensis Mirza Aqa Jan had hoarded a great many valuable gifts which the believers had presented to Baha'u'llah and which He had declined to accept for Himself.

He was detached from all earthly possessions, as were 'Abdu'l-Baha, His mother and His sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf.

In contrast, Mirza Aqa Jan and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali coveted these gifts.

Consequently they had amassed considerable wealth.

Indeed, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his brothers at one time plotted to kill Mirza Aqa Jan in order to seize his possessions.[*] [* For details, see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah. chapter 15.] After the passing of Baha'u'llah, the family lived prosperously. 'Abdu'l-Baha continued for many years to send funds and large supplies of food to the inhabitants of the Mansion -- everything needed to make them comfortable.

The three brothers, their families and close relatives all enjoyed a life of luxury and leisure.

The following is a summary translation of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali's remarks on this subject: <p179> All the gifts that the Master received, as well as the funds relating to the Huququ'llah, He used to send to the Mansion for the upkeep of the family.

Also He had bought for them a number of horses of the best breed which were kept in the stables at the Mansion.

The Covenant-breakers often spent their time riding and hunting.

When they went to 'Akka, they rode horses[*] flanked on each side by ten or twelve armed horsemen as guards.

In this way they impressed everyone.

They entered the city with a pomp and grandeur usually reserved for the governor and the chiefs.

In contrast to this, the Master often used to walk and occasionally rode a donkey as He went alone to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

Thus they considered themselves victorious when they reflected on their outward pomp and glory, while they regarded 'Abdu'l-Baha's lowliness and simplicity as a sign of weakness and defeat... [* In those days important people rode horses as a sign of their eminence in the community.

Ordinary people either walked or rode donkeys.] The Master had instructed Aqa Faraju'llah, who was His caterer, to send to the Mansion any amount of food and other supplies which the Covenant-breakers requested.

But they used to demand five or six times more than their needs.

They were determined to take excessive funds from the Master so as to make Him helpless and force upon Him the humiliation of borrowing money from the people.

In spite of all this, 'Abdu'l-Baha ensured that they received large supplies of food, clothing and other necessities of life.

Moreover, every gift which was sent to Him 'Abdu'l-Baha would dispatch to the Mansion and many of the funds which He received as Huququ'llah were given to them.

These manifestations of generosity and compassion which 'Abdu'l-Baha showered upon them in spite of their malevolence were interpreted by them as fear and helplessness.

Consequently the more they received His gracious gifts and favours, the more haughty they became and progressively intensified their opposition to His blessed Person.[181] [181 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, pp.

334-5.] During the early years of their rebellion, the Covenant-breakers, noticing on the one hand their own prosperity and apparent success in converting a considerable number to their side and on the other 'Abdu'l-Baha's humility and loving generosity, were convinced that theirs would be a victorious outcome.

Dr Yunis Khan recounts:

I heard several times from the Master saying: 'Once I was counseling Majdu'd-Din and trying to guide him in a spirit of love and compassion.

I admonished him to abandon the path of error and warned him of the remorseful consequences of his deeds.

But I spoke to him with such fervour that tears came to My eyes.

Then I noticed that upon seeing my emotions, Majdu'd-Din was scornfully smiling at Me, thinking in his heart how well I had been <p180> defeated!

Thereupon I raised my voice at him saying: "O wretched one!

My tears were shed when, out of pity, I reflected upon your miserable state and not for myself.

Did you think I had become helpless and impotent because of my pleading to you?"[182] [182 Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih, p.

216.] 'Abdu'l-Baha's patience and loving-kindness, as demonstrated in this story, were thus interpreted by the Covenant-breakers as weakness.

This misconception, coupled with the notion that theirs was a life of prosperity and honour, while 'Abdu'l-Baha and His family were living an austere life burdened by having to supply the exorbitant expenses they demanded, emboldened the Covenant-breakers to step up their campaign of misrepresentation against 'Abdu'l-Baha.

In this they received encouragement from the enemies of the Faith, as well as from the aides and deputies of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in Persia.

As Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's campaign to discredit 'Abdu'l-Baha in the eyes of the Baha'is gathered momentum, he began to direct his attention to the non-Baha'i public, fertile ground for spreading false accusations against Him.

It was much easier to poison the minds of those who, although they knew the Master, were not spiritually close to Him.

The Covenant-breakers invented several stories of different kinds and began to propagate calumnies against 'Abdu'l-Baha among influential people who held important positions in 'Akka and neighbouring towns.

Thus they completely disregarded the interests of the Faith they claimed to believe in and acted in a manner that clearly demonstrated their disbelief in Baha'u'llah and their denunciation of His Cause.

One of the most shameful pieces of propaganda was their accusation that 'Abdu'l-Baha had cut off their livelihood by withholding funds and provisions to which they were entitled.

As Dr Yunis Khan noted, nothing could have been further from the truth. 'Abdu'l-Baha used to send to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali a great part of the funds which He received from the believers in Persia.

He had also made ample arrangements for all members of Baha'u'llah's family to receive food and other provisions, amounting to many times more than their needs.

Whereas the Master and His family lived a life of austerity, His unfaithful brothers and the rest of Baha'u'llah's family lived luxuriously in the Mansion of Bahji.

Despite 'Abdu'l-Baha's solicitude for them, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his younger brothers used to complain to people that they were destitute and their families on the verge of starvation.

It must be remembered that in all the years that 'Abdu'l-Baha lived in 'Akka no one except a few enemies had ever doubted His exalted character, His magnanimity, His loving-kindness and generosity towards the inhabitants of the Holy Land in general and 'Akka in particular.

He was a compassionate father to all, a refuge to the poor, a true guide to the rich and a wise counsellor to the rulers of the land.

But now owing to the falsehoods invented by the Covenant-breakers, people who had hitherto been great admirers of 'Abdu'l-Baha became confused and, in the course of time when similar accusations were repeated, disillusioned and lost their faith and confidence in Him altogether.

In order to deceive people into believing that he had become destitute, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali used to send his sons, dressed in rags, to the homes of important people where they begged for money.

They pretended that they did not have even a loaf of bread in their home and that the whole family was on the verge of starvation.

In spite of the fact that they were living a life of luxury owing to the care and protection of 'Abdu'l-Baha, they accused Him of withholding their source of livelihood.

Dr Yunis Khan tells an interesting story, summarized below:

One of the deceitful schemes contrived by Covenant-breakers after the ascension of Baha'u'llah was that, on the one hand, they placed a great financial burden on 'Abdu'l-Baha receiving exorbitant sums of money from Him, and on the other, claimed poverty, destitution and hunger.

At the same time they spread false rumours among the believers (in Persia) that some of 'Abdu'l-Baha's companions had stolen His seals, with which they were issuing receipts for Huququ'llah [*] and pocketing the proceeds.

The Master often told us that the Covenant-breakers had done this so that the believers might stop sending funds and cause financial hardship for Him. [* For information about Huququ'llah, see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4.] Their claims of poverty however, became so serious ... that eventually they began to beg.

They continued to carry out this shameful practice of begging from people both high and low, and consequently they brought about great degradation for the Cause of God...

Whenever they received a gift of money from the Master they would intensify their begging operation.

When the news of such activities reached 'Abdu'l-Baha He would usually be overcome with grief and sorrow.

To cite an example:

One afternoon, when a number of visitors and resident believers had assembled in the Bikini [outer apartment] of the house of 'Abdu'l-Baha, a certain respectable Shaykh (his name I do not recall) arrived.

He was well known to the Master and trusted by Him.

He was held in high esteem by the people of Syria and Palestine and was a successful merchant in these regions.

Since he was a pious man, he had been appointed by the Ottoman government as the Mufti of 'Akka and was a centre of attention to all the people.

He sat next to the Master and after a brief exchange of greetings he began to convey some information to 'Abdu'l-Baha by whispering into His ear.

At this time everyone was silently gazing upon the face of the Master.

His countenance displayed various modes of expression -- anger, astonishment and a mild smile.

When the whispering came to an end, 'Abdu'l-Baha ... asked the Shaykh to recount his story to the assembled friends ... which he did in these words: 'A certain honoured person [one of the dignitaries known to the Master] came to see me in my office this morning...

I noticed he was very sad and depressed...

After much persuasion on my part he said: "A person ['Abdu'l-Baha] whom up to now I considered to be equal to a Prophet of God is, today, in my sight ..."

He did not finish the sentence. 'After much insistence on my part, promising that I should keep his story confidential, he continued: "Today I met Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

He complained bitterly about his brother, 'Abbas Effendi.[*] He told me many stories which deeply surprised and saddened me...

This poor man is now destitute...

He is in need of daily bread.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali told me that his children were today crying for a piece of bread and he could not provide for them...

I was so shaken and upset hearing Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's story that I was about to give him some money, but decided instead to send him some wheat..." [* 'Abdu'l-Baha] "When his story was finished, not wishing to disclose to my friend that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had a credit account with me, and that I keep his money for him in my bank, I said to him, "There is no need for you to send wheat or other provisions.

Please go and tell Mirza Muhammad-'Ali that he can come to me for funds up to a thousand liras."

My friend, who did not understand me, said, "Mirza Muhammad-'Ali is a respectable person, he will never beg for money." Realizing that my friend could not see that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had been lying to him, I decided to disclose to him the true situation.

I said to him, "Please go to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and tell him that the Shaykh says that he should take a fraction of the 60 liras he received the other day from his office and purchase some bread for his children."

My friend still could not understand.

He said, "If Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had even a piece of bread to eat, he would not have come to me in such a state of degradation and humility."

At this point I opened my safe and showed him a cheque which bore Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's signature and which I had cashed for him only the day before.

I said, "Now that you have seen the cheque with his signature, go and tell Mirza Muhammad-'Ali that he should be ashamed of himself feigning poverty and resorting to beggary.

Tell him that no one will be deceived by his imposture." <p183>

'Upon seeing the cheque, my friend was stunned.

He was overcome by an inner agitation which showed itself outwardly in his face.

He was so highly disturbed that for a few minutes he remained speechless.

Then, with tears flowing down his face, he said, "What a fool I have been.

I was deceived by this Satan and uttered some disparaging remarks about my Lord.

Now how can I atone for this transgression?"

He then asked me to come here and beg forgiveness for him, saying "I will go myself later to the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha and will kiss the hem of His garment."[*] [* This action signifies the expression of the utmost humility towards a person.] Before leaving us, the Shaykh said to 'Abdu'l-Baha: 'My Lord, in this world you have no enemy except Your own brother.' When the Shaykh departed, the Master spoke about the Covenant-breakers and said that they had girded up their loins for the extinction of the Cause of God.

He spoke in this vein for a short time and when He saw that the friends were all becoming sad, He changed the subject and with His soul-stirring utterances, He gave us the glad-tidings of the ascendancy of the Cause of God in the future.

He categorically stated that ere long these dark clouds would be dispersed and that the domain of the Covenant-breakers would be rolled up and assured us that the Cause of God would not become the plaything of children.

He told us to ponder upon the activities of the Covenant-breakers.

Because of their enmity towards Him, they go through so much degradation and abasement, appear in the guise of beggars and solicit alms for themselves.

Yet they have achieved nothing except to bring upon themselves further humiliation and dishonour.[183] [183 ibid. pp.

250-6. (Yunis Khan, *Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih.*)] There are many accounts left by 'Abdu'l-Baha's friends describing similar activities by the Covenant-breakers.

Haji 'Ali Yazdi,[**] who was one of the resident Baha'is in 'Akka during the days of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and who lived to serve the Cause of God during Shoghi Effendi's ministry, recounts a similar story.

He writes: [** The paternal uncle of the author.

For his life story see *Baha'i World*, vol.

9, p.

625.] One day the Master received from 'Adasiyyih a large quantity of wheat, the annual income from a certain property [owned by the Faith].

He sent it all to the Mansion of Bahji but Mirza Muhammad-'Ali returned it to Him.

At the same time, he sent a petition to the local government complaining that 'Abdu'l-Baha owed him his share of the annual income of that same property which he had earlier refused to accept and pleaded with the authorities to intervene so that he could remedy a serious shortage of food in his household.

This ignoble action was so manifestly provocative that even some of his supporters warned him that government intervention would harm the Cause.

He is reported to have said, 'Which harm is greater, this one or 'Abdu'l-Baha's claim that He is a Manifestation of God, that Baha'u'llah and the Bab are His forerunners and that He is determined to eliminate the Cause of Baha'u'llah and establish instead His own Cause and new teachings?' This petition was sent purely to humiliate the Master.

The officer in charge sent for 'Abdu'l-Baha and acquainted Him with His brother's claim.

Whereupon 'Abdu'l-Baha summoned Aqa Riza Qannad, who was in charge of His domestic affairs and who in the presence of the officer produced the books and determined the full annual income, which amounted to 520 liras.

It was further determined that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's share was only 80 liras.

But 'Abdu'l-Baha informed the officer that upon getting a receipt from Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, He would be glad to pay him the full amount of 520 liras to be transferred to him through the government officer.

A messenger was sent by the officer to inform Mirza Muhammad-'Ali of the offer and to ask him to sign the document.

A day later, 'Abdu'l-Baha was again invited to the government office and handed a receipt, which, although it was issued by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, bore a signature which had no resemblance to his. 'Abdu'l-Baha refused to accept it and the officer in charge rebuked the messenger and ordered him to return to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and get a genuine signature this time.

When the document arrived a second time 'Abdu'l-Baha was again invited to the office.

Again it was the same story.

The signature was not genuine.

This time the officer became very angry because of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's deceitful action.

He apologized to 'Abdu'l-Baha and offered to sign the receipt himself and send the money to its recipient -- an offer which was accepted by Him.[184] [184 Memoirs of Haji 'Ali Yazdi.] All these things were done to inflict humiliation upon the Master and to hurt Him as much as possible.

For many years the Covenant-breakers carried out this type of campaign to discredit 'Abdu'l-Baha, not knowing that falsehood can never survive and that the power of truth will prevail in the end.

Of course, the Cause of God was ultimately victorious through the potency of the Covenant, and through their actions the Covenant-breakers extinguished their own spiritual life.

But in the meantime, until they finally became impotent, they created a great disturbance within the community.

The accusations against 'Abdu'l-Baha were numerous and are beyond the scope of this book.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali devised several plots calumniating the Master on various issues.

These calumnies turned out to be much more serious with the passage of time; these will be recounted in chapter 22. <p185>

18 Deviations of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali (3) 6-WT

What deviation can be more glaring than spreading broadcast false and foolish reports touching the Temple of God's Testament!

Although Mirza Muhammad-'Ali often remained secluded in the Mansion of Bahji, he used to employ the services of his aides quite effectively in creating mischief for 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Whenever he met the Baha'is, he would behave like a most loyal believer in Baha'u'llah, feigning meekness and pretending that he had been wronged after the ascension of Baha'u'llah.

At the same time, he was engaged in a campaign of undermining the foundation of the Cause.

We recall the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha in the opening paragraph of His Will and Testament referring to 'the onslaught of the company of Covenant-breakers, that have threatened to subvert His Divine Edifice'.

In the 'Infernal Letters' that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali published among the friends, he appeared to be defending the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

But when addressing the public who were unaware of the real situation, he did not shrink from attacking the Centre of the Covenant and misrepresenting every truth enshrined in the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

He even went so far as to say that his father was merely a retiring holy man who believed in Sunni Islam!

The following is but one out of many examples of his public attacks on the Faith:

After the defection of Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis,[*] Mirza Muhammad-'Ali drew up an official indictment against 'Abdu'l-Baha replete with preposterous accusations.

He did this with the help of Tabur Aqasi, the chief of police, whom he had bribed heavily.

The case was taken to a court in 'Akka; there were five main complaints lodged by the sons of Baha'u'llah against 'Abdu'l-Baha.

They claimed that: [* For more information, see Taherzadeh, Revelation of

Baha'u'llah, chapter 15] Baha'u'llah was only a holy man who did not claim to be a prophet.

He had spent His time in seclusion, prayer and meditation, whereas 'Abdu'l-Baha for political ends exalted the station of His father to that of a Supreme Manifestation of God and of the Essence of Divinity.

'Abdu'l-Baha did not deal with them in accordance with the provisions of Baha'u'llah's Will and Testament.

They had been deprived of their right to inherit a vast estate left behind by their father, Baha'u'llah.

None of the gifts or funds sent in the name of Baha'u'llah were given to them. 'Abdu'l-Baha had caused thousands of their friends in Persia and India to turn against them and shun their company.

Such reckless action by members of Baha'u'llah's family against the Cause which they privately claimed to uphold, whose Author they knew was not just a 'holy man' but One who had proclaimed His mission to the kings and rulers of the world as the Promised One of all ages, exposes the hypocrisy of the Covenant-breakers, their treachery and their utter faithlessness.

These characteristics are true of the Covenant-breakers of the past, present and future.

Cut off from the tree of the Cause, they are devoid of faith and spiritual life.

They never shirk from employing any means, however degrading and nefarious, to undermine the foundations of the Cause and rob the believers of their faith.

In taking his case to court, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali never imagined that in the defence of the Cause 'Abdu'l-Baha would go so far as to read aloud the contents of the Kitab-i-'Ahd, Baha'u'llah's Will and Testament, in the courtroom.

By reading parts of this momentous document, 'Abdu'l-Baha made it clear that the station of Baha'u'llah was not merely that of a 'holy man' who spent His time in prayer and meditation.

Rather, He was the Lord of all men calling the peoples of the world to carry out His teachings and exhorting them to unity and fellowship.

It is reported that in the presence of the officials, 'Abdu'l-Baha openly declared His own position as the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, the Promoter of His Cause and the Interpreter of His teachings, the One to whom the Aghsan, the Afnan, the kindred of Baha'u'llah and all the believers must turn.

He explained that since the Covenant-breakers had arisen against Him they had violated the provisions of Baha'u'llah's Will, and consequently the believers had cut off their relationship with them.

He is reported to have told the officials that for four years He had not disclosed their rebellion to the believers but that the Covenant-breakers

themselves had announced <p187> to the Baha'i world their opposition to Him and had thereby cut themselves off from the Baha'i community. 'Abdu'l-Baha refuted the other claims of His brothers just as forcefully.

Quoting the Kitab-i-'Ahd, He demonstrated that they were not entitled to receive any of the funds of the Faith which were donated by the believers, for Baha'u'llah in that document states 'God hath not granted them any right to the property of others'. [185] On the question of inheritance, 'Abdu'l-Baha stated that Baha'u'llah had lived a life of austerity and had left no estate for anyone to inherit.

He is reported to have quoted the celebrated passage from the Kitab-i-'Ahd, 'Earthly treasures We have not bequeathed, nor have We added such cares as they entail.

By God! in earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed.' [186] [185 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, p.

222.] [186 ibid. p.

219. (Baha'u'llah, Tablets.)] However, 'Abdu'l-Baha confirmed that there were two priceless items in Baha'u'llah's possession -- one a rare copy of the Qur'an and the other a set of prayer beads -- and that both these items of inestimable value had been seen by a few dignitaries of 'Akka.

These unique possessions of Baha'u'llah had been taken by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and were kept by him.

These and other personal effects of Baha'u'llah, such as His garments, had been distributed by him to various officials to serve as chattels of bribery and to provide a means of humiliating 'Abdu'l-Baha.

For Mirza Muhammad-'Ali knew that the Master considered Baha'u'llah's personal belongings to be sacred and that they should be preserved with reverence.

Therefore, in order to hurt 'Abdu'l-Baha he gave Baha'u'llah's prayer beads to one of the enemies of the Faith and persuaded him to try to show them to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

It is reported that one day this man showed the beads to 'Abdu'l-Baha and asked Him if He could put a price on them, to which 'Abdu'l-Baha responded that their value depended on who was using them.

The episode of the court case was widely publicized.

Once again the Covenant-breakers were frustrated in their actions as they failed to humiliate the Master.

On another occasion Mirza Muhammad-'Ali gave Baha'u'llah's cloak and a pair of His spectacles to the deputy governor of Haifa as a bribe and urged him to wear them when he visited the Master.

This he did, appearing before 'Abdu'l-Baha brazenly spectacled and wearing Baha'u'llah's cloak.

Soon afterwards, however, this man was dismissed from his post and met with misfortune.

He then went to 'Abdu'l-Baha, begged forgiveness for his shameful behaviour and confessed that he had been urged by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali to act as he had. 'Abdu'l-Baha showered him with kindness and generosity and helped him to resolve his difficulties.

This was always 'Abdu'l-Baha's way -- to extend a helping hand with all His love to those enemies who had wronged Him and inflicted <p188> sufferings upon Him.

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha further states:

6-WT What deviation can be more odious than his iniquity and rebellion!

What deviation can be more shameful than dispersing the gathering of the people of salvation!

This is a reference to a temporary breach in the ranks of the believers caused by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

We have discussed in chapter 13 the manner in which Mirza Muhammad-'Ali tried to establish a following for himself among the believers in the East.

Through his main agents, such as Jamal-i-Burujirdi, Siyyid Mihdi Dahaji and Jalil-i-Khu'i, he made every endeavour to split the community of the Most Great Name.

Although for a short while he created some controversy among certain believers, as already stated, he failed miserably in his efforts.

Cleansed from the pollution of Covenant-breaking, the community emerged much stronger than before.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali also spread his wings over North America, in the following manner:

Around the turn of the century the Covenant-breakers became frustrated, for they found themselves impotent to arrest the progress of the Cause of God.

The news of the expansion of the Faith, especially the conversion of a number of souls in the West, caused the fire of jealousy to burn more fiercely within their breasts.

In December 1898 the first party of Western pilgrims arrived in the Holy Land and attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

For the first time these newly enrolled believers came into contact with the magnetic personality of the Master.

They felt the warmth of His genuine love and compassion and saw the light of divine spirit shining from His countenance.

During their short visit these pilgrims became galvanized by the soul-stirring

words of the Master.

They were utterly devoted to Him and longed to serve Him and the Cause He represented with unflinching faithfulness.

These souls showed such radiance and heavenly joy as a result of meeting 'Abdu'l-Baha that the Covenant-breakers became inflamed with rage and envy; their gloom and disappointment knew no bounds.

It became imperative for them to counteract these developments and to devise a plan to impede the progress of the Cause in the West.

At last Mirza Muhammad-'Ali discovered a means whereby he could attempt to disrupt the unity of the believers in America.

Among the party from the West that came to visit the Master was Ibrahim Khayru'llah, a Lebanese Christian who had embraced the Cause in Egypt during Baha'u'llah's lifetime and had moved to the United States in 1892.

Two years later he had succeeded in converting <p189> Thornton Chase, the first Western Christian to embrace the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

The Master referred to Khayru'llah as 'Baha's Peter'.

Over the next few years Khayru'llah taught the Faith in various parts of the United States and was the only teacher to whom the believers could turn for enlightenment in that vast country.

During the time that Khayru'llah was loyal to 'Abdu'l-Baha he succeeded in converting a number of people to the Faith.

In one of his letters to the Master he expressed profound loyalty to Him and gave the news of these conversions.

The following is a translation of this letter, which he wrote in 1897:

To the sacred court of my Master and the Master of the entire world ...
may my soul be a sacrifice unto the dust of His pathway:

After offering obedience and servitude unto the sacred threshold of my Master I beg to state that the believers in these regions and I greet the morn immersed in the sea of your bounties, and meet the night with the grace of your mercy which encompasses the East and the West of the earth, because you have turned unto them and unto me the glances of your favour.

You have revealed of divine verses three Tablets: one for the believers in America, one for Antun Effendi Haddad, and the last one for your servant, who forever and ever, lowly and poor, awaits the generous dispensations of his bountiful Lord...

Enclosed with this petition are seventy-four petitions from those who have recently come into the Faith of God, and shall soon send other petitions.

Seekers who wish to hear the Word of God and come into the knowledge of

truth arrive in large numbers...[187] [187 Quoted in Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp.

271-2.] But here is an example of how pride and ambition can extinguish the fire of faith which burns in the heart of a believer.

There is nothing more vital for a follower of Baha'u'llah who becomes successful in teaching the Cause than genuine humility, utter self-effacement and complete servitude towards the loved ones of God.

But alas, Khayru'llah was vain and egotistical.

As the years went by and he saw the fruit of his teaching work multiply, he became proud and entertained the thought of dividing the Baha'i world into two parts, he becoming the leader of the Baha'is of the West and 'Abdu'l-Baha of the East!

While nurturing these selfish ambitions in his heart, he arrived in 'Akka and met the Master for the first time.

He felt His majesty and authority as well as His love and compassion.

For a short while Khayru'llah showed his subordination to 'Abdu'l-Baha, who one day took him to Mount Carmel and there laid the foundation stone of the mausoleum of the Bab on the site purchased by Him and chosen by Baha'u'llah Himself. <p190> In the meantime, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had discovered in Khayru'llah signs of ambition and egotism which he exploited to the full.

Soon a clandestine relationship was established between the two and Khayru'llah became a tool in Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's hands.

He joined the infamous band of Covenant-breakers, rose up in opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha disseminated his misgivings among the friends and published far and wide some of his own ideas.

His defection brought great tests for the believers in the West but the vast majority of the American Baha'is remained faithful to the Cause.

In order to further his aim of creating division within the community, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali sent Shu'a'u'llah, his son, to the United States to strengthen the hand of Khayru'llah.

The news of Khayru'llah's defection brought sorrow to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha who tried to save him as he was heading towards his spiritual downfall.

In 1901 the Master asked 'Abdu'l-Karim-i-Tihriani, a merchant from Cairo who had taught the Faith to Khayru'llah, to go to the United States especially to make this faltering soul realize the error of his ways.

When his mission failed, that same year 'Abdu'l-Baha sent Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Khurasani for the same purpose.

He also could not help.

When Haji Mirza Hasan returned, Mirza Asadu'llah-i-Isfahani was dispatched to

the United States.

He had previously been commissioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha to transport the remains of the Bab to the Holy Land, a task which he had carried out with great success.

He had a link with the Holy Family since he had married a sister of Munirih Khanum, the wife of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Although he tried to help Khayru'llah remain faithful to the Covenant, sadly, a few years later, he himself and his son Dr Farid (Fareed) likewise became Covenant-breakers.

In spite of all Khayru'llah's attempts to mislead those he had earlier helped to embrace the Faith, he did not succeed in doing so.

Only a small number of people gathered around him.

He thus created a temporary division but the situation quickly changed.

As in Persia, the believers remained loyal to the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and thereafter refused to associate with their teacher.

This can be credited to a great extent to the arrival in the United States of the celebrated Baha'i scholar Mirza Abu'l-Fadl in 1901.

The visit of this eminent teacher, undertaken at the behest of 'Abdu'l-Baha, lasted for about two years.

During this period, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl dedicated himself fully to the task of deepening the believers in the verities of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

He spent many hours, day and night, discussing various aspects of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, its history, its teachings, its laws and its Covenant, which he pointed out was the guarantor of the unity of the community.

In the course of these discussions he was able to clarify those subjects which had hitherto been obscure to the <p191> American Baha'is.

In this he was assisted by Ali Kuli Khan, who acted as his interpreter.

Thus, as a result of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's teaching work, the believers in America became filled with the spirit of faith and vitality and many among them were transformed into spiritual giants of this Dispensation.

Khayru'llah, who craved power and continued to struggle to become the leader of the Baha'i community in the West, was continually urged by the Arch-breaker of the Covenant to foment discord and contention among the believers, and the efforts of prominent Baha'i teachers to purify his heart and mind from the poison of Covenant-breaking failed. 'Abdu'l-Baha expelled him from the community and commented that as a result of his violation of the Covenant he would be reckoned as dead and that soon the repugnant odour of his deeds would repel people everywhere.

In 1917 Khayru'llah wrote a letter to Professor Edward Browne of Cambridge University which is indicative of his despair:

The Baha'i movement in America became slow and dull since the sad dissension reached the West nineteen years ago.

I thought then that to call the people to this Great Truth was equivalent to inviting them into a quarrel.

But the visit of 'Abbas Effendi 'Abdu'l-Baha to this country, his false teachings, his misrepresentation of Baha'ism, his dissimulation, and the knowledge that his end is nigh, amused me to rise up for helping the work of God, declaring the Truth, and refuting the false attacks of theologians and missionaries.

Now I am struggling hard to vivify the Cause of God, after its having received by the visit of 'Abbas Effendi a death-blow.[188] [188 Quoted in Browne, Materials, p.

171.] Reference has been made in previous chapters to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's iniquity and rebellion -- a rebellion unprecedented in the annals of religion because the greatness of the Cause has brought similarly great opposition.

Dr Yunis Khan states in his memoirs that on one occasion, towards the end of 1904, when a few pilgrims were seated in His presence, 'Abdu'l-Baha described His suffering at the hands of the Covenant-breakers.

The stories He recounted were so heart-rending that all who heard Him were deeply distressed.

At this point Dr Khan asked the Master to tell him how long these Covenant-breakers would continue to oppose Him. 'Abdu'l-Baha is reported to have said that in four years' time they would become impotent to act against Him.

This prophecy was fulfilled in 1909 when, as a result of the 'Young Turk' Revolution, 'Abdu'l-Baha was freed from 40 years of imprisonment, the Cause of God made remarkable progress in the East and the West and the Covenant-breakers crept back into their abodes of ignominy and defeat.

In that same gathering in 1904 <p192> 'Abdu'l-Baha stated that whereas in the future some vestige would remain of Mirza Yahya's followers in the world, no trace would be left of these Covenant-breakers in the Holy Land, and this is the case today.

In one of His talks the Master is reported to have said that God always assisted the Covenant-breakers during His ministry and enabled them to make every possible breach in the stronghold of the Cause so that the Master might stop them all and ensure that others in the future would not succeed.

As the years went by, the Message of Baha'u'llah spread throughout the United States and Canada.

It reached the continent of Europe, where a nucleus of Baha'i communities was established in several countries including Britain, France and Germany.

When 'Abdu'l-Baha was freed from His 40-year confinement He travelled to the West and openly proclaimed the Message of Baha'u'llah to the people of Europe and America.

So powerful was the influence He exerted on the hearts of the people that great numbers flocked to churches and public halls to see Him and to hear Him speak.

The believers in the West who came into contact with 'Abdu'l-Baha were transformed spiritually and magnetized by His all-encompassing love.

He laid such a solid foundation, especially in North America, that a few years later He conferred upon that community a measure of primacy in the execution of His Tablets of the Divine Plan, a series of 14 Tablets addressed to the North American believers, which constitute a charter for the teaching work throughout the world. <p193> 19

Deviations of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali (4) 6-WI' What deviation can be more infamous than the vain and feeble interpretations of the people of doubt! 'The people of doubt' may be understood to be a reference to the Covenant-breakers in the Holy Land and those who were misled by them.

Engaged for years in opposing the Covenant, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, assisted by his evil-minded companions, continuously fabricated false stories to promote his plans to foment dissension within the Baha'i community and create confusion and mistrust among the well-wishers of the Master.

One may marvel at the Covenant-breakers' creativity, for every day they concocted and disseminated new falsehoods.

While a detailed description of their propaganda lies beyond the scope of this book, a few misleading statements will be mentioned.

In the 'Infernal Letters' that he disseminated among the believers, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali maintained that contrary to the provisions of the Kitab-i-'Ahd, 'Abdu'l-Baha should not be the sole Centre of authority in the community.

He contended that the Aghsan, meaning the three half-brothers of 'Abdu'l-Baha, should be involved in the decision-making process in all affairs of the Cause.

The reason given was that 'Abdu'l-Baha could not be trusted since He had allegedly claimed the station of the Divine Being for Himself -- a preposterous allegation.

At other times 'Abdu'l-Baha was accused of claiming the station of a Manifestation of God.

The Covenant-breakers levelled all these accusations, and many more, against the Master and publicized them far and wide.

In 1903 a bloody upheaval took place in the city of Yazd and its surrounding villages.

Within a few days, a great number of believers were martyred, demonstrating to the public the intensity of their faith and proclaiming with their life-blood

the truth of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

The scenes of their heroism and self-sacrifice are all recorded in detail in the annals of the Faith.

The news of the martyrdom of so many devoted believers brought great sorrow to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates, knowing too well that these souls had laid down their lives in the path of Baha'u'llah, spread the news among the inhabitants of the Holy Land in general, and to <p194> prominent citizens in particular, that the followers of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Yazd were all criminals and had therefore been put to death.

Dr Yunis Khan recounts an interesting story which demonstrates the genius of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in the art of perverting the truth.

The following is a summary translation of his words:

As the news of the sufferings of the Master reached the believers in the West, it stirred them up and aroused the spirit of loving devotion for Him in their hearts.

Some believers decided to try to relieve Him from His sufferings.

They wrote letters to 'Abdu'l-Baha and expressed their readiness to do anything in their power to bring about His freedom.

They sent letters to this effect signed by a great many souls.

Among those who wanted to take action were Mme.

Jackson and Hippolyte Dreyfus and two others who collected a large sum of money with a view to journeying to Istanbul and trying to secure 'Abdu'l-Baha's release from incarceration[*] in the Most Great Prison.

In so doing they intended to give a considerable sum as an award to Kazim Pasha, the Governor of Beirut, for his assistance in this matter. [* For further details of 'Abdu'l-Baha's incarceration see chapter 20.] As soon as this news reached the Master, He immediately put a stop to it by sending a telegram and forbidding them to take such action...

One day 'Abdu'l-Baha told me that His freedom from incarceration was in the hands of God and that it was not permitted for anyone to take action in this regard.

As soon as He heard of the plan to try to bring about His freedom, He sent a telegram to Paris and stopped the intended plan.

He then told me how the Covenant-breakers exploited this action by the Master.

They wrote a letter to Kazim Pasha and told the whole story to him.

They made a false statement accusing 'Abdu'l-Baha of harbouring animosity

towards the Pasha and maintained that because of this animosity, 'Abdu'l-Baha had stopped His followers from sending him a large sum of money (about thirty thousand liras) which he otherwise would have received.

It was because of this devilish misinformation that the Pasha rose up in enmity against 'Abdu'l-Baha.[189] [189 Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih, pp. 309-10.] Dr Khan further describes the machinations of the Covenant-breakers in casting doubts in the hearts of the people about the activities of the friends, as seen in the following summary translation:

When Mirza Badi'u'llah broke his repentance,[**] rejoined his brother, and reunited with the rebellious and the deniers, all the Covenant-breakers joined forces in order to arrest the onward progress of the Faith.

Mirza Shu'a'u'llah went to the United States to assist Khayru'llah and to confront Mirza Abu'l-Fadl.

Thus preparations <p195> were made to embark upon a campaign of misrepresentation of the Cause -- a campaign in which all Covenant-breakers were to take part including those in the Holy Land and abroad.

Soon they began to deny the indisputable facts connected with the progress of the Faith.

In those days, the believers in the East and the West were highly excited about the unprecedented advance of the Faith.

The Covenant-breakers in their publications in the West stated that there was no grain of truth concerning the progress of the Cause in the East.

Similarly, to the Baha'is of the East they emphatically declared the statements about entry into the Faith by the Western people to be untrue.

They even publicly announced that there was no truth in the news of the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in 'Ishqabad and that it was merely a propaganda campaign of the Baha'is... [** See chapter 16]
They continued fabricating false statements for some time.

Eventually, there came a time when they saw the futility of their efforts and these activities came to a halt...

In the meantime some of the Covenant-breakers in 'Akka repented and returned to the community, others were disillusioned and became helpless and began to wander around.

In the year 1904 the Arch-breaker of the Covenant, along with two or three of his close allies, crept into the den of oblivion, and like unto a spider, made a web of vain imaginings and feeble interpretations around himself, waiting for some poor soul to be caught in his net, to be

indoctrinated and led astray...

For about two years they remained inactive until the year 1906, when they crept out of their abodes of heedlessness and became active again with the arrival of the Commission of Inquiry.[190] [190 ibid. pp.

313-15. (Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih.)] As we shall see in the following pages, they soon became impotent and lost their cause altogether.

6-WT What deviation can be more wicked than joining hands with strangers and with the enemies of God!

As we have already noted, in their struggle to achieve ascendancy over the Master, the Covenant-breakers did everything in their power to undermine the foundation of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

The basis on which they always acted was falsehood, a universal tool with which they manipulated every situation.

They found sympathy among the enemies of the Cause who were longing to harm the Faith.

Not satisfied with sowing the seeds of disunity among the Baha'is, not content with spreading falsehood among the inhabitants of 'Akka and the neighbouring lands, they took their tales of woe to foreign nationals who were antagonistic towards the Faith.

Disguised as paupers, they claimed to have been treated cruelly by 'Abdu'l-Baha. <p196> One such person in whom the Covenant-breakers confided was Rosamond Dale Owen, the wife of Laurence Oliphant, the Victorian traveller and writer who lived for several years in the Holy Land.

Mrs Oliphant, a staunch Christian committed to the defence of her religion, became alarmed at the progress of the Faith, as can be seen from her book *My Perilous life in Palestine*.

Mirza Badi'u'llah deceitfully complained to her that 'Abdu'l-Baha had usurped his rights and those of his brothers and that consequently he was in dire financial need.

He and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali made other preposterous claims, all designed to discredit 'Abdu'l-Baha.

These brothers knew only too well that Mrs Oliphant was very unhappy about the growth of the Faith and its spread among Christians in the West; they hoped that their slanderous remarks about 'Abdu'l-Baha might serve as ammunition in her opposition to the Faith and to the Master as its head.

And this is exactly what happened.

The following few passages gleaned from Mrs Oliphant's book show the extent to which the calumnies and falsehoods that Mirza Badi'u'llah had uttered played into the hands of its author, who used them to discredit the Cause of Baha'u'llah:

He [Mirza Badi'u'llah] was a political prisoner in St Jean d'Acre for a number of years, and I found that he and his family of seven persons were about to starve...

Abbas Effendi and his family live comfortably, whereas Bedi-Allah [sic] and his family would almost have starved had I not come to the rescue...

I understand that Mohammed Ali [sic] the second son, is as great a sufferer, having been saved from extreme poverty only by the exertions of some relatives in America...

If the numerous Christian followers of Abbas Effendi, in England and America, consider this a noble course of action, their ideas of brotherly love, must be, so it seems to me, somewhat peculiar...

I understand that there are at least three million Christians who are followers and admirers of Abbas Effendi.

This scarcely seems possible, but if it be true, then it is for these people to determine whether a man of the character of Abbas Effendi, letting his brother almost starve while he lived comfortably, is fitted to teach Christians a more Christ-like mode of life.[191] [191 Owen, My Perilous Life in Palestine, pp.

230-5.] Much has happened since these uncomplimentary remarks were written about the Master.

It is evident today that the darkness of falsehood has been vanquished by the light of truth.

The Christ-like person of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the perfect Exemplar of the teachings of Baha'u'llah and a stainless mirror reflecting His light, provided a noble example for men to follow in this Dispensation.

These disparaging <p197> remarks about the Master, whose virtuous life of service to humanity has been acclaimed by friend and foe alike, would have brought great satisfaction to the Covenant-breakers, had it not been for the fact that by the time Mrs Oliphant's book was published they had become powerless and were on the verge of extinction. <p198>

20 Deviations of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali (5)

6-WT What deviation can be more complete than falsely accusing the loved ones of God!

What deviation can be more evil than causing their imprisonment and incarceration!

What deviation can be more severe than delivering into the hands of the government the Holy Writings and Epistles, that haply they (the government) might arise intent upon the death of this wronged one!

What deviation can be more violent than threatening the ruin of the Cause of God, forging and slanderously falsifying letters and documents so that this might perturb and alarm the government and lead to the shedding of

the blood of this wronged one, -- such letters and documents being now in the possession of the government!

Much has been said in foregoing pages about the machinations of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his shameful accusations against the Master and His loved ones.

In his endeavour to discredit 'Abdu'l-Baha he devised every kind of malicious plot, which brought much sorrow to the hearts of the believers.

He spread untrue stories in the Baha'i community and misrepresented the Faith to the local people in the Holy Land.

These activities continued unabated until the year 1900, when 'Abdu'l-Baha began to build the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Cannel.

This undertaking played into the hands of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, who exploited it to the utmost and brought about 'Abdu'l-Baha's greatest sufferings.

The difficulties which 'Abdu'l-Baha had endured since the passing of Baha'u'llah until the building work started pale into insignificance when compared with the pain inflicted on the Master by the Covenant-breakers after the start of the construction of the Shrine.

To appreciate the extent of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's machinations, a brief account of the circumstances surrounding the building of the Shrine of the Bab is helpful.

In the early part of 1900 Haifa became the focal point of 'Abdu'l-Baha's attention.

He rented three houses there: one for Himself and for occasional visits by members of His family; another, a four-roomed house, for Eastern pilgrims, in which one room was set aside for the Master Himself, another for the office <p199> of Haji Siyyid Taqiy-i-Manshadi,[*] and the other two for pilgrims; and a third house with four rooms, suitably furnished for the increasing number of Western pilgrims who had begun to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha since late 1898.

Before 1900 several pilgrims stayed in these houses but once 'Abdu'l-Baha began to build the Shrine on Mount Carmel, He discouraged Baha'is from coming on pilgrimage and so the houses remained for the most part untenanted. [* This believer served Baha'u'llah and the Master in the Holy Land for many years.

See 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, p.

54] Dr Yunis Khan describes the state of affairs in Haifa just after the turn of the century.

The following is a summary translation from his fascinating memoirs:

The work of building the foundation of the Shrine of the Bab was proceeding well.

The Blessed Master used to come to Haifa frequently to supervise the

construction work.

He would stay a few days during which the Baha'is and non-Baha'is attained His presence...

Certain changes had taken place during the three or four years preceding the year 1900.

Mirza Aqa Jan ... had passed away.

Mirza Diya'u'llah, the vacillating son of Baha'u'llah ... had also passed away.

The room on the ground floor of the Mansion of Bahji which was used by the believers had been taken over by the Covenant-breakers...

The Covenant-breakers had given up their earlier practice of demanding payment of their expenses from the Master; consequently, the hardships in His own household resulting from the shortage of funds in previous years had somewhat eased.

However, from time to time, He would find some reason to send funds to His unfaithful brothers.

The activities of the chief of police of 'Akka, Yahya Tabur Aqasi, against the Cause of God, had produced the opposite effect.

He himself was dismissed from his post and later, when he became destitute, he went to the Master and received help from Him.

During these past three years, groups of pilgrims from both the East and the West visited regularly.

The town of Haifa had become <p200> a centre for the believers where meetings and festive gatherings were often held, but in obedience to the advice of the Master, these gatherings had become less frequent.

The Covenant-breakers began to create fresh trouble by causing alarm among the mischievous elements of the population.

They misrepresented 'Abdu'l-Baha's plans for the construction of the mausoleum of the Bab.[192] [192 Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih, pp.

45-7.] The construction of the Shrine of the Bab was the greatest undertaking in the Baha'i Faith during the opening years of the 20th century.

This was a sacred task which, during the last years of His life, Baha'u'llah had specifically asked 'Abdu'l-Baha to accomplish.

The purchase of the site for the Shrine took a long time, for under the influence of the Covenant-breakers the owner at first refused to sell.

After many difficulties, when negotiations for the sale of the property were completed and ownership passed to 'Abdu'l-Baha, it became necessary to purchase another piece of land situated on the south side to provide access to the

building site.

At the instigation of the Covenant-breakers, the owner demanded an exorbitant price for this land and even when 'Abdu'l-Baha offered to pay a very large sum for it the owner was determined not to sell. 'Abdu'l-Baha was heard to make the following remarks concerning this episode:

Every stone of that building, every stone of the road leading to it, I have with infinite tears and at tremendous cost, raised and placed in position.

One night I was so hemmed in by My anxieties that I had no other recourse than to recite and repeat over and over again a prayer of the Bab which I had in My possession, the recital of which greatly calmed Me.

The next morning the owner of the plot himself came to Me, apologized and begged Me to purchase the property.[193] [193 'Abdu'l-Baha quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp.

275-6.] As the building work on Mount Carmel proceeded the believers were overjoyed at the prospect of the interment of the remains of the Bab in that holy spot.

But the Covenant-breakers, who were continually frustrated in their devious activities and forced to witness the ascendancy of the Covenant, particularly in the arrival of pilgrims from the West, were aroused to inflict yet another blow upon the Master.

In 1901 'Abdu'l-Baha in the course of His talks with the believers, foretold the approach of some impending tribulation that would be caused by the Covenant-breakers.

He is reported to have intimated to the friends that the Covenant-breakers would create great trouble <p201> for Him but that they themselves would be the first to be trapped in the mesh of their own devices and that only later would He Himself become a target of their schemes. 'Abdu'l-Baha often spoke in this vein to His companions during those days.

He intimated to them that whereas He welcomed afflictions in the path of God, His brothers would be the ones who would suffer.

The believers were concerned about such predictions and did not know what kind of problems would be created for the Master.

Their only prayer was that God might intervene and avert any ordeal which might be in store for Him.

By August 1901 the building work on Mount Carmel had reached an advanced stage and 'Abdu'l-Baha was visiting Haifa frequently when suddenly a great upheaval occurred in 'Akka.

On 20 August the believers celebrated the anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab (according to the lunar calendar) at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji.

On His return to 'Akka 'Abdu'l-Baha was informed that His brothers had been escorted by soldiers from Bahji and brought to 'Akka in great humiliation.

Majdu'd-Din[*] had also been brought from Tiberias.

The Master immediately went to the authorities to enquire about the reason for their arrest.

It was then that the governor informed 'Abdu'l-Baha of an order from the Sultan that He and His brothers were to be confined within the walls of the city of 'Akka and that the same restrictions previously imposed upon Baha'u'llah and His companions in the Most Great Prison were to be re-introduced.

Furthermore, none of the believers were to be allowed to leave the city and all their activities were to be monitored by the authorities. [* See chapter 13.]

Although in the early days of Baha'u'llah's arrival in 'Akka such restrictions were enforceable, now, after so many years, when the Master was loved and adored by the people, it was impossible to enforce this edict fully.

Indeed, the governor himself, who was a great admirer of 'Abdu'l-Baha, was so embarrassed by the order that he delayed its implementation for some time.

This re-incarceration was the direct result of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's misrepresentations to Nazim Pasha, the governor of the province of Syria.

The circumstances of this episode are described by Mirza Badi'u'llah in his 'Epistle of Repentance',[**] written a few years after this incident.

He states that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali sent Mirza Majdu'd-Din to Damascus to present a petition to the governor complaining about the activities of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The main purpose of this treacherous act was to alarm the authorities by misrepresenting the purpose of the building on Mount Carmel as a fortress designed <p202> to raise rebellion and by informing them of large gatherings in 'Akka and the comings and goings of Americans, whom he described as military advisers! [** See chapter 16] It is known that Majdu'd-Din took expensive gifts to the governor as a bribe and asked his help in bringing about 'Abdu'l-Baha's deportation.

Indeed, at other times and in the course of their several appeals to the government authorities in Syria, the Covenant-breakers had to raise large sums of money to bribe various officials.

Having used up the entire estate of Mirza Aqa Jan for this purpose, they sold a one-third share of the Mansion of Bahji for 1200 liras to Yahya Tabur Aqasi, the chief of police in 'Akka and an inveterate enemy of the Faith, and spent the whole sum in bribes to officials.

Majdu'd-Din arrived back from his mission to Damascus in a jubilant mood, having secured the governor's promise of aid.

But events now took a different turn.

Upon receiving the governor's report, Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid became alarmed and ordered that 'Abdu'l-Baha, His brothers and His followers be re-incarcerated.

Consequently to the surprise of Majdu'd-Din, his plans misfired and he himself, as well as his chief, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, together with Mirza Badi'u'llah, were incarcerated in the city of 'Akka by the order of the Sultan.

The prophecy of 'Abdu'l-Baha was fulfilled:

His brothers were the first to fall into their own trap.

The Master, as always, submitted Himself to the cruelties inflicted upon Him by His enemies.

He accepted the new restrictions in a spirit of radiant acquiescence.

The greatest deprivation for Him was His separation from the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, which He could not visit during this time.

He was also cut off from the building work on Mount Carmel, although He made arrangements for it to continue.

For about seven years while this incarceration was in force 'Abdu'l-Baha continued to direct the affairs of the Baha'i world in both the East and the West through the outpouring of His voluminous writings.

As the years went by, more pilgrims and visitors were received in His rented house adjacent to the barracks, known as the house of 'Abdu'llah Pasha.

On the upper storey of this house He built a small wooden cabin in which He could pray turning in the direction of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

As for His brothers, upon being brought to 'Akka where they were ordered to live, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali wrote two letters, one after the other, to the governor of Damascus (whom he had already bribed) desperately seeking assistance for his own release.

But his letters were left unanswered.

However, 'Abdu'l-Baha met the civil and military authorities and interceded for the release of His brothers, saying that they were not able to endure such restrictions, and they were released.

He also secured freedom for the other believers, who were allowed to resume the occupations in which they had been previously engaged, <p203> but He assured the authorities that He Himself would remain within the walls of the city.

The cause of the restrictions, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, at first flatly denied having had any communication with the governor of Damascus, as did Majdu'd-Din.

They both alleged that the edict of the Sultan for re-incarceration had been issued as a result of the publication of a book by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, the great Baha'i scholar, but the truth soon surfaced.

In his memoirs Haji 'Ali Yazdi has described the circumstances which exposed

the treachery of Majdu'd-Din and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

According to Haji 'Ali, Majdu'd-Din had delivered two petitions personally, one to Nazim Pasha and the other to Fariq Pasha, a high-ranking military officer friendly to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The second petition was presented in response to a question raised by Fariq Pasha, who wanted to know the nature of the disagreements between 'Abdu'l-Baha and His brothers.

Fariq Pasha considered 'Abdu'l-Baha to be possessed of super-human powers exclusive to the Prophet of God, as illustrated by the following summarized translation of the story by Dr Yunis Khan:

Sometime before the year 1900, there was a war between the Ottomans and the Greeks.

Fariq Pasha, a general in the army, was ordered to take part in the battle.

Because of his heartfelt belief in the powers of 'Abdu'l-Baha he asked Him to write a prayer for him to take with him for his protection.

The Master wrote a few lines, sealed it and gave it to him to wear on his arm but told him not to open it.

He left the Master and went quite happily to the battlefield.

At the end of the war he returned victorious, and in a spirit of humility and servitude, went straight to the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha, where he expressed his gratitude to Him. 'Abdu'l-Baha asked him if he had ever opened the prayer, and when he answered in the negative, He asked him to open and read it.

Upon reading it, Fariq Pasha's belief in 'Abdu'l-Baha's superhuman powers was further strengthened when he discovered that 'Abdu'l-Baha had briefly foretold the events of the war and the highlights of his personal circumstances.[194] [194 Yunis Khan, *Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih*, pp.

174-5.] Returning to the story of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's petition to the governor of Syria, Haji 'Ali Yazdi further describes that in order to confuse the issue for Fariq Pasha, who was a Sunni Muslim, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and Majdu'd-Din forged a document, which they attributed to Baha'u'llah, and sent it along with their petition.

In this document they composed, in the name of Baha'u'llah, certain complimentary passages in praise of 'Umar, the second Caliph of Sunni Islam.

In so doing, they made it seem that Baha'u'llah was a follower of Sunni Islam.

The other document which they sent to the Pasha <p204> contained parts of the *Lawh-i-Hizar Bayti* (Tablet of One Thousand Verses)[*] in which 'Abdu'l-Baha condemned 'Umar in strong terms.

In their petition they then alleged that 'Abdu'l-Baha was inciting His followers to arise in enmity against the Sunnis, whereas the rest of Baha'u'llah's family were admirers of 'Umar and the Sunni community! [* See chapter 4] Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and Majdu'd-Din continued to deny having sent any petition to Damascus until Fariq Pasha at last sent it to 'Abdu'l-Baha, who, upon receiving it, sent it to the mother of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali so that she could see the treachery of her offspring and son-in-law.

These preposterous activities opened the eyes of some of the Covenant-breakers, who had previously been duped into believing that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was a true follower of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

These simple-hearted men, who had been for so long deceived by the Arch-breaker of the Covenant, went to 'Abdu'l-Baha, expressed remorse for their folly and were bountifully forgiven by Him.

As we look back upon these events, we can only be amazed at the craftiness of such a two-faced hypocrite who, on the one hand, professed to his misguided followers the divine origin of the Revelation of his Father, thereby posing as a holy and truthful person worthy to be emulated by all, and on the other, shamelessly announced that both he and Baha'u'llah were followers of Sunni Islam.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali knew only too well that Baha'u'llah had clearly taught His followers that 'Umar, the second Caliph of Sunni Islam, had broken the unwritten Covenant of Muhammad and unlawfully usurped the successorship of the Prophet from Imam 'Ali.

He also knew that the holy Imams of the Shi'ah sect of Islam, whose stations Baha'u'llah has extolled in His writings, were the true successors of the Prophet.

Despite this, there were no limits to which Mirza Muhammad-'Ali would not go in order to destroy 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He was a master in the art of falsification and continued in this vein for years, spreading falsehood and calumnies against the Centre of the Covenant.

When it became public knowledge that the cause of the imposition of this new incarceration of 'Abdu'l-Baha was Majdu'd-Din's petition, the Covenant-breakers became subdued and chastened for some time.

However, once released from incarceration within the prison city, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates became content with their own freedom and jubilant that the Master, whom they hated so bitterly was confined within the walls of 'Akka.

They considered this a victory and foolishly thought that the end of 'Abdu'l-Baha and His <p205> leadership was in sight.

Little did they know that light cannot be put out by darkness and that the power of God cannot be made ineffective through the opposition of ignoble men.

During the years of His confinement in the city of 'Akka, 'Abdu'l-Baha was engaged in writing numerous Tablets either in His own handwriting or by dictation to His secretaries.

Through these He continued to guide the followers of Baha'u'llah in their service to the Cause, urging them to remain steadfast in the Covenant and to diffuse the divine fragrances with wisdom and perseverance.

Though restricted in His movements, the Master was now living in relative peace, directing the construction of the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel, while the emanations of His pen continued to enrapture the souls of the faithful, thus enabling them to scale loftier heights of service in His Cause.

Many significant achievements in the history of the Faith occurred during this time.

In 1902, through 'Abdu'l-Baha's instruction and guidance, the foundation stone was laid of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar[*] in 'Ishqabad, the first Baha'i House of Worship in the world. [*Literally, 'Dawning Place of the Mention of God'; a Baha'i House of Worship.] Another significant development during this period was the rise of a new spirit of dedication and steadfastness in the Baha'i communities of both the East and the West.

This spirit was intensified as a result of the upheaval in the summer of 1903 in Yazd and neighbouring villages, when a great many souls were martyred in the most moving circumstances, shedding through their amazing steadfastness and exemplary heroism an imperishable lustre upon the annals of the Faith.

In the Holy Land, while the Covenant-breakers were rejoicing that 'Abdu'l-Baha had been made a prisoner, many members of the public were moved to sympathize with the Cause.

The friendly governor of 'Akka made several attempts to persuade 'Abdu'l-Baha not to confine Himself within the city walls but to go and visit other places outside 'Akka; however, the Master declined the suggestion.

Eventually the governor asked 'Abdu'l-Baha to accompany him on a visit to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

The Master granted his wish and together they left the city and went to Bahji.

In order to further circumvent the strict edict of the Sultan, the governor arranged another visit and this time he invited other high-ranking officials to accompany him, including Fariq Pasha.

When the party arrived at Bahji, the Covenant-breakers witnessed the majestic figure of 'Abdu'l-Baha walking at the front of the procession and the dignitaries walking behind Him as a mark of respect. <p206> When Mirza Muhammad-'Ali saw the honour and reverence which the governor and other officials paid to the Master, he became very disheartened and his hopes that incarceration might diminish 'Abdu'l-Baha's ascendancy were dashed.

As the year 1902 passed, 'Abdu'l-Baha again permitted pilgrims from the East

and West to come.

All who attained the presence of the Master became magnetized by the spiritual forces He released and when they returned home they warmed the hearts of the friends through the fire of the divine love that the Master ignited in their hearts.

Far from impeding the progress of the Faith during those perilous years, 'Abdu'l-Baha's incarceration in the city of 'Akka with all the hardships it entailed, coincided with an upsurge in activity among the friends and the expansion of the community throughout the world.

Eye-witnesses have testified that during this agitated period in His life the Master, in His own hand, used to pen no less than 90 Tablets a day.

The outpouring of these Tablets in such profusion was chiefly responsible for the expansion of the Faith and the exhilaration and upliftment of the believers everywhere. <p207> 21

Decreeing the Death of 'Abdu'l-Baha 6-WT What deviation can be more grievous than decreeing the death of the Centre of the Covenant, supported by the holy verse: -- 'He that layeth a claim ere the passing of a thousand years ...,' whilst he (Muhammad 'Ali) without shame in the days of the Blessed Beauty had advanced such a claim as this and been confuted by Him in the aforementioned manner, the text of his claim being still extant in his own handwriting and bearing his own seal.

This passage in the Will and Testament concerns the secret plans of the Covenant-breakers to take 'Abdu'l-Baha's life.

For several years they had tried everything to discredit the Master but the more they intensified their campaign of opposition against Him, the greater was the progress of the Cause and the more desperate they became.

Like Mirza Yahya, who found himself unable to withstand the power of Baha'u'llah and resorted to poisoning Him, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali tried different means by which to bring about 'Abdu'l-Baha's death.

One of his men, on two different occasions, placed poison in a jug of His drinking water.

This was discovered in time.

On another occasion one of the Covenant-breakers carried a dagger hidden under his clothes with the intention of taking 'Abdu'l-Baha's life but he did not succeed in his attempt.

Later both men regretted their actions. 'Abdu'l-Baha forgave one and turned a blind eye to the other.

These two later left the Holy Land and went to Tihiran.

Before incarceration was imposed on Him, 'Abdu'l-Baha used to frequent the city of Haifa to supervise the building work on the Shrine of the Bab.

He used to meet the believers in the evenings and often late in the night He would proceed to His residence.

Always, against His wishes, some believer concerned for His protection would walk a few yards behind Him.

Late one night a gunman hired by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali fired three shots at the Master, all of which failed to hit Him.

The believer who was walking behind rushed forward and the gunman ran away. 'Abdu'l-Baha did not show the slightest sign of perturbation at this incident and kept on walking, as always, with great dignity and majesty.

In this connection the following words of <p208> 'Abdu'l-Baha concerning the sufferings which Mirza Muhammad-'Ali inflicted upon Him take on added meaning:

5-WT [Mirza Muhammad-'Ali] hath with bitter rancour endeavoured to hurt 'Abdu'l-Baha and hath assailed with the utmost enmity this servant of the Sacred Threshold.

Every dart he seized and hurled to pierce the breast of this wronged servant, no wound did he neglect to grievously inflict upon me, no venom did he spare but he poisoned therewith the life of this hapless one.

I swear by the most holy Abha Beauty and by the Light shining from His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my soul be a sacrifice for Their lowly servants), that because of this iniquity the dwellers in the Pavilion of the Abha Kingdom have bewailed, the Celestial Concourse is lamenting, the Immortal Maids of Heaven in the All-Highest Paradise have raised their plaintive cries and the angelic company sighed and uttered their moanings.

In another passage of the Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha says:

48-WT O ye the true, the sincere, the faithful friends of this wronged one!

Everyone knoweth and believeth what calamities and afflictions have befallen this wronged one, this prisoner, at the hands of those who have broken the Covenant at the time when, after the setting of the Day-Star of the world, his heart was consumed with the flame of His bereavement.

In order to legitimize their plans for taking 'Abdu'l-Baha's life, the Covenant-breakers needed to fabricate a reason that would warrant His death and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was well qualified in this regard.

As previously outlined, false accusations had been made against the Master to the effect that He claimed to be a Manifestation of God and that He regarded the Bab and Baha'u'llah to be His forerunners.

All these calumnies were widely spread among the Covenant-breakers who justified the death of 'Abdu'l-Baha based on the following passage of the

Kitab-i-Aqdas, in which Baha'u'llah regards anyone who claims a revelation from God as an imposter:

Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying imposter:

We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim.

Should he repent, God will, no doubt, forgive him.

If, however, he persisteth in his error, God will, assuredly, send down one who will deal mercilessly with him.

Terrible, indeed, is God in punishing! [195] [195 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

37.] <p209> The phrase to 'deal mercilessly with him' was interpreted by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali as a decree for taking the life of the imposter.

How wicked to calumniate 'Abdu'l-Baha, the embodiment of servitude, by saying that He claimed the station of the Manifestation of God for Himself!

It was common knowledge that in Adrianople Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had declared himself to be a partner with Baha'u'llah in divine revelation, provoking Baha'u'llah's wrathful reaction[*] to passages in Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's writings in which he announced himself to be the source of divine revelation.

It is to this that 'Abdu'l-Baha refers in His Will and Testament: [* See chapter 15] ...whilst he (Muhammad 'Ali) without shame in the days of the Blessed Beauty had advanced such a claim as this and been confuted by Him in the aforementioned manner, the text of his claim being still extant in his own handwriting and bearing his own seal.

Attempts on the life of 'Abdu'l-Baha continued for some time.

Towards the end of 1905 Shu'a'u'llah, the eldest son of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, disclosed a clandestine plot by the Covenant-breakers to achieve their aim, to which 'Abdu'l-Baha refers in this passage of the Will and Testament:

9-WT In like manner, the focal Centre of Hate, hath purposed to put 'Abdu'l-Baha to death and this is supported by the testimony written by Mirza Shu'a'u'llah himself and is here enclosed.

It is evident and indisputable that they are privily and with the utmost subtlety engaged in conspiring against me.

The following are his very words written by him in this letter: -- 'I curse at every moment him that hath kindled this discord, imprecate in these words "Lord! have no mercy upon him" and I hope ere long God will make manifest the one that shall have no pity on him, who now weareth another garb and about whom I cannot any more explain.' Reference he doth make by these words to the sacred verse that beginneth as follows: -- 'He that layeth a claim ere the passing of a thousand

years...' Reflect!

How intent they are upon the death of 'Abdu'l-Baha!

Ponder in your hearts upon the phrase 'I cannot any more explain' and realize what schemes they are devising for this purpose.

They fear lest, too fully explained, the letter might fall into alien hands and their schemes be foiled and frustrated.

The phrase is only foretelling good tidings to come, namely that regarding this all requisite arrangements have been made. <p210> As already stated, Shu'a'u'llah was sent to the United States to assist the notorious Covenant-breaker Khayru'llah and to counter the activities of the Baha'i community.

Soon after his arrival in that country, however, he found himself unable to carry out effectively the mission entrusted to him by his father.

He travelled to various parts of the United States and tried in vain to create dissension among the believers.

One of the activities he was involved in while there was a secret plot to take the life of 'Abdu'l-Baha, to which he clearly refers in a letter, dated 27 November 1905, to Majdu'd-Din.

Somehow this letter fell into the hands of 'Abdu'l-Baha, who attached such importance to it that He quoted these words of Shu'a'u'llah in His Will and Testament: 'I curse at every moment him ['Abdu'l-Baha] that hath kindled this discord, imprecate in these words "Lord! have no mercy upon him" and I hope ere long God will make manifest the one that shall have no pity on him, who now weareth another garb and about whom I cannot any more explain.' The phrase 'Lord! have no mercy upon him' is a reference to the passage in the Kitab-i-Aqdas quoted above: 'Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation ...

God will, assuredly, send down one who will deal mercilessly with him.' Apart from this reference to 'Abdu'l-Baha and the plot against His life, the rest of the letter mostly concerns material things.

Shu'a'u'llah refers to his shortage of funds and describes the ways he has been living in different quarters of the United States since his arrival in the summer of 1904.

He also mentions that when he meets the believers, he finds himself inadequate to deal with them in discussions.

Shu'a'u'llah (Light of God), to whom the Master referred as the darkened soul, remained in the United States for several years.

There he used to meet with some of the new believers and introduce himself as the grandson of Baha'u'llah but when the friends became aware of his violation of the Covenant, they left him to his own devices and shunned his company.

Shu'a'u'llah was in the United States when the Master visited that country.

He tried to undermine the influence which 'Abdu'l-Baha exerted on the hearts of people.

On one occasion, introducing himself as a blood relation of Baha'u'llah, he succeeded in misleading a newspaper editor who wrote about him as deserving to inherit the station of the chosen ones of God. 'Abdu'l-Baha did not pay any attention to this but when asked by a journalist to comment on His nephew's statement, He is reported to have told the story of Christ when He learned His brothers were coming to see Him.

Christ has <p211> said, 'They are not my brethren but you are my brethren and kindred.' As Christ had not paid attention to His brothers, 'Abdu'l-Baha continued, the same was true in this case.

He then said, 'Notwithstanding, my house is open to all.

People are free to come in or go out.' The words of the Master as recorded by the journalist were published in the newspaper.

At one point during the Master's visit to the United States, Shu'a'u'llah, encouraged by his father, wrote a letter to 'Abdu'l-Baha and published its contents in a newspaper.

In this letter, written in Arabic, he invited 'Abdu'l-Baha to meet with him and Khayru'llah in Chicago or elsewhere to resolve the differences that had arisen in the Faith.

He had the temerity to accuse 'Abdu'l-Baha of having divided the Faith and suggested ten points to be discussed in the meeting -- all based on the preposterous accusation that 'Abdu'l-Baha claimed to be and was acting as a Manifestation of God.

The Master did not deign to respond.

Soon after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha Shu'a'u'llah wrote another letter, on behalf of His father, addressed to the believers in the United States.

In it, quoting the verses of the Kitab-i-'Ahd concerning the station of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, he announced him to be the successor to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

None of the friends was influenced by his appeal to turn to the one who was the Arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah. <p212>

22

Covenant-Breakers Petition

Government against 'Abdu'l-Baha 7-WT A few months ago, in concert with others, he that hath broken the Covenant, hath prepared a document teeming with calumny and slander wherein, the Lord forbid, among many similar slanderous charges, 'Abdu'l-Baha is deemed a deadly enemy, the ill-wisher of the Crown.

They so perturbed the minds of the members of the Imperial Government that at last a Committee of Investigation was sent from the seat of His

Majesty's Government which, violating every rule of justice and equity that befit His Imperial Majesty, nay, with the most glaring injustice, proceeded with its investigations.

The ill-wishers of the One True God surrounded them on every side and explained and excessively enlarged upon the text of the document whilst the (the members of the Committee) in their turn blindly acquiesced.

One of their many calumnies was that this servant had raised aloft a banner in this city, had summoned the people together under it, had established a new sovereignty for himself, had erected upon Mount Carmel a mighty stronghold, had rallied around him all the peoples of the land and made them obedient to him, had caused disruption in the Faith of Islam, had covenanted with the following of Christ and, God forbid, had purposed to cause the gravest breach in the mighty power of the Crown.

May the Lord protect us from such atrocious falsehoods!

In part two of the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha, referring to the Covenant-breakers, says:

32-WT And still they rested not, but further strove with stubbornness, falsehood and slander, with scorn and calumny to stir up sedition in the midst of the government of this land and elsewhere, causing them to deem me a sower of sedition and filling the minds with the things that the ear abhorreth to hear.

The government was thus alarmed, fear fell upon the sovereign, and the suspicion of the nobility was aroused.

Minds were troubled, affairs were upset, souls were perturbed, the fire of anguish and sorrow was kindled within the breasts, the Holy Leaves (of the Household) were convulsed and shaken, their eyes rained with <p213> tears, their signs and lamentations were raised and their hearts burned within them as they bewailed this wronged servant of Thine, fallen a victim into the hands of these, his kindred, nay, his very enemies!

These two passages tell the story of the most menacing and the most dangerous episode in the life of the Master, during which the Covenant-breakers came very close to fulfilling their aim of eliminating Him.

They failed, through an act of Providence which brought in its wake freedom for the Master and an ignominious decline for Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his henchmen.

As we have already stated, by 1902 pilgrims from the East and the West were attaining the presence of the Master in the Holy Land.

As a result of their contact with Him, they were filled with a new divine spirit and returned home illumined, teaching the Cause, inspiring the friends and consolidating the foundations of the Faith.

In Persia, a number of the erudite teachers of the Faith defended the Covenant by writing epistles refuting, in compelling terms, the misrepresentations of

the Covenant-breakers.

Copies of these letters were usually read aloud in the gatherings of the friends in the Holy Land.

These activities as well as the onward progress of the Cause aroused the jealousy of the Covenant-breakers who began to take drastic actions against 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The following passage in the Will and Testament describes the extent of their malice and infamous deeds:

50-WT Thereupon the loved ones of the Lord arose, inspired with the greatest confidence and constancy and aided by the power of the Kingdom, by Divine Strength, by heavenly Grace, by the unfailing help and Celestial Bounty, they withstood the enemies of the Covenant in well-nigh three score and ten treatises and supported by conclusive proofs, unmistakable evidences and clear texts from the Holy Writ, they refuted their scrolls of doubt and mischief-kindling leaflets.

The Centre of Sedition was thus confounded in his craftiness, afflicted by the wrath of God, sunk into a degradation and infamy that shall be lasting until the Day of Doom.

Base and wretched is the plight of the people of evil deeds, they that are in grievous loss!

51-WT And as they lost their cause, grew hopeless in their efforts against the loved ones of God, saw the Standard of His Testament waving throughout all regions and witnessed the power of the Covenant of the Merciful One, the flame of envy so blazed within them as to be beyond recounting.

With the utmost vigour, exertion, rancour and enmity, they followed another path, walked in another way, devised another plan: that of kindling the flame of sedition in the heart of the very government <p214> itself, and thus cause this wronged one, this prisoner to appear as a mover of strife, inimical to the government and a hater and opponent of the Crown.

Perchance 'Abdu'l-Baha may be put to death and his name be made to perish whereby an arena may be opened unto the enemies of the Covenant wherein they may advance and spur on their charger, inflict a grievous loss upon everyone and subvert the very foundations of the edifice of the Cause of God.

For so grievous is the conduct and behaviour of this false people that they are become even as an axe striking at the very root of the Blessed Tree.

Should they be suffered to continue they would, in but a few days' time, exterminate the Cause of God, His Word, and themselves.

These passages refer to the treachery of the Covenant-breakers and their approach to government authorities, misrepresenting the activities of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The Covenant-breakers continued to spread their malicious propaganda against the Master until the year 1904 when fresh adversities appeared on the horizon.

The Covenant-breakers had assiduously plotted until the friendly governor of 'Akka was replaced by one who was hostile to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali took full advantage of this and stirred up mischief among certain elements of the population who had shown their opposition to the Master.

As a result, newspapers in Syria and Egypt wrote disturbing reports about Him and the partisans of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali fanned into flame all the unfounded allegations these articles contained.

The culmination of these activities was reached when the Arch-breaker of the Covenant finally drew up an official indictment against the Master.

In it he brought false and outrageous accusations against Him and through bribery gathered a number of signatures from certain inhabitants of 'Akka to support his case.

This document was sent to the authorities in Istanbul, the seat of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid, in the hope that the Sultan, who was a despot, might take measures to destroy 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Soon a Commission of Inquiry arrived in 'Akka.

The news spread immediately and agitation seized the inhabitants of the city.

Spies were planted in the neighbourhood and the approaches to the house of the Master were watched day and night.

For the protection of the Faith and the community, 'Abdu'l-Baha advised most of the believers to leave 'Akka and seek residence elsewhere.

Pilgrimages of the believers were also temporarily halted. 'Abdu'l-Baha was summoned by the Commission to face charges brought against Him by the violators of the Covenant.

He visited the members of the Commission several times and ably refuted the false accusations, disproving each in such a masterly way as to leave no <p215> doubt about their spurious nature.

His explanations, delivered with majesty and eloquence, were so convincing that the members of the Commission had no choice but to dismiss the case and return home.

Once again Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his fellow conspirators were frustrated.

Their shameful public encounter with the Master brought no benefit to them; instead it cost them large sums of money in bribes.

As 1904 drew to a close, the Master's situation gradually returned to normal and the believers returned to their homes in 'Akka.

The years 1905 and 1906 passed without major incident, although 'Abdu'l-Baha was continually harassed by these enemies of the Faith and had to take appropriate measures to protect the Cause from their various manoeuvres.

In the meantime the political situation in the heart of the Ottoman Empire was becoming increasingly unstable and the Sultan correspondingly alarmed.

He was known to be nervous of any popular movement in the country and showed himself ruthless in dealing with dissidents.

The Covenant-breakers, who had lost hope of carrying out their evil plots, were heartened by the political situation in Istanbul.

They now decided to take advantage of the Sultan's weakness and play on his fears and suspicions.

All they had to do was to re-open their case against 'Abdu'l-Baha and send their complaints to the court of the Sultan.

This, their last major onslaught against the Master, proved to be a complete failure.

In their petition, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates reaffirmed their false claim that whereas Baha'u'llah was merely a holy man and an admirer of Sunni Islam, 'Abdu'l-Baha had condemned the Sunni Faith and claimed the station of prophethood for Himself.

They also charged that 'Abdu'l-Baha had not only acquired vast tracts of land in 'Akka and neighbouring villages and had gathered a large following in the Holy Land but that He had also built a mighty fortress on Mount Carmel, [*] had made a banner of 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha' and raised it among the inhabitants, had received American and other Western military advisers [**] at His home and was about to overthrow the government. [* This refers to the building of the Shrine of the Bab.] [** This refers to Western pilgrims.] Such inflammatory claims, made at a time when the government was apprehensive of revolt by some of the Turkish factions, disturbed the mind of the Sultan, who immediately ordered a new Commission of Inquiry to be despatched to 'Akka.

This Commission, consisting of four officials, arrived in the winter of 1907.

They had in their possession all the papers relating to the previous Commission of Inquiry, which had, ironically enough, found all the allegations against 'Abdu'l-Baha to be baseless.

The Commission assumed full authority in the administration of the city, dismissed the governor of 'Akka who was friendly towards 'Abdu'l-Baha and even disregarded the orders from the governor of the province of Syria who wielded supreme authority over the region.

The members of the Commission then established direct contact with Mirza

Muhammad-'Ali and his associates and planned their course of action in concert with them.

They took as their residence the house of 'Abdu'l-Ghani Baydun, a wealthy and influential man who was living in close proximity to the Mansion of Bahji and was friendly towards the violators of the Covenant.

Their first act was again to plant a number of spies around the house of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

They then began to obtain testimonies from those enemies who had signed Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's original petition to the authorities.

With the assistance of the Covenant-breakers, the members of the Commission even sought to bring pressure upon people to testify against the Master.

Through intimidation people were forced to give false testimony, while a local grocer who refused to comply was put in gaol.

The inhabitants of the city became afraid to approach the house of the Master, in case they were incriminated by the authorities.

Even the poor of 'Akka, whom 'Abdu'l-Baha had always succoured, did not dare to come in contact with Him.

At one point the members of the Commission paid a visit to Mount Carmel, examined the six-room building of the Shrine, noted its massive walls and commented on its extraordinary strength.

Later in their report, they confirmed the Covenant-breakers' allegation that 'Abdu'l-Baha had indeed built a fortress on a strategic location on the mountain!

They also endorsed the other charges brought against Him.

Soon rumours began to circulate far and wide that the Commission was about to exile the Master to Fizan in Tripolitania, situated in the middle of the desert in North Africa.

During this period the Master remained unperturbed and confident.

He continued to write His Tablets to the Baha'is of the East and the West, spent time planting a few trees in His small garden and, to the astonishment of some notables of 'Akka who considered His banishment to be imminent, was seen to be attending to repairs of His rented house.

Their surprise was further intensified when they learned that He had bought and stored fuel for the winter.

The members of the Commission, who were actively engaged in preparing their report in collaboration with the Covenant-breakers, sent one of their agents to 'Abdu'l-Baha inviting Him to meet with them but He declined the invitation, saying that the Commission was <p217> biased against Him and there was no point in meeting with its members.

At the same time He made it clear, as on previous occasions, that He was ready to submit Himself to whatever decision they made and reminded them that His greatest ambition was to follow in the footsteps of His Lord the Bab and die a martyr's death. 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself mentioned this episode in a talk to the friends, recounted as follows:

Upon their arrival, the Commission of Inquiry invited me to meet with them but I declined.

They sent a certain official by the name of Hikmat Big to persuade me to call on them.

This agent begged me, and even hypocritically brought tears to his eyes, pleading with me to meet with members of the Commission even for a short time.

I told him that since they had come to investigate accusations against me, it would be better that I did not meet them.

I told him that they had already sent a report to the capital and I had sent a letter to Sultan Abdu'l-Hamid through Shaykh Badru'd-Din, the gist of which was as follows: 'The members of the Commission have come to 'Akka, but I have not met with them.

I understand that they have made a report in which they have levelled several accusations against me and for this I am grateful.

Their main complaints are as follows:

1.

That I have rebelled against the government and established my own.

2.

That I have built fortifications on Mount Cannel.

3.

That with the help of Mirza Dhikru'llah[*] I have hoisted a banner with the inscription of 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha' [O Glory of the Most Glorious] among the inhabitants including the Bedouins. [* The son of Mirza Muhammad-Quli, the faithful half-brother of Baha'u'llah who remained steadfast in the Covenant after the ascension of Baha'u'llah.] 4.

That two-thirds of the land in 'Akka is owned by me.

The reason that I am grateful to the members of the Commission for the above accusations is that by their first complaint, they have, in reality, praised me and attributed great powers to me.

How can a prisoner and an exile establish a new government?

Anyone who could do that deserves to be congratulated.

Similarly, by their second complaint they have also commended me by

ascribing to me extraordinary capabilities.

It would be a miracle for one who is a captive in the hands of the authorities to build fortifications strong enough to be capable of withstanding bombardment by powerful naval ships.

But one is surprised by their third complaint, for how is it that the many government agents posted all over the country have failed to see the banner which has allegedly been hoisted among the inhabitants of these lands?

Perhaps during the last two years these officials have been asleep or some angels have blinded their eyes.

Concerning the fourth complaint, that I own most of the land in 'Akka and neighbouring villages, I am willing to sell them all for the small sum of one thousand liras.' [196] [196 Translation of Fadil-i-Mazandarani, Asraru'l-Athar, pp.

361-3.] The ironic language of this letter is indicative of the depravity of those 'Abdu'l-Baha was addressing.

In the meantime, events were moving to a climax in which it was almost certain that 'Abdu'l-Baha would be exiled or put to death.

The atmosphere was becoming more tense with every passing day.

There is an interesting account of an Italian who was Acting Consul for Spain at this time.

He was an admirer of the Master and his wife was friendly with the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

This man and his relatives were the chief agents of an Italian shipping company.

When he was informed that 'Abdu'l-Baha's life was in danger, he came to the Master in the dead of night and offered to transport Him out of the Holy Land to a safe spot.

He even delayed a particular ship's departure for a few days in the hope of rescuing Him. 'Abdu'l-Baha took the unusual step of inviting some of the elders of the Baha'i community in 'Akka, including the celebrated Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, to consult together and give their opinion on this offer.

It is amusing to see how 'Abdu'l-Baha wanted to test these people and teach them a lesson.

The group unanimously decided to advise the Master to accept the offer of the Italian friend and leave the Holy Land for a place of safety. 'Abdu'l-Baha looked at them disapprovingly and reminded them that running away had never been the practice of the Chosen Ones of God.

His Lord the Bab had offered up His life, so how could 'Abdu'l-Baha do

otherwise?

As a result of this episode, each one of the group recognized his own shortsightedness and lack of understanding of the spirit of the Faith.

The following passage from the Will and Testament casts further light on 'Abdu'l-Baha's resignation to the Will of God and His longing to lay down His life in the path of Baha'u'llah:

8-WT According to the direct and sacred command of God we are forbidden to utter slander, are commanded to show forth peace and amity, are exhorted to rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and harmony with all the kindreds and peoples of the world.

We must obey and be the well-wishers of the governments of the land, regard disloyalty unto a just king as disloyalty to God Himself and wishing evil to the government a transgression of the Cause of God.

With these final and decisive words, how can it be that these imprisoned ones should indulge in such vain fancies; incarcerated, how could they show forth such disloyalty!

But alas!

The Committee of Investigation hath approved and confirmed these calumnies of my brother and ill-wishers and submitted them to the presence of His Majesty the Sovereign.

Now at this moment a fierce storm is raging around this prisoner who awaiteth, be it favourable or unfavourable, the gracious will of His Majesty, may the Lord aid him by His grace to be just.

In whatsoever condition he may be, with absolute calm and quietness, 'Abdu'l-Baha is ready for self-sacrifice and is wholly resigned and submitted to His Will.

One wonders what thoughts must have crowded the mind of 'Abdu'l-Baha during the days that He waited for the Sultan's decree, as He reflected on the adversities which had surmounted Him.

How much He must have grieved when He meditated on the unfaithfulness of His brothers and other members of the family who had arisen with all their power to destroy Him and the Cause He represented.

The following passage from the Will and Testament describes the tenderness of His heart during those fate-laden days:

33-WT Lord!

Thou seest all things weeping over me and my kindred rejoicing in my woes.

By Thy Glory, O my God!

Even amongst mine enemies, some have lamented my troubles and my

distress, and of the envious ones a number have shed tears because of my cares, my exile and my afflictions.

They did this because they found naught in me but affection and care and witnessed naught but kindness and mercy.

As they saw me swept into the flood of tribulation and adversity and exposed even as a target to the arrows of fate, their hearts were moved with compassion, tears came to their eyes and they testified declaring: -- 'The Lord is our witness; naught have we seen from him but faithfulness, generosity and extreme compassion.' The Covenant-breakers, foreboders of evil, however, waxed fiercer in their rancour, rejoiced as I fell a victim to the most grievous ordeal, bestirred themselves against me and made merry over the heartrending happenings around me.

When 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote parts two and three of the Will and Testament, great dangers surrounded Him.

It appears that as He was writing He was waiting patiently for God's will to be realized.

He communed with God and in the prayers He wrote in this period, He revealed the agony of His heart and portrayed the evil machinations of the Covenant-breakers.

In these prayers, He expressed His longing to lay down His life as a martyr in the path of Baha'u'llah.

Those who attained the presence of the Master have left behind many stories of His craving for martyrdom.

Whenever He spoke about the <p220> subject, His whole being would be exhilarated, His face radiant and His heart in great excitement.

Dr Yunis Khan describes how 'Abdu'l-Baha, in the midst of intense suffering at the hands of the Covenant-breakers, earnestly prayed that yet more suffering and hardship might descend upon Him.

As tribulations increased, His desire to bear them increased correspondingly.

He often used to speak about illustrious martyrs such as Varqa and then, in a joyous and excited tone, He would express His heartfelt desire to lay down His life in the path of Baha'u'llah.

So moving were His words that all His loved ones who heard Him were overcome with emotion, their souls uplifted and their hearts filled with a new spirit of sacrifice in their readiness to follow in the footsteps of their Beloved.

At the time of greatest danger to His life He revealed a number of moving prayers, such as the following:

30-WT O my Lord, my heart's Desire, Thou Whom I ever invoke, Thou Who art my Aider and my Shelter, my Helper and my Refuge!

Thou seest me submerged in an ocean of calamities that overwhelm the soul, of afflictions that oppress the heart, of woes that disperse Thy gathering, of ills and pains that scatter Thy flock.

Sore trials have compassed me round and perils have from all sides beset me.

Thou seest me immersed in a sea of unsurpassed tribulation, sunk into a fathomless abyss, afflicted by mine enemies and consumed with the flame of their hate, enkindled by my kinsmen with whom Thou didst make Thy strong Covenant and Thy firm Testament, wherein Thou biddest them turn their hearts to this wronged one, to keep away from me the foolish, the unjust, and refer unto this lonely one all that about which they differ in Thy Holy Book, so that the Truth may be revealed unto them, their doubts may be dispelled and Thy manifest Signs be spread abroad.

In the following prayer 'Abdu'l-Baha dwells on the afflictions He has endured and begs God to relieve Him from His ordeals, beseeching Him to fulfil His heart's desire of laying down His life as a martyr:

44-7-WT O my God! my Beloved, my heart's Desire!

Thou knowest, Thou seest that which hath befallen this servant of Thine, that hath humbled himself at Thy Door, and Thou knowest the sins committed against him by the people of malice, they that have broken Thy Covenant and turned their backs on Thy Testament.

In the day-time they afflicted me with the arrows of hate and in the night-season they privily conspired to hurt me.

At dawn they committed that which the Celestial Concourse did lament and at eventide they unsheathed against me the sword of tyranny and hurled in the presence of the ungodly their darts <p221> of calumny upon me.

Notwithstanding their misdeeds, this lowly servant of Thine was patient and did endure every affliction and trial at their hands, though by Thy power and might he could have destroyed their words, quenched their fire and stayed the flame of their rebelliousness.

Thou seest, O my God! how my long-suffering, my forbearance and silence have increased their cruelty, their arrogance and their pride.

By Thy Glory, O Beloved One!

They have misbelieved in Thee and rebelled against Thee in such wise that they left me not a moment of rest and quiet, that I might arise as it is meet and seemly, to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind, and might serve at Thy Threshold of Holiness with a heart that overfloweth with the joy of the dwellers of the Abha Kingdom.

Lord!

My cup of woe runneth over, and from all sides blows are fiercely raging

upon me.

The darts of affliction have compassed me round and the arrows of distress have rained upon me.

Thus tribulation overwhelmed me and my strength, because of the onslaught of the foemen, became weakness within me, while I stood alone and forsaken in the midst of my woes.

Lord!

Have mercy upon me, lift me up unto Thyself and make me to drink from the Chalice of Martyrdom, for the wide world with all its vastness can no longer contain me.

Thou art, verily, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful!

And again:

10-WT O God, my God!

Thou seest this wronged servant of Thine, held fast in the talons of ferocious lions, of ravening wolves, of blood-thirsty beasts.

Graciously assist me, through my love for Thee, that I may drink deep of the chalice that brimmeth over with faithfulness to Thee and is filled with Thy bountiful Grace; so that, fallen upon the dust, I may sink prostrate and senseless whilst my vesture is dyed crimson with my blood.

This is my wish, my heart's desire, my hope, my pride, my glory.

Grant, O Lord my God, and my Refuge, that in my last hour, my end may even as musk shed its fragrance of glory!

Is there a bounty greater than this?

Nay, by Thy Glory!

I call Thee to witness that no day passeth but that I quaff my fill from this cup, so grievous are the misdeeds wrought by them that have broken the Covenant, kindled discord, showed their malice, stirred sedition in the land and dishonored Thee amidst Thy servants.

Returning to the subject of the Commission of Inquiry, events were moving to their climax, and one day, late in the afternoon, the members of the Commission boarded their ship in Haifa and headed towards 'Akka.

The sun was setting as the ship sailed closer to the prison city.

Everyone in Haifa and 'Akka was certain that the ship was <p222> on its way to take 'Abdu'l-Baha on board as a prisoner.

In the meantime, 'Abdu'l-Baha was calmly pacing the yard at His house, and the believers, extremely perturbed, were nervously watching the approaching ship.

Suddenly, to their great relief, the ship changed course, headed out to sea and sailed towards Istanbul.

In one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha states that at that moment the guns of God went into action, removed the chains from the neck of 'Abdu'l-Baha and placed them on the neck of 'Abdu'l-Hamid, the Sultan of Turkey.

This was a reference to the ultimate fate of the Sultan, who narrowly escaped death when returning from the mosque on a fateful Friday that same year.

A bomb which was meant for him exploded, killing and injuring others, and it was this event which prompted the authorities to recall the members of the Commission.

Some months later, the 'Young Turk' revolutionaries demanded from the Sultan the release of all political prisoners.

This was done, and in the summer of 1908 'Abdu'l-Baha was freed.

Within months the tyrannical Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid was deposed. 'Abdu'l-Baha's freedom after 40 years of imprisonment enabled Him to fulfil one of the most important undertakings of His ministry, the interment of the remains of the Bab, the Martyr-Prophet of the Faith, in the Shrine built by the Master on Mount Carmel.[*] [* For more detailed information on this see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3, appendix 1; also ibid. vol.

1, p.

268] 'Abdu'l-Baha's dramatic release from confinement was the greatest blow that the Covenant-breakers had ever sustained in their entire period of opposition to Him.

It signaled the approaching end of their satanic endeavours to uproot the very foundations of the Cause of God. 'Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy, uttered in 1904 (see chapter 18), that in four years' time they would become impotent, was fulfilled. 'Abdu'l-Baha foresaw the downfall of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali when He wrote these words in His Will and Testament:

5-WT And now ye are witnessing how the wrath of God bath from all sides afflicted him and how day by day he is speeding towards destruction.

Ere long will ye behold him and his associates, outwardly and inwardly, condemned to utter ruin. <p223> 23

'Abdu'l-Baha's Greatness Transcends His

Suffering Around the time that 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote the passages concerning the Commission of Inquiry, He wrote a long Tablet to the believers in Persia to familiarize them with the distressing situation that endangered His life as He awaited the decision of the Sultan on the Commission's report.

Here is a translation of part of this Tablet:

O ye the cherished loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Baha!

It is a long time now since my inward ear hath heard any sweet melodies out of certain regions, or my heart been gladdened; and this despite the fact that ye are ever present in my thoughts and standing clearly visible before my sight.

Filled to overflowing is the goblet of my heart with the wine of the love I bear you, and my yearning to set eyes upon you streameth like the spirit through my arteries and veins.

From this it is clear how great is my affliction.

At this time and throughout this tempest of calamities now tossing its waves to high heaven, cruel and incessant darts are being hurled against me from every point of the compass, and at every moment, here in the Holy Land, terrifying news is received, and every day bringeth its quota of horror. The Centre of Sedition had imagined that it needed but his arrogant rebellion to bring down the Covenant and Testament in ruins; it needed but this, so he thought, to turn the righteous away from the Holy Will.

Wherefore he sent out far and wide his leaflets of doubt, devising many a secret scheme.

Now he would cry out that God's edifice had been subverted and His divine commands annulled, and that accordingly, the Covenant and Testament was abolished.

Again he would set himself to sighing and groaning that he was being held a prisoner and was kept hungry and thirsty day and night.

Another day he would raise an uproar, saying that the oneness of God had been denied, since another Manifestation had been proclaimed, prior to the expiration of a thousand years.

When he saw that his calumnies had no effect, he gradually formed a plan to incite a disturbance.

He began stirring up mischief, and went knocking at every door.

He started making false accusations to the officials of the Government.

He approached some of the foreigners, made himself their intimate, and together with them prepared a document and presented it to the seat of the Sultanate, bringing consternation to the authorities.

Among the many slanderous charges was this, that this hapless one had raised up a standard of revolt, a flag bearing the words Ya Baha'u'l-Abha; that I had paraded this throughout the countryside, to every city, town and village, and even among the desert tribes, and had summoned all the inhabitants to unite under this flag.

O my Lord, verily I seek refuge with Thee from the very thought of such an act, which is contrary to all the commandments of Baha'u'llah, and

which would indeed be a mighty wrong that none but a grievous sinner would ever perpetrate.

For Thou has made it incumbent upon us to obey the rulers and kings.

Another of his slanders was that the Shrine on Mount Carmel was a fortress that I had built strong and impregnable -- this when the building under construction compriseth six rooms -- and that I had named it Medina the Resplendent, while I had named the Holy Tomb[*] Mecca the Glorified.

Yet another of his calumnies was that I had established an independent sovereignty, and that -- God forbid!

God forbid!

God forbid! -- I had summoned all the believers to join me in this massive wrongdoing.

How dire, O my Lord, is his slander! [* At Bahji.] Yet again, he claimeth that since the Holy Shrine hath become a point visited by pilgrims from all over the world, great damage will accrue to this Government and people.

He, the Centre of Sedition, averteth that he himself hath had no hand in all these matters, that he is a Sunni of the Sunnites and a devoted follower of Abu-Bakr and 'Umar, and regardeth Baha'u'llah as only a pious man and a mystic; all these things, he saith, were set afoot by this wronged one.

To be brief, a Commission of Investigation was appointed by the Sultan, may the glory of his reign endure.

The Commission journeyed hither and immediately upon arrival betook themselves to the house of one of the accusers.

They then summoned the group who, working with my brother, had prepared the accusatory document and asked them whether it was true.

The group, explained the contents of the document, stated that everything they had reported therein was nothing but the truth, and added further accusations.

Thus they functioned at one and the same time as plaintiffs, witnesses, and judge.

The Commission hath now returned to the seat of the Caliphate, and reports of a most frightful nature are coming in daily from that city.

However, praised be God, 'Abdu'l-Baha remaineth composed and unperturbed.

To none do I bear ill will because of this defamation.

I have made all my affairs conditioned upon His irresistible Will and I am waiting, indeed in perfect happiness, to offer my life and prepared

for whatever dire affliction may be in store.

Praise be to God, the loving believers also accept and remain <p225> submissive to God's Will, content with it, radiantly acquiescent, offering thanks.

The Centre of Sedition hath imagined that once the blood of this wronged one is spilled out, once I have been cast away on the wide desert sands or drowned in the Mediterranean Sea -- nameless, gone without trace, with none to tell of me -- then would he at last have a field where he could urge his steed ahead, and with his mallet of lies and doubts, hit hard at the polo ball of his ambitions, and carry off the prize.

Far from it!

For even if the sweet musk-scent of faithfulness should pass, and leave no trace behind, who would be drawn by the stench of perfidy?

And even if some gazelle of heaven were to be ripped apart by dogs and wolves, who would go running to seek out a ravening wolf?

Even should the day of the Mystic Nightingale draw to its close, who would ever lend his ear to the raven's croak, or the cawing of the crow?

What an empty supposition is his!

What a foolish presumption! 'Their works are like the vapour in a desert which the thirsty dreameth to be water, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth nothing.'^[*] [* Qur'an 24:39] O ye loved ones of God!

Be ye firm of foot, and fixed of heart, and through the power of the Blessed Beauty's help, stand ye committed to your purpose.

Serve ye the Cause of God.

Face ye all nations of the world with the constancy and the endurance of the people of Baha that all men may be astounded and ask how this could be, that your hearts are as well-springs of confidence and faith, and as mines so rich in the love of God.

Be ye so, that ye shall neither fail nor falter on account of these tragedies in the Holy Land; let not these dread events make you despondent.

And if all the believers be put to the sword, and only one be left, let that one cry out in the name of the Lord and tell the joyous tidings; let that one rise up and confront all the peoples of the earth.

Gaze ye not upon the dire happenings at this Illumined Spot.

The Holy Land is in danger at all times, and here, the tide of calamities is ever at the flood; for this upraised call hath now been heard around the world, and the fame of it hath gone forth to the ends of the earth.

It is because of this that foes, both from within and from without, have turned themselves with subtlety and craft to spreading slander.

It is clear that such a place as this would be exposed to danger, for there is no defender here, none to arise and take our side in the face of calumny: here are only a few souls that are homeless, hapless, held captive in this stronghold.

No champion have they; there is none to succour them, none to ward off the arrows of lies, the darts of defamation that are hurled against them: none except God...

O ye loving friends!

Strive ye with heart and soul to make this world the mirror-image of the Kingdom, that this nether world may teem with the blessings of the world of God, that the voices <p226> of the Company on high may be raised in acclamation, and signs and tokens of the bounties and bestowals of Baha'u'llah may encompass all the earth.

Jinab-i-Amin hath expressed the greatest admiration for you honoured men and enlightened women, naming and commending you each by each, telling at length of the firmness and constancy ye all have shown, saying that, God be praised, in all Persia the men and women are standing together, straight, strong, unmovable -- a mighty edifice solidly raised up; and that ye are engaged with love and joy in spreading abroad the sweet savours of the Lord.

These were tidings of great joy, especially as they have reached me in these days of extreme peril.

For the dearest wish of this wronged one is that the friends be spiritual of heart and illumined of mind, and once this grace is granted me, calamity, however afflictive, is but bounty pouring down upon me, like copious rain.

O God, my God!

Thou seest me plunged in an ocean of anguish, held fast to the fires of tyranny, and weeping in the darkness of the night.

Sleepless I toss and turn upon my bed, mine eyes straining to behold the morning light of faithfulness and trust.

I agonize even as a fish, its inward parts afire as it leapeth about in terror upon the sand, yet I ever look for Thy bestowals to appear from every side.[197] [197 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections, pp.

216-22.] 'Abdu'l-Baha felt the sufferings inflicted on Him by the Covenant-breakers much more intensely than any human being would have felt them.

This is true of Baha'u'llah also.

He mentions in many Tablets that no one on earth has been, or will be, subjected to such suffering.

It may be difficult for those who are not fully familiar with the Faith of Baha'u'llah to accept such a statement.

They may argue that there have been many people who were afflicted with unbearable tortures and life-long sufferings.

In order to appreciate the words of Baha'u'llah let us imagine a community somewhere in the world whose people are savage, barbarous and brutally cruel.

Those born and brought up within such a community, who have lived there all their lives and have never been in touch with civilization, would find this life to be normal.

Although to the outsider the standard would seem to be very cruel, yet for the members of that community every event that took place in their midst would be a natural happening and accepted as such.

As in every other community, there would be moments of joy and comfort as well as sadness and suffering for the people who belonged to this society.

However, were a noble person who had lived in a highly civilized society forced to join this uncivilized community, he would suffer much more than the rest.

Because he was used to a far superior standard in his life, it could be said of him that he had undergone cruelties and hardships, both mental and physical, that no one else in that community had experienced. <p227> It is the same with the Manifestation of God and His Chosen Ones, sent to live among men.

There is a vast contrast between the world of man and the world of the Chosen Ones of God.

The former is limited and full of imperfections while the latter is a realm of perfections far exalted above the comprehension of human beings.

Coming from such a realm, possessing all the divine virtues and embodying God's attributes, these exalted Beings descend into this world and become prisoners among human beings.

Man's ignorance, his cruelty, his ungodliness, his selfishness, his insincerity and all his sins and shortcomings are tools of torture inflicting painful wounds upon the souls of the Chosen Ones of God, who have no alternative but to bear them in silence with resignation and submissiveness, as in the case of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

One act of unfaithfulness -- even a glance betraying the insincerity of the individual or an unworthy thought emanating from his mind -- is painful torture to them.

But they seldom reveal the shortcomings of men or dwell on their own pain and suffering.

Like teachers who have to descend to the level of a child and act as if they do not know, the Manifestations of God come as men appearing to be the same as others.

They have the sin-covering eye to such an extent that some may think that they do not know.

The perusal of the Will and Testament may leave the reader with the erroneous impression that 'Abdu'l-Baha was being crushed under the pressure of sufferings inflicted on Him by the Covenant-breakers, and that He could not bear their onslaught any longer.

For example, we come across the following statements which, if considered on a human level, may lead one to conclude that a person facing such fierce opposition would collapse and be heard of no more:

31-WT Yet now Thou seest them, O Lord, my God! with Thine eye that sleepeth not, how that they have broken Thy Covenant and turned their backs thereon, how with hate and rebelliousness they have erred from Thy Testament and have arisen intent upon malice.

32-WT Adversities have waxed still more severe as they rose with unbearable cruelty to overpower and crush me, as they scattered far and wide their scrolls of doubt and in utter falsehood hurled their calumnies upon me.

36-WT O dearly beloved friends!

I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour's life is lost to me.

The study of the life of the Manifestations of God and their Chosen Ones reveals that although they physically endure the pain and agony of persecutions, in the realm of the spirit they are not affected.

For instance, while 'Abdu'l-Baha faced fierce opposition from the Covenant-breakers, He dispelled, through His exemplary life, the gloom that had been surrounding the community of the Most Great Name.

During this time, when He Himself was the target of dire afflictions and sufferings, He cast upon everyone around Him the light of truth, of divine virtues and spiritual teachings.

Although we can never understand the reality of Baha'u'llah, the Manifestation of God, or of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Most Great Mystery of God and the Centre of His Covenant, we can observe some of their superhuman characteristics.

Unlike a human being whose mind can only deal with one subject at a time, 'Abdu'l-Baha, who had all the powers of Baha'u'llah conferred upon Him, was free from this limitation.

Usually a person becomes overwhelmed when afflicted by sufferings or faced with insurmountable obstacles.

Under such circumstances even people of outstanding ability show their weakness and reveal their human frailty.

They try to cope with one problem at a time and often seek the assistance of experts and advisors to help them make a decision.

Not so with 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He acted independently, for no individual was qualified to advise or assist Him in His manifold activities.

His soul was not bound by the limitations of the world of humanity and His mind was not overwhelmed when faced with a host of problems simultaneously.

In the midst of calamities, when the ablest of men would have succumbed to pressure, He remained detached, while directing His attention to whatever He desired.

This is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Manifestation of God and His Chosen Ones.

Baha'u'llah has explained this in the Kitab-i-Iqan, quoting the celebrated Islamic passage: 'Nothing whatsoever keepeth Him from being occupied with any other thing.' [198] [198 Quoted in Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p.

67.] Although the Manifestations of God and these specially Chosen Ones such as 'Abdu'l-Baha feel the agony of sufferings inflicted on them by their enemies, and their human nature experiences both mental and physical pain, their souls are not affected by any man-made affliction.

They abide in a realm far beyond the ken of mortal men and wield the spiritual sceptre of authority and power with which they rule over humanity.

These powers are at first hidden from the eyes of most people but with the passage of time humanity observes the influence of their word and the spread of their Faith.

To appreciate, even to a limited degree, the superhuman powers and divine perfections with which 'Abdu'l-Baha was invested, we can do no better than to turn to the writings of Shoghi Effendi.

Referring to the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the position He occupies in this Dispensation, the Guardian writes: <p229> It would be indeed difficult for us, who stand so close to such a tremendous figure and are drawn by the mysterious power of so magnetic a personality, to obtain a clear and exact understanding of the role and character of One Who, not only in the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah but in the entire field of religious history, fulfils a unique function.

Though moving in a sphere of His own and holding a rank radically different from that of the Author and the Forerunner of the Baha'i Revelation, He, by virtue of the station ordained for Him through the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, forms together with them what may be termed the

Three Central Figures of a Faith that stands unapproached in the world's spiritual history.

He towers, in conjunction with them, above the destinies of this infant Faith of God from a level to which no individual or body ministering to its needs after Him, and for no less a period than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise... ..we should not by any means infer that 'Abdu'l-Baha is merely one of the servants of the Blessed Beauty, or at best one whose function is to be confined to that of an authorized interpreter of His Father's teachings.

Far be it from me to entertain such a notion or to wish to instil such sentiments.

To regard Him in such a light is a manifest betrayal of the priceless heritage bequeathed by Baha'u'llah to mankind.

Immeasurably exalted is the station conferred upon Him by the Supreme Pen above and beyond the implications of these, His own written statements.

Whether in the Kitab i-Aqdas, the most weighty and sacred of all the works of Baha'u'llah, or in the Kitab-i-'Ahd, the Book of His Covenant, or in the Suriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch), such references as have been recorded by the pen of Baha'u'llah -- references which the Tablets of His Father addressed to Him mightily reinforce -- invest 'Abdu'l-Baha with a power, and surround Him with a halo, which the present generation can never adequately appreciate.

He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Centre and Pivot of Baha'u'llah's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Baha'i ideal, the incarnation of every Baha'i virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being 'round Whom all names revolve', the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation -- styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He is, above and beyond these, appellations, the 'Mystery of God' -- an expression by which Baha'u'llah Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.[199] [199 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, pp.

131-4.] <p230> The tributes which Baha'u'llah has paid to 'Abdu'l-Baha are numerous, as recorded in His Tablets to which Shoghi Effendi refers above.

The following passages are gleaned from a wide range of Baha'u'llah's writings, some of which are written in His own hand.

In the Suriy-i-Ghusn (Surih of the Branch),[*] He exalts the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha in these words: [* See Taherzadeh, of Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

2.] There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntaha this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow.

Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation.

Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork!...

Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favour unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened.

Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me.

He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His Manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favoured servants...[200] [200 Baha'u'llah, quoted in *ibid.* p.

135. (Shoghi Effendi, *World Order.*)] In another Tablet in His own handwriting, Baha'u'llah thus addresses 'Abdu'l-Baha:

O Thou Who art the apple of Mine eye!

My glory, the ocean of My loving-kindness, the sun of My bounty, the heaven of My mercy rest upon Thee.

We pray God to illumine the world though Thy knowledge and wisdom, to ordain for Thee that which will gladden Thine heart and impart consolation to Thine eyes.[201] [201 *ibid.* (Baha'u'llah quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, p.

135.)] In yet another Tablet, these verses have been revealed by Him:

The glory of God rest upon Thee, and upon whosoever serveth Thee and circleth around Thee.

Woe, great woe, betide him that opposeth and injureth Thee.

Well is it with him that sweareth fealty to Thee; the fire of hell torment him who is Thine enemy.[202] [202 *ibid.* (Baha'u'llah quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, p.

135.)] And again:

We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind, a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth, a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.

God grant <p231> that through Thee He may protect them, may enrich and sustain them, that He may inspire Thee with that which shall be a well-spring of wealth unto all created things, an ocean of bounty unto all men, and the dayspring of mercy unto all peoples.[203] [203 ibid. pp.

135-6. (Baha'u'llah quoted in Shoghi Effendi, World Order.)] When 'Abdu'l-Baha was on a visit to Beirut, Baha'u'llah expressed in these words His sorrow at their separation:

Praise be to Him Who hath honoured the Land of Ba [Beirut] through the presence of Him round Whom all names revolve.

All the atoms of the earth have announced unto all created things that from behind the gate of the Prison-city there hath appeared and above its horizon there hath shone forth the Orb of the beauty of the great, the Most Mighty Branch of God -- His ancient and immutable Mystery -- proceeding on its way to another land.

Sorrow, thereby, hath enveloped this Prison-city, whilst another land rejoiceth...

Blessed, doubly blessed, is the ground which His footsteps have trodden, the eye that hath been cheered by the beauty of His countenance, the ear that hath been honoured by hearkening to His call, the heart that hath tasted the sweetness of His love, the breast that hath dilated through His remembrance, the pen that hath voiced His praise, the scroll that hath borne the testimony of His writings.[204] [204 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, pp.

227-8.] The bounties that Baha'u'llah showered upon 'Abdu'l-Baha were not confined to these and the other Tablets that streamed from His Pen.

On innumerable public and private occasions He praised 'Abdu'l-Baha, described His divine attributes in glowing terms and paid tribute to His noble deeds.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, that spiritual giant immortalized by the title 'the Angel of Carmel', has left the following record of one of his memorable audiences, when Baha'u'llah spoke about 'Abdu'l-Baha's important role in shielding Him from the pressures of the outside world:[*] [* These are not to be taken as the exact words of Baha'u'llah; they are only recollections of His utterances by Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali.] During the days of Baghdad We ourself used to visit the coffee house[**] and meet with everyone.

We associated with people whether they were in the community or outside, whether acquaintances or strangers, whether they came from far or near.

[** See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3, pp.

250-1.] We considered those who were distant from us to be near, and the strangers as acquaintances.

We served the Cause of God, supported His Word, and exalted His Name.

The Most Great Branch ['Abdu'l-Baha] carried out all these services, withstood all <p232> the difficulties and endured the sufferings and calamities to a great extent in Adrianople and now to a far greater extent in 'Akka.

Because while in Baghdad, to all appearances We were not a prisoner and the Cause of God had hardly enjoyed a fame it does today.

Those who opposed it and the enemies who fought against it were comparatively few and far between.

In Adrianople We used to meet with some of the people and gave permission to some to attain Our presence.

But while in the Most Great Prison We did not meet with anyone[*] and have completely closed the door of association with the people.

Now the Master has taken upon Himself this arduous task for Our comfort.

He is a mighty shield facing the world and its peoples and so He has relieved Us [from every care].

At first He secured the Mansion of Mazra'ih for Us and We stayed there, then the Mansion of Bahji.

He is so occupied in the service of the Cause that for weeks He does not find the opportunity to come to Bahji.

We are engaged in meeting with the believers and revealing the verses of God, while He labours hard and faces every ordeal and suffering.

Because to deal and associate with these people is the most arduous task of all.[205] [* That is, with non-Baha'is.] [205 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjutu's-Sudur, pp.

251-2.] Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani, [**] a trusted follower of Baha'u'llah who was in His service from the days of Baghdad and accompanied Him to Adrianople and 'Akka, has recounted in his memoirs his recollection of the words of Baha'u'llah as He spoke to a number of believers about the exalted station of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Here is a summary translation of his notes: [** See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

1, p.

288.] ...The word Aqa (the Master) was a designation given to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

I recall that one day when Baha'u'llah was in the Garden of Vashshash

which was a delightful place situated outside Baghdad, which He occasionally used to visit, someone referred to certain individuals as the Aqa.[***] On hearing this Baha'u'llah was heard to say with a commanding voice: 'Who is the Aqa?'

There is only one Aqa, and He is the Most Great Branch.' [*** As a common noun, the word 'Aqa' in the Persian language is used as a title before a name.

It is similar to 'Mr' in English.

However, if it is used on its own as a proper noun, it signifies the exalted station of a person.] Baha'u'llah said the same thing again in the Garden of Ridvan in 'Akka.

On that occasion, someone addressed Mirza Muhammad-'Ali as Aqa, whereupon Baha'u'llah admonished him saying: 'There is one and only one Aqa and He is the Most Great Branch, others should be addressed by their names.'...

<p233> Many a time I was in the presence of Baha'u'llah when the Master was also present.

Because of His presence Baha'u'llah would be filled with the utmost joy and gladness.

One could see His blessed countenance beaming with delight and exultation so lovingly that no words can adequately describe it.

Repeatedly He would laud and glorify the Master and the mere mention of His name would suffice to evoke an indescribable feeling of ecstasy in the person of the Blessed Beauty.

No pen is capable of fully describing this.

In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has extolled the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha...

Haji Mirza Habibu'llah-i-Afnan, a younger son of Aqa Mirza Aqa entitled Nuru'd-Din,[*] one of the distinguished members of the Afnan family, has written in his memoirs some interesting stories of his pilgrimage in 1891.

The following is an extract from his notes, summarized and translated: [* For a detailed account of his life and services see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4.] One evening we were informed that the Beloved of the World [Baha'u'llah] intended to visit the Garden of Junaynih[**] and had directed that all the pilgrims and resident Baha'is accompany Him in the morning.

That night we could not sleep because we were so excited ... that we should have the bounty of being in His holy presence for several hours the next day.

At the hour of dawn we faced His blessed room and engaged in prayers and

devotions.

Before sunrise we all assembled outside the gate of the Mansion.

It took about one hour until His Blessed Person came downstairs and mounted a white donkey...

All the believers followed Him on foot to the garden.

One of the local believers, Haji Khavar, was a tall man.

He walked alongside Baha'u'llah and held an umbrella over His head as a protection against the heat of the sun.

The air was refreshing as we arrived in the garden...

His Blessed Person was extremely happy that day and each one of the friends received his share of the bounties from His presence.

We had lunch in the garden, then we assembled together and attained His presence. [** A garden situated in the north of 'Akka near the Mansion of Mazra'ih.] It was at that time that 'Abdu'l-Baha arrived from 'Akka.

The Blessed Beauty said, 'The Master is coming, hasten to attend Him'...

On those days Baha'u'llah used to sow the seeds of loyalty and servitude towards 'Him Whom God hath purposed' ['Abdu'l-Baha] in the hearts of the believers and explained the lofty station and hidden reality of the Master to all.

Attended by everyone, 'Abdu'l-Baha came with great humility into the presence of the Blessed Beauty.

Then The Tongue of Grandeur uttered words to this effect, 'From morning until now this garden was not pleasant but now with the presence of the Master it has become truly most delightful.' Then, turning to the Master, He remarked, 'You should have come in the morning.' 'Abdu'l-Baha responded, 'The Governor of 'Akka and some residents had requested to meet with Me.

Therefore I had to receive and entertain them.' Baha'u'llah, with a smiling face, said, 'The Master is our shield.

Everybody here lives in the utmost comfort and peace.

Association with the outside people such as these is very, very difficult.

It is the Master who stands up to everything and prepares the means of comfort for all the friends.

May God protect Him from the evil of the envious and the hostile.'[*] [* These are not to be taken as the exact words of Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha.]

In His Will and Testament, having dwelt on the machinations of the Covenant-breakers, the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the Supreme

Exemplar of His teachings unveils to His loved ones a different picture of His warm and affectionate nature.

He gives them a glimmer of that heavenly spirit bestowed upon Him by Baha'u'llah and provides them with a glimpse of His limitless love and compassion, His humility and self-effacement through the following soul-stirring prayer of forgiveness for His enemies:

34-5-WT I call upon Thee, O Lord my God! with my tongue and with all my heart, not to requite them for their cruelty and their wrong-doings, their craft and their mischief, for they are foolish and ignoble and know not what they do.

They discern not good from evil, neither do they distinguish right from wrong; nor justice from injustice.

They follow their own desires and walk in the footsteps of the most imperfect and foolish amongst them.

O my Lord!

Have mercy upon them, shield them from all afflictions in these troubled times and grant that all trials and hardships may be the lot of this Thy servant that hath fallen into this darksome pit.

Single me out for every woe and make me a sacrifice for all Thy loved ones.

O Lord, Most High!

May my soul, my life, my being, my spirit, my all be offered up for them.

O God, My God!

Lowly, suppliant and fallen upon my face, I beseech Thee with all the ardour of my invocation to pardon whosoever hath hurt me, forgive him that hath conspired against me and offended me, and wash away the misdeeds of them that have wrought injustice upon me.

Vouchsafe unto them Thy goodly gifts, give them joy, relieve them from sorrow, grant them peace and prosperity, give them Thy bliss and pour upon them Thy bounty.

Thou art the Powerful, the Gracious the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting! <p235> 24

Dissociation with Covenant-Breakers The history of the Faith of Baha'u'llah is replete with glorious episodes of steadfastness to Baha'u'llah and loyalty to His Covenant, of heroism and sacrifice.

There are also dark pages of violation and treachery.

These contrasting features of light and darkness, of truth and falsehood are interwoven.

The preceding chapters of this book mainly recount stories of the

Covenant-breakers' unfaithfulness and betrayal, which caused much agony and hardship for the Master.

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha describes their attacks on the Cause and the sufferings they inflicted on His person over a period of almost 15 years.

He refers to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's hatred, describes his unrelenting attacks on the Cause, enumerates his manifold violations of the Covenant, and foreshadows, in emphatic terms, the frustration of his schemes and his eventual extinction, a prophecy soon fulfilled.

Referring to him in His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

5-WT And now ye are witnessing how the wrath of God hath from all sides afflicted him and how day by day he is speeding towards destruction.

Ere long will ye behold him and his associates, outwardly and inwardly, condemned to utter ruin.

These passages of the Will and Testament constitute dark and gloomy pages in the history of the Faith.

Then, having dwelt at length on these tragic events, 'Abdu'l-Baha turns His attention to the glorious features of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

He directs the believers to observe at all times the ordinances of God, to uphold the standard of faithfulness and to arise in the promotion of the teachings in a spirit of selflessness and detachment from all worldly things, as seen in the following exhortations:

23-4-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted.

Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace.

It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straight-forwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers.

So intense must be the spirit of love and loving kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them.

For universality is of God and all limitations earthly.

Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone.

The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples.

The vivifying breeze reviveth every living creature and all beings endued

with life obtain their share and portion at His heavenly board.

In like manner, the affections and loving kindness of the servants of the One True God must be bountifully and universally extended to all mankind.

Regarding this, restrictions and limitations are in no wise permitted.

Wherefore, O my loving friends!

Consort with all the peoples, kindred and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindliness, good-will and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Baha, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancour may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity.

Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourselves, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores.

Such are the attributes of the sincere!

Such are the attributes of the truthful.

The exhortation to consort with the peoples and religions of the world with the utmost love and fellowship should not be confused with the commandment to shun entirely the Covenant-breakers.

Covenant-breaking is a deadly spiritual disease and never before in the history of religion have its pernicious effects been brought to light.

In this Dispensation, however, the position of the Covenant-breakers and their spiritual condition have been exposed and fully examined.

As we have described in chapter 3, Covenant-breaking provokes the wrath of God.

Therefore, when a believer breaks the Covenant, his spiritual lifeline is cut off.

Although he may have great knowledge of the teachings and the history of the Faith and may have had a brilliant record of service to the Cause, he becomes a lifeless being.

Spiritually he turns blind and deaf; his heart becomes cold and bereft of faith.

In reality he is not the same person any more.

This is the reason why the violators of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah acted in the way they did.

As previously noted, in nature water can only flow from a high level to a lower

one.

It cannot flow to a point on the same level or to a higher one.

Similarly, in order for a believer to receive the bounties of God <p237> from on high, he must be positioned at the opposite end of the scale: lowly, humble and self-effacing.

The Covenant-breakers were not.

They aspired to be equal to the Centre of the Covenant and thus the spiritual energies released by God could not reach them and they became deprived of the outpouring of the spirit of faith.

Their lives, once guided by the Light of Truth, were now based on falsehood.

Deception, intrigue, dishonesty and violence became their way of life.

Throughout the ages these vices have proved to be the weapons which the ungodly use against the righteous.

But in the end they are obliterated by the power of truth.

These unholy characteristics are not exclusive to the violators at the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The Covenant-breakers who opposed Shoghi Effendi and those who appeared after his passing conducted their shameful careers in the same manner.

It is necessary here to distinguish between enemies of the Faith and Covenant-breakers.

The former attack the Cause of God mainly through ignorance, and perhaps they will be forgiven by God.

The latter, however, know where the Source of Truth is but are unable to turn to it; instead, for their own selfish reasons, they knowingly rise up against it.

To inflict harm upon a human being is reprehensible in the sight of God and perhaps can be forgiven by Him.

But to wilfully oppose the Cause of the Almighty and to strike at its roots, as the violators of the Covenant do, are grave transgressions which without repentance are unforgivable.

The subject of Covenant-breaking was frequently broached by the Master, according to Dr Yunis Khan's testimony.

In order to protect the community from the Covenant-breakers' poisonous influence, 'Abdu'l-Baha used to speak about their schemes and intrigues, their plots and conspiracies.

He often likened Covenant-breaking to a contagious disease: the only way to prevent it from spreading is to confine the patient and place him in quarantine.

Infectious disease spreads rapidly and can affect a multitude.

For that reason, He said, protecting the believers from this deadly disease was imperative and could be achieved only by cutting off association with the Covenant-breakers.

In one of His last messages to the American believers 'Abdu'l-Baha warned of the consequences of association with the Covenant-breakers.

He cabled them:

He who sits with leper catches leprosy.

He who is with Christ shuns Pharisees and abhors Judas Iscariots.

Certainly shun violators...[206] [206 'Abdu'l-Baha in Star of the West, vol.

12, no.

14, p.

233.] In many of their Tablets Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha have emphatically warned the believers to avoid associating with the Covenant-breakers. <p238>

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha admonishes them in these words:

38-WT And now, one of the greatest and most fundamental principles of the Cause of God is to shun and avoid entirely the Covenant-breakers, for they will utterly destroy the Cause of God, exterminate His Law and render of no account all efforts exerted in the past.

O friends!

It behoveth you to call to mind with tenderness the trials of His Holiness, the Exalted One, and show your fidelity to the Ever-Blest Beauty.

The utmost endeavour must be exerted lest all these woes, trials and afflictions, all this pure and sacred blood that hath been shed so profusely in the Path of God, may prove to be in vain.

Again 'Abdu'l-Baha writes in the third part of the Will and Testament:

52-WT Hence, the beloved of the Lord must entirely shun them, avoid them, foil their machinations and evil whisperings, guard the Law of God and His religion, engage one and all in diffusing widely the sweet savours of God and to the best of their endeavour proclaim His Teachings.

In answer to a question about 'shunning', 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote:

Thou hadst asked some questions; that why the blessed and spiritual souls, who are firm and steadfast, shun the company of degenerate persons.

This is because, that just as bodily diseases ... are contagious, likewise the spiritual diseases are also infectious.

If a consumptive should associate with a thousand safe and healthy persons, the safety and health of these thousand persons would not affect the consumptive and would not cure him of his consumption.

But when this consumptive associates with those thousand souls, in a short time the disease of consumption will infect a number of those healthy persons.

This is a clear and self-evident question.[207] [207 ibid. ('Abdu'l-Baha in Star of the West, vol.

12, no.

14, p.

233.)] To check the spread of this spiritual disease, it is necessary not only to shun the Covenant-breakers but also to expel them from the community in the same way that a cancerous growth is cut out of the body.

As has already been stated in the Introduction, the Prophets of old did not establish a firm and explicit Covenant with their followers and so the adherents of past religions did not enjoy this protection.

A look at the history of religions, which clearly reveals the many schisms that have taken place, will amply demonstrate the danger.

If, in this Dispensation, the Covenant-breakers had not been expelled and had been allowed to associate freely with the believers, after a short time <p239> the Baha'i community, like other religions, would have been divided into sects.

Its unity, which is its distinguishing feature, would have been destroyed forever and its goal of establishing the oneness of mankind on this planet brought to naught.

To illustrate this point, let us examine some of the laws of nature as applied to the human body.

The Cause of God may be likened to the body of man which, when healthy, can withstand manifold external pressures.

It can endure extremes of temperature, overcome thirst and hunger, defend itself when confronted with hardship and preserve its wholesomeness against the effects of disease.

Similarly the Cause of Baha'u'llah can withstand the onslaught of its external enemies and can resist every opposition from its adversaries.

All the persecutions whereby thousands of its followers were martyred have failed to extinguish its light, destroy its unity or undermine its rising institutions.

On the other hand, a healthy person can be fatally afflicted if poison is allowed to enter and circulate in his blood stream.

Nature, however, has provided the body with an immune system which removes the

unwanted poisonous substances from the blood stream and discharges them at intervals, thus cleansing the body from their deadly effects and ensuring its health and well-being.

It is the same with the Cause of God.

Baha'u'llah has provided an instrument for casting out any individual who, while claiming to be a believer, opposes the Centre of the Cause and tries to remain in the community to disrupt its foundations.

When the unwholesome elements, those egotistical personalities who lust for power and are ready to sacrifice the religion of God to their own selfish desires, are expelled from the Faith, the community, cleansed from the poison of Covenant-breaking, acquires a fresh vitality and vigour.

It is enabled to maintain its health and continue its forward march towards ultimate victory.

During the days of Baha'u'llah the authority to expel Covenant-breakers was vested only in Him.

Later it devolved upon 'Abdu'l-Baha, as the Centre of the Covenant, and then upon Shoghi Effendi, as the Guardian of the Cause.

Today this expulsion takes place by decision of the Hands of the Cause of God[*] residing in the Holy Land, subject to the approval of the Universal House of Justice. [* The functions of the Hands of the Cause, as defined in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, are mainly the protection and propagation of the Faith.

Those Hands of the Cause now living were appointed by the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.] <p240> No one is lightly or hurriedly declared a Covenant-breaker by the Centre of the Cause.

Great efforts are made to enlighten the individual and guide him to the path of truth.

Only when every possible effort to save him from his spiritual downfall has failed will he be expelled from the community.

For example, 'Abdu'l-Baha made every endeavour during the first few years of His ministry to change the attitude of His unfaithful brothers; only after they failed to heed His counsels and intensified their rebellion did He declare them to be Covenant-breakers and cast them out of the community.

Never before has a Manifestation of God created the instrument whereby the breakers of His Covenant, those who oppose the Centre of the Cause from within the community, are cast out.

This is one of the unique features of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, providing a means by which the Cause of God is purged from impurities.

It is important to note that should a Covenant-breaker recognize his mistakes, become conscious of his transgressions against the Cause of God and find the

urge to repent, the Centre of the Cause, when satisfied he is sincerely repentant, will forgive his past deeds and restore his credibility and status as a Baha'i in good standing in the community.

The protection of the Cause from the intrusion of the Covenant-breakers is the most vital duty of the institutions of the Faith, both at present and in the future.

Around the time when the perils threatening the life of 'Abdu'l-Baha were greatest and He wrote in His Will and Testament, 'I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour's life is lost to me', [208] He took a special measure for the protection of the Cause of God.

Since Shoghi Effendi, whom He had designated as the Guardian of the Cause, was at that time a child of about ten years of age, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote a Tablet of great significance to Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, the Vakilu'd-Dawlih, a cousin of the Bab.[*] In it He intimated that great dangers surrounded His person, and urged him to make arrangements, if necessary: for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

To bring this about, He directed him to gather the Afnan[**] and the Hands of the Cause in one place and establish this institution in accordance with the provisions of His Will and Testament. [208 'Abdu'l-Baha, Will and Testament, para.

38.] [* The Vakilu'd-Dawlih was a distinguished believer who was designated by 'Abdu'l-Baha as one of the 'four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats' mentioned in chapter 11 of the Revelation of St John the Divine.

Of the other 23 'elders', only 19 have been named by 'Abdu'l-Baha i.e. the Bab and the 18 'Letters of the Living'.] [** The kinsmen of the Bab and those of His wife.] <p241> 'Abdu'l-Baha attached great importance to the protection of the Cause.

He refers to it several times in His Will and Testament:

10-WT Lord!

Shield Thou from these Covenant-breakers the mighty Stronghold of Thy Faith and protect Thy secret Sanctuary from the onslaught of the ungodly.

Thou art in truth the Mighty, the Powerful, the Gracious, the Strong.

36-WT O dearly beloved friends!

I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour's life is lost to me.

I am thus constrained to write these lines for the protection of the Cause of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Word and the safety of His Teachings.

By the Ancient Beauty!

This wronged one hath in no wise borne nor doth he bear a grudge against any one; towards none doth he entertain any ill-feeling and uttereth no word save for the good of the world.

My supreme obligation, however, of necessity, prompteth me to guard and preserve the Cause of God.

Thus, with the greatest regret, I counsel you saying: -- Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His law and have the utmost fear of discord.

42-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

Strive with all your heart to shield the Cause of God from the onslaught of the insincere, for souls such as these cause the straight to become crooked and all benevolent efforts to produce contrary results.

43-WT O God, my God!

I call Thee, Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, Thy Saints and Thy Holy Ones, to witness that I have declared conclusively Thy Proofs unto Thy loved ones and set forth clearly all things unto them, that they may watch over Thy Faith, guard Thy Straight Path and protect Thy Resplendent Law.

Thou art, verily, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise!

In one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the Covenant-breakers as dead bodies which the ocean casts out upon its shores:

The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe.

These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected.

These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features; but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and shall cast ashore the bodies of the dead, for it cannot retain them.

Thus it is seen that the ocean of the Covenant hath surged and surged until it hath thrown out the dead bodies -- souls that are deprived of the Spirit of God and are lost in passion and self and are seeking leadership.

This foam of <p242> the ocean shall not endure and shall soon disperse and vanish, while the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar...

From the early days of creation down to the present time, throughout all the divine dispensations, such a firm and explicit Covenant hath not been entered upon.

In view of this fact is it possible for this foam to remain on the surface of the ocean of the Covenant?

No, by God!

The violators are trampling upon their own dignity, are uprooting their own foundations and are proud at being upheld by flatterers who exert a great effort to shake the faith of feeble souls.

But this action of theirs is of no consequence; it is a mirage and not water, foam and not the sea, mist and not a cloud, illusion and not reality.

All this ye shall soon see.[209] [209 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections, p.

210-11.] Those who are expelled from the Faith as Covenant-breakers are left to their own devices.

The believers will never oppose them in their activities and they are left free to continue their actions against the Cause of God.

But the history of the Faith demonstrates that by their very opposition to the Centre of the Faith they sow the seeds of their own extinction and after a while fade away ignominiously.

Their position is like that of a branch cut off from the tree.

At first it is green and appears to have some life, but as it has no root, it will inevitably wither and die.

Severing relationships with Covenant-breakers must not be confused with acts of opposition or hatred towards them.

Dr Yunis Khan recounts a story of 'Abdu'l-Baha which throws light on this subject.

The following is a summary translation of a passage from his memoirs:

Sometimes in the course of His talks, 'Abdu'l-Baha used to explain that Covenant-breaking exerts an evil influence upon the conduct and morals of the public.

The seed of sedition which the Covenant-breakers have sown among the people is capable of inclining the world of humanity towards ungodliness and iniquity.

Therefore the believers must manifest righteousness and divine virtues in their lives, so as to remove the foul odour of this rebellion from the world.

At the same time they will have to be vigilant and resourceful lest the Covenant-breakers influence public opinion because whenever their foul breath reaches a certain area, it impairs the spiritual nostrils of the people and obscures their vision.

Consequently these people are unable to inhale the sweet savours of holiness or to behold the effulgence of the divine light...

One of the important duties enjoined upon the loved ones of God is to make every endeavour to prevent the Covenant-breakers from infiltrating the Baha'i community. 'Abdu'l-Baha quoted Baha'u'llah as saying that should one who is a follower of Mirza Yahya be living in a town, the foul odour of his presence will linger for a long time in that town and the progress <p243> of the Cause of God will be impeded there.

The Master gave the example of the city of Kirman and said that the breath of the Covenant-breakers [Muhammad-'Ali and his associates], which is none other than the tempting of Satan, [*] is far more deadly than that of the followers of Mirza Yahya... [* According to the Baha'i teachings, there is no such being as Satan.

Satan is a human being who is led by his ego to live a life of wickedness and ungodliness.

Shoghi Effendi's secretary states on his behalf that 'devil or Satan is symbolic of evil and dark forces yielding to temptation' (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 2 November 1938).]

One day when this servant and two other friends were in 'Abdu'l-Baha's presence, He was talking in the same vein about Covenant-breakers...

At one point I remembered an incident which happened in Tihiran and in order to support His arguments, I said: 'A new school has recently been opened in Tihiran and Hubbu'llah, a son of the notorious Jamal-i-Burujirdi [father and son were both Covenant-breakers], was being considered for employment as a teacher.

As soon as we heard this, the Hands of the Cause, two other friends and myself consulted together in a meeting and agreed to do everything in our power to prevent the appointment of Hubbu'llah to this post.

We sent a certain individual to persuade the school authorities not to appoint him...' I had not yet finished my sentence when 'Abdu'l-Baha interrupted me and instead of praising our action, said: 'Do you mean to say that you consulted together and decided to stop a Covenant-breaker earning a living?

This is not the way to serve the Cause of God.

In matters connected with one's livelihood there should be no differentiation between a believer and a Covenant-breaker.

The loved ones of the Abha Beauty must be the signs of the bounty of God among the people.

They should, like the sun, illumine the world, and like the clouds of the spring season rain down upon everything.

They must not look upon the capacity and worthiness of the individual'... 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke in this vein to us for some time and I hung my head in shame![210] [210 Yunis Khan, Khatirat-i-Nuh-i-Salih, pp.

357-8.] In many of their Tablets Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorted the believers to show the utmost kindness to all, including their enemies, and to pray for them.

Whereas association with the peoples of the world is enjoined on the Baha'is, the Covenant-breakers are a legitimate exception.

They are cast out of the community and shunned by the believers but to hate, oppose or confront them is against the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

The story of Dr Yunis Khan told above demonstrates that Baha'is are forbidden to take any measures designed to harm the Covenant-breakers or obstruct their personal work and activities.

On the contrary, knowing that these people are misguided and ignorant of <p244> the truth, the believers should overlook and forgive their transgressions.

Following in the footsteps of the Master, they are encouraged to feel the utmost compassion towards them in their hearts, for they are aware that unless these misguided souls change their ways, their plight will be disastrous and their end perilous.

Since the Baha'is do not associate with Covenant-breakers, the only way they can help them is to pray that they may be guided to the pathway of truth.

Indeed, a number of Covenant-breakers have recognized their folly, repented to the Centre of the Cause, been forgiven and have been welcomed back into the Baha'i community.

The prayer revealed in the Will and Testament and quoted in this chapter, in which 'Abdu'l-Baha begs forgiveness for the Covenant-breakers who had inflicted untold sufferings upon Him for many years, demonstrates that although the Baha'is shun these sick souls, they do not bear antagonism or hatred towards them in their hearts.

It is helpful at this juncture to clarify the difference between Covenant-breakers and those who withdraw from the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

There are always a small number of individuals who recognize Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God, embrace His Faith and even become active members of the community but later, for some reason, change their minds and withdraw from the Faith.

Such individuals are not Covenant-breakers.

The Baha'is will maintain friendly relationships with such people and respect their decision to withdraw their membership in the Faith.

Baha'u'llah has enjoined upon His followers to associate with them in a spirit of love and fellowship.

There is another category of believers who become deprived of their administrative rights by the sanction, at the present time, of the National Spiritual Assemblies.

This happens when an individual flagrantly breaks certain laws of Baha'u'llah which are related to social or administrative activities and by so doing brings disgrace upon the Faith.

Although not Baha'is in good standing, these people are nevertheless part of the community and may, under certain conditions, regain their administrative rights. 'Abdu'l-Baha described Covenant-breaking as a contagious disease and therefore counselled the believers, for the sake of their own salvation and for the unity of the community, to sever their relationships with Covenant-breakers and to have no personal contact with them.

The believers are also strongly discouraged from reading their propaganda, for their words can inject poison into the mind.

When Mirza Muhammad-'Ali distributed his false propaganda against the Centre of the Covenant, the recipients in Persia who were loyal to the Faith used to return his communications to him sealed and unread.

This is still a wise precaution today. <p245> By their fidelity, courage and faith the believers during the ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi rallied around the Centre of the Cause, guarded the stronghold of the Faith, protected it from the onslaught of the Covenant-breakers and prevented them from spreading their venom among the believers.

Thus they passed on to later generations a worldwide community whose unity is firmly established and the invincibility of whose rising institutions is fully demonstrated. <p246>

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Teaching the Cause of God 13-14-WT O ye that stand fast in the Covenant!

When the hour cometh that this wronged and broken-winged bird will have taken its flight unto the celestial Concourse, when it will have hastened to the Realm of the Unseen and its mortal frame will have been either lost or hidden neath the dust, it is incumbent upon the Afnan, that are steadfast in the Covenant of God, and have branched from the Tree of Holiness; the Hands, (pillars) of the Cause of God (the glory of the Lord rest upon them), and all the friends and loved ones, one and all to bestir themselves and arise with heart and soul and in one accord, to diffuse the sweet savours of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith.

It behoveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose.

They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime and travel throughout all regions.

Bestirred, without rest and steadfast to the end they must raise in every land the triumphal cry 'O Thou the Glory of Glories!' (Ya Baha'u'l-Abha), must achieve renown in the world wherever they go, must burn

brightly even as a candle in every meeting and must kindle the flame of Divine love in every assembly; that the light of truth may rise resplendent in the midmost heart of the world, that throughout the East and throughout the West a vast concourse may gather under the shadow of the Word of God, that the sweet savours of holiness may be diffused, that faces may shine radiantly, hearts be filled with the Divine spirit and souls be made heavenly.

In these days, the most important of all things is the guidance of the nations and peoples of the world.

Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance for it is the head corner-stone of the foundation itself.

Thus a loving Master, in language at once tender, moving and forceful, exhorts His steadfast lovers of all ranks within the community to arise after His passing to teach the Cause -- an act regarded as the most important and meritorious of all deeds in this Holy Dispensation.

Teaching, or 'diffusing the Divine Fragrances', was the first commandment enjoined by the Bab upon the Letters of the Living.

Since then it has remained, and will continue to remain throughout the <p247> Baha'i era, the foremost obligation of every follower of the Blessed Beauty, who addressed the believers on the duty of teaching His Cause in the following words:

Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Baha, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds.

Such a deed is acceptable only when he that teacheth the Cause is already a firm believer in God, the Supreme Protector, the Gracious, the Almighty.

He hath, moreover, ordained that His Cause be taught through the power of men's utterance, and not through resort to violence.

Thus hath His ordinance been sent down from the Kingdom of Him Who is the Most Exalted, the All-Wise.[211] [211 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

278.] Baha'u'llah stressed the paramount importance of teaching His Cause in a Tablet to Jamal-i-Burujirdi,[212] telling him that if he were residing in the West of the world and learned that a person in the East was anxious to attain the knowledge of God and the recognition of His Manifestation, then it would be incumbent upon him, if he had the means, to travel to distant lands in order to bestow the water of life upon that enquirer. [212 Ma'idiy-i-Asmani, vol.

4, p.

47.] To appreciate the significance of Baha'u'llah's utterance that teaching the Cause is 'the most meritorious of all deeds', let us turn to one of the basic laws of creation, namely, the love relationship between the Creator and

the created.

We observe in nature that the earth produces the mineral, vegetable and animal forms of life and therefore it may be regarded as the creator of all matter it produces.

In this relationship, the love between the Creator and the created is manifested by a force of attraction between the earth and every object that comes within its orbit.

Thus the earth attracts everything to itself.

One might say that the goal of every object is to teach and rest upon the surface of the earth.

But if a barrier is placed between the object and the earth, this union cannot take place unless the barrier is removed.

The same law of attraction binds the Manifestation of God and the soul of man.

There is a love relationship between Baha'u'llah and every human being but in most cases there are many manmade barriers between them -- the veils mentioned by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Iqan.

They include pride in one's knowledge and background, attachment to the world and imitation of others in matters of religion and culture, to name but a few.

The act of teaching is the removal of these barriers, one by one and with wisdom, so that the soul will be attracted to Baha'u'llah.

The only person who can do this is a Baha'i.

In the world of nature, when two opposite entities are attracted to each other, they unite and bring each other pleasure.

This also <p248> happens between the Manifestation of God and the believer, one occupying the summit of glory and lordship and the other the depths of lowliness and servitude.

When the soul recognizes Baha'u'llah and is drawn to Him, the attraction of the opposites brings pleasure to God as well as to the individual and there can be no reward more 'meritorious' for the Baha'i teacher than being a source of pleasure to God.

Teaching the Cause is an act of devotion to God, as it brings pleasure to Him.

In many of their Tablets, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha have stated that divine blessings will descend upon those who endeavour to teach the Cause and that the act of teaching itself becomes a magnet attracting the bounties of God to the soul.

It is therefore important to appreciate that the primary purpose of teaching the Cause is not to increase the membership of the Baha'i community, although this happens as a result.

Rather, it is to enable a soul to draw near to Baha'u'llah and become enamoured of Him.

In a Tablet[213] Baha'u'llah discloses the pre-eminent position occupied in the sight of God by the act of teaching.

He states that there are two things pleasing to God: the tears shed in fear of Him and the blood of the martyr spilled in His path.

But since Baha'u'llah has advised His followers not to volunteer to give their lives, He has in this Tablet replaced the reward of martyrdom with teaching His Faith.

Indeed, in another Tablet[214] Baha'u'llah explicitly states that in this Dispensation it is preferable to teach with wisdom than to give one's life.

[213 *ibid.* pp.

123-4. (Ma'idiy-i-Asmani, vol.

4.)] [214 *ibid.* vol.

1, p.

69. (Ma'idiy-i-Asmani.)] In past Dispensations only a few privileged leaders of religion were engaged in teaching work but one of the greatest gifts that Baha'u'llah has bestowed upon His followers is to provide all believers, regardless of their abilities and accomplishments, the opportunity to become the recipients of God's bestowals as they teach His Cause -- a duty He has enjoined on them all.

He has written:

God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of teaching His Cause.

Whoever ariseth to discharge this duty, must needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an upright and praiseworthy character, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call.

Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers.[215] [215 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

335.] This statement leaves no room for doubt that success in teaching depends upon the teacher having 'an upright and praiseworthy character', for Baha'u'llah says, 'Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers.' The word 'never' is emphatic and rules out any <p249> other possibility.

Similar statements are found in numerous other Tablets. 'Abdu'l-Baha also writes:

The aim is this:

The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch.

Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever.[216] [216 'Abdu'l-Baha Tablets of the Divine Plan, p.

51.] The emphasis of the last sentence is repeated in other Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Shoghi Effendi, too, has drawn our attention to this truth in many of his letters.

To cite one celebrated passage:

Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching -- no matter how worldwide and elaborate in its character -- not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abha Revelation.

One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Baha'u'llah.[217] [217 Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p.

66.] Here Shoghi Effendi leaves no alternative to this vital prerequisite for teaching, for he says (and let us note his double emphasis): 'One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause...' Having discussed one of the most important prerequisites for teaching, let us now examine the work of teaching itself.

There are no set methods or procedures, although we have been given certain principles and guidelines by the Author of the Faith and by 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

These principles and guidelines are at variance with standards and methods current outside the Faith, where, generally, every expedient measure is used to influence people and convert them to various ideologies.

The Cause of Baha'u'llah is founded on the truth of God's Revelation and truth cannot be clothed in false standards.

It cannot employ the techniques of salesmanship, propaganda, expediency and compromise.

The methods used in the commercial world to attract people to new ideas, such as extravagant and sensational publicity based on slogans, extreme statements and similar gimmicks, are all alien to the Cause of God.

In his teaching work a Baha'i presents the message of Baha'u'llah as one would offer a gift to a king.

Since his primary object in teaching <p250> is not to increase numbers but

rather to bring a soul to its God, a Baha'i ought to approach his fellow men with feelings of love and humility and, above all, take to them the transforming power of Baha'u'llah and nothing of himself.

Indeed, if he tries to project himself by impressing upon the listener his knowledge and accomplishments and if he aims to establish the ascendancy of his arguments while teaching the Faith, then the power of Baha'u'llah cannot reach him.

Success in teaching depends on one's ability and readiness to draw on the power of Baha'u'llah, as was discussed in chapter 14.

There is no alternative.

If the believer does not open the way for Baha'u'llah through his love for Him, through living his life in accordance with His teachings and through teaching His Cause with devotion, Baha'u'llah's confirmations and assistance cannot reach the believer and he will fail in his service to Him.

Those who rank foremost among Baha'i teachers have always been conscious of the presence of Baha'u'llah at every stage of their teaching activities.

Because of this consciousness they have been enabled to approach with genuine love and humility those who have been seeking the truth and have attracted them with the warmth of their faith and the creative power of the Word of God.

It is this consciousness that has enabled them to radiate the glory of the new-born Faith of God, to demonstrate its truth, to promote its interests, to withstand the onslaught of its enemies and to win imperishable victories for their Lord.

In the third part of His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha elaborates further on the subject of teaching the Cause:

53-WT Whosoever and whatsoever meeting becometh a hindrance to the diffusion of the Light of Faith, let the loved ones give them counsel and say: 'Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching.

It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation.

Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves?

Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abha Beauty and teach the Cause of God.' Caution and prudence, however, must be observed even as recorded in the Book.

The veil must in no wise be suddenly rent asunder.

The Glory of Glories rest upon you.

Throughout His ministry Baha'u'llah exhorted His followers to teach the Cause of God with great wisdom.

He did not approve of teaching the public indiscriminately.

He repeatedly advised the believers in <p251> Persia, especially after the martyrdom of Badi',[*] that for their own safety and the protection of the Cause they should exercise care and prudence in their approach to people and not excite or antagonize them.

In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah counsels His followers: [* An illustrious youthful martyr of the Faith, whose exemplary sacrifice is described in Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3.] In this Day, We can neither approve the conduct of the fearful that seeketh to dissemble his faith, nor sanction the behaviour of the avowed believer that clamorously asserteth his allegiance to this Cause.

Both should observe the dictates of wisdom, and strive diligently to serve the best interests of the Faith.[218] [218 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

343.] To cite an example of wisdom in teaching, there is a Tablet of Baha'u'llah[219] in which Faris (the Christian Syrian who embraced the Faith in Alexandria)[**] is exhorted to teach with wisdom.

Baha'u'llah counsels him not to disclose to people everything about the Cause at first but rather to teach them little by little until they are ready to absorb more.

He likens this process to feeding infants who need to be given a little milk at a time until they grow in strength and are able to digest other food.

This exhortation of Baha'u'llah is the basis of teaching the Cause of God.

The principles involved are very similar to those employed by a schoolteacher in teaching his pupils.

Before teaching the Cause to any person, it is important to know his background and capacity.

The most successful teachers are those who, after familiarizing themselves with the beliefs and ideas of an individual, reveal the truths of the Faith gradually to him.

What little they impart is the correct remedy and is so potent as to influence and stimulate the soul and enable it to take a step forward and become ready to absorb more. [219 Baha'u'llah, Amr va Khalq, vol.

3, p.

121.] [** See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3, pp.

5-11.] Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, the celebrated Baha'i teacher, has left to posterity the following account of one of his memorable interviews with Baha'u'llah in 'Akka, in the course of which He spoke these words about teaching the Cause of God:[***] [*** These are not the exact words of Baha'u'llah but convey the purport of His talk.] "The way to teach

is to have a pleasing disposition and to deal with people in a spirit of loving-kindness.

One must acknowledge whatever the other person says, even if it is vain imaginings, beliefs which are the result of blind imitation or absurd talk.

One should avoid engaging in arguments or adducing proofs which bring out stubbornness and contention in the other person.

This is because <p252> he finds himself defeated, and this will lead to his becoming more veiled from the truth and will add to his waywardness.

'The right way is to acknowledge the other person's statements and then present him with the alternative point of view and invite him to examine it to see whether it is true or false.

Of course, when it is presented to him with courtesy, affection and loving-kindness, he will hear and will not be thinking in terms of defence, to find answers and look for proofs.

He will acknowledge and admit the points.

When the person realizes that the purpose behind discussions is not wrangling or the winning of arguments but rather to convey the truth and to reveal human qualities and divine perfections, he will of course show fairness.

His inner eyes and ears and heart will open and, through the grace of God, he will become a new creation and will possess new eyes and new ears.' Baha'u'llah spoke a great deal about the evils of controversial argument and aiming to become a winner in discussion.

He then said, 'The Most Great Branch ['Abdu'l-Baha] will listen to any absurd talk with such attentiveness that the person concerned believes that He is deriving enlightenment from him.

However, little by little, and in a way that the person cannot realize, He bestows upon him a new vision and a new understanding.' [220] [220 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, p.

257.] The talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha in the West provide the best example of wisdom in teaching.

He addressed audiences who were almost alien to the history and genesis of the Faith and unfamiliar with the claims and the station of its founder.

Yet He disclosed to them with simplicity and brevity only those essential truths which they were capable of understanding and which constituted the first stepping-stones for their eventual recognition of the stupendous message of Baha'u'llah.

He clearly avoided at that early stage any elaboration on the many implications of the station of Baha'u'llah and His Revelation as well as the unfoldment of

His laws and His World Order in the future.

Instead, He bestowed upon everyone who had the capacity a measure of His all-embracing love, which animated and sustained those few who embraced the Faith in the West.

It is perhaps a temptation for a Baha'i teacher, especially if he is a knowledgeable one, to pour out upon a seeker all his knowledge and bombard him with a series of profound utterances and lengthy discussions with the aim of proving the truth of his own arguments.

When this happens, however, it blocks the way for the power of Baha'u'llah to reach the heart of the seeker and enlighten him with the light of faith.

As previously noted, a passage from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha earnestly urges the believers to 'disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime and travel throughout all regions'. <p253> These words are reminiscent of a passage in the Tablet of Carmel in which Baha'u'llah makes this moving announcement:

Oh, how I long to announce unto every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to each one of its cities, the glad-tidings of this Revelation -- a Revelation to which the heart of Sinai hath been attracted, and in whose name the Burning Bush is calling: 'Unto God, the Lord of Lords, belong the kingdoms of earth and heaven.' [221] [221] Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

16.] From among all the writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, including His Tablets of the Divine Plan, which urge the believers to leave their homes and travel throughout the world for the purpose of diffusing the divine fragrances, the exhortations of 'Abdu'l-Baha in the above passage of the Will and Testament penetrate the soul and are the most appealing to the heart.

There can be no doubt that when 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote these passages, He knew full well that souls would arise to fulfil His appeal.

Years before, soon after the passing of Baha'u'llah, He had also addressed this theme in very moving language in the following Tablet, which was revealed for one of the Apostles of Baha'u'llah, Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar: [*] [* For further information about him, see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3, p.

88.] O phoenix of that immortal flame kindled in the sacred Tree!

Baha'u'llah -- may my life, my soul, my spirit be offered up as a sacrifice unto His lowly servants -- hath, during His last days on earth, given the most emphatic promise that, through the outpourings of the grace of God and the aid and assistance vouchsafed from His Kingdom on high, souls will arise and holy beings appear who, as stars, would adorn the firmament of divine guidance; illumine the dayspring of loving-kindness and bounty; manifest the signs of the unity of God; shine

with the light of sanctity and purity; receive their full measure of divine inspiration; raise high the sacred torch of faith; stand firm as the rock and immovable as the mountain; and grow to become luminaries in the heavens of His Revelation, mighty channels of His grace, means for the bestowal of God's bountiful care, heralds calling forth the name of the One true God, and establishers of the world's supreme foundation.

These shall labour ceaselessly, by day and by night, shall heed neither trials nor woe, shall suffer no respite in their efforts, shall seek no repose, shall disregard all ease and comfort, and, detached and unsullied, shall consecrate every fleeting moment of their lives to the diffusion of the divine fragrance and the exaltation of God's holy Word.

Their faces will radiate heavenly gladness, and their <p254> hearts be filled with joy.

Their souls will be inspired, and their foundation stand secure.

They shall scatter in the world, and travel throughout all regions.

They shall raise their voices in every assembly, and adorn and revive every gathering.

They shall speak in every tongue, and interpret every hidden meaning.

They shall reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom, and manifest unto everyone the signs of God.

They shall burn brightly even as a candle in the heart of every assembly, and beam forth as a star upon every horizon.

The gentle breezes wafted from the garden of their hearts shall perfume and revive the souls of men, and the revelations of their minds, even as showers, will reinvigorate the peoples and nations of the world.

I am waiting, eagerly waiting for these holy ones to appear; and yet, how long will they delay their coming?

My prayer and ardent supplication, at eventide and at dawn, is that these shining stars may soon shed their radiance upon the world, that their sacred countenances may be unveiled to mortal eyes, that the hosts of divine assistance may achieve their victory, and the billows of grace, rising horn His oceans above, may flow upon all mankind.

Pray ye also and supplicate unto Him that through the bountiful aid of the Ancient Beauty these souls may be unveiled to the eyes of the world.

The glory of God rest upon thee, and upon him whose face is illumined with that everlasting light that shineth from His Kingdom of Glory.[222]
[222 'Abdu'l-Baha Selections, pp.

251-2.] Having encouraged the believers to arise after Him for the promotion of the Faith, 'Abdu'l-Baha, in the following passage of the Will and Testament, invites them to follow His example of service to the Cause of Baha'u'llah:

14-WT This wronged servant has spent his days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service.

He rested not a moment, till the fame of the Cause of God was noised abroad in the world and the celestial strains from the Abha Kingdom roused the East and the West.

The beloved of God must also follow the same example.

This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Baha!

Finally, in the following passage of the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha urges the believers to follow the example of the disciples of Christ.

This passage also serves to immortalize the memory of those who in an earlier Dispensation achieved memorable victories for the Cause of God.

15-WT The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion and with absolute detachment scattered far <p255> and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the Divine Guidance, till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God.

Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom.

Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!

Today a vast number of dedicated believers from all over the world, and of every conceivable background, have arisen with vigour and devotion to promote the Cause of God as Baha'i pioneers and teachers.

Indeed, with the rising of these detached and holy souls, the initial stage of the promise of Baha'u'llah has already been realized.

The Faith of Baha'u'llah has now reached all parts of the world; through their self-sacrifice, their detachment and their faith, these men and women, drawing on the power of Baha'u'llah, have succeeded in erecting the framework of the divinely-ordained institutions of the Faith everywhere.

The embryo of a new world order is now growing within the old and for this reason the world will never be the same again. <p256>

26 We Have Chosen 'the Greater' after 'the Most Great' In the Kitab-i-'Ahd, His Will and Testament, Baha'u'llah reveals these words.

Verily God hath ordained the station of the Greater Branch [Muhammad-'Ali] to be beneath that of the Most Great Branch ['Abdu'l-Baha].

He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

We have chosen 'the Greater' after 'the Most Great,' as decreed by Him

Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.[223] [223 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, p.

222.] As we have already stated in chapter 3, a similar statement was made by Baha'u'llah in answer to a question by Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, entitled Varqa.

He wanted to know the identity of the person to whom all must turn as revealed in a verse of the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

Baha'u'llah intimated to him that the intended person was the Most Great Branch, and after Him, the Greater Branch.[*] The passage in which the Greater Branch is chosen 'after' the Most Great Branch, meaning that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali is to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha, brought about tests and misunderstandings for the believers, many of whom were astonished at this statement.

These believers either knew Mirza Muhammad-'Ali personally or had read several condemnatory passages that Baha'u'llah had written about him.

Both groups saw him as a perfidious person, deceitful, materialistic and avid for power -- one who was related to Baha'u'llah physically but had no spiritual relationship with Him.

These believers were deeply puzzled when they observed that Baha'u'llah had chosen such a person to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha. [* Ghusn-i-A'zam (the Most Great Branch) and Ghusn-i-Akbar (the Greater Branch) are titles which Baha'u'llah conferred upon His sons, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali respectively.]

Of course Baha'u'llah was very well aware of the reprehensible conduct in which Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had engaged from the early years of his life.

We have discussed in chapter 15 how, when he was in his early teens, he claimed to share with Baha'u'llah the power of <p257> supreme infallibility and claimed to be, among other things, 'the sovereign ruler of all who are in heaven and on earth'.

From Adrianople he dispatched to Persia some Arabic passages that he claimed were the words of God, thus creating tests and problems for some of the believers there.

For this action he faced the wrath of Baha'u'llah, who chastised him with His own hands.

He it was who, throughout his entire life, harboured implacable hatred in his heart towards 'Abdu'l-Baha -- a fact well known by the Holy Family, including Baha'u'llah.

About eight years before the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, encouraged by a number of his associates who later became Covenant-breakers, asked permission to leave the Holy Land to go sightseeing in India.

Baha'u'llah told him that such a journey needed the approval of the Master.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali insisted so much on this issue that eventually 'Abdu'l-Baha

gave permission.

Accompanied by a servant who lived in Port Said and volunteered to travel with him, Mirza Muhammad-'Alf departed for India in the year 1302 AH (1885).

After spending a considerable time sightseeing there, he wished to return but Baha'u'llah was displeased with him and denied him permission to do so.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali then wrote to his mother who put pressure on 'Abdu'l-Baha to intervene, with the result that he obtained Baha'u'llah's permission to return.

The second journey that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali made to India was for the purpose of transcribing some of the well-known Tablets of Baha'u'llah and printing them in one volume.

As we have stated in chapter 16, he succeeded in printing a book known as Kitab-i-Mubin but he deleted a passage which appeared to him to refer to the exalted nature of 'Abdu'l-Baha's mission and instead substituted his own words.

This occurred a year before Baha'u'llah's ascension and caused Him great sorrow.

It is a well-known fact that on numerous occasions Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, supported by his mother, committed acts that brought great displeasure to Baha'u'llah.

In some of His Tablets He condemns him in strong terms, such as these:

By God, the True One!

Were We, for a single instant, to withhold from him the outpourings of Our Cause, he would wither, and would fall upon the dust.[224] [224 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p.

251.] To such a person, Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-'Ahd grants the right to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha.

And indeed, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali publicly claimed this successorship both during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha and after His ascension.

Referring to him, Shoghi Effendi states: <p258> He it was who had the impudence and temerity to tell 'Abdu'l-Baha to His face that just as 'Umar had succeeded in usurping the successorship of the Prophet Muhammad, he too, felt himself able to do the same.

He it was who, obsessed by the fear that he might not survive 'Abdu'l-Baha, had, the moment he had been assured by Him that all the honour he coveted would, in the course of time, be his, swiftly rejoined that he had no guarantee that he would outlive Him.[225] [225 *ibid.* p.

249. (Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By.)] In the light of these facts, we may ask ourselves two questions:

Why did Baha'u'llah grant such an exalted station to so perfidious a

person as Mirza Muhammad-'Ali?

Why did the provision in Baha'u'llah's 'Book of the Covenant' for his successorship not materialize?

To resolve these puzzling questions, it is necessary to meditate on the nature of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and try to discover its distinctive and challenging features.

The first question, concerning the appointment of such a disloyal person to so exalted a position, may be resolved through a careful examination of an essential feature of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, namely, the non-interference of each party in the functions of the other.

The two parties to this Covenant are not of equal station.

After all, the station of Baha'u'llah is awe-inspiring and the believers are but humble servants.

However, God in His justice gives His creatures the opportunity to carry out their duties without His interference; they have free will to behave as they please.

Of course, He has full knowledge of how each individual will behave in discharging the obligations which the Covenant of Baha'u'llah has placed on him but He leaves the person free to play his part and He does not judge him before he commits an error.

This is similar to the relationship between a teacher and pupil.

In the course of teaching his students the teacher usually comes to know the ability and capacity of each one.

Suppose that he finds one of his pupils to be inattentive to his work and negligent in his school duties.

He may be certain that his pupil is going to fail his examinations but foreknowledge of that failure does not entitle the teacher to prevent the student from taking part.

It is the student's prerogative to sit his examinations and no one has the right to deprive him of that privilege.

This analogy helps to clarify the statement about Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in the Kitab-i-'Ahd.

Baha'u'llah was fully aware of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's shortcomings, yet, He decided that he should occupy a station next to that of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

God did not pronounce judgement on him before his rebellion against the Cause.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was given the chance to mend his ways and take his rightful position within the Faith.

However, he failed, as in a test, and perished spiritually.

Had Mirza Muhammad-'Ali remained a true and steadfast believer, had he lived a life of humility and self-effacement, had he devoted all his efforts to the promotion of the Cause and detached himself from earthly things and had he followed in the footsteps of the Master and emulated the one who was the supreme Exemplar of the teachings of Baha'u'llah, then who could have been more suited than he, a son of Baha'u'llah, to take over the reins of the Cause of God after 'Abdu'l-Baha?

But he did not fulfil any of these conditions and deprived himself of the bounties that might have been vouchsafed to him by Baha'u'llah.

Through his intense jealousy of 'Abdu'l-Baha and his lack of spiritual qualities, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali sought throughout his life to undermine the position of 'Abdu'l-Baha and usurp His God-given station as the Centre of the Covenant.

During the lifetime of Baha'u'llah he was impotent to achieve the evil promptings of his heart because the overshadowing power of Baha'u'llah and His overwhelming authority frustrated his ambitions.

But, as previously discussed, he rebelled against the Covenant immediately after the passing of Baha'u'llah and arose in opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha, its Centre.

In dealing with the question as to why the provision made by Baha'u'llah for Mirza Muhammad-'Ali to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha did not materialize, it is helpful to begin by looking at the many references Baha'u'llah makes in His Tablets to the creativity of His words.

To cite an example:

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

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

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

This, verily, is a certain truth.

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

All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences

of the Revelation of this Name.

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

Thus hath it <p260> been decreed in the Tablets of God, and none can comprehend it except them whose sight is sharp.

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

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

Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet.

Well is it with them that apprehend this truth.[226] [226 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, pp.

141-2.] From this and other passages, we can be assured that owing to the creative power of the Word of God every event Baha'u'llah has foreshadowed in His Tablets has either taken place already or will come about in the future.

Indeed, a careful study of His writings reveals that many of His promises have been fulfilled.

However, there are exceptions to this, which are related to the subject of the Covenant.

The appointment of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali in the Kitab-i-'Ahd is one of these exceptions whereby Baha'u'llah's purpose, His implied wish, appeared not to materialize.

The main reason for the non-fulfilment of certain provisions of this momentous document is that this Covenant, like any other is a reciprocal agreement between two parties.

In this case, one party is Baha'u'llah and the other His followers.

In general, the outcome of any agreement between two parties depends upon the manner in which each party fulfils his commitments.

If one side fails to fulfil his obligations as set out in the contract, the other side will no longer be bound to honour his.

For example, let us say that a landlord and a tenant draw up a lease.

As long as the tenant pays his rent and meets his other responsibilities, the landlord has no reason to cancel the contract but if the former fails to

discharge his liabilities, the latter will have no choice but to cancel the lease and possibly initiate eviction proceedings.

The Covenant of Baha'u'llah, as formulated in the Kitab-i-'Ahd, also has two distinct sides.

One side is the Almighty, who provides the spiritual energies for the achievement of His purpose and who rules over His creatures.

The other side is His servants, the recipients of His grace, who abide by His bidding.

This Covenant necessitates an interaction between the two parties.

As in the analogy of the landlord and the tenant, if the followers of Baha'u'llah, the recipients of His grace, had faithfully carried out what was expected of them in this <p261> Covenant, then every provision of the Kitab-i-'Ahd would have been fulfilled and the plan of God, as ordained by Baha'u'llah, would have materialized.

But they did not.

The Covenant was broken by no less a person than Mirza Muhammad-'Ali himself, who rose up against the Centre of the Cause.

Consequently, the plan of God as envisaged by Baha'u'llah was changed.

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the many cases of 'deviation' from the Cause of God by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and in unequivocal language proves that by his own actions he cut himself off from the tree of the Cause, changed into a dried branch and became the fulfilment of the following words of Baha'u'llah regarding him:

He verily is one of My servants...

Should he for a moment pass out from under the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught.[227] [227 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

251.] The violation of the Covenant by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his many acts of infamy have been discussed in previous chapters.[*] Having disclosed his numerous transgressions to the believers, 'Abdu'l-Baha in the following passages of the Will and Testament exhorts the believers to shun him: [* See chapters 12 to 24] 39-WT In short, according to the explicit Divine Text the least transgression shall make of this man a fallen creature, and what transgression is more grievous than attempting to destroy the Divine Edifice, breaking the Covenant, erring from the Testament, falsifying the Holy Text, sowing the seeds of doubt, calumniating 'Abdu'l-Baha advancing claims for which God hath sent down no warrant, kindling mischief and striving to shed the very blood of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and many other things whereof ye are all aware!

It is thus evident that should this man succeed in bringing disruption

into the Cause of God, he will utterly destroy and exterminate it.

Beware lest ye approach this man, for to approach him is worse than approaching fire!

And again:

11-WT In short, O ye beloved of the Lord!

The Centre of Sedition, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, in accordance with the decisive words of God and by reason of his boundless transgression, hath grievously fallen and been cut off from the Holy Tree.

Verily, we wronged them not, but they have wronged themselves! <p262>
Thus, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was cast out of the community of the Most Great Name.

As in the analogy of the landlord and the tenant, the plan of God changed and 'Abdu'l-Baha appointed Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice as His successors.

We must bear in mind, however, that Baha'u'llah had ordained the Universal House of Justice in His writings.

He states:

The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of the people.

They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the daysprings of authority in His countries.[228] [228 Baha'u'llah, Tablets p.

128.] From another point of view, we may regard the appointment of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali as one of those cases by which God tests His servants.

As we have already stated, many believers were tested either by this appointment or by the fact that the words of Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i'Ahd were not fulfilled.

Baha'u'llah explains in the Kitab-i-Iqan that in every Dispensation certain acts or statements by the Manifestation of God have brought great tests to people, causing them to lose their faith altogether.

Baha'u'llah gives several examples of this in His writings.

Referring to these tests He states: ...from time immemorial even unto eternity the Almighty hath tried, and will continue to try, His servants, so that light may be distinguished from darkness, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, guidance from error, happiness from misery, and roses from thorns.

Even as He hath revealed: 'Do men think when they say "We believe" they shall be let alone and not be put to proof?' [Qur'an 29:2][229] [229 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, pp.

8-9.] Returning to the story of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, we note that during the last years of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry the steadfast believers both in the East and the West were triumphant in their campaign to counteract the machinations of the Covenant-breakers.

After years of fierce opposition against the Master, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali at last recognized his impotence to arrest the onward march of the Faith and retired to his den of ignominy and defeat.

But as soon as 'Abdu'l-Baha passed away he emerged into the open and audaciously attempted to seize the reins of the Cause of God and to establish himself as the successor of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

In order to do this, he gave the appearance of having changed his position of bitter enmity towards 'Abdu'l-Baha into that of reconciliation.

The first thing he did was to appear at the gate of the Master's house, wanting to take part in a memorial meeting that was being held in His honour.

A servant of the household told him to wait for <p263> permission.

The Greatest Holy Leaf is reported to have sent a brief message to him:

Our Beloved does not allow and does not like you to come in, and if you come in you will add to our sorrows.[230] [230 Quoted in Star of the West, vol.

12, no.

19, p.

303.] During the short period separating the ascension of the Master and the announcement of Shoghi Effendi's appointment, the perturbing thought uppermost in the minds of some of the believers was the position of the Arch-breaker of the Covenant, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

Was he going to succeed 'Abdu'l-Baha as laid down in the Kitab-i-'Ahd, the Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah?

Some were confused, wondering how the provisions of this momentous document could be allowed to come about when the very person who had assiduously tried to undermine the foundation of the Cause of God for almost 30 years was none other than Mirza Muhammad-'Ali himself.

But the great majority of the believers knew that because of his deviation from the Faith, his appointment was null and void.

In the meantime, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali published far and wide his claim that according to the text of the Kitab-i-'Ahd he was now 'Abdu'l-Baha's successor.

Not only did he publish this claim among the Persian Baha'i community but he also declared in an Egyptian newspaper that he was the successor of Baha'u'llah.

The Baha'is of Egypt responded to his statement by publishing a refutation of

his claims in the same newspaper.

The following account by Muhammad Said Adham, an Egyptian believer, describes the events which took place during those anxiety-filled days:

A few days after this we had at telegram from the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha in reply to all cables sent from Egypt to Haifa, which read thus:

"The beauty of the Beloved disappeared and the hearts are melted by this great calamity.

Our only hope is to raise the banner of the Covenant, and with all righteousness, unity and servitude we serve His sublime threshold.'

A few days later the great violator addressed the Baha'is through the columns of the Arabic newspapers, calling upon them to follow him, according, as he stated, to the will of Baha'u'llah, pretending, in his call, that although he had been separated from his brother by God's destiny, yet the filial relationship and hearty sensations were strong in his heart, and he tried outwardly to show sorrow for the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

One of his only two followers in Alexandria confirmed his call on a page of the same paper, but the House of Spirituality in Cairo replied and contested both statements, stating in effect that this violator is not recognized at all by the Baha'is, and since he has violated the Covenant of Baha'u'llah for thirty years, he is not considered among the

Baha'is, and has not the authority to speak in their behalf, for all the affairs of the Baha'is are now directed by the Houses of Spirituality, all over the world, whose members are elected and who will come under the control of the House of Justice, and they are the only representatives of the Baha'is.

And this violator is not a Baha'i in the true sense of the word and according to the dictates of Baha'u'llah.

This reply was given especially for the benefit of the public, to give them correct information and to prove to them that the violators are not Baha'is and were cut off thirty years ago by their disobedience to the command of Baha'u'llah to turn, after His departure, to the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and by their harmful actions to the Cause.

The reply produced the desired effect and we, individually, spread it among the inquirers and thus enlarged the circle of its influence.[231]
[231 *ibid.* pp.

294-5. (Quoted in *Star of the West*, vol.

12, no.

19.)] In the United States of America a public statement was issued by Shu'a'u'llah, that son of the Arch-breaker of the Covenant who had been involved in the conspiracy to put 'Abdu'l-Baha to death.

In it he invited the American Baha'is to turn to his father, who, he claimed, was the legitimate successor of Baha'u'llah after 'Abdu'l-Baha.

His call was utterly ignored by the believers in the West.

In Persia, with the exception of a few Covenant-breakers, the Baha'i community paid no attention to Muhammad-'Ali's circular letters claiming successorship of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The publication of the Will and Testament among the believers brought much comfort and consolation to their hearts; they realized that the Master had not abandoned them but rather had left the custodianship of the Cause of God in the hands of Shoghi Effendi, His eldest grandson, whom He appointed the Guardian of the Faith and the Interpreter of the holy writings. <p265>

27

The Appointment of

Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Cause The announcement of the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Cause of God, about 40 days after the passing of the Master, brought much joy and a sense of relief to the believers who were concerned about the claims of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

In the opening paragraphs of His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha pays great tribute to Baha'u'llah and then with loving and tender words, but without mentioning him by name, He lauds and glorifies the person of Shoghi Effendi:[*]

[* It becomes evident in a later passage of the Will and Testament that this is a reference to Shoghi Effendi.] 2-WT Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest upon that primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Late-Tree, grown out, blest, tender, verdant and flourishing from the Twin Holy Trees; the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas...

In this passage Shoghi Effendi is referred to by the word 'ghusn', translated as 'branch'.[**] Baha'u'llah chose this Arabic word as a designation exclusively for His male descendants. 'The Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree' is a term which appears in many of the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, usually symbolizing the Manifestation of God.

Shoghi Effendi is described as 'that primal branch ... grown out ... from the Twin Holy Trees ... the priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas'.

The Twin Holy Trees and the Twin surging seas refer to the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

The mother of Shoghi Effendi, Diya'iyyih Khanum, was the eldest daughter of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

His father, Mirza Hadi Shirazi, was a grandson of Haji <p266> Abu'l-Qasim, a cousin of the mother of the Bab and a brother of the wife of the Bab.

Thus Shoghi Effendi, descended from Baha'u'llah and related to the Bab, was an offshoot of the twin Manifestations of God. [** While there are no capital letters in Arabic or Persian, in English the word 'branch', the translation of 'ghusn', is usually written with capital B.

In the Will and Testament, however, it is not capitalized.

The present author believes that since the word 'branch' referred to Shoghi Effendi, he made a point of not capitalizing it out of his deep sense of humility and self-effacement.] 'Abdu'l-Baha extols Shoghi Effendi in matchless terms, as 'blest, tender, verdant and flourishing ... the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl'.

Bearing in mind that when 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote these words Shoghi Effendi was not yet ten years old, we can observe the superhuman foresight of the Master, who saw in that child such divine attributes as to appoint him the Guardian of the Cause of God and pay tribute to him in such laudatory terms.

In this paragraph, after Shoghi Effendi, the descendants of Baha'u'llah and the Afnan -- the relatives of the Bab and those of His wife -- are addressed by 'Abdu'l-Baha and He showers His blessings only upon those who have remained faithful to the Covenant, saying:

2-WT [Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest] upon the offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, the twigs of the Celestial Tree, they that in the Day of the Great Dividing have stood fast and firm in the Covenant...

The next people extolled by 'Abdu'l-Baha for their outstanding services to the Faith are the Hands of the Cause of God:

2-WT [Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest] upon the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God that have diffused widely the Divine Fragrances, declared His Proofs, proclaimed His Faith, published abroad His Law, detached themselves from all things but Him, stood for righteousness in this world, and kindled the Fire of the Love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants...

This passage outlines the achievements of the Hands of the Cause as they carried out their exalted functions in the service of the Faith.

At the time that 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote His Will and Testament there were four Hands of the Cause who had been appointed by Baha'u'llah.[*] Finally, 'Abdu'l-Baha bestows His blessings upon those believers who are firm in the Covenant and who will follow Shoghi Effendi after His passing: [* For detailed information about the life and activities of the Hands appointed by Baha'u'llah, see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah. vol.

4.] 2-WT [Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest] upon them that have believed, rested assured, stood steadfast in His Covenant and followed the Light that after my passing shineth <p267> from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance -- for behold! he is the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees.

Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind. 'Abdu'l-Baha excludes from these words of praise those who claim to believe in Baha'u'llah but are not firm in the Covenant.

He also excludes those who may confess their belief in Baha'u'llah as the Author of the Faith and in 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of the Covenant but do not follow Shoghi Effendi, described here as the 'Light that ... shineth from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance'.

Divine guidance was inherent within the person of Baha'u'llah.

Through the institution of the Covenant it was conferred upon 'Abdu'l-Baha, whose every word and deed during His ministry was divinely inspired.

This process was continued in the ministry of Shoghi Effendi, as he inherited the same powers born of divine guidance.

In the above passage of the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha again identifies Shoghi Effendi as a branch of the Twin Holy Trees and makes a reference to 'the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind'.

One of the greatest achievements of Shoghi Effendi was the building of the Administrative Order, which is the nucleus of the World Order of Baha'u'llah.

During the 36 years of his ministry he erected the institutions of this divine Order, designed by Baha'u'llah to act as channels to carry the world-vitalizing spirit of His Faith to humanity.

These institutions are now established all over the world and are multiplying rapidly with the passage of time.

In light of Shoghi Effendi's creation of a world-encircling network of divine institutions, we may not be wrong in concluding that indeed the shelter of his shade has overshadowed all mankind.

But the influence that Shoghi Effendi has exerted on the ultimate establishment of a united world is not limited to his laying the foundations of the institutions of the Administrative Order.

He has also left behind a vast number of divinely-guided instructions and counsels that will guide and sustain the Universal House of Justice in the discharge of its sacred duties until the end of this Dispensation.

In the following passage of the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha appoints Shoghi Effendi to succeed Him as the Guardian of the Cause of God:

16-WT O my loving friends!

After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghsan (Branches), the Afnan (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abha Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi -- the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees and the fruit grown from <p268> the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, -- as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghsan, the Afnan, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn.

He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendents [sic].

If one were to summarize the Will and Testament of Baha'u'llah or of 'Abdu'l-Baha in two words, those words would be 'turn unto'. 'Abdu'l-Baha enjoins on believers of all ranks to 'turn unto' Shoghi Effendi.

Again 'Abdu'l-Baha states that Shoghi Effendi has branched from the Twin Holy Trees of Baha'u'llah and the Bab:

He designates him as 'the guardian of the Cause of God' and empowers him to be 'the expounder of the words of God'.[*] [* We will discuss the question of Shoghi Effendi's successor, 'the first-born of his lineal descendants', later in this book.] A statement of 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorting the believers to turn to Shoghi Effendi in a spirit of utter obedience, as well as to the Universal House of Justice, is contained in a most challenging and thought-provoking passage found in paragraph 17 of the Will and Testament.

Before reviewing this particular passage in the next chapter, it is helpful to study a brief account of the life of Shoghi Effendi during 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry and the many difficulties he encountered immediately after the passing of the Master.

As we have already stated, 'Abdu'l-Baha describes Shoghi Effendi as 'the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas ... the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees'.

Knowing full well the glorious mission which the Almighty had destined for His first grandson, 'Abdu'l-Baha extended to him from the time he was born a special measure of care and love and kept him under the wings of His protection.

A few of those who had been admitted to the presence of Baha'u'llah and who were endowed with spiritual insight observed that the same relationship which existed between Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha was also apparent between 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

That deep sense of humility and utter nothingness which 'Abdu'l-Baha manifested towards His Father, and which was reciprocated by Him through an outpouring of bounty and love, was likewise established between the young grandchild and his beloved Master.

However to avoid creating jealousy in the family, 'Abdu'l-Baha was cautious of openly showing the intensity of His love for Shoghi Effendi.

In spite of this, those believers who were endowed with discernment noticed <p269> this special relationship and had no doubt that the reins of the Cause of God would one day be placed in the hands of Shoghi Effendi.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and Dr Yunis Khan were among these enlightened believers.

The famous poet and devoted promoter of the Cause 'Abdu'l-Baha saw signs of the child's future glory as Shoghi Effendi lay in his cradle and he composed a most delightful lullaby, a song of praise and victory, for him. 'Abdu'l-Baha conferred upon his first grandchild the name 'Shoghi' (one who longs) but commanded everyone to add the title 'Effendi'[*] after his name.

He even told Shoghi Effendi's father not to call him merely 'Shoghi'.

The Master Himself called him Shoghi Effendi when he was only a child and wrote this prayer which reveals His cherished hopes for the future of His first grandchild: [* 'Effendi' is a title given to men as a term of respect.]
...O God!

This is a branch sprung from the tree of Thy mercy.

Through Thy grace and bounty enable him to grow and through the showers of Thy generosity cause him to become a verdant, flourishing, blossoming and fruitful branch.

Gladden the eyes of his parents, Thou Who giveth to whomsoever Thou willest, and bestow upon him the name Shoghi so that he may yearn for Thy Kingdom and soar into the realms of the unseen! [232] [232 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

5.] From his early childhood, Shoghi Effendi developed a passionate love for 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Their relationship was unlike that between any other grandchild and grandfather; it was a spiritual force, a heavenly power that linked Shoghi Effendi with his beloved Master.

It was this degree of attachment and humble devotion that was reminiscent of 'Abdu'l-Baha's own attitude towards Baha'u'llah.

Mrs Ella Goodall Cooper, one of the distinguished believers of the West who attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 'Akka in 1899, recounted her impressions of Shoghi Effendi as a child when he came into a room in the house of 'Abdu'l-Baha to pay his respects to the Master.

She writes:

One day ...

I had joined the ladies of the Family in the room of the Greatest Holy Leaf for early morning tea, the beloved Master was sitting in His favourite corner of the divan where, through the window on His right, He could look over the ramparts and see the blue Mediterranean beyond.

He was busy writing Tablets, and the quiet peace of the room was broken only by the bubble of the samovar, where one of the young maidservants, sitting on the floor before it, was brewing the tea.

Presently the Master looked up from His writing with a smile, and requested Ziyiyh Khanum to chant a prayer.

As she finished, a small figure appeared in the open doorway, directly opposite <p270> 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Having dropped off his shoes he stepped into the room, with his eyes focused on the Master's face. 'Abdu'l-Baha returned his gaze with such a look of loving welcome it seemed to beckon the small one to approach Him.

Shoghi, that beautiful little boy, with his exquisite cameo face and his soulful appealing, dark eyes, walked slowly toward the divan, the Master drawing him as by an invisible thread, until he stood quite close in front of Him.

As he paused there a moment 'Abdu'l-Baha did not offer to embrace him but sat perfectly still, only nodding His head two or three times, slowly and impressively, as if to say -- 'You see?'

This tie connecting us is not just that of a physical grandfather but something far deeper and more significant.' While we breathlessly watched to see what he would do, the little boy reached down and picking up the hem of 'Abdu'l-Baha's robe he touched it reverently to his forehead, and kissed it, then gently replaced it, while never taking his eyes from the adored Master's face.

The next moment he turned away, and scampered off to play, like a normal child...

At that time he was 'Abdu'l-Baha's only grandchild ... and, naturally, he was of immense interest to the pilgrims.[233] [233 Cooper, quoted in *ibid.* pp.

5-6. (Rabbani, *Priceless Pearl*.)] This attitude of humility and profound reverence towards the Master was one of the most outstanding features of Shoghi Effendi's personality throughout his entire life.

Shoghi Effendi grew up in the household of 'Abdu'l-Baha under His care and protection but his childhood years were spent in 'Akka during the time when the Master and His family were incarcerated within the walls of the city and subjected to violent opposition by the Covenant-breakers.

Great dangers surrounded the Holy Family.

Thus Shoghi Effendi experienced, from the early years of his life, the venomous assaults launched against the Cause by the violation of the Covenant.

When at one point the situation in 'Akka became too dangerous and unbearable, 'Abdu'l-Baha sent Shoghi Effendi to Haifa with his nurse, where he lived until the Master was released from imprisonment and the Holy Family moved there permanently.

Concerning Shoghi Effendi's schooling Ruhiyyih Khanum writes:

Shoghi Effendi entered the best school in Haifa, the *College des Freres*, conducted by the Jesuits.

He told me he had been very unhappy there.

Indeed , I gathered from him that he never was really happy in either school or university.

In spite of his innately joyous nature, his sensitivity and his background -- so different from that of others in every way -- could not but set him apart and give rise to many a heart-ache; indeed, he was one of those people whose open and innocent hearts, keen minds and affectionate natures seem to combine to bring upon them more shocks and suffering in life than is the lot of most men.

Because of his unhappiness in this school 'Abdu'l-Baha decided to send him to Beirut <p271> where he attended another Catholic school as a boarder, and where he was equally unhappy.

Learning of this in Haifa the family sent a trusted Baha'i woman to rent a home for Shoghi Effendi in Beirut and take care of and wait on him.

It was not long before she wrote to his father that he was very unhappy at school, would refuse to go to it sometimes for days, and was getting thin and run down.

His father showed this letter to 'Abdu'l-Baha Who then had arrangements made for Shoghi Effendi to enter the Syrian Protestant College, which had a school as well as a university, later known as the American College in Beirut, and which the Guardian entered when he finished what was then equivalent to the high school.

Shoghi Effendi spent his vacations at home in Haifa, in the presence as often as possible of the grandfather he idolized and Whom it was the object of his life to serve.

The entire course of Shoghi Effendi's studies was aimed by him at fitting himself to serve the Master, interpret for Him and translate His letters into English.[234] [234 ibid. p.

17. (Rabbani, Priceless Pearl.)] Shoghi Effendi received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Beirut in 1918.

He was then able to return to Haifa and serve the Master, which he did uninterruptedly, day and night, with a devotion that knew no bounds.

Not only did he serve as His secretary and the English translator of His Tablets, he also attended to many other duties, which he took upon himself in order to assist the Master in His manifold activities.

He did this with characteristic sincerity, promptness and thoroughness, and brought great joy to the heart of the Master.

For a period of two years, until 1920, Shoghi Effendi was the constant companion of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He accompanied his grandfather when He visited high-ranking government officials or religious dignitaries and he saw how the Master treated His

friends and dealt with His enemies.

In all these encounters, Shoghi Effendi observed the manner in which 'Abdu'l-Baha conducted Himself, with that majesty and authority that were characteristic of His person.

This period, which brought Shoghi Effendi so close to the Master and linked his heart to 'Abdu'l-Baha's, was among the most fertile of his life.

But this intimate association, in the course of which 'Abdu'l-Baha bountifully endowed the future Guardian with special powers and capacities, irrevocably came to an end when it was decided that Shoghi Effendi should enter Oxford University in England to perfect his English, thus equipping himself to achieve his heart's desire to better translate the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha and other holy writings.

Shoghi Effendi left the Holy Land in the spring of 1920 and began his studies at Balliol College in the autumn of that year.

During his short stay in Oxford -- a little over one year -- he concentrated all his energies on mastering the English language.

But he could not complete <p272> his education, for the plan of God cut across his own plans in a most painful manner when 'Abdu'l-Baha passed away.

The news of the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha came to him as a shattering blow -- so much so that when he was informed of it he collapsed.

We read the following account by Ruhyyih Khanum in *The Priceless Pearl*:

The address of Major Tudor Pole, in London, was often used as the distributing point for cables and letters to the Baha'is.

Shoghi Effendi himself, whenever he went up to London, usually called there.

On 29 November 1921 at 9.30 in the morning the following cable reached that office:

Cyclometry London His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Baha ascended Abha Kingdom.

Inform friends.

Greatest Holy Leaf In notes he made of this terrible event and its immediate repercussions Tudor Pole records that he immediately notified the friends by wire, telephone and letter.

I believe he must have telephoned Shoghi Effendi, asking him to come at once to his office, but not conveying to him at that distance a piece of news which he well knew might prove too much of a shock.

However this may be, at about noon Shoghi Effendi reached London, went to 61 St James' [sic] Street (off Piccadilly and not far from Buckingham Palace) and was shown into the private office.

Tudor Pole was not in the room at the moment but as Shoghi Effendi stood there his eye was caught by the name of 'Abdu'l-Baha on the open cablegram lying on the desk and he read it.

When Tudor Pole entered a moment later he found Shoghi Effendi in a state of collapse, dazed and bewildered by this catastrophic news.

He was taken to the home of Miss Grand, one of the London believers, and put to bed there for a few days.

Shoghi Effendi's sister Rouhangeze [sic] was studying in London and she, Lady Blomfield and others did all they could to comfort the heart-stricken youth.[235] [235 ibid. p.

39. (Rabbani, Priceless Pearl.)] In a letter to a Baha'i friend written a few days after the passing of the Master, Shoghi Effendi shares with him his thoughts about 'Abdu'l-Baha and informs him of his plans:

The terrible news has for some days so overwhelmed my body, my mind and my soul that I was laid for a couple of days in bed almost senseless, absent-minded and greatly agitated.

Gradually His power revived me and breathed in me a confidence that I hope will henceforth guide me and inspire me in my humble work of service.

The day had to come, but how sudden and unexpected.

The fact. <p273> however that His Cause has created so many and such beautiful souls all over the world is a sure guarantee that it will live and prosper and ere long will compass the world!

I am immediately starting for Haifa to receive the instructions He has left and have now made a supreme determination to dedicate my life to His service and by His aid to carry out His instructions all the days of my life.

The friends have insisted on my spending a day or two of rest in this place with Dr.

Esslemont after the shock I have sustained and tomorrow I shall start back to London and thence to the Holy Land.

The stir which is now aroused in the Baha'i world is an impetus to this Cause and will awaken every faithful soul to shoulder the responsibilities which the Master has now placed upon every one of us.

The Holy Land will remain the focal centre of the Baha'i world; a new era will now come upon it.

The Master in His great vision has consolidated His work and His spirit assures me that its results will soon be made manifest.

I am starting with Lady Blomfield for Haifa, and if we are delayed in

London for our passage I shall then come and see you and tell you how marvellously the Master has designed His work after Him and what remarkable utterances He has pronounced with regard to the future of the Cause...

With prayer and faith in His Cause, I am your well-wisher in His service,
Shoghi[236] [236 Quoted in ibid. pp.

40-1. (Rabbani, Priceless Pearl.)] From Shoghi Effendi's other statements it is clear that although he knew that an envelope addressed to him by the Master was awaiting his return to the Holy Land, he had no knowledge at this time that he was appointed by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament as the Guardian of the Faith, the Interpreter of the Word of God, and the one to whom all were bidden to turn.

Such a heavy burden, so suddenly and unexpectedly laid upon his shoulders, came to him as a further shock no less agonizing than the earlier one caused by the news of 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing.

Accompanied by his sister Ruhangiz and by Lady Blomfield, Shoghi Effendi sailed from England on 16 December and arrived in Haifa on the 29th, one month after the passing of the Master.

The agony of bereavement had taken its toll and Shoghi Effendi was physically a broken man.

He was so frail that he had to be assisted up the steps of his home when he arrived.

Grief-stricken by the absence of the Master, he was then confined to bed for a number of days.

The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha was awaiting the arrival of Shoghi Effendi to be opened.

Concerning this, Ruhiiyyih Khanum writes: <p274> When 'Abdu'l-Baha so unexpectedly and quietly passed away, after no serious illness, the distracted members of His family searched His papers to see if by chance He had left any instructions as to where He should be buried.

Finding none, they entombed Him in the centre of the three rooms adjacent to the inner Shrine of the Bab.

They discovered His Will -- which consists of three Wills written at different times and forming one document -- addressed to Shoghi Effendi.

It now became the painful duty of Effendi to hear what was in it; a few days after his arrival they read it to him.

In order to understand even a little of the effect this had on him we must remember that he himself stated on more than one occasion, not only to me, but to others who were present at the table of the Western Pilgrim House, that he had had no foreknowledge of the existence of the

Institution of Guardianship, least of all that he was appointed as Guardian; that the most he had expected was that perhaps, because he was the eldest grandson, 'Abdu'l-Baha might have left instructions as to how the Universal House of Justice was to be elected and he might have been designated the one to see these were carried out and act as Convenor of the gathering which would elect it.[237] [237 ibid. p.

42-3. (Rabbani, Priceless Pearl.)] The belief that the Universal House of Justice would come into being immediately after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha was not uncommon among the Baha'is.

Many of them thought this would happen and soon after Shoghi Effendi's appointment a few ambitious individuals such as Avarih and Ahmad Sohrab[238] tried to insist that the House of Justice should be formed without delay.

It is interesting to note that the Master, when in America, spoke to a few friends about the protection of the Faith and the role of the Universal House of Justice in securing it.

Here is a summary translation of His words as recorded by Mirza Mahmud-i-Zarqani, the faithful chronicler of His journeys to the West: [238 See chapter 29.] I am bearing the discomforts of this journey with stop-overs so that the Cause of God may be protected from any breach.

For I am still not sure about what is going to happen after me.

If I could be sure, then I would sit comfortably in some corner, I would not leave the Holy Land and travel far away from the Most Holy Tomb.

Once, after the martyrdom of the Bab, the Cause of God was dealt a hard blow through Yahya.

Again, after the ascension of the Blessed Beauty, it received another blow.

And I fear that self-seeking persons may again disrupt the love and unity of the friends.

If the time were right and the House of Justice were established, the House of Justice would protect the friends.[239] [239 Mahmud-i-Zarqani, Mahmud's Diary, p.

268.] The Master knew well that Covenant-breakers old and new would renew their onslaught against the Cause of God.

From the way the <p275> institutions of the Faith have developed since the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha, it can be seen that it was not timely then to establish the Universal House of Justice straight away.

In His wisdom He knew that the Faith first needed a Guardian, whose purpose would be, on the one hand, to lay the foundation of the Administrative Order for future generations to build upon and, on the other, to wipe out the evils of Covenant-breaking in the Holy Land.

Although the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha was read out to Shoghi Effendi soon after his arrival in Haifa, it had to be formally presented to the members of the family and others in the Holy Land.

On 3 January 1922, in the presence of nine persons, mainly senior members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family, and in Shoghi Effendi's absence, the Will and Testament was read aloud and its seal, signature and handwriting were shown to those present.

Later, the Greatest Holy Leaf sent cables to Persia and America -- the two major communities at that time -- informing them that according to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi had been appointed 'Guardian of the Cause of God'.

A major source of consolation and support for Shoghi Effendi from the time he returned to the Holy Land until the end of her earthly life in 1932 was the Greatest Holy Leaf, the adored sister of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

She, the most outstanding woman of the Baha'i Dispensation, was a tower of strength for everyone.

And now that the Master had gone to His heavenly abode, the burden of many responsibilities and, especially in the early days, the protection of the Guardian from the assaults of the Covenant-breakers, were placed upon her shoulders.

Ruhiyyih Khanum writes:

Immediately after these events Shoghi Effendi selected eight passages from the Will and circulated them among the Baha'is; only one of these referred to himself, was very brief and was quoted as follows: 'O ye the faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Baha!

It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi...

For he is, after 'Abdu'l-Baha, the guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnan, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him.' Of all the thundering and tremendous passages in the Will referring to himself, Shoghi Effendi chose the least astounding and provocative to first circulate among the Baha'is.

Guided and guiding he was from the very beginning.[240] [240 Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

48.] <p276>

28

The Guardian and the Universal House of Justice under the Protection of the Bab and Baha'u'llah

17-WT The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of the Cause of God as well as the Universal House of Justice, to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both).

Whatsoever they decide is of God.

Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God, whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God.

May the wrath, the fierce indignation the vengeance of God rest upon him!

The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God.

These words of the Master constitute the most momentous passage of the Will and Testament.

As already stated, this document provides the means by which the believers are tested and of all that is in the Will and Testament, this passage creates the greatest test.

Indeed, many souls who claimed to have recognized Baha'u'llah as 'the Supreme Manifestation of God, who had laboured in the promotion of His Cause and who were renowned for their deep knowledge of the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha found themselves severely tested by this passage and consequently lost their faith altogether.

This occurred because the faith of a believer and his steadfastness in the Covenant are determined by the extent to which he acknowledges the truth of the Master's words regarding the station of the Guardian and of the Universal House of Justice. <277> It is evident from this passage that the guidance and protection of Baha'u'llah and the Bab are conferred upon the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice, independently of each other.

As 'Abdu'l-Baha says, 'The guardian of the Cause of God as well as the Universal House of Justice ... are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty'.

Further, in condemning those who oppose the two institutions, He refers to each separately, stating, 'whoso opposeth Him [the Guardian] hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them [the Universal House of Justice] hath contended with God'.

Neither in the above passage of the Will and Testament nor in any of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets can we find a single reference or allusion indicating that the guidance of Baha'u'llah would reach the Guardian and the House of Justice only if the two combined their functions and worked together.[*] [* For further discussion of this subject see chapter 36.] Having experienced bitter opposition by the Covenant-breakers, 'Abdu'l-Baha aimed to protect the Guardian from the onslaught of the unfaithful.

Thus, in language at once forceful and forbidding, in this passage He warns the

believers of the consequences of opposition to him and to the House of Justice.

He equates disobedience to Shoghi Effendi with disobedience to God.

A careful study of the Master's words here makes it clear that there can be no justification for a believer to deny the infallibility conferred upon Shoghi Effendi or to arise against him.

Although today some individuals question the validity of the pronouncements the Guardian left behind as divine guidance for generations yet unborn, it is obvious that such people ignore 'Abdu'l-Baha's emphatic exhortations and act against His commandments.

While a few unfaithful persons rose up in opposition against Shoghi Effendi, the Baha'i community as a whole, in both the East and the West, took to heart the Master's words and rallied around the Guardian with a devotion and love reminiscent of the days following the passing of Baha'u'llah, when the faithful turned in a spirit of utter dedication to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

During the ministry of the Guardian, the believers, through their passionate loyalty to him, their wholehearted belief in him as 'the sign of God on earth' and their faithful and enthusiastic obedience to his guidance, won memorable victories for the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

Because of his modesty and profound innate humility, Shoghi Effendi attributed the stupendous achievements of his 36-year ministry to the work of the believers but it is unquestionably clear that the enormous progress of the Faith was entirely due to his divinely <p278> guided leadership.

Indeed, it was he who nursed and reared the infant Faith of God until it reached the stage of adolescence.

It was he who protected it from the attacks, the intrigues, the betrayals and the machinations of its adversaries and of the Covenant-breakers.

It was he who fashioned the Baha'i administration, who laid a broad and solid base for the establishment of its world order and erected the pillars that sustain and buttress the mighty edifice of the Universal House of Justice.

It was he who brought the Faith into the limelight of recognition and world attention.

It was he who, through his eloquent translations and original writings, immensely enriched Baha'i literature and promoted its steady growth and dissemination.

It was he who directed the construction of the House of Worship in Wilmette, built, embellished and enlarged the Baha'i holy shrines and organized the Faith's international endowments.

But the Guardian's most momentous feat was to organize and weld together the loosely knit, struggling, heterogeneous groups and elements that composed the Baha'i world into a vast, vigorous, harmoniously functioning, international

community.

Its existence is something unique in the religious annals of humankind and constitutes the glory and the promise of the Baha'i commonwealth of the future.

Had there been no appointed Guardian after 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, it is difficult to see how the Formative Period of the Faith would have unfolded and the glorious future of its Golden Age been assured.

During this Formative Period the creative energies released through the Revelation of Baha'u'llah found incarnation in the rise of a world administrative order.

Today its framework is being fashioned by the eager hands of Baha'is throughout the world in accordance with the Divine Plan, the instructions of the Guardian and the guidance flowing in great profusion from the Universal House of Justice.

The passing of the Master in November 1921 marks the termination of the Apostolic Age of our Faith and the opening of the Formative one.

It, in turn, will culminate in the Golden Age, when the Most Great Peace and a new divine civilization based on the recognition of Baha'u'llah and the unity of mankind will be firmly established on this earth.

The shape and pattern of this administrative order are outlined in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha in which He, among other things, nominates the Guardian, assigns his functions, makes provisions for the election of the Universal House of Justice and the creation of the institution of the Hands of the Cause and defines the scope and character of these institutions.

At the close of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry there were well-established Baha'i communities in Persia, the United States, India, Burma, Egypt, Iraq, France and England in which boards of consultation -- rudimentary <p279> spiritual assemblies -- were functioning.

Groups of varying size also existed in Turkey, Canada, Russia, Austria, Italy, Holland, Hungary, Arabia, Switzerland, Tunisia, China, Japan, South Africa, Brazil and Australia.

The construction of the first Baha'i House of Worship in 'Ishqabad, Russia, had been completed, and the excavations for the House of Worship in Wilmette had begun.

In the Holy Land the original mausoleum of the Bab had been built and an extensive property east of the Shrine acquired.

The Eastern and the Western pilgrim houses had also been constructed.

The accession of Shoghi Effendi to the exalted office of Guardianship late in 1921 opened a new chapter in the history of the rise and establishment of Baha'u'llah's World Order.

Baha'i groups and communities at that time were still unorganized and most

believers had their own crude ideas about the Faith and its outlook.

They were still in a state of childhood and needed care and spiritual nourishment.

For no fewer than 15 years (1922-36) the Guardian set himself the herculean task of training and educating these diverse groups and elements in the art of administration and the Baha'i way of life.

He helped them both individually and collectively to attain maturity and spiritual consciousness by demonstrating the aim, the shape and the scope of Baha'i administration.

He harnessed the creative energies of these scattered groups into cohesive institutional forms and channels.

And he created a broad and universal foundation for the world-embracing system of Baha'i administration, delineating the features and functions of both local and national institutions.

The creation of local spiritual assemblies, together with the intensive preparation and instruction of diverse communities in matters of Baha'i administration, went on so vigorously that four years after 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing no fewer than five national spiritual assemblies came into being: the British Isles, India and Burma, Germany and Austria, Egypt, and the United States and Canada.

A few years later three more national bodies were created:

Iraq (1931), Iran (1934) and Australia and New Zealand (1934).

In 1927 the constitution and bylaws drawn up by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States were universally adopted by the other national bodies.

This was a vital step towards the unification of the Baha'i world community and a necessary instrument for the legal incorporation of Baha'i institutions, which began with the registration of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada in 1929.

By this action the Assembly was given state protection and recognition and was empowered to hold property.

Ever since, the process of incorporation of assemblies has continued steadily. [*] [* For further information about the development of the Administrative Order see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, chapter 26.] At the time of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha there was no adequate sense of community life among the believers.

It was Shoghi Effendi who, through his eloquent translations of the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, through his own masterly writings, [**] through his guidance and direction of the affairs of local and national assemblies throughout the world and through his constant encouragement and perseverance, patiently and effectively unveiled the Faith of Baha'u'llah to their eyes. [**]

For further information about the writings of Shoghi Effendi see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, chapter 27.] In the Heroic Age of the Faith the believers were so attracted to Baha'u'llah that they did not pay much attention to anything else.

They were in love with Him and were completely intoxicated by the wine of His presence.

But now was the time to build the new World Order and it was through Shoghi Effendi's endeavours and guidance that the vision of the Baha'is widened.

They began to appreciate the Faith in a new light and many arose to build local and national institutions throughout the world.

From the early days of Shoghi Effendi's ministry the followers of the Most Great Name in the cradle of the Faith had been oppressed by the authorities and subjected to sporadic outbursts of persecution, resulting in the martyrdom of many.

Shoghi Effendi turned his attention to the institutions of the Faith which, by then, were functioning throughout the length and breadth of that land.

He gave them a special task that assumes a great importance in the Cause, namely, the implementation of some of the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the 'warp and woof' of Baha'u'llah's World Order.

He directed the spiritual assemblies in Persia to begin the enforcement of these laws within the Baha'i community -- laws which, although known to the believers in that land, had not previously been fully observed.

In the course of his ministry, Shoghi Effendi elaborated a great deal on the application of these laws, elucidated many intricacies and details connected with them, urged the spiritual assemblies never to compromise when enforcing the laws and counselled them to uphold the standard of justice and impartiality in all cases.

Thus he built up a great reservoir of knowledge and experience in this particular field, which will be of great value in the future. <p281> Another significant enterprise undertaken during the first 15 years of the Guardianship was the erection of the superstructure of the House of Worship in Wilmette and the completion of the exterior ornamentation of its dome.

This unique achievement by the American Baha'is reflects the tenacity and spirit of dedication that enabled them to carry out this mighty task in spite of the unparalleled economic crisis prevailing at that time.

A vast expansion in the range of Baha'i literature was a further outstanding step taken at this time.

During the life of 'Abdu'l-Baha only a few editions published in English, French, German, Turkish, Russian and Burmese had been available but by 1936 Baha'i books and pamphlets were printed and circulated in no less than 29 additional languages.

The Guardian's monumental renderings of the Word of Baha'u'llah into English and his own original works contributed immensely to the extension and enrichment of Baha'i literature.

Another brilliant achievement initiated a few years after the Master's passing was the biennial production of the volumes of *The Baha'i World* and the publication of many books and pamphlets about the Faith in different languages.[*] [* For further information see Taherzadeh, *Covenant of Baha'u'llah*, chapter 27.] In the years following 'Abdu'l-Baha's ascension teaching work received a greater impetus than ever before.

Undismayed by the Master's sudden removal and spurred on by His brilliant example, Baha'is in both the East and the West arose to promote the expansion of the Faith.

These teaching campaigns were at first intermittent and haphazard but gradually they became organized and systematic and the exploits and resourcefulness of the American friends in executing them are worthy of the highest admiration.

Special reference should be made to the prodigious feats accomplished by Martha Root, 'the Pride of Baha'i Teachers', [241] whose travels to teach the Faith continued for almost 20 years and carried her four times around the globe.

Other international Baha'i teachers who served during this period include Hyde and Clara Dunn, Keith Ransom-Kehler, May Maxwell and a host of others.

Through their outstanding efforts no fewer than 30 sovereign countries were opened to the Faith during the first 15 years of the Guardianship; Some of the other noteworthy events that occurred between 1922 and 1936 include the following: [241 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

386.] The passing of the Greatest Holy Leaf, sister of 'Abdu'l-Baha in July 1932 The recognition of the independent status of the Faith in Egypt <p282> The seizure of Baha'u'llah's House in Baghdad, which led to the submission of a petition to the League of Nations The seizure of the Baha'i House of Worship in Russia and dissolution of all Baha'i institutions there The systematic institution of the 19 day feast The creation of the International Baha'i Bureau in Geneva in 1925 The growth of organized youth activities The acquisition of national centres in Iraq, Egypt, India and Persia The enlargement of Baha'i endowments and properties in the Holy Land, United States and Persia.

The acquisition of historic sites in Persia The establishment of permanent summer schools in the United States (Green Acre, Louhelen, Geyserville) Sporadic outbursts of persecution in Persia and the closing down of Baha'i schools The transcription and documentation of all original Tablets of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha The formation of the International Baha'i Archives The inauguration of the first Seven Year Plan was a turning point in the history of the Formative Period of the Faith, marking the fulfillment of the initial stage of the divine mandate 'Abdu'l-Baha had issued to the American Baha'is in the Tablets of the Divine

Plan.

The outstanding feature of this remarkable period is the initiation of systematic and organized teaching activities, efficiently prosecuted under the direction of the Guardian.

Before this, teaching work had been undertaken in a haphazard manner by individuals.

The Guardian launched the first Seven Year Plan (1937- 44) in his message to the National Convention in the United States and Canada, saying:

Would to God every State within American Republic and every Republic in American continent might ere termination of this <p283> glorious century embrace the light of the Faith of Baha'u'llah and establish structural basis of His World Order.[242] [242 Message of Shoghi Effendi to the 1936 American Convention, in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America, p.

6.] The Plan was a supreme challenge to the American friends and its full significance made itself increasingly felt with every passing day.

In it Shoghi Effendi introduced two basic strategies for expansion and consolidation, which have been pursued throughout the Baha'i world ever since.

One was the dispatch of a believer -- a Baha'i pioneer -- to a territory where there were no Baha'is; there he or she engaged in teaching the Cause until enough people embraced the Faith to be able to establish a local spiritual assembly.

The other was the systematic formation of spiritual assemblies in various localities of a country or region, resulting in the establishment of a specific number of assemblies by the end of the Plan.

By the time the Seven Year Plan was triumphantly completed in 1944, coinciding with the worldwide celebrations of the Centenary of the birth of the Faith, the number of local spiritual assemblies in the United States had almost doubled, the number of localities in which Baha'is lived had increased enormously and the nucleus of the institutions of the Faith had been established in every republic of Latin America.

These tremendous achievements, together with the completion of the exterior ornamentation of the holiest House of Worship in the Baha'i world, awakened the Baha'is of other lands to the pattern of systematic expansion and consolidation of the Faith -- a pattern developed as a direct consequence of this first historic Plan, initiated by the Guardian of the Cause of God and executed by the followers of Baha'u'llah in the cradle of the Administrative Order of the Faith.

Such a glorious triumph for the Cause created an upsurge of eagerness and dedication, of confidence and enthusiasm in the hearts of the believers in other lands.

They, too, longed to scale loftier heights in service to the Cause of God.

As each national assembly reached the point of readiness the Guardian gave his approval and encouragement to the formulation of its national plan.[*] These plans were mainly designed to increase the number of local spiritual assemblies, to consolidate them as institutions and to multiply the number of Baha'i centres within each assembly's boundaries -- and beyond.

The first to turn to the Guardian for a plan was the British community, which was given a Six Year Plan in 1944.

Other plans followed within two to three years.

Each had a certain duration and ended either in 1950, the hundredth anniversary <p284> of the Martyrdom of the Bab, or in 1953, the Holy Year,[**] the centenary of the birth of Baha'u'llah's revelation in the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran.

[* For further information about various national plans and the Ten Year Crusade, see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, chapter 28, and Baha'i World volumes.] [** The Holy Year was from October 1952 to October 1953.] Foremost among these was the second Seven Year Plan of the Baha'is of North America, the duration of which marks the second phase of the initial epoch of the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

Major international goals incorporated into this Plan included the establishment of local spiritual assemblies in ten countries of Western Europe, the formation of three national assemblies in the Western hemisphere and the interior ornamentation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in the United States.

The goals of this Plan were accomplished by its end in 1953.

Other national plans were the Indian Four and a Half Year Plan, which was followed by a Nineteen Month Plan; the Persian Forty-five Month Plan; the Australian Six Year Plan; the Iraqi Three Year Plan; the Egyptian Five Year Plan; the German Five Year Plan; the Canadian Five Year Plan, which could be regarded as the continuation of the Seven Year Plan of North America; and finally, the second British Two Year Plan, 'the Africa campaign', in which six national spiritual assemblies worked together for the establishment of the Faith on the continent of Africa.

This latter Plan played a significant role in creating the pattern for future international cooperation and inter-assembly projects and was a prelude to the launching of later world-encircling Plans.

Apart from these Plans, which created an upsurge of activity among all the national Baha'i communities and which inspired many believers to arise as pioneers and settle in goal towns or in virgin territories, other important developments at this time paved the way for the future unfoldment and rise of the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah.

Foremost among these were the appointment by Shoghi Effendi in 1951 of the first contingent of the Hands of the Cause of God, whose number was soon to be increased; the formation in the same year of the International Baha'i Council, destined to evolve through successive stages into the Universal House of

Justice; the participation of Baha'i delegates with other non-governmental organizations at the United Nations; and the phenomenal growth of the Faith in Africa, the first continent to witness entry into the Faith in great numbers.

These far-reaching achievements, together with the triumphant conclusion of all national Plans, endowed the community of the Most Great Name with tremendous potentialities for the worldwide expansion and consolidation of the Faith.

Through their pursuit of the goals of these Plans, the national communities acquired the vision and capacity to take part in the first international Plan.

<p285> Shoghi Effendi launched the Ten Year World Crusade in 1953 and referred to it as the greatest spiritual crusade the world has ever witnessed.

It marked both the opening of the third and final phase of the initial epoch of the Tablets of the Divine Plan and the inception of the Baha'i International Community.

It brought together the twelve existing national assemblies of the Baha'i world to plant the banner of the Faith in all remaining virgin territories of the globe, to multiply the number of the local and national spiritual assemblies throughout the world and to accomplish many other goals.

When the Crusade's goals were announced, the followers of Baha'u'llah in every land were staggered with the immensity of the tasks that confronted them.

Nevertheless, by the end of the first year of the Plan alone they witnessed with gratitude, awe and wonder, that a hundred virgin territories had been opened to the Faith!

This prodigious expansion of the Cause in the initial phase of the Plan, which inspired an army of Baha'i pioneers and teachers to rise to loftier heights of heroism and sacrifice and enabled them to accomplish all the major goals of the Plan in the following years, can only be attributed to one thing: the spirit of loyalty and devotion with which the Hands of the Cause of God and their Board Members, the national and local assemblies, the pioneers and the teachers turned to Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause and the Sign of God on earth.

In the Holy Land, the process of building the World Centre of the Faith had originated with Baha'u'llah through the revelation of the Tablet of Carmel and was initiated by the hand of the Centre of His Covenant through the building of the original Mausoleum of the Bab.

During the ministry of Shoghi Effendi this process gathered such momentum that by the end of his life the glory of Carmel, foretold by the Prophets of the past, had become manifest.

The superstructure of the Shrine of the Bab, 'the Queen of Carmel', 'crowned in glowing gold, robed in shimmering white, girdled in emerald green', which enchanted 'every eye from air, sea, plain, and hill',[243] had been majestically raised.

In its vicinity the monuments marking the resting places of the Greatest Holy Leaf, the Purest Branch and the mother and wife of 'Abdu'l-Baha had been befittingly erected, forming the focal point of a series of buildings, situated around an arc, which are to constitute the international administrative centre of the Faith.

The first in this series, the International Archives Building, within whose walls the most precious relics of the Central Figures of the Faith are preserved, had been constructed.

The nine original terraces connecting the city of Haifa to the Shrine of the Bab had been completed and the gardens surrounding the Shrine and the adjoining buildings had been developed and embellished.

The international endowments of <p286> the Faith stretching from the base to the summit of Mount Carmel, an area of over 350,000 square metres, had been acquired.

A plot of land comprising approximately 36,000 square metres had, after tedious and prolonged negotiations, been purchased for the purpose of erecting a Mashriqu'l-Adhkar on Mount Carmel, to be located in 'close proximity to the Spot hallowed by the footsteps of Baha'u'llah, near the time-honoured Cave of Elijah, and associated with the revelation of the Tablet of Carmel, the Charter of the World Spiritual and Administrative Centres of the Faith on that mountain'[244] [243 Letter of Shoghi Effendi, October 1953, in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, p.

169.] [244 Letter of Shoghi Effendi, April 1954, in *ibid.* p.

63. (Messages to the Baha'i World.)] At Bahji, the holiest spot in the Baha'i world, around the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, within an area of approximately 160,000 square metres, beautiful gardens had been laid out.

Within these gardens, where in the future a magnificent mausoleum over the Shrine of Baha'u'llah will be constructed, an outer sanctuary (termed the Haram-i-Aqdas) designed to embrace this holy edifice had been created.

The realization of such magnificent achievements in the Holy Land during the opening years of the Formative Age of the Faith, together with the detailed delineation of the blueprint for the future development of the World Centre of the Faith, will always be regarded as one of the noblest fruits associated with the ministry of Shoghi Effendi.[*] [* For further information see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, chapter 29.] As one surveys the progress of the Faith during the ministry of the Guardian, it becomes apparent that one of his great achievements was to bring about unity between the various elements that constituted the Baha'i community in the early years of the Formative Age.

When 'Abdu'l-Baha passed away there was very little Baha'i literature available in the West and the teachings of the Faith had not fully penetrated the hearts of the believers there.

Consequently, one could find some very strange ideas about the Faith

circulating among them.

In Persia, the cradle of the Faith, the Baha'is were still identified as Baha'is from Muslim, Jewish or Zoroastrian backgrounds.

Although there was unity of belief and thought concerning the station of Baha'u'llah among the various sections of the community, the differences in their background, culture and social habits were discernible to all.

For instance, Jewish Baha'is had their own meetings, distinct from the meetings held by Muslim Baha'is.

The same was true of Zoroastrian Baha'is.

Of course, on occasion the whole community worked together and held large gatherings.

On Baha'i holy days, for example, Baha'is of different religious backgrounds met together in a spirit of joy and unity.

Nevertheless there were social barriers between these three groups in Persia.

One of the great achievements of Shoghi Effendi <p287> was to transform these differences into unity.

Then, towards the end of his ministry, Shoghi Effendi brought together the Baha'is of the East and the West in a world-embracing fellowship -- the international Baha'i community.

By the time the Ten Year Crusade was launched in 1953, all the Baha'is were working together in a spirit of absolute unity and love under the guidance and leadership of Shoghi Effendi.

Indeed, one of the Guardian's feats was the formation of a community spread throughout the world, consisting of peoples of every colour and former creed, of diversified backgrounds, young and old, educated and unlettered, tribal people and citizens of various cultures, speaking different languages and dialects, yet all united in one Faith, practicing the same religious teachings, building the same Administrative Order and having one common purpose -- the establishment of the oneness of mankind on this planet.

Each local community with its local spiritual assembly was linked to a national assembly and through that institution to the World Centre of the Faith, described by Shoghi Effendi as the heart of the Baha'i world.

From this mighty heart the vivifying forces of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah flowed through the national and local institutions of the Faith to every believer, uniting and harmonizing their activities in the building of Baha'u'llah's embryonic institutions.

Shoghi Effendi placed everything that the Faith possessed in the proper perspective: its founders, laws, ordinances, teachings, principles and institutions.

He enabled the believers to acquire a new conception of community life, of unity and solidarity.

To appreciate this great achievement, let us use the following analogy.

It is abundantly clear that the utterances of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha enshrine the truths of God's Revelation for this age.

Each one of Baha'u'llah's teachings and ordinances resembles a piece of a colossal jigsaw puzzle.

Each piece has a unique place in the overall scheme which, when assembled, produces a certain image intended by the makers.

A person may be familiar with each piece but not until the whole set is assembled can he see the full picture emerge before his eyes.

The same is true of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

The scholars of the Faith and those who were well versed in the holy writings and the history of the Cause had full knowledge of the teachings and were able to appreciate the significance of His utterances as well as some of the events which were associated with them.

But they did not have the vision to grasp fully the overall features of the Faith.

At the close of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry, the Baha'is were enamoured of Baha'u'llah but at the same time many had their own crude ideas about the Faith and its true status.

It was the Guardian who, through his writings, constructed a full image of the Faith for the Baha'is to see.

He put together all the elements of truth enshrined in the utterances of Baha'u'llah, related <p288> them to each other, defined the verities of the Faith, explained their significance, clarified the stations of its Herald, its Author and the Centre of its Covenant, described the glorious destiny of its Administrative Order and portrayed the splendours of the Golden Age, during which the sovereignty of Baha'u'llah will be established throughout the world and His grandeur acclaimed by the generality of mankind.

Thus the Guardian presented the Faith of Baha'u'llah to the Baha'i community in its true perspective.

This is one of his greatest gifts both to this generation and to those yet unborn. <p289>

29

Covenant-Breakers' Attacks on Shoghi Effendi

17-WT He that opposeth him hath opposed the True One, will make a breach in the Cause of God, will subvert His Word and will become a manifestation of the Centre of Sedition.

Beware, beware, lest the days after the ascension (of Baha'u'llah be repeated when the Centre of sedition waxed haughty and rebellious and

with Divine Unity for his excuse deprived himself and perturbed and poisoned others.

With the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Cause, the Baha'i world embarked upon a new age.

In a previous chapter[*] the Kitab-i-'Ahd and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha have been likened to an examination paper placed before students, Just as some pass and some fail the test, the followers of Baha'u'llah who came face to face with the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha were divided.

The great majority remained faithful to the Covenant.

However, some egotistical personalities failed the tests of the Covenant and were cast out, with the result that the community was purged. [* See chapter 3.] In the passage quoted above 'Abdu'l-Baha warns the believers not to allow the reprehensible accusations levelled against Him by the Covenant-breakers following Baha'u'llah's ascension to be repeated after His own passing.

But, unfortunately, the forces of evil arrayed themselves against those of righteousness.

The excuse of 'Divine Unity' mentioned in the above passage of the Will and Testament refers to slanderous accusations by the Covenant-breakers that 'Abdu'l-Baha had claimed the station of divinity for Himself.[**] [** See chapter 13.] The news of Shoghi Effendi's appointment as Guardian of the Cause of God was warmly greeted by the entire Baha'i world.

Nevertheless, there were some faithless individuals, motivated by their ambition to emerge as leaders of the community, who arose in <p290> opposition to Shoghi Effendi and, despite all his efforts to save them, proved unrepentant and were consequently expelled from the community.

After some time these egotistical personalities surfaced and launched their attacks.

There was another category of people who, although they did not openly oppose Shoghi Effendi in those early days, ultimately revealed their lack of faith in him as the Guardian of the Cause of God.

These included most of the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family.

They failed to see Shoghi Effendi in the light of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament, which refers to him in terms such as the 'sign of God', the 'expounder of the words of God' and the 'Light that ... shined from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance'.

These people contended that since Shoghi Effendi was only a youth, he ought to establish the House of Justice to assist him in his work.

In later years, one by one, they rose up against him, violated the Covenant and were responsible for the greatest sufferings inflicted upon him during his ministry.

One of Baha'u'llah's titles is 'the Wronged One of the World' -- a title that could well be applied to Shoghi Effendi too, for he silently suffered at the hands of those closest to him.

Whereas Baha'u'llah's main enemies had been the divines of Islam and the despotic monarchs of Persia and Turkey, the primary adversaries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi were the Covenant-breakers. 'Abdu'l-Baha, unlike Shoghi Effendi, did not always remain silent when sufferings were heaped upon him.

In His writings and public appearances He disclosed the evil-doings of the Covenant-breakers and thus, to some extent, frustrated their wicked schemes.

But Shoghi Effendi acted differently; he did not follow 'Abdu'l-Baha's pattern of life as a public figure.

He directed the affairs of the Cause and built the institutions of the Faith mainly through correspondence, privately enduring the onslaught of the Covenant-breakers with resignation and forbearance.

Consequently, he suffered greatly.

Immediately upon Shoghi Effendi's return to the Holy Land after 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, opposition arose from the quarter of the old, established Covenant-breakers, especially Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, his brother and his associates.

These unscrupulous men, who during the latter part of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry had become demoralized, with no choice but to creep into the limbo of ignominy and defeat, raised their heads once again when they saw a youth of 25 years at the helm of the Faith.

They thought they could wrest the leadership of the Baha'i community from him -- but soon discovered that they were gravely mistaken.

The Arch-breaker of the Covenant in the Holy Land and a few of his supporters in America and Persia actively tried to create division within the community.

At the same time that Mirza Muhammad-'Ali <p291> was calling on the Baha'is to follow him as 'Abdu'l-Baha's successor, he took ruthless action to seize custody of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah for himself.

Ruhiyyih Khanum describes this episode:

Shortly after 'Abdu'l-Baha's ascension, this disgruntled and perfidious half-brother had filed a claim, based on Islamic law (he who pretended he had still a right to be the successor of Baha'u'llah!), for a portion of the estate of 'Abdu'l-Baha which he now claimed a right to as His brother.

He had sent for his son, who had been living in America and agitating his father's claims there, to join him in this new and direct attack on the Master and His family.

Not content with this exhibition of his true nature he applied to the

civil authorities to turn over the custodianship of Baha'u'llah's Shrine to him on the grounds that he was 'Abdu'l-Baha's lawful successor.

The British authorities refused on the grounds that it appeared to be a religious issue; he then appealed to the Muslim religious head and asked the Mufti of Akka to take formal charge of Baha'u'llah's Shrine; this dignitary, however, said he did not see how he could do this as the Baha'i teachings were not in conformity with Shariah law.

All other avenues having failed he sent his younger brother, Badiullah, with some of their supporters, to visit the Shrine of Baha'u'llah where, on Tuesday, 30 January, they forcibly seized the keys of the Holy Tomb from the Baha'i caretaker, thus asserting Muhammad 'Ali's right to be the lawful custodian of his Father's resting-place.

This unprincipled act created such a commotion in the Baha'i Community that the Governor of Akka ordered the keys to be handed over to the authorities, posted guards at the Shrine, but went no further, refusing to return the keys to either party.[245] [245 Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, pp.

53-4.] Following Shoghi Effendi's arrival in Haifa, the shock of the announcement of his appointment as the Guardian of the Faith, coupled with the terrible ordeal of the passing of the Master, took their toll on his health.

He was so crushed under the weight of bereavement that he could not even attend a memorial meeting for the Master which was held in His residence 40 days after His ascension.

Three weeks later, the seizure of the sacred Shrine of Baha'u'llah by the Covenant-breakers came as a further blow.

The seizure of the keys of the Shrine by this bitterest enemy brought shock and sorrow to the tender and sensitive heart of Shoghi Effendi.

Yet, despite his physical weakness, the evidence of divine guidance was apparent in his actions, which were characterized by a resolve and a wisdom that called to mind the wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Baha and His penetrating foresight.

While Shoghi Effendi's appeal to the government for the return of the keys was postponed by his absence from the Holy Land, which lasted about eight months, he continued <p292> to pursue this matter with great diligence until full rights of possession were restored to him by the authorities.

Ruhiyyih Khanum writes in some detail about this episode:

The matter which concerned Shoghi Effendi most, however, was the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji.

The keys of the inner Tomb were still held by the authorities; the right of access to other parts of the Shrine was accorded Baha'is and Covenant-breakers alike; the Baha'i custodian looked after it as before, and any decision seemed in a state of abeyance.

Shoghi Effendi never rested until, through representations he made to the authorities, backed by insistent pressure from Baha'is all over the world, he succeeded in getting the custody of the Holy Tomb back into his own hands.

On 7 February 1923 he wrote to Tudor Pole: 'I have had a long talk with Col.

Symes and have fully explained to him the exact state of affairs, the unmistakable and overwhelming voice of all the Baha'i Community and their unshakable determination to stand by the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Recently he sent a message to Muhammad 'Ali requiring from him the sum of £108. for the expenses of the policeman, contending that he being the aggressor is liable to this expense.

So far he has not complied with this request and I await future developments with deep anxiety.' The following day Shoghi Effendi received this telegram from his cousin, who was in Jerusalem:

His Eminence Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Haifa.

Letter received immediate steps taken the final decision by the High Commissioner is in our favour the key is yours.[246] [246 ibid. (Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, pp.

70-1.)] Given his ill health and the weight of the custodianship of so mighty a Cause so suddenly placed upon his shoulders, the pressures which were building up around Shoghi Effendi were intolerable.

In these circumstances he decided to leave the Holy Land for a period, during which he hoped to pray and commune with his Beloved in solitude, regain his strength and confidence, and return to the duties waiting him at the World Centre.

He announced his decision in a letter written in English to the Baha'is of the West and in a similar one in Persian to the Baha'is of the East:

He is God!

This servant, after that grievous event and great calamity -- the ascension of His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Baha to the Abha Kingdom -- has been so stricken with grief and pain and so entangled in the troubles (created) by the enemies of the Cause of God, that I consider my presence here, at such a time and in such an atmosphere, is not in accordance with the fulfilment of my important and sacred duties. <p293> For this reason, unable to do otherwise, I have left for a time the affairs of the Cause, both at home and abroad, under the supervision of the Holy Family and the headship of the Greatest Holy Leaf -- may my soul be a sacrifice to her -- until, by the Grace of God, having gained health, strength, self-confidence and spiritual energy, and having taken into my hands, in

accordance with my aim and desire, entirely and regularly the work of service, I shall attain to my utmost spiritual hope and aspiration.

The servant of His Threshold, Shoghi[247]
[247 Shoghi Effendi, quoted in *ibid.* p.

57.)] Shoghi Effendi's absence from the Holy Land lasted only a few months.

When he returned, he took the reins of the Cause of God in his hands and with great vigour and zeal directed its affairs uninterruptedly until the end of his life.

Opposition to the Guardian was not limited to Covenant-breakers residing in the Holy Land.

Several believers raised their heads in violation of the Covenant in other parts of the world and began their onslaught against him from the early days of his ministry.

One of the age-old factors which led certain believers to violate the Covenant of Baha'u'llah was their ambition and pride in wanting to become leaders of the community and to obtain positions of importance in the Cause.

The truth, however, is that the Baha'i community has no leaders as such and those who are elected or appointed to administrative office are expected to be servants of the Cause, manifesting self-effacement, humility and detachment from the things of this world.

An inherent characteristic of the Faith of Baha'u'llah is that it does not harbour egotistical personalities.

Its watchword is the servitude exemplified by 'Abdu'l-Baha, whose supplication to God was to give Him 'to drink from the chalice of selflessness' and to make Him as 'dust' in the pathway of the loved ones of God.[248] [248 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections*, p.

320.] Considering these attributes of servitude that must govern the activities of the friends, it is not surprising to witness the eventual downfall of those who, either through their folly or their ambition and pride, tried with all their power to introduce into the Faith of Baha'u'llah the concepts of leadership and dominance and to create the cult of personality within its ranks.

In their struggle for power these people brought about severe crises in the community; they violated the Covenant, rose up against Shoghi Effendi and, in the end, tragically destroyed themselves.

Soon after Shoghi Effendi assumed the office of the Guardianship and while there was widespread expectation among the Baha'is of the immediate establishment of the Universal House of Justice, some individuals longed to become members of that august institution.

One such person in the East was 'Abdu'l-Husayn, entitled by <p294> 'Abdu'l-Baha

Avarih (Wanderer).

In the West it was Ahmad Sohrab.

Both men were prominent teachers of the Faith, in Persia and North America respectively, and both had one thing in common: a passionate love of leadership.

Avarih was a native of the village of Taft in the province of Yazd.

Before he embraced the Faith he was a Muslim clergyman.

Soon after becoming a follower of Baha'u'llah he was recognized by the believers to be a man of learning and knowledge and became renowned as one of the erudite teachers of the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha, who was fully aware of the vices and corrupt practices of this man, did not prevent him from serving the Cause, and as long as he acted faithfully in relation to the Faith, He encouraged him, praised his work and wrote several Tablets in his honour.

However, from the beginning of his involvement with the Baha'i Faith, Avarih displayed a pride and vanity that puzzled those Baha'is who were in close contact with him.

On 19 January 1922 Shoghi Effendi wrote a letter to the Persian believers stating that he would soon establish the Universal House of Justice.

He then called a number of well-known believers to the Holy Land in March 1922 for consultation.

Among these was Avarih, who arrived late.

Many of the believers, including Avarih, thought that Shoghi Effendi should call for the election of the Universal House of Justice immediately.

However, it became apparent to Shoghi Effendi that the election of that body had to wait until such time as local and national spiritual assemblies could be formed in various countries and were fully functioning.

But Avarih, dissatisfied with this decision, was still determined to press his point of view.

Following Avarih's short stay in the Holy Land, he travelled to England in January 1923 and soon after he went to Egypt.

During the few months that he remained in Cairo, he created dissension and disunity among the believers to such an extent that the Spiritual Assembly of Cairo complained to Shoghi Effendi.

Thus he was invited to return to the Holy Land.

Here he questioned the authenticity of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha but was satisfied when shown the original copy in 'Abdu'l-Baha's handwriting.

He then met with the Greatest Holy Leaf and reiterated to her his opinion that Shoghi Effendi should be advised to call for the election of the Universal

House of Justice.

He is reported to have uttered a veiled threat that if his demand were not acted upon, he would have no choice but to arouse the Baha'is of Persia to rebel against the Guardian.

In the meantime, he wrote letters to the believers expressing his dissatisfaction with the way the affairs of the Cause were being conducted.

Upon his arrival in Persia he began propagating his misconceived ideas aimed at creating division among the friends there, with the result that in May 1924 the Spiritual Assembly of <p295> Tihiran sought guidance from the Guardian about to how to deal with Avarih.

The response was that the friends must be protected from his misguided intentions.

This clear violation of the Covenant isolated Avarih from the believers.

Even his wife left him and refused to associate with him.

Soon he changed his tactics and wrote a series of letters to various members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family, saying that there had been misunderstandings and suggesting that if Shoghi Effendi were willing to arrange an annual income for him, he would alter his attitude and stop his activities against the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Covenant-breaking is a spiritual disease and those who are affected by it are victims of their own selfish ambitions.

It is only through a real awakening of the soul and the recognition of his transgressions against God that a Covenant-breaker can find the urge to repent.

When the repentant is sincere, God will forgive his past deeds and restore his spiritual health, and indeed, there were a number of Covenant-breakers who were forgiven in this way by 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

In the several letters Avarih wrote asking for reinstatement, however, there was no expression of repentance, and when he received no positive response, he unveiled his satanic nature and wrote abusive letters to Shoghi Effendi, using offensive language and vowing to destroy the Faith of Baha'u'llah altogether.

There was never among the Covenant-breakers during Shoghi Effendi's ministry a man so vile and hypocritical as he.

Covenant-breakers usually oppose the Centre of the Faith but most of them claim to be believers in Baha'u'llah.

In this case, however, Avarih rebelled against the Faith itself, in spite of the fact that he had spent more than two decades teaching the Cause of Baha'u'llah and had published voluminous writings declaring its truth and testifying to the authenticity of its Founder's message.

He joined hands with the Muslim clergy and Christian missionaries in attacking

the Faith in Persia.

He disseminated far and wide a series of his despicable publications against the Faith.

In foul language, he attacked every aspect of the Faith, misrepresented its aims, and uttered slanders about its Central Figures, whom he attacked in most distasteful terms. 'The volumes', Shoghi Effendi writes, 'which a shameless apostate composed and disseminated ... in his brazen efforts not only to disrupt that Order [Administrative Order] but to undermine the very Faith which had conceived it, proved ... abortive.' [249] [249 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

327.] In one of his letters to the Baha'is of Persia, who had completely ignored the activities of this ignoble man, Shoghi Effendi referred to Avarih as a dead body which the surging ocean of the Cause of God had cast upon its shores, thus cleansing itself of pollution.

Shoghi <p296> Effendi predicted that Avarih would live to a very old age in order to see with his own eyes the progress of the Faith throughout the world.

And, indeed, he did live to be about a hundred years of age and witness the rising prestige of the Faith, the inauguration of the Holy Year in 1953, the completion of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Bab, the launching of the Ten Year Crusade and the convocation of several international conferences at which a host of teachers and pioneers arose to carry the message of Baha'u'llah to many virgin territories and establish the institutions of His Faith all over the globe.

In a cable of 16 December 1953 announcing the death of Avarih, Shoghi Effendi referred to him as one who 'will be condemned by posterity as being the most shameless, vicious, relentless apostate in the annals of the Faith, who, through ceaseless vitriolic attacks recorded in voluminous writings and close alliance with its traditional enemies, assiduously schemed to blacken its name and subvert the foundations of its institutions'. [250] [250 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World*, p.

53].

The defection of Avarih in Persia resulted in the expulsion from the Faith of a handful of unfaithful persons who were influenced by his propaganda.

In the same way that all impurities are discharged at intervals from the body of man to keep it healthy, the process of the expulsion of the Covenant-breakers had a cleansing effect upon the Baha'is of Persia.

It invigorated the community and gave it the extra stimulus necessary to expand and consolidate the institutions of its divinely ordained Administrative Order.

One of the people influenced by Avarih was his close friend, the evil-minded Hasan-i-Niku.

A teacher of the Faith who had spent some time in India and who visited Shoghi

Effendi in Haifa at the end of 1923, Hasan-i-Niku was an ambitious man who looked for leadership in the Baha'i community.

When he did not find it he followed the same path as Avarih.

He published three volumes in which he viciously attacked the Faith and attributed appalling things to its Founders, totally misrepresenting its tenets in a language full of bitterness hatred and falsehood.

He was ignored by the believers and his hopes of discrediting the Faith and breaking up the solidarity of its adherents were frustrated.

Another notorious Covenant-breaker in Persia who became a close associate of Avarih was Faydu'llah Subhi, who had served as the Master's secretary for a number of years, A vacillating person, he had on more than one occasion rebelled against the institutions of the Faith and each time had repented, only to resume his opposition to the Cause.

Although brought up in a Baha'i family, he fell victim to the influence of Avarih.

His father tried hard to save him from spiritual extinction but he remained adamant and continued in his odious activities against the Cause, sustaining a prolonged campaign <p297> of shameful vilification not only against the Guardian but also against Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha.

At the height of his rebellion, he wrote a letter to Ayatu'llah Burujirdi, a high-ranking Muslim cleric, in which he repented of having taken part in Baha'i activities in his earlier days.

The offensive language he used against Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice in this letter demonstrated the depraved character of this man, who remained in the abyss of ignominy and godlessness until the end of his life.

All he left behind is the memory of his vile language and despicable conduct.

Notorious among the few Covenant-breakers outside Persia and the Holy Land was an Armenian by the name of Fa'iq who caused much agitation among the Egyptian Baha'is.

He rebelled against Shoghi Effendi and tried to create an alternative organization to the Administrative Order -- a 'Scientific Society', an experiment that ended in utter failure.

After the friends dissociated themselves from him, he was left to his own devices and, deprived of the bounty of faith, died a Covenant-breaker.

Yet another Covenant-breaker was Fallah, a resident of Iskandarun, Turkey.

He was a proud and arrogant man who misled a number of his relatives in that city and remained unrepentant until the end of his life.

These men were the ringleaders of the violators of the Covenant in the East but those who followed them were very few in number.

As in the days of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Covenant-breakers did not make any headway in Persia and the havoc they created in the early years of Shoghi Effendi's ministry was, within a short period of time, utterly eradicated.

The first to arise in opposition to Shoghi Effendi in the West was Ahmad Sohrab.

He had been to the United States when he was a teenager to act as a servant and cook for Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, whose solitary habits caused the friends deep concern for his health.

When Mirza Abu'l-Fadl left the United States in 1904, Ahmad was ordered by 'Abdu'l-Baha to accompany him but he disobeyed and remained in the United States until 1912 when the Master took him back to the East, although he seemed loath to go.

While in America, Ahmad became proficient in English and when the Master went to the United States he served Him as interpreter.

From the beginning, however, Ahmad showed signs of insincerity and faithlessness and many times his behaviour caused 'Abdu'l-Baha deep sorrow.

But he remained with 'Abdu'l-Baha throughout the journey and when he later went to Haifa he continued to serve Him as a secretary.

The Master knew that Ahmad would rebel against the Centre of the Cause after His passing and had intimated this to one or two people who were close to Him. <p298> Indeed, the Master's prediction was fulfilled.

One of the believers, Mrs Nellie French, has recounted the reaction of Ahmad Sohrab when she communicated to him the contents of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Intensely agitated, his face black, and pacing back and forth, he exclaimed: 'This cannot be.

Shoghi Effendi knows nothing about the Cause.

He was never with 'Abdu'l-Baha as I have been.

I am the one who should have been appointed.' [251] [251 Letter from Nellie French to Albert Windust, 20 April 1948.] By the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, Ahmad had become well-known among the believers of the West.

Having emerged as a prominent Baha'i, he, like Avarih, wanted the establishment of the Universal House of Justice immediately after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha and opposed Shoghi Effendi's creation of local and national spiritual assemblies.

With the help of a certain wealthy woman, Mrs Lewis Stuyvesant (Julie) Chanler, he formed an organization known as the New History Society and made a great deal of propaganda to recruit members.

Using the name and teachings of the Faith to attract people to his cause, he

clearly denounced Shoghi Effendi's directives for the building of the Administrative Order.

He also created the 'Caravan of East and West', the chief activity of which was international correspondence.

Ahmad Sohrab, who was referred to by the believers as the 'Avarih of the West', tried to create a new sect of his own based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

He did not question the authenticity of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha but maintained that Shoghi Effendi had erred in his function as the Guardian of the Faith.

He made great efforts to penetrate the American Baha'i community in order to undermine the foundation of the local and national spiritual assemblies and to establish himself in place of Shoghi Effendi but he utterly failed.

The Baha'is remained faithful to the Covenant; they shunned him entirely and with the passage of time his hopes were dashed and his plans and activities bore no fruit whatsoever.

At the height of Ahmad's endeavours, Shoghi Effendi through his secretary wrote the following to the American National Spiritual Assembly:

In regard to the activities of Ahmad Sohrab, Shoghi Effendi has already stated that such attacks, however perfidious, do not justify the friends replying or taking any direct action against them.

The attitude of the National Spiritual Assembly should be to ignore them entirely...[252] [252 From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, Baha'i News, May 1934.] Most Covenant-breakers engage in a common pattern of behaviour, at first claiming to be devoted and sincere Baha'is but later demonstrating by their actions that they are not.

For instance, those who broke the Covenant during Shoghi Effendi's ministry declared their faith in Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha in the early stages, but as time went on and they foresaw the bankruptcy of their position, they compromised and progressively distanced themselves from their earlier practices and assertions.

In almost every case the new Covenant-breakers joined hands with the old, whom they had previously denounced.

For example, Ahmad Sohrab at first did not have anything to do with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates, whom he regarded as enemies of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

But later when he noticed the ascendancy of the Cause of God, he forged links of friendship and cooperation with them.

In fact, he even went so far as to denounce 'Abdu'l-Baha, whom he used to regard in the early days of his rebellion as the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and whose writings he used to quote in his public pronouncements.

In 1954, the year that witnessed the extraordinary expansion of the Faith as hundreds of Baha'i pioneers settled in virgin territories of the globe, Ahmad Sohrab, incensed by the growth and consolidation of the institutions of the Cause worldwide, visited the Holy Land and went to the home of some of the old Covenant-breakers.

Holding meetings there, he gave them his support and encouragement and created much agitation in the region.

Ahmad continued his shameful activities until the end of Shoghi Effendi's ministry but they produced no results.

On the contrary, towards the end of his life, the movement which he had created and spent so much effort in promoting was near extinction and it disintegrated completely after his death in 1958.

All endeavours exerted by this misguided man over several decades to undermine the Cause of God had quite the opposite effect: stimulating its growth.

The message of Baha'u'llah reached the furthest corners of the earth and the institutions of His Faith were established in almost every country and territory of the globe.

Another person who rose up in opposition to Shoghi Effendi and to the establishment of the institutions of the Faith was Mrs Ruth White in the United States.

A veteran believer, she had visited 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land in 1920.

She claimed that the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha was not authentic and created much agitation in the community by attacking the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, whose establishment she considered to be against the teachings and wishes of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

For several years Mrs White persevered in her determination to prevent the establishment of the institutions of the Faith.

One of her actions was to write a letter to the United States Postmaster General asking him, among other things, to prohibit the National Spiritual Assembly from 'using the United States mails to spread the falsehood that <p300> Shoghi Effendi is the successor of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian of the Baha'i Cause'.^[253] [253 Quoted in Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

119.] Another of Mrs White's letters was addressed to the High Commissioner for Palestine.

In it she completely misrepresented the position of Shoghi Effendi but the authorities in the Holy Land were well aware of the facts and did not heed her appeals.

Mrs White also wrote many letters to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, as well as to some believers, vehemently objecting to the directives of Shoghi Effendi and the administration

of the Cause through the local and national institutions.

One of Mrs White's converts was Dr Herrigel, a founding member of the German Baha'i community.

He, too, rejected the authority of the Will and Testament and became numbered among the Covenant-breakers.

It is interesting to note that no one who has studied the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, with the exception of Mrs White and a few others whom she influenced, has ever questioned its authenticity.

Even other Covenant-breakers who rose up against Shoghi Effendi did not agree with her.

Ahmad Sohrab and Subhi for example, who had both served 'Abdu'l-Baha as His secretary, never questioned the authenticity of the Will.

Neither did Muhammad-'Ali, nor Badi'u'llah nor other enemies who were looking for any excuse they could find to attack the Guardian of the Faith.

It must be remembered that the Will and Testament was in Abdu'l-Baha's handwriting and bore His seal.

These were very familiar to the Persian believers because 'Abdu'l-Baha had written innumerable Tablets in His own hand and almost every Baha'i family in Persia had received one or mote of them.

Thus, when the photostatic text of the Will and Testament was sent to Persia and elsewhere, it was easily acknowledged by everyone to be in the handwriting of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Another criterion for the Will's authenticity was 'Abdu'l-Baha's unique style and mode of expression, with which the Persian 'friends were familiar.

Indeed, anyone who is versed in the writings of the Faith in the original language can easily tell the difference between the writings of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, as each has its own special tone and style.

The behaviour of those who rose up in opposition to Shoghi Effendi, such as Ruth White, Ahmad Sohrab and others, clearly demonstrates the truth of 'Abdu'l-Baha's words, found in the following passages from the Will and Testament:

17-WT No doubt every vainglorious one that purposeth dissension and discord will not openly declare his evil purposes, nay rather, even as impure gold, will he seize upon divers measures <p301> and various pretexts that he may separate the gathering of the people of Baha.

55-WT He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyeth God; he that turneth away from him, hath turned away from God and he that denieth him, hath denied the True One.

Beware lest anyone falsely interpret these words, and like unto them that

have broken the Covenant after the Day of Ascension (of Baha'u'llah) advance a pretext, raise the standard of revolt, wax stubborn and open wide the door of false interpretation.

Each one of those who violated the Covenant and openly challenged the authority of the Guardian seized 'upon divers measures and various pretexts' to justify his or her position.

Avarih opened 'wide the door of false interpretation', maintaining that since Shoghi Effendi was only a youth, the House of Justice needed to be established immediately.

Ahmad Sohrab's pretext was that Shoghi Effendi should not have engaged in building up the Administrative Order.

Similarly, Mrs White was bitterly against the establishment of organizational institutions such as the national spiritual assembly, so she raised 'the standard of revolt' and contended that the Will and Testament of the Master was a forgery.

Indeed, every other person who broke the Covenant justified his action through false interpretation of the writings, and as we have observed, the motivating force behind many of these violations of the Covenant was an intense ambition for leadership in the Baha'i community.

Although the violators of the Covenant in the East and the West during Shoghi Effendi's ministry were few in number, their relentless attacks against the Faith during that entire period of his ministry were fierce.

In spite of their persistent efforts to create a breach within the Baha'i community, however, they did not succeed.

The vast majority of believers remained firm in the Covenant, turned to Shoghi Effendi with great devotion and laboured to promote the Faith and establish its divinely ordained institutions throughout the world. <p302>

30 Rebellion of Shoghi Effendi's Relatives

While Shoghi Effendi endured many distressing afflictions at the hands of the enemies of the Faith and the Covenant-breakers in the East and the West, they pale into significance when compared with the pain and suffering inflicted upon him by the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family who broke the Covenant and bitterly opposed him.

The rebellion of these family members against Shoghi Effendi is reminiscent of the rebellion of Baha'u'llah's family after His ascension.

As discussed elsewhere in this volume, it is usually those who are closest to the Manifestation of God or to His Chosen Ones who are in greatest danger of becoming Covenant-breakers.[*] Only those who are true servants of God, who are the embodiments of humility and utter nothingness, can survive spiritually and remain faithful in the holy and rarified atmosphere of Baha'u'llah's, 'Abdu'l-Baha's or Shoghi Effendi's presence.

Any trace of ambition or self-glorification which a believer may have in his personality can be fatal if he comes into frequent contact with the source of divine revelation because in that holy presence He shall 'accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity'. [254] [* For an explanation of this particular phenomena which relates to special tests surrounding the members of the family of Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha see chapter 2.] [254 Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words, Persian no.

69.] The history of the Faith has shown that many of those who were closest to Baha'u'llah fell from grace because of their insincerity and selfish interests.

These people, however, could have remained faithful believers had they not served in His presence.

A proud and egotistical person who serves the Cause of Baha'u'llah in his local community may create many unpleasant problems for himself and the other believers but these difficulties will not necessarily be the cause of the extinction of his faith.

To give an analogy, a man who falls while standing on the ground may hurt himself but a fall will be fatal to a person flying high above the ground.

Most members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family were devoid of the spiritual qualities that distinguish men of God from the ungodly.

Materialism had eaten into the core of their beings and 'Abdu'l-Baha knew it.

The high esteem in which they were held by the believers and the tokens <p303> of respect shown to them by Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike had made them haughty and vain instead of humble and lowly. 'Abdu'l-Baha was not pleased with the spiritual development of His family and He often remarked on it.

From the early days of Shoghi Effendi's ministry the old Covenant-breakers arose in opposition to him and tried to exploit the weaknesses of the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family who lacked faith and were devoid of spiritual qualities.

Among these instigators of dissension was Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the Arch-breaker of the Covenant, who outlived the Master by 16 years and did everything in his power to extinguish the light of the Faith.

He died in 1937 and all witnessed his tragic downfall.

The next in command, Mirza Badi'u'llah, the youngest son of Baha'u'llah, lived to an old age and died in 1950.

He opposed Shoghi Effendi in every way he could.

The Master knew that he would create great problems for the Cause and wrote these words about Mirza Badi'u'llah, warning the friends to shun his company:

41-WT My purpose is, however, to show that it is incumbent upon the friends that are fast and firm in the Covenant and Testament to be ever

wakeful lest after this wronged one is gone this alert and active worker of mischief may cause disruption, privily sow the seeds of doubt and sedition and utterly root out the Cause of God.

A thousand times shun his company.

Take heed and be on your guard.

Watch and examine; should anyone, openly or privily, have the least connection with him, cast him out from your midst, for he will surely cause disruption and mischief.

It was Badi'u'llah who, on the instructions of the Arch-breaker of the Covenant, seized the keys of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah from their custodian.

It was he who complained to the British authorities, vehemently opposing the transfer of the remains of the Purest Branch to Mount Carmel.

His acts of treachery, deceit and arrogance, perpetrated over almost 60 years, stained the annals of the Faith that his own father had founded.

Another unrepentant Covenant-breaker was the notorious Majdu'd-Din, son of the faithful brother of Baha'u'llah, Aqay-i-Kalim.

He was an inveterate enemy of the Master and later of Shoghi Effendi.

He lived to an old age and was one of those who succeeded in spreading the poison of Covenant-breaking among the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He died in 1955, realizing the futility of his deeds and witnessing the triumph of the Cause on the global scale.

Haji Siyyid 'Ali Afnan, a brief account of whose life appears in chapter 13, was yet another veteran Covenant-breaker.

The members <p304> of his family were chiefly responsible for delivering the most painful blows to the person of Shoghi Effendi.

When Shoghi Effendi became the Guardian of the Faith, the family of the Master were expected to turn to him devotedly in a spirit of lowliness and humility, as true believers did.

But of course this was not easy for his brothers, sisters and cousins to do.

After all, Shoghi Effendi had grown up with them and they were his peers and next of kin.

Although they acknowledged his appointment and outwardly showed their submissiveness to him, it was obvious from the very beginning that they were not sincere in their hearts.

During the first few years of the ministry of Shoghi Effendi his family remained outwardly loyal but the seed of rebellion and Covenant-breaking had been planted in their hearts, only needing time to germinate and bring forth the fruit of sedition and opposition.

In direct contrast stood the Greatest Holy Leaf.

Although she was the most venerable member of the Holy Family and the most outstanding woman in the Baha'i era and had seen Shoghi Effendi grow up in the household of 'Abdu'l-Baha, yet she turned to him in a spirit of devotion and humility.

She did this because she believed the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha that Shoghi Effendi was the Guardian of the Cause and the 'sign of God' on earth.

In His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorts the believers 'to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him'.^[255] ^[255] 'Abdu'l-Baha, Will and Testament, para.

17.] Shoghi Effendi's attitude towards the followers of Baha'u'llah who turned devotedly to him in the spirit of the Master's exhortation was absolute love and humility.

Unlike some of the world leaders who show an air of superiority and authoritarianism to their subjects, Shoghi Effendi extended to all the believers, and especially to his relatives, the hand of fellowship and brotherhood.

To the Western Baha'is he often signed himself 'Your true brother, Shoghi', and in his Persian letters, 'The servant of His ['Abdu'l-Baha's] Threshold'.

Yet Shoghi Effendi's relatives did not respond with sincerity and faithfulness to his meekness and magnanimity.

Knowing very well that most of the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family were not able to turn to him as befitted his station as Guardian, Shoghi Effendi turned a blind eye to their aloofness and instead showed them extra warmth and encouragement.

But he could see their insincerity from the very start, and although he looked upon them with a sin-covering eye, he suffered immensely.

This suffering did not stem from the fact that they did not obey him personally but because the Will and Testament enjoined them to be obedient to the Guardian and he knew that as Guardian he would have to expel them from the Faith if they continued in this way. <p305> For several years Shoghi Effendi called on the services of his close relatives in the work of the Faith in the Holy Land.

His younger brother Husayn and some of his cousins served him as secretaries.

He bore with resignation and forbearance all of their deceitful and faithless actions and their disobedience to him as Guardian.

In the early years of the Guardianship, through the influence of the Greatest Holy Leaf, everyone in the household of 'Abdu'l-Baha, even though insincere, rallied around Shoghi Effendi.

The Greatest Holy Leaf acted as a shield for 'Abdu'l-Baha's family, all of whom

stood firm against the company of the old Covenant-breakers, who were the only people who publicly opposed the Cause and the person of the Guardian.

The passing of the Greatest Holy Leaf in 1932 caused untold sorrow to Shoghi Effendi and broke his heart forever.

He built a befitting monument over her resting place in the vicinity of the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel.

With her passing, the great shield protecting the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family was removed.

Then, six years after Bahiyyih Khanum, in 1938, Munirih Khanum passed away.

She and 'Abdu'l-Baha had four surviving daughters; they were all married and between them had 13 children, of whom Shoghi Effendi was the eldest.

The remaining 12, one by one, rebelled against him and were expelled from the Faith.

The other members of the family were likewise disobedient to Shoghi Effendi; in some cases, he denounced them as Covenant-breakers and in others he remained silent about their status.

The eldest daughter of 'Abdu'l-Baha was Diya'iyih Khanum, who married Mirza Hadi, an Afnan and a grandson of Haji Mirza Abu'l-Qasim, a brother of the wife of the Bab.

This marriage brought forth three sons, Shoghi Effendi, Husayn and Riaz, and two daughters, Ruhangiz and Mehrangiz.

Their family name was Rabbani, a name given them by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Tuba Khanum married Mirza Muhsin, an Afnan, a son of Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan (the Great Afnan), the other brother of the wife of the Bab.

They had three sons, Ruhi, Suhayl and Fu'ad, and one daughter, Thurayya.

Their family name was Afnan.

Ruha Khanum married Mirza Jalal, the son of the 'King of Martyrs'.

They had two sons, Munib and Hasan, and two daughters, Maryam and Zahra.

Their family name was Shahid (Martyr).

Munavvar Khanum married Ahmad Yazdi, the youngest son of Haji 'Abdu'r-Rahim-i-Qannad.

They had no children.

Every member of the Master's family knew well that the old Covenant-breakers were all deadly enemies of the Master and of the Faith and were to be shunned as He had directed.

They had not associated with them during the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Baha and they did not do so <p306> in the early years of Shoghi Effendi's ministry.

It did not take very long, however, before secret ties were established between the old Covenant-breakers and certain members of the Master's family.

As if a virus had attacked, the disease of Covenant-breaking spread and eventually infected all the surviving members of that noble family, sparing no one.

This grievous downfall occurred because of their disobedience to the commandment to shun the Covenant-breakers.

How clearly 'Abdu'l-Baha admonishes the believers to avoid associating with them!

In His Will and Testament, He thus enjoins:

38-WT And now, one of the greatest and most fundamental principles of the Cause of God is to shun and avoid entirely the Covenant-breakers, for they will utterly destroy the Cause of God, exterminate His Law and render of no account all efforts exerted in the past.

And in another passage He repeats the same injunction:

52-WT Hence, the beloved of the Lord must entirely shun them, avoid them, foil their machinations and evil whisperings, guard the Law of God and His religion, engage one and all in diffusing widely the sweet savours of God and to the best of their endeavour proclaim His Teachings.

It is clear, then, that the most obvious reason why the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family failed to obey the Master was their lack of faith in Him and in His words. 'Abdu'l-Baha wanted his family to turn to Shoghi Effendi in a spirit of devotion and servitude.

In His Will and Testament He warned them in clear and unequivocal language that if they turned away from him, disobeyed him or contended with him, they had turned away, disobeyed and contended with God.

Yet they chose to disregard the exhortations of the Master and rose up in open opposition against Shoghi Effendi.

The tragic spiritual extinction of the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha as its members fell, one by one, victim to the devouring flames of Covenant-breaking, left Shoghi Effendi entirely on his own.

Over the years, his brothers and sisters, his several cousins, his aunts (the daughters of 'Abdu'l-Baha) and other relatives were cut off from the tree of the Cause.

As they rebelled against him, the Guardian tried his utmost to save them.

He even refrained from disclosing their rebellion to the community for a considerable period of time.

Instead he ignored their insults and endured their despicable conduct in silence until, at the end, he was left with no choice but to declare

them Covenant-breakers and announce this to the Baha'i world.[*] [* For the text of these announcements and other details of Covenant-breaking by members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family and their expulsion from the Faith, see Taherzadeh, Covenant of Baha'u'llah, chapter 32.] Every one of these messages sent by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'i world at different times during his ministry was the consequence of many agonizing episodes of Covenant-breaking, acts of opposition, betrayal and open defiance by the members of the family of the Master.

But far from weakening the fabric the Baha'i community, the defection of these family members and that of some outstanding Baha'is who broke the Covenant strengthened and invigorated it.

Through such a cleansing process the impurities are expelled from the body of the Cause.

As for the effect of the Covenant-breakers' rebellion, Shoghi Effendi wrote:

We should also view as a blessing in disguise every storm of mischief with which they who apostatize their faith or claim to be its faithful exponents assail it from time to time.

Instead of undermining the Faith, such assaults, both from within and from without, reinforce its foundations, and excite the intensity of its flame.

Designed to becloud its radiance, they proclaim to all the world the exalted character of its precepts, the completeness of its unity, the uniqueness of its position, and the pervasiveness of its influence.[256] [256 Shoghi Effendi, quoted in Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, pp.

120-1.] In 1948 a fierce political upheaval erupted in the Holy Land.

The State of Israel was founded, bringing an end to the British Mandate.

War broke out between Arabs and Jews and a great many Arabs fled the country.

During this period Shoghi Effendi remained in Haifa and, in the face of great dangers and severe difficulties, carried on his work as usual, including the building of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Bab.

But the rest of the family, who were Covenant-breakers, allied themselves with the Arab community and fled the land.

Among them were the family of Mirza Jalal Shahid, which included Ruha Khanum, the daughter of 'Abdu'l-Baha; Tuba Khanum, another daughter of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and her son Ruhi, his wife Zahra and his brother; three cousins of Dr Farid; and Nayyir Afnan, his wife Ruhangiz (sister of Shoghi Effendi) and their children.

Others who fled to Lebanon were Badi'u'llah (next in command to the Arch-breaker of the Covenant) and his relatives, together with those Baha'is who were disloyal to Shoghi Effendi.

As time went on these people, who were already cut off from the Holy Family by virtue <p308> of their association with the enemies of the Faith, integrated themselves into Islamic society.

Although the Cause of God benefits from the expulsion of unfaithful individuals who break the Covenant, the Centre of the Faith is the one who suffers most.

In the case of Shoghi Effendi, this suffering was deepened by the fact that he was duty bound, by virtue of his position as Guardian of the Faith, to expel his closest loved ones.

We cannot estimate the agony Shoghi Effendi must have undergone when he had to expel his brothers, sisters and aunts from the Faith.

Among those instrumental in raising up the spirit of Covenant-breaking, which had lain dormant within the hearts of most members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family during the early years of Shoghi Effendi's ministry, were the family of Siyyid 'Ali Afnan, an inveterate adversary of 'Abdu'l-Baha.[*] Now his sons -- the grandchildren of Baha'u'llah, all Covenant-breakers -- inflicted the greatest injury upon the person of Shoghi Effendi. [* See chapter 13.] Shoghi Effendi was dealt a great blow when Ruhangiz, his eldest sister, married the second son of Siyyid 'Ali, Nayyir Afnan, who proved to be the greatest enemy of Shoghi Effendi throughout his ministry.

This marriage created an unprecedented convulsion in the family and was followed by two similar marriages, one between the Covenant-breaker Hasan, another son of Siyyid 'Ali, and Mehrangiz, the younger sister of Shoghi Effendi, and the other between another son, Faydi, and Thurayya, Shoghi Effendi's cousin.

Shoghi Effendi refers to Nayyir as the 'pivot of machinations, connecting link between old and new Covenant-breakers'.

He wrote: 'Time alone will reveal extent of havoc wreaked by this virus of violation injected, fostered over two decades in 'Abdu'l-Baha's family.' [257] [257 Cablegram of Shoghi Effendi, 5 April 1952, in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, pp.

24-5.] These inroads made by the old Covenant-breakers into the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha were fatal and soon most of its members became Covenant-breakers.

Ruhiyyih Khanum writes the following about the effect of the Covenant-breaking in the household of the Master:

But the tale of defections such as these does not convey the true picture of what Covenant-breaking signified in the ministry of Shoghi Effendi.

To understand that one must understand the old story of Cain and Abel, the story of family jealousies which, like a sombre thread in the fabric of history, runs through all its epochs and can be traced in all its events.

Ever since the opposition of the younger brother of Baha'u'llah, Mirza

Yahya, the poison of Covenant-breaking, which is opposition to the Centre of the Covenant, entered the Faith and remained.

It is difficult for those who have neither experienced what this disease is, nor devoted any consideration to the subject, to grasp the reality of the power for destruction it possesses.

All the members of the family of Baha'u'llah grew up in the shadow of Covenant-breaking.

The storms, separations, reconciliations, final sundering of ties, which are involved when a close, distinguished and often dear relative is dying spiritually of a spiritual disease, are inconceivable to one who has not experienced them...

It looks simple on paper.

But when year after year a house is torn by heart-breaking emotions, shaken by scenes that leave one's brain numb, one's nerves decimated and one's feelings in a turmoil, it is not simple, it is just plain hell.

Before a patient lies on the operating table and the offending part is removed there is a long process of delay, of therapeutic effort to remedy the disease, of hope for recovery.

So it is with Covenant-breaking; the taint is detected; warning, remonstrance, advice follow; it seems better; it breaks out again, worse than before; convulsive situations arise -- repentance, forgiveness follow -- and then all over again, the same thing, worse than before, recommences.

With infinite variations this is what took place in the lifetimes of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.[258] [258 Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, pp.

121-2.] In the following passage Ruhiiyyih Khanum shares her insights as to how the Centre of the Faith reacts when confronted with the unfaithful who rise in opposition to the Cause:

Whereas we ordinary human beings react in one way, these extraordinary human beings react in an entirely different way.

They are, in such matters -- however great the difference in their own stations -- entirely different from us.

I used to wonder, in the early years of my life with the Guardian, why he got so terribly upset by these happenings, why he reacted so violently to them, why he would be prostrated from evidences of Covenant-breaking.

Gradually I came to understand that such beings, so different from us, have some sort of mysterious built-in scales in their very souls; automatically they register the spiritual state of others, just as one side of a scale goes down instantly if you put something in it because of

the imbalance this creates.

We individual Baha'is are like the fish in the sea of the Cause, but these beings are like the sea itself, any alien element in the sea of the Cause, so to speak, with which, because of their nature, they are wholly identified, produces an automatic reaction on their part; the sea casts out its dead.[259] [259 ibid. pp.

122-3. (Rabbani, Priceless Pearl.)] The Covenant-breakers struggled continually to hurt Shoghi Effendi in whatever way they could.

They attacked him from every direction and inflicted unbearable pain upon him, while he resisted their onslaught until they were vanquished one by one.

In 1957, a few months before he passed away, he accomplished the task of removing <p310> once and for all the last traces of the Covenant-breakers' evil influence from the Holy Land.

During his development of the gardens around the Mansion of Bahji, he had made repeated efforts to secure from the government orders for demolition of the Covenant-breakers' houses around the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

The following is part of the cable Shoghi Effendi sent in June 1957 to the Baha'i world when he achieved this goal.

With feelings of profound joy, exultation and thankfulness, announce on morrow of sixty-fifth Anniversary of Ascension of Baha'u'llah, signal, epoch-making victory won over the ignoble band of breakers of His Covenant which, in the course of over six decades, has entrenched itself in the precincts of the Most Holy Shrine of the Baha'i world, provoking through acts of overt hostility and ingenious machinations, in alliance with external enemies under three successive regimes, the wrath of the Lord of the Covenant Himself, incurring the malediction of the Concourse on high, and filling with inexpressible anguish the heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The expropriation order issued by the Israeli government, mentioned in the recent Convention Message, related to the entire property owned by Covenant-breakers within the Haram-i-Aqdas, recently contested by these same enemies through appeal to Israel's Supreme Court, now confirmed through adverse decision just announced by same Court, enabling the civil authorities to enforce the original decision and proceed with the eviction of the wretched remnants of the once redoubtable adversaries who, both within the Holy Land and beyond its confines, laboured so long and so assiduously to disrupt the foundations of the Faith, sap their loyalty and cause a permanent cleavage in the ranks of its supporters...

The implementation of this order will, at long last, cleanse the Outer Sanctuary of the Qiblih of the Baha'i world of the pollution staining the fair name of the Faith and pave the way for the adoption and execution of preliminary measures designed to herald the construction in future

decades of the stately, befitting Mausoleum designed to enshrine the holiest dust the earth ever received into its bosom.[260] [260 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 3 June 1957, in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, pp.

120-2.] Obtaining this expropriation order was Shoghi Effendi's last act in rooting out the nests of corruption and hatred that had plagued the holiest Shrine of the Baha'i world for over six decades.

During this time countless schemes had been devised against 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi by the Arch-breaker of the Covenant, his kinsmen and associates, and by enemies of the Faith.

Today no trace of any of them remains in the areas surrounding the Shrine.

<p311> 31 Turning to Shoghi Effendi 17-WT It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice, upon all the Aghsan, the Afnan, the Hands of the Cause of God to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him.

News of the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Faith was hailed by Baha'is all over the world who, as bidden by the Master in His Will and Testament, turned to Him with devotion and loyalty.

This act endowed the community of the Most Great Name with tremendous potentialities for progress and bestowed upon the believers a fresh outpouring of divine bounties which, in turn, strengthened their faith.

While a believer's faith depends upon the measure of his love for Baha'u'llah, that love cannot be realized unless the individual turns to the Guardian with devotion, humility and lowliness as exhorted by the Master in His Will and Testament.

For how could one claim to love the Blessed Beauty while disregarding the authority of the very person who is infallibly guided by Baha'u'llah and is the Sign of God on earth?

Stories of the love and dedication which the believers in general, and the Hands of the Cause in particular, evinced towards Shoghi Effendi are numerous and heartwarming.

In the East, the believers' enthusiasm knew no bounds.

They carried out his instructions faithfully and, in many cases, suffered severe persecution in the accomplishment of various undertakings.

Great numbers of Baha'is wrote to Shoghi Effendi and expressed their loyalty to him, while many with able pens expressed their deep love in verse and prose that were published within the community.

Some had met Shoghi Effendi, knew him personally and had perceived even during his childhood that he would be the successor of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

As mentioned in chapter 27, the famous Baha'i poet 'Andalib composed a delightful lullaby as Shoghi Effendi lay in his cradle, foretelling a glorious future for him.

Another story of this kind of spiritual perceptiveness involves Dr Yunis Khan, 'Abdu'l-Baha's trusted secretary and translator for some years, who used to correspond <p312> with the believers in the West.

Once he received a letter from an American believer saying that some of the friends had heard that the Master's successor had recently been born and asking him to confirm this.

Dr Khan found it very difficult to mention this to 'Abdu'l-Baha because he could not bear to think of the day when the Master would pass away, so he kept this matter to himself and was uncertain how to speak about it.

Eventually he mustered his courage.

Timorously and in a low voice, he asked the question. 'Abdu'l-Baha responded affirmatively, saying, 'The triumph of the Cause is in his hands.' Dr Khan knew who the child was and had previously had an experience of profound spiritual upliftment while visiting the infant Shoghi Effendi.

Although he tried to put the matter out of his mind, as he believed it was unforgivable to pay attention to anyone except the Master during His lifetime, nevertheless he told Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali about the feelings he had experienced seeing Shoghi Effendi in his cradle -- and discovered that the Haji also had a similar experience.

Thus, from the early days of Shoghi Effendi's life, the seed of love for him was planted in the hearts of a great many believers in the East.

This is why his appointment as the Guardian of the Cause was greeted enthusiastically by the entire community of the Baha'is of Persia.

In the West the believers turned to Shoghi Effendi in obedience to the words of the Master but it took some time before they recognized him as a person endowed with God-given powers and virtues.

As the believers met him and became enchanted with his personality, they recounted to the friends their stories of utter devotion to him, which in turn led the Baha'is of the West to acquire a deeper attachment to and love for him.

The following testimonials from some of the prominent believers, including the Hands of the Cause, demonstrate the extent of love and adoration felt for the Guardian by the believers in the West.

Mountfort Mills, an outstanding believer who served the Guardian ably and with great devotion, spoke to the friends on 22 April 1922, having met Shoghi Effendi a few months after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha: ...We met Shoghi Effendi, dressed entirely in black, a touching figure.

Think of what he stands for today!

All the complex problems of the great statesmen of the world are as child's play in comparison with the great problems of this youth, before whom are the problems of the entire world.

He is a youth of twenty-six, left by the will of the Master as the Guardian of the Cause.

No one can form any conception of his difficulties, which are overwhelming.

We received his joyous, hearty hand grasp and our meeting was short.

A bouquet was sent to our room in the form of a young tree filled with nectarines or tangerines.

It was brought by Mr Fugeta.

We awoke without any sense of sadness.

That feeling was entirely gone.

The Master is not gone.

His Spirit is present with greater intensity and power, freed from bodily limitations.

We can take it into our own hearts and reflect it in greater degrees.

In the center of this radiation stands this youth, Shoghi Effendi.

The Spirit streams forth from this young man.

He is indeed young in face, form and manner, yet his heart is the centre of the world today.

The character and spirit divine scintillate from him today.

He alone can today save the world and make true civilization.

So humble, meek, selfless is he that it is touching to see him.

His letters are a marvel.

It is the great wisdom of God in granting us the countenance of this great central point of guidance to meet difficult problems.

These problems, much like ours, come to him from all parts of the world.

They are met and solved by him in the most informal way.[261] [261 Mills, quoted in Giachery, Shoghi Effendi, p.

189.] In 1926 Hand of the Cause Mrs Keith Ransom-Kehler wrote:

The unique and outstanding figure in the world today is Shoghi Effendi.

Unique, because the guardianship of this great Cause is in his hands and his humility, modesty, economy and self-effacement are monumental.

Outstanding because he is the only person, we may safely say, who

entrusted with the affairs of millions of souls, has but one thought and one mind -- the speedy promulgation of peace and goodwill throughout the world.

His personal life is absolutely and definitely sacrificed...

The world, its politics, social relationships, economic situations, schemes, plans, aspirations, programmes, defects, successes, lie under his scrutiny like infusoria beneath a microscope. ...Shoghi Effendi is the Commander-in-chief of this great new army of faith and strength that is moving forth to vanquish the malevolent forces of life.[262] [262 Ransom-Kehler, in *ibid.* pp.

192-3. (quoted in Giachery, Shoghi Effendi.)] And Hand of the Cause Dr Ugo Giachery left this account:

Of all the characteristics that Shoghi Effendi possessed, the one that I believe was at the very core of his personality and was deeply rooted in his soul was the immense faith he had, his complete reliance on the efficacy of Baha'u'llah's Revelation.

He clung to His Teachings with a tenacity that cannot be likened to anything.

His whole being was permeated with the power of the Revelation, and this is the reason that all who came near him or in contact with him felt so safe, so assured, so regenerated.

For the same reason, <p314> scheming individuals who inclined towards evil-doing or deceit could not remain long in his presence and went away frightened, bewildered and chastened.

During my years of association with Shoghi Effendi I experienced, over and over again, the power emanating from his belief, a power that removed difficulties, brought unexpected happy solutions and paved the way to better and greater achievements...

At this point I would like to illustrate still another of the spiritual virtues of Shoghi Effendi, which I had noticed before but which, during that vital conversation, became evident in all its strength and delicacy; namely, the capacity to separate himself as a man from Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause of God.

When he spoke of the labours, duties, plans, present and future, the inspiration, the decisions of the Guardian, he was so impersonal that one could have believed he was speaking of another person.

This endeared him even more, because to find such a balance of humility and greatness, of objectivity and selflessness coupled with a fertile, creative and poetic mind is one of the rare happenings in thousands of years.

I have used the word delicacy, because in all his thought and action

there was no affectation or remote trace of pride or vainglory.

An illuminating example of this is to be found in one of his masterly letters, The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, in the section on the Administrative Order wherein is described the station of the Guardian...

Humility of a kind not yet known elsewhere was one of Shoghi Effendi's many unique virtues, a humility which came from the conviction that man's faculties are not self-created but are a precious trust from God, not to be displayed or used overbearingly or with vanity.

And yet he emanated true pride and dignity, such a regal dignity that raised him far above any man I have yet met or known.

When conversing with him, one could strongly sense this feeling of humility, while his ample brow and penetrating eyes reflected an inner light born of faith, courage and determination.

One could feel an awareness that was amazing and rendered one speechless.

Shoghi Effendi's selflessness was not only outstanding but exemplary.

He never placed his personal interests or desires ahead of his functions as Guardian...

If one were to relate in detail the manifold aspects of the personality of Shoghi Effendi which like facets of a perfectly cut gem reflected the rays of divine light and inspiration, many volumes would not suffice.

I firmly believe that psychologists will come to agree with the point of view that while human beings, generally, react in a voluntary or semi-voluntary way to circumstance, situations, inspiration and even to what may be considered illumination from the Divinity, Shoghi Effendi, like a sensitive instrument connected to the Source of all powers, reacted involuntarily, to the most imperceptible spiritual impulse which activated his organism, making him capable of executing and discharging all functions and responsibilities related to the Cause of God without the slightest probability of error.

This analysis, made at the very first meeting with him, explained to me clearly and conclusively the meaning of divine guidance and infallibility...[263] [263 Giachery, in ibid. pp.

16-20. (Giachery, Shoghi Effendi.)] Finally, a tribute was paid to Shoghi Effendi less than a year after his passing in an address delivered by Hand of the Cause Amelia Collins at the International Baha'i Conference held in Frankfurt/Main, Germany, which she attended as the chosen representative of Shoghi Effendi.

It provides ample testimony that the Hands of the Cause faithfully carried out the exhortations of the Master 'to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him'.

Mrs Collins spoke as follows:

How can I ever find words to bring you what is in my heart about our beloved Guardian!

I feel we must each so fill ourselves at this time with his spirit and his wishes that it will carry us through the next five years of the glorious Crusade he initiated and enable us to consummate his every hope and wish.

This, the fulfilment of his own Plan, is the living memorial we must build in his memory.

When I first heard of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha, I was a very young believer and after the provisions of His will became known, my whole heart and soul turned to that youthful Branch, appointed by Him to watch over and guide the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

How I prayed that God would help me to make him happy!

In 1923 I first met our beloved Guardian in Haifa.

He was just a young man then, full of determination to carry forward the great work entrusted to his care.

He was so spontaneous, so trusting and loving and outgoing in the buoyancy of his beautiful heart.

Through the years we all watched with wonder and ever-deepening devotion to him and appreciation of his God-given gifts, the unfoldment of Baha'u'llah's Divine Order which he built up so patiently and wisely all over the world.

But, oh friends, at what great cost to himself!

In 1951, when the beloved Guardian called some of the friends to serve in Haifa, I began to learn of what he had passed through.

His face was sad, one could see his very spirit had been heavily oppressed by the agony he went through for years during the period when the family pursued their own desires and finally abandoned the work of the Faith and their Guardian to go their own way.

I can truthfully say that for a number of years we who served him at the World Centre seldom saw him smile, and very often he poured out to us his woes and confided some of the things he had passed through.

I do not know in any great detail the day to day afflictions of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, but sometimes <p316> I wonder if they could have been any more heartbreaking than those of our beloved Shoghi Effendi.

The Guardian had a profound and innate humility.

Whenever the Faith was involved, he was fiery in its defence, kinglike in

the loftiness of his bearing, the authority with which he spoke.

But as a human being he was self-effacing, would brush aside our adulation and praise, turn everything we wished to shower on him towards the central figures of our Faith.

We all know this characteristic of his, how he would never allow any photographs to be taken of himself, or give any of himself, but invariably encouraged the friends to place the Master's picture in their rooms; how he would not allow anyone to have his clothes or personal things lest they be regarded as relics; how he disliked any signs of personal worship -- though he could never control what was in our hearts for him!

The Master said: 'O ye the faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Baha!

It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi ... that no dust of despondency and sorrow may stain his radiant nature...'
Neither his family, nor the people of the world, nor I am afraid we Baha'is, protected that radiant heart of Shoghi Effendi.

After the years of sorrow and trial he went through with the family after his final separation from them, there came a new joy and hope to our beloved Guardian.

The rapid progress made in the attainment of so many of the goals of the World Crusade lifted him up.

How can I ever describe to you his eyes when he would come over to the Pilgrim House and announce to us a new achievement; they sparkled with light and enthusiasm and his beautiful face would be all smiles.

Often he would send over one of his maps and when it was spread out on the dining table, his finger, full of infinite strength, insistence and determination, would point out the new territory opened, the new Haziratu'l-Quds purchased, the new language translated, as the case might be.

I feel it would be no exaggeration to say that it was the progress of the Ten Year Plan that gave him the encouragement to go on working so hard, for he was very tired.

More than once he said during the last year of his life, that his ministry had lasted longer than that of either Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha, and complained of the crushing burden, but none of us could foresee it presaged his release, that he was burned out with thirty-six years of struggle, of constant work, of sorrow and self-sacrifice.

His conscientiousness was like a fire burning in him; from his earliest childhood he showed the sensitive, noble, painstaking qualities that characterized him, and grew stronger as he matured and throughout his Guardianship.

The friends should realize that Shoghi Effendi had no foreknowledge that he would be appointed the Successor of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The shock of the Master's passing was followed by an even more terrible one -- the shock of his own appointment as the 'Sign of God'.

He grew in this supreme office, which we know was under the direct guidance of the Twin Manifestations of God, even as a tree grows to full maturity and bears goodly fruits, but at such cost to himself of sacrifice that no one will ever properly estimate.

Let us review for a moment, however briefly, some of the services Shoghi Effendi rendered the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

When 'Abdu'l-Baha passed away, the Shrine of the Bab consisted of six rooms surrounded by a small piece of land.

The Mansion of Bahji and most of its lands were in the hands of the Covenant-breakers or their friends, except for the Holy Tomb itself, which covers a very small area, and two pilgrim houses, one rented.

The Master Himself, though so widely loved and respected, was not known as the Head of an independent religion, but rather regarded as a Moslem notable and Holy Man.

The young Guardian, freed by his very youthfulness, armed with the power conferred on him by his Grandfather, cut with one stroke the bonds still holding in appearance the Baha'is to Islam -- he refused to go to the Mosque.

Tender, sensitive, crushed with grief, fighting his own inner battle to be reconciled to the glory of the station so suddenly revealed to him, Shoghi Effendi began to do all the Master had hoped to accomplish and to carry into effect His Words when He hinted that after Him the veils would be rent asunder.

The Perfect Exemplar, the loving and forgiving Father, had passed away and the Order of Baha'u'llah was now to take shape under the guidance of the Champion of Divine Justice.

With wistful eyes the blessed Master had gazed up at the Shine of the Bab and said that it was not possible to build the Shrine of the Bab, but God willing, it would be done.

The Guardian first added three rooms during the early years of his ministry to make the building a nine-roomed edifice.

In 1944, the model of the completed Shrine was unveiled on the occasion of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Bab's Declaration; it had an arcade and a dome, both of which the Master had stated it should have.

By 1953 it was all built.

Year after year the Guardian increased the size of the Shrine gardens,

himself laying out the design in its minutest detail.

Patiently, persistently, he had the lands about it bought, designating each area, supervising each transaction, overcoming every obstacle.

He got the Mansion of Baha'u'llah away from the arch Covenant-breaker, Muhammad-'Ali, and turned it into a Museum and Holy Place; he had all the Baha'i properties exempted from government and municipal taxes; he had the Baha'i marriage recognized as legally binding; he secured first [from] the British and later, in a much stronger form, from the new State of Israel, recognition of the fact that this is a World Religion, whose Holy Places and whose World Centre are in Haifa and Acca, and that he as the Head of this Faith had a higher position than any other religious dignitary in the land. <p318> He chose the design himself and erected the monuments over the resting places of the Greatest Holy Leaf, her mother and brother, and the wife of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He likewise specified the International Archives building should be of the type and proportions which it is, approving himself every detail and often changing details until he got them the way he wanted them.

He located its exact position on the ground, the size of its walls and stairs, the garden surrounding it.

This building will house precious Baha'i relics such as no previous religion has ever possessed.

Shoghi Effendi, appealing direct to high government officials, secured Mazra'ih as a Holy Place for the Baha'i pilgrims to visit, after it had been promised to other institutions when the Jewish State was formed.

It was at his decision that the beautiful Temple site on Mt Cannel was purchased, in the spot 'Abdu'l-Baha had wished; and from the World Centre streamed out the translations, the letters, the writings of the Guardian in a mighty flow, in exquisite language, full of power, accurate, profound, inspired.

The hand of the Guardian was a motivating force.

Let there be no mistake that any glove ever did the work of that hand.

The gloves were poor and unworthy instruments for the most part, well nigh useless judged by human standards.

It was his hand in everything, from the littlest to the biggest thing, that grasped every work, initiated every enterprise, never relaxed, never relinquished its grip until the task was done.

Many gloves frayed out on that powerful hand, fell apart, were of necessity cast aside, but the work of the Cause went on uninterrupted until the last night of his life!

The Administrative Order of the Faith, the provisions for which were laid

down by Baha'u'llah Himself and amplified by 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi set out to build.

When the Master passed away, there were few Spiritual Assemblies in the world, and only one national body functioning in a very rudimentary manner.

The builder, however, had been provided by God; the Great Administrator, with an almost unique capacity for organization, with a wisdom vouchsafed from on High, with a world-encompassing vision, set about his task.

Patiently, persistently, painstakingly, Shoghi Effendi reared strong national bodies.

He brought into being the International Baha'i Council -- the embryonic Universal House of Justice.

He kept the balance, the perfect balance, between a thing too loosely knit, too individualistic to function efficiently, and too much efficiency, too many rules and regulations, too much running into endless and unnecessary detail which is one of the great afflictions of present day civilization.

When he had created the system and reared the machinery of the Baha'i Administrative Order, he suddenly shifted the whole mechanism into gear; he called for the first Seven-Year Plan, the first step in the Promulgation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Divine Plan, which is the instrument for the spiritual conquest of the entire globe.

Plan followed plan.

The scattered diversified followers of the Faith began to take shape as the army of Baha'u'llah; guided by the National Spiritual Assemblies <p319> The pioneers, the vanguard as he called them of this great host, began to march out and over the world until, at the half-way point of the mighty Crusade he had launched, Shoghi Effendi could look upon a united, strong, enthusiastic, world-wide community of believers, who had already achieved the major part of the tasks he had set for them.

What gifts he had, what gifts he gave:

Gleanings from the Writings Baha'u'llah, The Dawn-Breakers -- Nabil's Narrative, The Kitab-i-Iqan, The Hidden Words, and the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, translations of superlative style and power, making available the essence of Baha'u'llah's Message to the western world.

What life he breathed into us through his own writings, beginning with his World Order letters -- the Goal of a New World Order, the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, followed by the Unfoldment of World Civilization (now The World Order of Baha'u'llah), The Advent of Divine Justice, The Promised Day is Come, works which were supplemented by

dynamic cables and special messages.

To such a long list of distinguished works was added the finest flower of his mind, his masterful review of the first one hundred years of the greatest Dispensation vouchsafed by God to man on this planet -- God Passes By.

His was the vision which looked at the Cause as a whole, saw present and future as part of one mighty panorama.

He not only collated the teachings, but, with a strong sense of history, assembled the most precious relics in the Baha'i world into a religious archives such as no previous Faith has ever possessed.

He saw to it that all the precious sites associated with the Bab and Baha'u'llah and the heroes and martyrs of his Cause were, whenever possible, purchased: the House where Baha'u'llah was born in Teheran, His father's house in Tihran, the Siyah-Chal, where the first rays of His Divine Mission fell upon Him in the blackness of a dungeon, the House He occupied in Constantinople, and one of the Houses He occupied in Adrianople; the bleak fortress of Mah-Ku, where the Bab revealed the Bayan, His shop in Bushihr, and many other sites associated with Him and His companions.

At Shoghi Effendi's instructions an exhaustive photographic record was made of hundreds of these spots associated with the Heroic Age of the Faith.

He encouraged the Persian believers to compile the histories of the early days of the Cause in their provinces, and laid upon the Persian National Spiritual Assembly the great responsibility of collecting and transcribing the Tablets of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, thus preserving for posterity a truly priceless heritage.

He was truly the builder by nature; he completed the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in America, the great Mother Temple of the West, unique in having had its foundation stone laid by 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself.

He initiated, chose the designs, and set in motion the plans for the erection of the African, the European, the Australasian, the Teheran and the Holy Land Temples.

He specified the sites for the National Haziratu'l-Quds and the national endowments.

He named the languages into which the literature <p320> of the Faith was to be translated, and personally encouraged the pioneers to go forth and fulfil 'Abdu'l-Baha's plan.

Ah, but he did more than this!

He made each believer feel that over him watched a just mind and a loving heart; that he had a part to play, was precious to the Faith, had duties

to discharge, enjoyed privileges infinitely precious because he was a member of the Community of the Most Great Name.

Let us never forget this, never lose sight of this!

This oneness he made a reality, this staunch loyalty to our Faith he implanted in our hearts.

His work in this world is done.

Ours is not.

We are all, in a way, Shoghi Effendi's heirs.

We have inherited his work.

His plan is completely laid out.

Ours is the task to fulfil it.

We must, each of us, complete our share of the World Crusade.

This is the memorial we must build to our beloved Shoghi Effendi.

Let us love him more now than ever before, and through the power of our love attract his love to us, and bring his blessing on our labours.

Let us not fail him, for he never failed us.

Let us never forget him, for he never forgot us.[264] [264 Collins, A Tribute to Shoghi Effendi.] In the third part of the Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorts His loved ones to 'take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi' and to turn to him.

54-5-WT O ye the faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Baha!

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

For he is after 'Abdu'l-Baha, the guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnan, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him.

For most of his ministry Shoghi Effendi suffered greatly at the hands of the old Covenant-breakers, the entire family of the Master and many so-called Baha'is who were not faithful to him.

Far from the expectations of the Master that 'no dust of despondency and sorrow may stain his radiant nature', the sufferings inflicted on him by a band of godless men and women left their imprint on his radiant soul.

It was only through the loyalty of the majority of the friends and the Hands of

the Cause who truly followed the exhortations of 'Abdu'l-Baha and rallied around him with deepest love that Shoghi Effendi was able to sustain the heavy weight of responsibilities with which he was entrusted by the Master.

Finally, towards the end of his life, through his guidance and encouragement, a host of itinerant teachers <p321> and pioneers won unprecedented victories in all the continents of the globe.

The historic achievements in Africa and the spectacular progress during the first years of the Ten Year Crusade brought great joy to his heart. <p322>

32 Hands of the Cause of

God Since the inception of the Faith, the commandment to teach the Cause and proclaim the message of Baha'u'llah to the human race has been the cornerstone of the teachings and ordinances of the Cause of God.

Baha'u'llah has enjoined every believer to teach His Faith, calling this act 'the most meritorious of all deeds'. [265] In Persia the friends carried out this vital duty in a spirit of unity and teamwork, with each person playing his part according to his ability.

Not everyone was capable of speaking about religion and, in the absence of priests, the actual work of teaching, adducing proofs and confirming people was usually left to those who had the gift of knowledge and an understanding of religious subjects.

Localities usually had a few knowledgeable believers, each known as muballigh (teacher).

These souls were available to discuss the Faith in private meetings with people who had been contacted by individual Baha'is. [265 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 278.] Often, teaching the Cause was carried out as team work.

Many searched for receptive souls, attracted them to the Cause through prayer and perseverance and eventually prepared them to attend a meeting in which a muballigh would speak to them about the Faith.

Others would offer their homes for such meetings and some rendered other services to make these meetings possible.

These teachers of the Cause usually had a deep understanding of the Faith and were well versed in the writings of Baha'u'llah and in the holy books of the past.

Most of them were learned people but there were some very successful teachers who were illiterate or had very little education.

While to be knowledgeable is a great advantage, teaching the Cause is not dependent upon academic knowledge.

Rather, a teacher must have faith and be detached from earthly things.

The outstanding qualities possessed by most teachers of the Cause in those days were a deep understanding of the Faith, whether they were educated or not, and

a passionate love for Baha'u'llah, which made them radiant souls.

In the absence of any institutions of the Faith such as local and national spiritual assemblies in the days of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, a muballigh would play a significant part in deepening the friends in the knowledge of the Faith and would <p323> encourage and help them to discharge their duties in the field of teaching.

As far back as 1881, Baha'u'llah in one of His Tablets[266] directed Ibn-i-Asdaq, in consultation with Mulla 'Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi[*] and another believer, to make arrangements for the appointment in every locality in Persia of a suitable resident Baha'i teacher.

He placed great emphasis on this matter and regarded it as supremely important.

From the very early days, too, Baha'u'llah Himself directed a few outstanding and knowledgeable souls to travel continually throughout Persia and the neighbouring countries in the capacity of muballigh to teach the Faith in different towns and villages.

Their main task was to speak to interested people in private meetings that were usually organized by local believers.

These travelling teachers rendered an invaluable service: through their devotion, their knowledge, their spirituality and radiance they succeeded in helping the believers in their teaching work and brought a great many souls under the shadow of the Cause of God.

This practice continued during the ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

When the national institutions of the Faith were established in Persia, one of their important obligations was to ensure that in every locality there were some individuals who could function in the capacity of a muballigh. [266 Unpublished compilation, Iran National Baha'i Archives, no.

27, p.

281.] [* Both were, some years later, appointed by Baha'u'llah as Hands of the Cause.] Running parallel to the duty of teaching the Faith is the task of conducting the affairs of the community through the process of consultation, as ordained by Baha'u'llah in His teachings.

Before the establishment of the institutions of the Faith, important decisions, whether concerned with the local community or an individual, were often made through consultation among a few teachers of the Faith and other older and experienced Baha'is.

As we have already stated, the practice of naming certain individuals as muballigh continued during the ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

When the local spiritual assemblies were constituted in Persia during the ministry of the Guardian, he advised that the spiritual assembly in its

decision-making process pay special attention to the views of the muballigh in the area and try to act on his advice.

The appointment of the muballigh seems to have been a prelude to Baha'u'llah's appointment of the Hands of the Cause, whose functions were elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The body of the Hands was later institutionalized during the ministry of the Guardian.

During the last few years of His life Baha'u'llah chose four of His devoted followers and designated them Hands of the Cause of God.

They were Haji Mulla 'Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmiradi, known as Haji <p324> Akhund; Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, known as Ibn-i-Abhar; Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, known as Ibn-i-Asdaq; and Haji Mirza Hasan, surnamed Adib.

These appointments, so far as we know, did not take place at one time.

Their names were not announced to the community, nor were their functions outlined in one special Tablet.

With the exception of Mirza Hasan-i-Adib, who embraced the Faith about three years before the ascension of Baha'u'llah, the other three Hands of the Cause were long-standing believers.

They were the recipients of many Tablets in which, over the years, He showered upon them His blessings, guided their steps, praised their work and exalted their station in glowing terms.

In these Tablets He often referred to them as 'the Chosen Ones', 'the loved ones', 'the detached souls', 'the pure in spirit' and other similar designations.

Towards the end of His life Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet to each of these four individuals, designating them 'Hands of the Cause of God'.

As far as we can gather, the first time Baha'u'llah used the term 'Hand of the Cause' to refer to an individual with certain responsibilities was in a Tablet revealed in honour of Ibn-i-Asdaq on 19 Rajab 1304 (13 April 1887) and it is possible that the first three Hands of the Cause were appointed around the same time.

Certainly there is a Tablet revealed in honour of Ibn-i-Abhar dated 24 Sha'ban 1306 (26 April 1889) which makes it clear that he had already been designated a Hand of the Cause.

As yet, no definite date for the appointment of Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Adib has been found.

He was the last to be appointed, having become a believer around 1889.

For quite some time the believers did not appreciate the significance of the appellation 'Hand of the Cause' and the implications of designating certain

individuals as such.

One may think of two reasons for this.

First, Baha'u'llah had often used the term 'Hands' in earlier Tablets without referring to any particular person; second, there was no apparent change in the activities of these souls after their appointment, since they continued to be engaged in promoting the Cause and assisting the believers in their many activities.

For instance, Baha'u'llah confirms in a Tablet that from the early days of His arrival in 'Akka He had instructed Mulla 'Akbar to be engaged in the protection of the Cause.

Gradually, however, as the years went by, the friends began to understand the functions and duties of the Hands of the Cause -- particularly during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha, when He directed them to carry out certain duties as a body.

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha defines the duties of the Hands of the Cause in these words:

21-WT The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God are to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to <p325> promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things.

They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners, their deeds and their words.

To appreciate the function of the Hands of the Cause, it is helpful to examine some basic principles of life and creation.

In a Tablet[267] revealed in honour of His Trustee, Haji Abu'l-Hasan-Amin, Baha'u'llah states that movement is caused by heat, and heat by the Word of God.[*] This is a profound statement, the first part of which is proved by science, the second taught by religion.

Thus the pronouncement is not only valid physically but has deep spiritual significance, as religious enthusiasm and fervour are generated by the warmth of one's heart. [267 Baha'u'llah, Iqtidarat, p.

249.] [* For more information on this topic see Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

4, pp.

42-3.] As in nature, when heat causes movement, so in spiritual life when the heart is warmed by the fire of the love of God the believer moves to action and arises to serve the Cause.

In other words, when the love of Baha'u'llah enters the heart of a believer he will feel exhilarated and will be motivated to serve Him.

There are two potent factors that can ignite the fire of the love of God in a believer's heart.

The first is the power of the Word of God, and the second is the influence that a true believer may, through close association, exert on the heart of another.

So powerful is this influence that Baha'u'llah states in the Hidden Words:

He that seeketh to commune with God, let him betake himself to the companionship of His loved ones; and he that desireth to hearken unto the word of God, let him give ear to the words of His chosen ones.[268] [268 Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words, Persian no.

56.] This passage demonstrates the great contribution that the Hands of the Cause --who were highly exhilarated by the love of their Lord -- made in enthusing and arousing the believers, thereby enabling them to draw nearer to Baha'u'llah.

These devoted souls warmed the hearts of the friends by the fire of faith that burned brightly within them.

To commune with these holy souls was to commune with God and to hear their words was to hear the Word of God.

We can see, therefore, the vital role which Baha'u'llah entrusted to the Hands of the Cause, who, by virtue of the fire which raged within their hearts, were able to ignite others.

Of course this role is not limited to the Hands.

Any believer who is aglow with the love of God can impart the fire of his faith to others and the history of the Faith has recorded the names of many immortal teachers of the Cause who have been endowed with this quality.

The four Hands designated by Baha'u'llah held consultative meetings and were regarded in the community as occupying a position of spiritual leadership.

It could be said that during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha these four created the nucleus of a sacred institution, since 'Abdu'l-Baha did not appoint any Hands during His ministry but only named a few outstanding believers posthumously to that station.

Of the first four Hands, Ibn-Asdaq lived long enough to serve the Guardian during the opening years of the Formative Age when the institution of the Hands of the Cause was further developed and consolidated to constitute one of the twin arms of the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah.

In several of His Tablets Baha'u'llah pays tribute to the devotion and self-sacrifice of the Hands of the Cause, describes their main functions as the diffusion of the divine fragrances and the protection of His Cause, and prays that they may be assisted by the Almighty to serve His Faith, to guide and enthuse the believers and to be ready at all times to carry out His commandments.

In a Tablet to Mulla 'Ali-Akbar[269] Baha'u'llah calls on the Hands to help the believers become aware of the laws and principles of the Faith and to exert every effort to carry them out.

In a Tablet[270] He states that the Hands of His Cause circle around His Will and do not speak except by His leave.

He declares that through them the standards of the oneness of God have been raised among people and the banners of holiness unfurled in all regions.

Baha'u'llah further testifies that the inmates of the highest Paradise, the denizens of His Kingdom, and beyond them the Tongue of Grandeur, bestow upon them their blessings and salutations. [269 Unpublished compilation, Iran National Baha'i Archives, no.

15, p.

385.] [270 Baha'u'llah, Mu'assisy-i-Ayadiy-i-Amru'llah, p.

11.] In another Tablet[271] Baha'u'llah states that God has appointed the Hands of His Cause as guards and custodians of the stronghold of His Faith to protect it from the onslaught of the unfaithful and the ignorant.

He describes the Hands of the Cause as the lamps of guidance who stand guard at the entrance of His mighty edifice and prevent the ungodly from entering it.

In several of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has revealed short prayers for the Hands of His Cause.

One is found in the Lawh-i-Dunya and has been translated into English: [271 ibid. p.

12. (Baha'u'llah, Mu'assisy-i-Ayadiy-i-Amru'llah.)] Light and glory, greeting and praise be upon the Hands of His Cause, through whom the light of fortitude hath shone forth and the truth hath been established that the authority to choose rests with God, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Unconstrained, through whom the ocean of bounty hath surged and the fragrance of the gracious favours of God, the Lord of mankind, hath been diffused. <p327> We beseech Him -- exalted is He -- to shield them through the power of His hosts, to protect them through the potency of His dominion and to aid them through His indomitable strength which prevaieth over all created things.

Sovereignty is God's, the Creator of the heavens and the Lord of the Kingdom of Names.[272] [272 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, p.

83.] These statements extolling the station of the Hands of the Cause and delineating their functions should not give rise to the erroneous view that the institution of the Hands, followed by that of the Counsellors appointed by the Universal House of Justice to carry on the main duties of the Hands in the future, is any kind of priesthood.

The fact that Baha'u'llah has abolished priesthood is ample testimony that this

is not the case and the following statement by the Universal House of Justice clarifies this point:

It should be apparent to the friends that, as Baha'u'llah Himself both abolished the priesthood and instituted the body of the Hands of the Cause, the Hands cannot be confused with a priesthood.

There are basic differences between a priesthood and Baha'i institutions, such as the Hands of the Cause and the Continental Boards of Counsellors.

A priesthood is usually a profession, has sacramental functions and confers upon the individual occupant of the ecclesiastical office jurisdiction over the believers.

In the Baha'i Faith, there is no profession in any of its institutions, there are no sacraments and no individual has a sacramental function.

Jurisdiction over communities and individuals is not vested in individuals.

Even in the matter of teaching, the friends must realize that although a Hand of the Cause or a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors or indeed any other believer may be deeply learned in the Teachings so that one naturally gives weight to his exposition of them, no one, apart from the Master and the Guardian, is authorized to interpret the Sacred Writings.[273] [273 From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 19 May 1969.] During His lifetime Baha'u'llah directed the Hands to consult among themselves and with other believers on issues vital to the growth and development of the Baha'i community.

At a certain point in His ministry it seems that Baha'u'llah, wishing to emphasize the importance of consultation in resolving various issues, deliberately declined to give guidance when asked for it and instead urged the questioner to consult on the subject.

For instance, Hand of the Cause Ibn-i-Abhar once sought guidance from Baha'u'llah as to where he should reside in Persia.

The answer was that first he ought to consult with some souls who were well-assured and steadfast in the Faith and then act upon their advice.

It is apparent from these details that consultative meetings usually involved the Hands and different individuals they invited to take part, <p328> with discussions mainly centring on topics such as the propagation of the Faith and its protection.

Such meetings were held long before the establishment of local and national spiritual assemblies.

In fact, the consultative meetings of the first Hands evolved into the Spiritual Assembly of Tihiran, the first Assembly in the Baha'i world.

Indeed, when in 1899 'Abdu'l-Baha instructed the Hands of the Cause to

Although the Guardian invited others to undertake a similar service, there were no suitable candidates available anywhere in the Baha'i world.

There were few, if any, believers who had the vision and the experience needed to work with Shoghi Effendi in his efforts to build the foundations of the institutions of the Faith around the world.

Although there were a number of outstanding scholars of the Faith in Persia who had studied all the holy writings available to them and were well versed in the history of the Faith as well as in the scriptures of older religions, it is highly unlikely that any of them had perceived the significance of the institutions of the Faith, the inevitability of their rise or the emergence of the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah, the framework of His World Order for mankind.

These learned Baha'is were fully conscious of the importance of the spiritual assemblies, which Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha had emphasized, but probably none of them realized that the local spiritual assembly was destined to become the primary institution of the Administrative Order, about which very little was known at the time.

Nor did anyone realize that the institutions of the Faith would become channels for the flow of the spiritual forces latent within the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

It becomes clear now, only after the lapse of many decades, how little the early Baha'is understood the basic principles of Baha'u'llah's Administrative Order, the foundations of which Shoghi Effendi had begun to build.

This is perhaps the main reason why Shoghi Effendi could not find a single believer who sufficiently understood the nature of the work which he had set himself to carry out and who was free to come to the Holy Land to assist him.

Gradually, through the guidance of the Guardian, Baha'is the world over learned about the workings of the Administrative Order and acquired the capacity to serve befittingly on the institutions of the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi waited for 30 years until, in 1951, he was able to appoint a number of dedicated souls to the exalted position of Hand of the Cause of God.

Thus he fulfilled the command of 'Abdu'l-Baha in this regard, as revealed in His Will and Testament.

Apart from those whom he appointed posthumously, the Guardian named, at different times, 32 Hands of the Cause.

In the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha states that the Guardian must direct the activities of the Hands:

22-WT This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the guardian of the Cause of God.

He must continually urge them to strive and endeavour to the utmost of

their ability to diffuse the sweet savours of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world, for it is the light of Divine Guidance that causeth all the universe to be illumined.

To disregard, though it be for a moment, this absolute command which is binding upon everyone, is in no wise permitted, that the existent world may become even as the Abha Paradise, that the surface of the earth may become heavenly, that contention and conflict amidst peoples, kindreds, nations and governments may disappear, that all the dwellers on earth may become one people and one race, that the world may become even as one home.

For six years the Guardian guided the Hands to carry out their sacred responsibilities.

In his personal contact as well as in his communications, <p331> he laid down the principles on which the Hands were to act, described the details of their relationship with the national spiritual assemblies and the body of the believers and delineated the range and the scope of their functions.

Shortly before he passed away he called on them to watch over and ensure the protection of the Cause and the Baha'i community and introduced the body of the Hands as the 'Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth'.

Concerning the appointment of the first contingent of the Hands of the Cause, in his cablegram of 24 December 1951 the Guardian wrote:

Hour now ripe to take long inevitably deferred step in conformity with provisions of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Testament ... through appointment of first contingent of Hands of Cause of God, twelve in number, equally allocated Holy Land, Asiatic, American, European, continents.

Initial step now taken regarded as preparatory full development of institution provided in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will, paralleled preliminary measure formation International Council destined to culminate in emergence of Universal House of Justice.

Nascent institution forging fresh links binding rising World Centre of Faith to consolidating World Community of followers of Most Great Name, paving way to adoption supplementary measures calculated reinforce foundations structure of the Baha'i Administrative Order.

Nominated Hands comprise, Holy Land, Sutherland Maxwell, Mason Remey, Amelia Collins, President, Vice-President, International Baha'i Council; cradle Faith, Valiyu'llah Varqa, Tarazu'llah Samandari, 'Ali-Akbar Furutan; American continent, Horace Holley, Dorothy Baker, Leroy Ioas; European continent, George Townshend, Herman [sic] Grossmann, Ugo Giachery.

Nine elevated to rank of Hand in three continents outside Holy Land advised remain present posts and continue discharge vital administrative, teaching duties pending assignment of specific functions as need arises.

Urge all nine attend as my representatives all four forthcoming intercontinental conferences as well as discharge whatever responsibilities incumbent upon them at that time as elected representatives of national Baha'i communities.[274] [274 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 24 December 1951, in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World. p.

20.] In this message mention is made of the formation of the International Baha'i Council.

This appointed body was also created in 1951.

Its membership included Ruhyyih Khanum, Mason Remey, Amelia Collins, Leroy Ioas and Ugo Giachery, who was designated as 'member-at-large'.

Later its membership was increased to nine.

Concerning this institution the Guardian wrote:

Hail with thankful, joyous heart at long last the constitution of International Council which history will acclaim as the greatest <p332> event shedding lustre upon second Epoch of Formative Age of Baha'i Dispensation potentially unsurpassed by any enterprise undertaken since inception of Administrative Order of Faith on morrow of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Ascension, ranking second only to glorious immortal events associated with Ministries of the Three Central Figures of Faith...[275] [275 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 9 January 1951, in ibid. p.

8. (Messages to the Baha'i World.)] And concerning the functions of the International Council he wrote:

Nascent Institution now created is invested with threefold function: first, to forge link with authorities of newly emerged State; second, to assist me to discharge responsibilities involved in erection of mighty superstructure of the Bab's Holy Shrine; third, to conduct negotiations related to matters of personal status with civil authorities.[276] [276 ibid. p.

7. (Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 9 January 1951, Messages to the Baha'i World.)] The International Baha'i Council, working under the direction of Shoghi Effendi, rendered him valuable services by carrying out important tasks in the Holy Land, which resulted in the further strengthening of the World Centre of the Faith.

In his writings Shoghi Effendi attached great importance to the International Council, which was to evolve by stages into the Universal House of Justice.

The first stage was the Council in its initial form as an appointed body.

The second stage was its evolution into an elected body.

This took place in 1961, during the Custodianship of the Hands of the Cause, when the national spiritual assemblies throughout the world elected a

nine-member Council.

The third stage was for the Council to be transformed into the International Baha'i Court[*] in Israel, and the fourth stage was to be the establishment of the Universal House of Justice.

The third stage did not materialize because after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, when the Hands of the Cause investigated the matter through legal channels, they found that the prerogatives and privileges that could legally be granted to a Baha'i Court were inadequate and unbecoming the prestige of the Faith.

The International Council ceased to exist with the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. [* In Islamic countries and in Israel there are religious courts legally recognized to administer matters in the context of religious law.] The presence of the Hands of the Cause and members of the International Baha'i Council in the Holy Land who were engaged in rendering various forms of service to Shoghi Effendi unfortunately did not reduce his workload.

On the contrary, it was increased.

In the latter part of Shoghi Effendi's ministry the Baha'i world had grown enormously and the local and national institutions of the Faith had <p333> multiplied.

The World Centre had also grown.

The construction of the Shrine of the Bab, the terraces and the Archives Building, the beautification of the gardens in Haifa and Bahji and the strengthening of ties with the government of Israel all brought in their wake heavier burdens to be borne by Shoghi Effendi in the last years of his ministry.

Ruhiyyih Khanum describes the manner in which the Guardian directed the work of the International Baha'i Council:

In its functions the International Baha'i Council acted as that Secretariat the Guardian, so many years earlier, had desired to establish; its members received their instructions from him individually, in the informal atmosphere of the dinners at the Pilgrim House table, and not formally as a body; its meetings were infrequent as all its members were kept constantly busy with the many tasks allotted to them by the Guardian himself.

Skilfully Shoghi Effendi used this new institution to create in the minds of government and city officials the image of a body of an international character handling the administrative affairs at the World Centre.

It was no concern of the public how much or how little that body had authority; we who were on it knew Shoghi Effendi was everything; the public, however, began to see an image which could evolve later into the

Universal House of Justice.[277] [277 Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

253.] It is important to realize that whoever was given the privilege to work with the Guardian was never in a position to make a decision for him.

It was he and he alone who directed the affairs of the Cause.

Unlike world leaders who often authorize their subordinates to make decisions, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi were the sole decision-makers because they alone were the recipients of divine guidance.

Indeed, the writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi are all products of that infallible guidance conferred upon them by the Author of the Faith Himself.

In a cablegram sent on 29 February 1952 the Guardian announced the appointment of seven new Hands of the Cause:

Announce friends East and West, through National Assemblies, following nominations raising the number of the present Hands of the Cause of God to nineteen.

Dominion Canada and United States, Fred Schopflocher and Corinne True, respectively.

Cradle of Faith, Dhikru'llah Khadem, Shu'a'u'llah [sic] 'Ala'i.

Germany, Africa, Australia, Adelbert Muhlschlegel, Musa Banani Clara Dunn, respectively.

Members august body invested in conformity with 'Abdu'l-Baha's Testament, twofold sacred function, the propagation and preservation of the unity of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, and destined to assume individually in the course of time the direction of institutions paralleling those revolving around the Universal House of Justice, the supreme legislative body of the Baha'i world, <p334> are now recruited from all five continents of the globe and representative of the three principal world religions of mankind.[278] [278 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 29 February 1952, in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, pp.

20-1.] Soon after this announcement William Sutherland Maxwell passed away.

The Guardian appointed Mr Maxwell's illustrious daughter Ruhyyih Khanum a Hand of the Cause in his place and sent the following message to the Baha'i world on 26 March 1952:

With sorrowful heart announce through national assemblies that Hand of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, highly esteemed, dearly beloved Sutherland Maxwell, has been gathered into the glory of the Abha Kingdom.

His saintly life, extending well nigh four score years, enriched during the course of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry by services in the Dominion of Canada, ennobled during Formative Age of Faith by decade of services in Holy Land, during darkest days of my life, doubly honoured through

association with the crown of martyrdom won by May Maxwell and incomparable honour bestowed upon his daughter, attained consummation through his appointment as architect of the arcade and superstructure of the Bab's Sepulchre as well as elevation to the front rank of the Hands of the Cause of God.

Advise all national assemblies to hold befitting memorial gatherings particularly in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in Wilmette and in the Haziratu'l-Quds in Tihran.

Have instructed Hands of Cause in United States and Canada, Horace Holley and Fred Schopflocher, to attend as my representatives the funeral in Montreal.

Moved to name after him the southern door of the Bab's Tomb as tribute to his services to second holiest Shrine of the Baha'i world.

The mantle of Hand of Cause now falls upon the shoulders of his distinguished daughter, Amatu'l-Baha Ruhyyih, who has already rendered and is still rendering manifold no less meritorious self-sacrificing services at World Centre of Faith of Baha'u'llah.[279] [279 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 26 March 1952 in *ibid.* pp.

132-3. (Messages to the Baha'i World.)] The next appointments were Jalal Khazeh, Paul Haney and 'Ali Muhammad Varqa in 1953, 1954 and 1955 respectively.

The latter was appointed Trustee of Huququ'llah and Hand of the Cause to succeed his father, Hand of the Cause Valiyu'llah Varqa, who passed away in November 1955.

On the passing of George Townshend, Agnes Alexander was appointed a Hand of the Cause and the Guardian sent the following cablegram to the Baha'i world on 27 March 1957:

Inform Hands and national assemblies of the Baha'i world of the passing into Abha Kingdom of Hand of Cause George Townshend, indefatigable, highly talented, fearless defender of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. <p335>

Agnes Alexander, distinguished pioneer of the Faith, elevated to rank of Hand of Cause.

Confident her appointment will spiritually reinforce teaching campaign simultaneously conducted in north, south and heart of Pacific Ocean.[280] [280 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 27 March 1957, in *ibid.* p.

174. (Messages to the Baha'i World.)] A significant development in the unfoldment of the institution of the Hands of the Cause took place when the Guardian directed the Hands to appoint Auxiliary Boards in each continent of the globe to act as their deputies and advisers.

He announced this decision in a cablegram on 6 April 1954.

The following is the full text of that historic announcement:

To all the Hands of the Cause and all National Assemblies of the Baha'i World:

Hail emergence of the unfoldment in the opening years of the second epoch of the formative age of the Baha'i Dispensation of the august Institution foreshadowed by the Founder of the Faith and formally established in the Testament of the Centre of His Covenant, closely associated in provisions of the same Will with Institution of the Guardianship, destined to assume in the fullness of time, under the aegis of the Guardian, the dual sacred responsibility for protection and propagation of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

Desire to pay warm tribute to the services rendered severally and collectively by appointed hands at the World Centre of the Faith and in territories beyond its confines.

Greatly value their support in the erection of the Bab's Sepulchre on Mt. Carmel; in reinforcing ties with the newly emerged State of Israel; in the extension of the International Endowments in the Holy Land; in the initiation of the preliminary measures for the establishment of the Baha'i World Administrative Centre, as well as in their participation in four successive intercontinental Teaching Conferences; in their extensive travels in African territories, in North, Central and South America, in the European, Asiatic and Australian Continents.

This newly constituted body, embarked on its mission with such auspicious circumstances, is now entering the second phase of its evolution signalized by forging of its ties with the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Baha'i world for the purpose of lending them assistance in attaining the objectives of the Ten Year Plan.

The hour is ripe for the fifteen Hands residing outside the Holy Land to proceed during Ridvan with the appointment, in each continent separately, from among the resident Baha'is of that Continent, of Auxiliary Boards, whose members, acting as deputies, assistants and advisers of the Hands, must increasingly lend their assistance for the promotion of the interests of the Ten Year Crusade. <p336> Advise the Hands of the Asiatic, American and European Continents to convene in Tihiran, Wilmette and Frankfurt respectively for the purposes of consultation and nomination.

The Hands of the Cause of the African and Australian Continents must exercise their functions in Kampala and Sydney respectively.

The Auxiliary Boards of the American, European and African Continents must consist of nine members each, of the Asiatic and Australian continents of seven and two respectively.

The allocation of areas in each continent to the members of the Auxiliary Boards, as well as subsidiary matters regarding the development of the

activities of the newly appointed bodies, and the manner of collaboration with the National Spiritual Assemblies in their respective Continents, is left to the discretion of the Hands.

All Boards must report and be responsible to the Hands charged with their appointment.

The Hands of each Continent in their turn must keep in close touch with, and report the result of the nominations and progress of the activities of the Boards to the National Assemblies in their respective continents, as well as to the four Hands residing in the Holy Land destined to act as liaison between themselves and the Guardian of the Faith.

Urge the initiation of five Continental Baha'i Funds which, as they develop, will increasingly facilitate the discharge of the functions assigned to the Boards.

Transmitting five thousand pounds as my initial contribution to be equally divided among the five Continents.

Appeal to the twelve National Assemblies and individuals to insure a steady augmentation of these Funds through annual assignment in National Budgets and by individual contributions.

Advise transmit contributions to Varqa, Holley, Giachery, Banani and Dunn acting as Trustees of the Asiatic, American, European, African and Australian Funds respectively.

Fervently supplicating at the Holy Threshold for an unprecedented measure of blessings on this vital and indispensable organ of the embryonic and steadily unfolding Baha'i Administrative Order, presaging the emergence of the World Order of Baha'u'llah which must pave the way for the establishment of the World Civilization destined to attain maturity in the course of successive Dispensations in the Five Thousand Century Baha'i Cycle.[281] [281 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 6 April 1954, in *ibid.* pp.

58-60. (Messages to the Baha'i World.)] In a passage of the Will and Testament previously quoted, 'Abdu'l-Baha warns:

Should any, within or without the company of the Hands of the Cause of God disobey and seek division, the wrath of God and His vengeance will be upon him, for he will have caused a breach in the true Faith of God.

<p337> We have already mentioned a number of individuals, including the close relatives of Shoghi Effendi, who rebelled against the Guardian and were cast out of the community as Covenant-breakers.

However, during the lifetime of Shoghi Effendi none of the Hands showed the slightest sign of disobedience to him.

On the contrary, they demonstrated the utmost faithfulness to the Guardian and left for posterity a supreme example of loyalty and utter obedience to his

directives.

After the passing of Shoghi Effendi, however, one of the Hands, Mason Remey, [*] rebelled against the Covenant and was cast out of the community by the decision of the Hands of the Cause. [* For further information about Mason Remey's violation of the Covenant see chapter 37.] One month before his passing, the Guardian sent a moving message to the followers of Baha'u'llah throughout the world and in it appointed eight additional Hands of the Cause.

After enumerating the manifold victories achieved during the first five years of the World Crusade, the Guardian stated:

So marvellous a progress, embracing so vast a field, achieved in so short a time, by so small a band of heroic souls, well deserves, at this juncture in the evolution of a decade-long Crusade, to be signallized by, and indeed necessitates, the announcement of yet another step in the progressive unfoldment of one of the cardinal and pivotal institutions ordained by Baha'u'llah, and confirmed in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha involving the designation of yet another contingent of the Hands of the Cause of God, raising thereby to thrice nine the total number of the Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth, who have been invested by the unerring Pen of the Centre of His Covenant with the dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation, of His Father's Faith.

The eight now elevated to this exalted rank are:

Enoch Olinga, William Sears, and John Robarts, in West and South Africa; Hasan Balyuzi and John Ferraby in the British Isles; Collis Featherstone and Rahmatu'llah Muhajir, in the Pacific area; and Abu'l-Qasim Faizi in the Arabian Peninsula -- a group chosen from four continents of the globe, and representing the Afnan, as well as the black and white races and whose members are derived from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Pagan backgrounds.

This latest addition to the band of the high-ranking officers of a fast evolving World Administrative Order, involving a further expansion of the august institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, calls for, in view of the recent assumption by them of their sacred responsibility as protectors of the Faith, the appointment by these same Hands, in each continent separately, of an additional Auxiliary Board, equal in membership to the existing one, and <p338> charged with the specific duty of watching over the security of the Faith, thereby complementing the function of the original Board, whose duty will henceforth be exclusively concerned with assisting the prosecution of the Ten-Year Plan.[282] [282 Letter of Shoghi Effendi, October 1957, in *ibid.* pp.

127-8. (Messages to the Baha'i World.)) During the last six years of his ministry the Guardian showered his unfailing encouragement, loving guidance and inspiration upon the company of the Hands of the Cause and spurred them on to

scale loftier heights of sacrifice and service in the promotion of the Cause.

He addressed this last moving appeal to them a month before he passed away:

I call upon each and every Hand of the Cause of God, previously or now appointed, upon the entire body of the believers participating in this Crusade, and, in particular, upon their elected representatives, the numbers of the various Regional and National Spiritual Assemblies in both the East and the West, and, even more emphatically, upon those privileged to convene and organize these history-making Conferences, to bestir themselves, and, according to their rank, capacity, function and resources, befittingly prepare themselves, during the short interval separating them from the opening of the first of these five Conferences, to meet the challenge, and seize the opportunities, of this auspicious hour, and insure, through a dazzling display of the qualities which must distinguish a worthy stewardship of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, the total and resounding success of these Conferences, dedicated to the glorification of His Name, and expressly convened for the purpose of accelerating the march of the institutions of His world-redeeming Order, and of hastening the establishment of His Kingdom in the hearts of men.[283] [283 ibid. p.

130. (Letter of Shoghi Effendi, October 1957, (Messages to the Baha'i World.))

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Hands in the Service of the Guardian 17-WT My object is to show that the Hands of the Cause of God must be ever watchful and so soon as they find anyone beginning to oppose and protest against the guardian of the Cause of God, cast him out from the congregation of the people of Baha and in no wise accept any excuse from him.

How often hath grievous error been disguised in the garb of truth, that it might sow the seeds of doubt in the hearts of men!

For 30 years of the Guardian's ministry there were no Hands of the Cause to carry out the directives of the Master or to take action against those who opposed him.

Shoghi Effendi himself dealt with the Covenant-breakers and expelled them from the community of the Most Great Name.

In so doing he went through a great deal of pain and anguish, especially since many of those he had to declare as Covenant-breakers were his closest relatives -- aunts, cousins, brothers and sisters.

The appointment of the Hands of the Cause in 1951 created a shield between the Covenant-breakers and the Guardian.

But the authority to expel the Covenant-breakers from the Faith was vested in the Guardian alone and he exercised this authority throughout his entire ministry.

The investigation of the activities of those who appeared to oppose the

Guardian and the assessment of their motives and pursuits were conducted by the Hands of the Cause but the decision to proclaim them as Covenant-breakers rested with the Guardian.

Today, in the absence of the Guardian, the expulsion of Covenant-breakers from the Faith takes place by the decision of the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land, subject to the approval of the Universal House of Justice.

During the ministry of the Guardian, the Hands of the Cause serving on various continents of the world performed their duties as protectors of the Faith with great diligence and steadfastness.

The four Hands who served as members of the International Baha'i Council at the World Centre of the Faith made great efforts to counter the activities of the old Covenant-breakers but their actions were all closely guided by the Guardian.

This is clearly seen in the following account from a biography of Hand of the Cause Leroy Ioas, who was the Secretary-General of the Council: <p340>

As the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land visited with officials of the Government in the interests of the World Centre, as they met the press, as they greeted dignitaries from abroad, they were by their very presence a living demonstration of Baha'i standards, practices, and attitudes.

This was surely an important part of their teaching function.

Those Hands who were members of the International Baha'i Council were immediately drawn into the protective aspect of their work, specifically as it related to the Covenant-breakers.

They lived at the very centre of violation, where the enemies of the Faith could make common cause with the Covenant-breakers against the head of the Faith himself.

When Leroy arrived in Haifa, the Guardian was deeply preoccupied with such a matter, and it was causing him great concern.

It involved a case brought against the Guardian by remnants of the Covenant-breakers in 'Akka.

Starting with an insignificant incident it took on such dimensions that a deeper intent became evident on the part of those bringing suit, namely, to gain co-custodianship with the Guardian of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, or to secure rooms for themselves in the Mansion of Bahji, from which they had removed themselves so that the Guardian might repair the appalling deterioration that had occurred under their care.

After its restoration the British High Commissioner had declared Bahji a place of pilgrimage and not a personal residence, and the Guardian became its custodian.

The court case is an example of the type of scheming with which Shoghi

Effendi was forced to contend throughout his Guardianship.

The Guardian, ever intent on beautifying the surroundings of Baha'u'llah's Tomb, one day told the guard to tear down a dilapidated house of several rooms near the Tomb; the roof was falling in and the walls unstable.

The Covenant-breakers living on the property of Bahji, in a house leaning up against the Mansion, rushed to obtain an Order from the Haifa Court to halt the demolition because they had not been consulted and still held one-sixth of the deed to the Mansion.

In fact the structure in question had been in Baha'i hands since 1892 and in Shoghi Effendi's hands for more than twenty years.

Two of the Covenant-breakers and their lawyer met with Leroy, Mason Remy and the Guardian's lawyer with the intention of settling the question out of court.

It was a fruitless meeting as sixty-year-old attacks on 'Abdu'l-Baha were brought forward.

So the case went to a hearing, scheduled to be held informally before a judge.

After two ineffectual meetings with the judge, during which intense hostility was displayed on the part of the plaintiffs, the case was sent for a first hearing in Court.

Indicating the unchanging desire of the Covenant-breakers to humiliate the head of the Faith, they summoned Shoghi Effendi as a witness, an insulting act which caused the Guardian immense distress. 'His great suffering', Ugo Giachery recalled, 'was for the sacrilege being committed against this Institution of the Faith.

It was so abhorrent to him that he felt physically ill, as if "a thousand scorpions had bitten him".' The Guardian made the decision to appeal directly to the Government to lift the case out of the Civil Court and called Ugo Giachery from Rome to assist with the work that followed.

The three Hands of the Cause called on the Attorney General, the Vice-Minister of Religions, and officials of the Foreign Office and the prime Minister's Office.

The result was that the Attorney-General on instructions of the Vice-Minister informed the president of the Haifa Court that in accordance with a 1924 law, the case in question was a religious matter and not to be tried by a Civil Court.

It would appear that the Guardian's initiatives had concluded the case.

But the clever and hostile lawyer of the Covenant-breakers challenged the

finding on a technicality and made an appeal to the Supreme Court of Israel, in effect putting themselves in an adversarial position to the State.

The Hands of the Cause again went forth to a series of interviews, and Shoghi Effendi made a personal appeal to the Prime Minister.

There was an immediate reaction.

The Prime Minister's legal adviser called to his office the Vice-Minister of Religions, the two lawyers and those they represented.

The Baha'is refused to meet further with the Covenant-breakers and waited in another room of the building.

The opposing lawyer made repeated claims, conveyed by the Guardian's lawyers to the Hands of the Cause, all of them rejected categorically.

Finally the Prime Minister's adviser told the plaintiffs that they could continue their appeal if they wished but they should understand that their fight was now with the Government of Israel and what it had the authority to do.

At this point they dropped the appeal and the case, and the authorities issued authorization to demolish the ruins.

The Guardian cabled the Baha'i world of the successful conclusion to the painful case inspired by what he termed the 'blind, uncontrollable animosity' of the Covenant-breakers.

Within forty-eight hours the Guardian had levelled the house and sent over eight truckloads of plants and ornamental pieces to begin the beautification of the area.

Leroy stayed in the Mansion to oversee the work.

Within a week the Guardian had laid out a wide expanse of garden which appeared miraculously spread out before the eyes of the Baha'is in time for the commemoration of Baha'u'llah's Ascension.

The case had frustrated the Guardian's intentions from December through mid-May...

Through this court case, occurring as it did shortly after the birth of the International Council, the Faith gained stature in the eyes of the most important government Ministries, as officials learned more of its history and purposes, dealt with its dignified emissaries, and noted its unified stand behind the head of the Faith, even as the plaintiffs revealed themselves as vengeful and vindictive.[284] [284 Chapman, Leroy Ioas, pp.

187-90.] The following account from the same biography describes the activities of the Hands of the Cause, under the guidance of the Guardian, to totally eradicate the influence of the Covenant-breakers at Bahji.

It also provides further details of an interesting episode briefly mentioned in chapter 30:

For more than sixty years, disaffected members of the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha had lived on the property of Bahji, step by step being pushed back and restricted in their freedom of movement.

But never in his lifetime was the Guardian able to visit the Shrine of his great-grandfather without their presence and their viewing of his acts of devotion.

Whatever he did there was done under their unfriendly gaze.

Five years earlier, as we have seen, the Covenant-breakers had brought legal suit against the Guardian.

A major result of those efforts had been recognition by the State of Israel of the Guardian as sole Custodian of the Baha'i Holy Places, and the 'irretrievable curtailment', in the words of Shoghi Effendi, 'of long-standing privileges extended to the Covenant-breakers during the course of six decades'. 'It was a very dramatic story', Leroy said some years later of the sequence of events which led to the final departure of the Covenant-breakers from Bahji, 'and I remember when we started the process the Guardian said, "Do you think it can be done?"

I said, Shoghi Effendi, if the Guardian wants it done, it can be done.

I did not know what I was getting into!

The Covenant-breakers had been there for sixty-five years desecrating that sacred place and the Guardian said, it will be a miracle to get them out.' When Leroy was given this assignment, the Guardian said to him: 'Everything you have done up to now, including your work on the Shrine of the Bab, is as silver, whereas removing the Covenant-breakers from Bahji, and securing the buildings and lands for the Faith, will be as gold.' It was to be the monumental victory which 'crowned the beloved Guardian's life and filled his heart with profound joy, exultation and thankfulness...' The first step was taken on May 11, 1956 when lawyers representing the International Baha'i Council applied for expropriation of the property owned by the Covenant-breakers within the Haram-i-Aqdas, the outer Sanctuary of Baha'u'llah's Sepulchre, i.e. the consecrated grounds contiguous to the Shrine.

This initiative was taken as a result of information Leroy gleaned from government officials responsible for questions of property ownership.

The legal instrument was the Land Acquisition for Public Purposes Ordinance of 1943, permitting the Government to <p343> acquire land for purposes which it deemed public purposes, and to transfer that land to responsible authorities.

The Shrine and Mansion had been recognized as a Holy Place long years

before by the Mandate authorities, a recognition confirmed by the Israeli Government in 1952.

Its acquisition therefore on behalf of the Baha'is, so that it could be developed and maintained by them, was deemed by the Government to be a public purpose. (One of the arguments used by the Baha'is in urging expropriation was their intention to embellish and build on the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.) The Government issued an expropriation order which was published in the Official Gazette on December 20, 1956.

The expropriation order was immediately challenged by the Covenant-breakers, who appealed to the Supreme Court.

They claimed that the expropriation (of their minimal shares of the property) constituted an interference in an internal dispute, an infringement of their spiritual and temporal rights, and discrimination against a minority group.

The Baha'is appeared before the Court to answer what Leroy called 'many of their nasty attacks against the Guardian and the Faith'.

The case was heard by the Supreme Court in April of 1957 and judgement was given on May 31.

The Court found against the Covenant-breakers, and in so doing found that the Government's purpose in acquiring the land was indeed a public purpose.

The Court furthermore drew attention to the fact that the appellants had not contended the public purpose of the action and that the contentions which they had brought forward had no substance.

Following the judgement of the Supreme Court, the Baha'is proceeded with eviction orders against the Covenant-breakers.

The Attorney General applied to the Haifa District Court for a dispossession order against them, but again they intervened, attempting to delay the court hearing.

They were unsuccessful in this and judgement was given against them, resulting in orders that they quit the premises of Bahji and relinquish whatever small holdings remained in their hands.

The Supreme Court had set the amount of their recompense.

On June 3, Shoghi Effendi cabled the triumphant news that the expropriation order had been upheld, 'enabling the civil authorities to enforce the original decision and proceed with the eviction of the wretched remnants of the once redoubtable adversaries...' Within three months, they were gone.

The Haram-i-Aqdas had been cleansed.

The spiritual suffering inflicted on 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian by

these enemies of the Faith had come to its end.

Before leaving Haifa that summer, Shoghi Effendi had told Leroy that 'just as soon as we acquire this house of the Covenant-breakers we will tear it down', so the moment they were gone -- in late August -- he cabled the Guardian asking if this should be done.

The Guardian replied: 'Postpone demolition until my return.' He wished to supervise the work himself. <p344> Two months before his passing, Shoghi Effendi again cabled the Baha'i world (September 6, 1957):

ANNOUNCE TO HANDS AND ALL NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES THAT FOLLOWING LOSS OF THE APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT, THE GOVERNMENT EXPROPRIATION ORDER HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED, RESULTING IN THE COMPLETE EVACUATION OF THE REMNANT OF COVENANT-BREAKERS AND THE TRANSFER OF ALL THEIR BELONGINGS FROM THE PRECINCTS OF THE MOST HOLY SHRINE, AND THE PURIFICATION, AFTER SIX LONG DECADES, OF THE HARAM-I-AQDAS FROM EVERY TRACE OF THEIR CONTAMINATION.

MEASURES UNDER WAY TO EFFECT TRANSFER OF TITLE DEEDS OF THE EVACUATED PROPERTY TO THE TRIUMPHANT BAHAI COMMUNITY.

The legalities of the transfer took place in two stages.

In October 1957 Leroy was able to cable the Guardian that the Baha'is had now acquired the properties, that 'they are ours'.

He left a memorandum of the second occasion, when the transfer was completed, here briefly noted:

This morning I joined our lawyer at the Land Registry in connection with the transfer of the properties at Bahji to the Israel branch of the United States National Spiritual Assembly.

We had a conference to review the details of my signing on behalf of the National Assembly, Israel Branch, in view of the fact that His Eminence Shoghi Rabbani had passed away. It was demonstrated that the Power of Attorney which he had given me was not a Power of Attorney to act in his behalf, it was a Power of Attorney to act in behalf of the Israel Branch, and therefore his passing had no effect on the validity of my authority to sign.

We likewise discussed the question of the local transfer tax of two per cent, inasmuch as I had brought from Jerusalem a letter waiving the government tax of four per cent.

When it was learned that the property was definitely not within the city limits of 'Akka, it was stated that the two per cent would be waived.

'We then proceeded with the transfer of the property.

The Official Deeds of Sale were signed before the transfer agent.

Thus there is concluded the complete purification of the Shrine area and

the Haram-i-Aqdas.' The historic day of the final transfer of properties was two days short of one month after the Guardian's passing, Monday, December 2, 1957.

The Deeds for Bahji -- the Shrine, the Mansion, the house of the Covenant-breakers, and all small pieces of land which they held in 'Akka, were signed over to the Faith at 10:25 a.m. (It should be noted that until this date the Shrine itself was held by Covenant-breakers as part of their small percentage of property.) Leroy was signatory for the Baha'is with Ugo Giachery and Sylvia as witnesses.

The property was put in the name of the Israel Branch <p345> of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

After Leroy's death, Sylvia found the pen with which he had signed the documents, left in the page of his diary at the date of December 2, 1957.

On leaving Haifa, she gave it to the International Archives.

On Sunday, December 15, demolition of the house of the Covenant-breakers was begun.

The Hands of the Cause in Haifa and the members of the International Baha'i Council went over to Bahji and took pictures of the event; the demolition was completed one week later.[285] [285 ibid. pp.

193-7. (Chapman, Leroy Ioas.)] A few months before the Guardian passed away he addressed a momentous message to the Hands of the Cause and the National Spiritual Assemblies.

Sent in the form of a cablegram on 4 June 1957, this communication may be viewed as a mandate bequeathed by the Guardian to these two institutions of the Faith.

In it he foreshadows 'dire contests destined to range the Army of Light against the forces of darkness', anticipates attacks on the Faith from within and without the community and offers guidance to both divinely ordained institutions about the means to counteract the forces of opposition and protect the Cause of God.

The entire message reads as follows:

Divinely appointed Institution of the Hands of the Cause, invested by virtue of the authority conferred by the Testament of the Centre of the Covenant with the twin functions of protecting and propagating the Faith of Baha'u'llah, now entering new phase in the process of the unfoldment of its sacred mission.

To its newly assured responsibility to assist National Spiritual Assemblies of the Baha'i world in the specific purpose of effectively prosecuting the World Spiritual Crusade, the primary obligation to watch over and insure protection to the Baha'i world community, in close collaboration with these same National Assemblies, is now added.

Recent events, the triumphant consummation of a series of historic enterprises, such as the construction of the superstructure of the Bab's Sepulchre, the dedication of the Mother Temple of the West, the world-wide celebrations of the Holy Year, the convocation of four Intercontinental Teaching Conferences launching the Ten Year Crusade, the unprecedented dispersal of its valiant prosecutors over the face of the globe, the extraordinary progress of the African and Pacific campaigns, the rise of the administrative order in the Arabian Peninsula in the heart of the Islamic world, the discomfiture of the powerful antagonists in the Cradle of the Faith, the erection of the International Archives, heralding the establishment of the seat of the World Administrative Order in the Holy Land, served to inflame the unquenchable animosity of its Muslim opponents and raised up a new set of adversaries in the Christian fold and roused internal enemies, old and new Covenant-breakers, to fresh attempts to arrest the march of the Cause of God, <p346> misrepresent its purpose, disrupt its administrative institutions, dampen the zeal and sap the loyalty of its supporters.

Evidences of increasing hostility without, persistent machinations within, foreshadowing dire contests destined to range the Army of Light against the forces of darkness, both secular and religious, predicted in unequivocal language by 'Abdu'l-Baha, necessitate in this crucial hour closer association of the Hands of the five continents and the bodies of the elected representatives of the national Baha'i communities the world over for joint investigation of the nefarious activities of internal enemies and the adoption of wise, effective measures to counteract their treacherous schemes, protect the mass of the believers, and arrest the spread of their evil influence.

Call upon Hands and National Assemblies, each continent separately, to establish henceforth direct contact and deliberate, whenever feasible, as frequently as possible, to exchange reports to be submitted by their respective Auxiliary Boards and national committees, to exercise unrelaxing vigilance and carry out unflinchingly their sacred, inescapable duties.

The security of our precious Faith, the preservation of the spiritual health of the Baha'i communities, the vitality of the faith of its individual members, the proper functioning of its laboriously erected institutions, the fruition of its worldwide enterprises, the fulfilment of its ultimate destiny, all are directly dependent upon the befitting discharge of the weighty responsibilities now resting upon the members of the two institutions, occupying, with the Universal House of Justice, next to the Institution of the Guardianship, foremost rank in the divinely ordained administrative hierarchy of the World Order of Baha'u'llah.

Shoghi[286] [286 Cablegram from Shoghi Effendi, 4 June 1957, in Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, pp.

Successor to Shoghi Effendi 16-WT He [the Guardian] is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendents [sic].

Shoghi Effendi passed away without issue and the intention of 'Abdu'l-Baha that the first-born of Shoghi Effendi's lineal descendants would succeed him did not materialize.

This event caused a crisis of faith for some believers who did not fully understand the workings of the Covenant.

These believers expected that whatever the Master wrote in His Will and Testament would come to pass.

How could 'Abdu'l-Baha, upon whom Baha'u'llah had conferred infallibility and endowed superhuman knowledge, make, in so important a document, a statement that could not be implemented, they asked. 'Abdu'l-Baha further instructed the Guardian to appoint his successor during his lifetime, which the Guardian could not do.

In the Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

18-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing.

How is it that 'Abdu'l-Baha's conditions were not fulfilled?

To resolve this perplexing question, we would do well, in the first instance, to recall that Baha'u'llah had invested 'Abdu'l-Baha with divine knowledge and that although 'Abdu'l-Baha was not a Manifestation of God, the powers of the Manifestation were conferred upon Him by Baha'u'llah.

This was proved during the 29 years of His ministry and the believers were witness that the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha, like those of Baha'u'llah, were creative.

A great many believers who attained 'Abdu'l-Baha's presence or maintained communication with Him realized that He was aware of what was hidden in the hearts of men.

But since He had clothed Himself in the mantle of servitude, He seldom spoke about the <p348> spiritual powers vested in Him by Baha'u'llah.

Occasionally, however, He opened the window of His heart to a few staunch believers and intimated to them the workings of the divine Spirit that animated the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

In an unpublished Tablet addressed to Bashir-i-Ilahi, a devoted believer and a trusted confidant residing in Shiraz, the Master revealed a glimpse of the heavenly powers conferred upon Him by Baha'u'llah.

In this Tablet 'Abdu'l-Baha acknowledges the receipt of Bashir-i-Ilahi's letter and states that on the very day the letter was written in Shiraz 'Abdu'l-Baha dictated to His secretary in 'Akka a response answering all his questions.

He gives details.

The letter written in Shiraz was dated the 9th of the month of Sha'ban; on that date the answer was issued by 'Abdu'l-Baha and it took 12 days for the Tablet to be prepared and signed by Him.

He explains that it usually took about 10 days between the time that He dictated the first draft to His secretary and the time He signed the Tablet.

Thus the answer to the letter was sent from the Holy Land on the 21st of Sha'ban.

However, the letter of the 9th of Sha'ban arrived in 'Akka on the 15th of the month of Ramadan, i.e.

24 days after 'Abdu'l-Baha had dispatched His answer to Bashir-i-Ilahi.

'Abdu'l-Baha says that this is enough proof of the power of the Covenant.

Another episode showing the Master's awareness of what is hidden in the innermost heart of people is the account of the conversion to the Faith of Mirza Muhammad-Sadiq, a talented graphic artist who lived in Tihran and was extremely antagonistic to the Faith.

He married his cousin, Gulsurkh Bagum, who some years later became a devoted believer.

Whereas in earlier years the couple lived in great harmony, after Gulsurkh Bagum's conversion to the Faith there was nothing but turmoil in the household, which lasted for years.

Gulsurkh Bagum, who was later surnamed Fa'izih (she who has attained) by 'Abdu'l-Baha was aflame with the fire of the love of Baha'u'llah.

So deep was her attachment to the Faith that in spite of opposition from her husband she emerged as a great teacher among the women and a tower of strength for the believers.

Soon her activities became a legend in the land and the enemies of the Cause were intent upon taking her life.

On one occasion, although she was wearing a veil over her face, the enemies recognized and attacked her in the street.

Inflicting numerous blows on her body using sticks and other blunt implements, they were about to kill her on the spot when someone managed to rescue her.

It took several months for her wounds and broken bones to heal and she lost sight in one eye.

But instead of dampening her enthusiasm, her sufferings increased her ardour for teaching the Cause. <p349> At home, Fa'izih encountered great opposition

from her husband but she showed the utmost love and respect towards him.

Many a time he would become so enraged as to raise his hand to beat her, but instead of resisting, Fa'izih would go forward with the aim of kissing the hand that was about to strike her because of her allegiance to the Faith.

For many years Fa'izih tried to open the eyes of her husband to see the glory of the station of Baha'u'llah.

She invited many outstanding Baha'i teachers to her home in order to converse with him but he would reject every argument they put forward and deny every proof they adduced to establish the authenticity of the claims of Baha'u'llah.

The great Baha'i teacher Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali describes his encounter with Mirza Muhammad-Sadiq.

The following is a summary translation of this interview:

The husband of Fa'izih Khanum was an obstinate and stubborn person who used to deny the truth which was presented to him...

I spoke to him about the Faith for two hours.

I found him to be angry and during this period the signs of malice and opposition were apparent from every limb of his body.

He offered me tea in a special cup because he considered me to be an infidel and, therefore, a defiled person.

In the course of my conversation with him, I quoted a verse of the Qur'an, and a tradition of Islam in support of my arguments.

He angrily retorted that such a verse was not in the Qur'an and that I was uttering slander to the Prophet of Islam by attributing such a verse to the Holy Book.

Of course I could have asked for a copy of the Book and shown him the verse in question but I knew in so doing he would feel defeated in argument and this would increase his animosity towards the Faith.

Therefore in a loving spirit I said, 'I hope that God through His bounty may guide you to the truth.' I further suggested to him that he should try to find the verse in question in the Qur'an, as well as the tradition that I had quoted for him...

I then requested permission to leave but he said that I could stay the night in his home because all he would have to do would be to wash and purify the dishes I ate from and wash the bedding after I left.

I thanked him for the hospitality and left...

The following day, Mirza Sadiq searched the Qur'an, found the verse in question and became very ashamed and sorry for the way he had treated me.

He then decided to seriously investigate the Cause but he continued to

reject the proofs which the teachers of the Faith presented to him until he wrote to 'Abdu'l-Baha.[287] [287 Haydar-'Ali, Bihjatu's-Sudur, pp.

441-3.] In his letter to 'Abdu'l-Baha, Mirza Sadiq asked certain questions, but instead of sending the letter to 'Abdu'l-Baha, he kept it in a safe and locked it.

He then placed a blank piece of paper in an envelope and asked his wife to send it to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

He assured his wife that <p350> if he received answers to his questions, he would acknowledge the truth of the Cause.

Upon receiving the envelope 'Abdu'l-Baha immediately revealed a Tablet addressed to Mirza Sadiq in which He answered all his questions.

When he received the Tablet, Mirza Sadiq was exhilarated beyond words that 'Abdu'l-Baha had responded to his questions; he went to his wife, prostrated himself at her feet and begged forgiveness for all the opposition that he had shown towards her.

In a later Tablet 'Abdu'l-Baha reminded Mirza Sadiq that until this point no one had attempted to test a servant (i.e. 'Abdu'l-Baha) by asking questions and receiving an answer.

He reminded him that the same is true of a similar situation in the Qur'an.

Having conveyed to him that it is not for man to test God, 'Abdu'l-Baha mentioned that He has responded to his questions merely because of the wonderful services that his wife had rendered to the Cause.

She suffered great persecution, remained steadfast in the face of severe opposition and demonstrated the staunchness of her faith.

It was clear, 'Abdu'l-Baha said, that her endeavours in the promotion of the Cause of God had not been in vain; rather, they would be rewarded in the Kingdom, were deeply appreciated by 'Abdu'l-Baha and were praised by all.

In this Tablet 'Abdu'l-Baha invited the couple to undertake a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah.

After visiting the Holy Shrines and the Master, both husband and wife returned home ablaze with the fire of love for the Master and played an especially important part in the promotion of the Covenant at a time when a few Covenant-breakers such as Jamal-i-Burujirdi were actively engaged in their efforts to mislead the believers in Persia.

The stories of Bashir-i-Ilahi and Mirza Muhammad-Sadiq demonstrate the fact that the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah had been endowed with powers beyond mortal ken.

On countless other occasions the Master, seeing future events, guided the believers both in their personal lives as well as on matters dealing with the Baha'i community.

Indeed, the perusal of His voluminous writings reveals the penetrating influence of His creative words, which inspired the hearts, revealed the innermost mysteries of God's creation and foreshadowed events stretching far into the future, many of which have already taken place.

No Second Guardian to Succeed Shoghi Effendi 'Abdu'l-Baha states in His Will and Testament:

18-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him <p351> that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing.

He that is appointed must manifest in himself detachment from all worldly things, must be the essence of purity, must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning.

Thus, should the first-born of the guardian of the Cause of God not manifest in himself the truth of the words: -- 'The child is the secret essence of its sire', that is, should he not inherit of the spiritual within him (the guardian of the Cause of God) and his glorious lineage not be matched with a goodly character, then must he, (the guardian of the Cause of God) choose another branch to succeed him.

The second part of the passage shows that 'Abdu'l-Baha had anticipated the possibility that, even if the Guardian had a son, this son might not have the spiritual qualities to become his successor, and had authorized the Guardian in such a circumstance to 'choose another branch to succeed him'.

However, not only did Shoghi Effendi not have any children but all the Aghsan[*] (Branches) mentioned in the above passage had violated the Covenant and had been cast out of the community.

That the detailed conditions set out by 'Abdu'l-Baha for the Guardian's appointment of his successor become inoperative remains a matter which each believer has to ponder in his own heart. [* Plural of Ghusn (Branch), an Arabic term used by Baha'u'llah to refer exclusively to His male descendants.

Thus 'Abdu'l-Baha was designated Ghusn-i-A'zam (the Most Great Branch).

Shoghi Effendi is referred to by 'Abdu'l-Baha as Ghusn-i-Mumtaz (the Chosen Branch).] There is a profound wisdom hidden in this episode of successorship, namely, that God tests the believers in order to differentiate between the faithful and the unfaithful.

After Shoghi Effendi passed away and the passages in the Will and Testament regarding a successor were not fulfilled, a number of believers were severely tested.

As stated in chapter 2, tests are an integral part of the Revelation of God.

In every Dispensation He has tested His servants in various ways.

Baha'u'llah speaks of this in many of His Tablets.

For example, explaining the significance of symbolic terms recorded in heavenly Books of the past, Baha'u'llah states in the Kitab-i-Iqan:

Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the Peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil.

From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books.[288] [288

Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p.

49.] <p352> In other passages in the same book Baha'u'llah elaborates further on the tests created by certain events in the lives of the Manifestations of old:

But inasmuch as the divine Purpose hath decreed that the true should be known from the false, and the sun from the shadow, He hath, therefore, in every season sent down upon mankind the showers of tests from His realm of glory. ...For instance, consider Moses, son of 'Imran, one of the exalted Prophets and Author of a divinely-revealed Book.

Whilst passing, one day, through the market, in His early days, ere His ministry was proclaimed, He saw two men engaged in fighting.

One of them asked the help of Moses against his opponent.

Whereupon, Moses intervened and slew him.

To this testifieth the record of the sacred Book [the Qur'an]...

While returning [from Midian,] Moses entered the holy vale, situate in the wilderness of Sinai, and there beheld the vision of the Ring of glory from the Tree that belongeth neither to the East nor to the West'.

There He heard the soul-stirring Voice of the Spirit speaking from out of the kindled Fire, bidding Him to shed upon Pharaonic souls the light of divine guidance...

And now ponder in thy heart the commotion which God stirreth up.

Reflect upon the strange and manifold trials with which He doth test His servants.

Consider how He hath suddenly chosen from among His servants, and entrusted with the exalted mission of divine guidance Him Who was known as guilty of homicide, Who, Himself, had acknowledged His cruelty, and Who for well-nigh thirty years had, in the eyes of the world, been reared in the home of Pharaoh and been nourished at his table.

Was not God, the omnipotent Ring, able to withhold the hand of Moses from

murder, so that manslaughter should not be attributed unto Him, causing bewilderment and aversion among the people?[289] [289 ibid. pp.

53-6. (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan.)] Concerning the tests associated with the person of Jesus Christ, Baha'u'llah states:

And now, meditate upon this most great convulsion, this grievous test.

Notwithstanding all these things, God conferred upon that essence of the Spirit, Who was known amongst the people as fatherless, the glory of Prophethood, and made Him His testimony unto all that are in heaven and on earth.

Behold how contrary are the ways of the Manifestations of God, as ordained by the King of creation, to the ways and desires of men![290] [290 ibid. p.

57. (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan.)] There were many tests in the Islamic Dispensation.

Baha'u'llah refers to one of them in the Kitab-i-Iqan: <p353> And likewise, reflect upon the revealed verse concerning the 'Qiblih'.[*] When Muhammad [sic], the Sun of Prophethood, had fled from the day-spring of Batha [Mecca] unto Yathrib [Medina], He continued to turn His face, while praying, unto Jerusalem, the holy city, until the time when the Jews began to utter unseemly words against Him -- words which if mentioned would ill befit these pages and would weary the reader.

Muhammad strongly resented these words.

Whilst, wrapt in meditation and wonder, He was gazing toward heaven, He heard the kindly Voice of Gabriel, saying: 'We behold Thee from above, turning Thy face to heaven; but We will have Thee turn to a Qiblih which shall please Thee.'[*] On a subsequent day, when the Prophet, together with His companions, was offering the noontide prayer, he had already performed two of the prescribed Rik'ats [prostrations], the Voice of Gabriel was heard again:

Turn Thou Thy face towards the sacred Mosque [at Mecca].[***] In the midst of that same prayer, Muhammad suddenly turned His face away from Jerusalem and faced the Ka'bah.

Whereupon, a profound dismay seized suddenly the companions of the Prophet.

Their faith was shaken severely.

So great was their alarm, that many of them, discontinuing their prayer, apostatized their faith.

Verily, God caused not this turmoil but to test and prove His servants.

Otherwise, He, the ideal King, could easily have left the Qiblih unchanged, and could have caused Jerusalem to remain the Point of

Adoration unto His Dispensation, thereby withholding not from that holy city the distinction of acceptance which had been conferred upon it.[291] [* The direction towards which the face must be turned when praying.] [** Qur'an 2:144.] [*** Qur'an 2:149.] [291 ibid. pp.

49-5 1. (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan.)] In this Dispensation, too, there have been many causes for people to be tested.

For example, the fact that Baha'u'llah had three wives at the same time has become a barrier for those who do not understand the circumstances and traditions of the time.[****] The faith of a number of the believers has also been tested by the laws of Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

And above all, the terms of the Covenant as revealed in the Kitab-i-'Ahd and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha have provided severe tests for the believers.

Such tests become barriers for those people whose vision does not extend beyond their own way of thinking.

Only through an unbiased and earnest search for truth, conducted in a prayerful attitude, can these matters be clarified and many barriers preventing the individual from recognizing the truth be removed. [**** For further details see chapter 2.] <p354> 36

Shoghi Effendi's Statements about Future Guardians

Among the tests referred to in the previous chapter are three specific factors which puzzled some of the believers:

Why Shoghi Effendi left no will provision in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will Hands of the Cause to assent successor The statement in The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah about the inseparability of the institutions of the Guardianship and the

What the significance was of the and Testament requiring the nine to the Guardian's appointment of his

Universal House of Justice A thorough study of these items will make it clear how each one, while creating further tests for the believers, was divinely ordained and contributed significantly both to the unfoldment of the Administrative Order and to a better comprehension of the mysterious forces of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

It is important to bear in mind that a true understanding of these issues depends upon each believer deeply studying the holy writings in a prayerful attitude and examining the nature of the Covenant to discover the mysteries hidden in its innermost reality.

To assist in this process, some explanation of these important issues is set down in the following pages.

In numerous letters Shoghi Effendi expounded in great detail the function of the Guardianship and the weighty responsibilities which the Master had placed upon that institution.

In many instances he referred to future Guardians.

Yet, at least towards the end of his life, Shoghi Effendi was fully aware that there was no one qualified to fill the position of Guardian after him and no one knew better than he that he had no offspring.

Nevertheless, in 1954, three years before he passed away, Shoghi Effendi wrote about the administrative Seat of the Guardianship to be built on Mount Carmel.

<p355> If one takes these statements at their face value, one can be mystified about Shoghi Effendi's intentions.

However, as we examine his relationship to the Master, the reason for such statements and the wisdom behind them become clear.

Throughout his ministry, the Guardian spoke and wrote in the context of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha and acted in harmony with the Master's words.

He never uttered a word to contradict or appear to contradict the statements of 'Abdu'l-Baha in that important document.

In His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha categorically confirmed the position of the successors to Shoghi Effendi.

In compliance with the Will and Testament, knowing that the Hand of God was involved, Shoghi Effendi remained, throughout his life, silent on the question of his own successor as Guardian.

The Question of Shoghi Effendi's Will Soon after the passing of Shoghi Effendi the body of the Hands of the Cause of God, designated by him as the 'Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth',[*] informed the Baha'i world that a thorough investigation revealed that Shoghi Effendi had not left a will. [* See chapter 33.] As we look at the history of the unfoldment of the Covenant, we note that in the Kitab-i-'Ahd Baha'u'llah appointed 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of His Covenant; in the Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha in turn, appointed Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Faith.

In both cases, the faithful knew where to turn.

But Shoghi Effendi did not leave a will and this caused some to become perplexed.

Indeed, Baha'is all over the world had taken it for granted that the Guardian would follow the same practice as Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and would appoint his successor.

That Shoghi Effendi did not write a will was due to the circumstances of his ministry and his life.

He was a most meticulous person who never left anything to chance, especially in such a vital issue as writing a will and testament in which he was to appoint a successor.

One of Baha'u'llah's injunctions in the Kitab-i-Aqdas is that every Baha'i should write a will and testament and that foremost in it he should bear

witness to the oneness of God in the Dayspring of His Revelation, Baha'u'llah.

This confession of faith is to be a testimony for him in both this world and the next.

A will also directs the distribution of wealth among one's heirs. <p356>

Regarding the first requirement, Shoghi Effendi's letter entitled The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah is one of the finest declarations of faith ever written.

Indeed, we may say that through writing this remarkable document, Shoghi Effendi fulfilled the requirement of the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

As to the second requirement for a will, which is the bequest of a person's wealth to his heirs, Shoghi Effendi did not have any worldly possessions and therefore had no need to distribute them.

Thus from this perspective it can be said that Shoghi Effendi followed Baha'u'llah's injunction with regard to the writing of a will.

As to the appointment of a successor, the Master had stated in His Will and Testament that should the 'first-born' of the Guardian not inherit his spiritual qualities, he should appoint another Ghusn (Branch).

As already noted, the word Ghusn was used by Baha'u'llah to signify His male descendants exclusively.

Shoghi Effendi was not in a position to appoint a successor because he had no son and there was not a single Ghusn who was faithful to the Cause of God.

Every one of the descendants of 'Abdu'l-Baha had been declared a Covenant-breaker.

Not only was Shoghi Effendi unable to appoint a successor but he made no written statement of this situation.

In this connection we must remember that Shoghi Effendi was the Interpreter of the Word of God.

This allowed him to explain everything in the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and apply their teachings and commandments within the framework of the exigencies of the time.

What Shoghi Effendi could not do, however, was to pronounce on subjects not recorded in the holy writings.

These fell within the purview of the Universal House of Justice, which alone has the authority to legislate on matters not revealed by the pen of Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Since 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament did not indicate the course to be taken should there be no Ghusn to succeed the Guardian, the resolution of this question did not fall within the domain of the Guardianship; it was the prerogative of the Universal House of Justice to find a solution.

The authority of the House of Justice to legislate on matters which are not in the Book was primarily given by Baha'u'llah, as seen in the following passage:

It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them.

God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth, and He, verily, is the Provider, the Omniscient.[292] [292 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, p.

68.] After the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the tests facing the believers were, in some respects, far greater than those that had descended upon the <p357> earlier believers as a result of the passing of Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha.

This time there was no will and testament; Shoghi Effendi was gone and the believers were left on their own.

In spite of this, the institutions of the Administrative Order that were born of the Covenant and had been raised by Shoghi Effendi had been strengthened to such a point that practically the whole Baha'i world community remained loyal to the Cause and its institutions.

The believers of every land remained united as one soul in many bodies and for over two years after the passing of Shoghi Effendi there was no voice of dissent anywhere.

All the believers turned to the Hands of the Cause of God and national and local spiritual assemblies declared their loyalty to them.

There was never in the history of the Faith a time when the believers demonstrated such unity and solidarity and this in spite of the uncertainty created by the circumstances resulting from the passing of Shoghi Effendi.

Indeed, this is the best proof of the indestructibility of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

As we shall see later, in April 1960 Charles Mason Remey, a Hand of the Cause of God, made a preposterous claim to be the second Guardian.

He was eventually declared a Covenant-breaker and died in ignominy some years later.

The Authority of the Hands of the Cause to Assent to the Guardian's Choice of Successor In the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha places the special responsibility of approving the choice of the Guardian upon the Hands of the Cause of God:

19-WT The Hands of the Cause of God must elect from their own number nine persons that shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the guardian of the Cause of God.

The election of these nine must be carried either unanimously or by majority from the company of the Hands of the Cause of God and these,

whether unanimously or by a majority vote, must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor.

This assent must be given in such wise as the assenting and dissenting voices may not be distinguished (i.e., secret ballot).

As previously noted, Shoghi Effendi did not appoint Hands of the Cause until 1951.

After that date it was impossible for him to appoint someone to succeed him as the next Guardian.

Therefore there was no occasion for him to implement 'Abdu'l-Baha's instructions in this regard. <p358> Indeed, the Hands, like the rest of the believers, did not know what would happen after Shoghi Effendi's passing.

The general expectation was that the Guardian would live a long life and many thought that the question of successor-ship would be clarified by him later.

But the Guardian unexpectedly passed away in 1957 at the age of 60 and from the time of his death until the Universal House of Justice made the following pronouncement, the question of a successor to Shoghi Effendi remained unresolved.

In October 1963, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

After prayerful and careful study of the Holy Texts bearing upon the question of the appointment of the successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, and after prolonged consultation which included consideration of the views of the Hands of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land, the Universal House of Justice finds that there is no way to appoint or legislate to make it possible to appoint a second Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi.[293] [293 The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p.

11.] The importance of this provision of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will was shown when Mason Remey made a claim to be the second Guardian.

The Hands not only did not assent to his claim, they rejected it outright.

We now return to the final issue that seriously tested the faith of the believers:

The Inseparability of the Two Institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice When it became clear that there would be no Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi, a number of believers were troubled by the following statement by Shoghi Effendi in *The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah*:

An attempt, I feel, should at the present juncture be made to explain the character and functions of the twin pillars that support this almighty Administrative Structure -- the institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice...

It should be stated, at the very outset, in clear and unambiguous language, that these twin institutions of the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah should be regarded as divine in origin, essential in their functions and complementary in their aim and purpose.

Their common, their fundamental object is to insure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.

Acting in conjunction with each other these two inseparable institutions administer its affairs, coordinate its activities, promote its interests, execute its laws and defend its subsidiary institutions.

Severally, each operates within a clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction; each is equipped with its own attendant institutions -- instruments designed for the effective discharge of its particular responsibilities and duties.

Each exercises, within the limitations imposed upon it, its powers, its authority, its rights and prerogatives.

These are neither contradictory, nor detract in the slightest degree from the position which each of these institutions occupies.

Far from being incompatible or mutually destructive, they supplement each other's authority and functions, and are permanently and fundamentally united in their aims.

Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Baha'u'llah would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God. 'In all the Divine Dispensations', He states, in a Tablet addressed to a follower of the Faith in Persia, 'the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions.

Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright.' Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperilled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered.

Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn.

Severed from the no less essential institution of the Universal House of Justice this same System of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha would be paralyzed in its action and would be powerless to fill in those gaps which the Author of the Kitab-i-Aqdas has deliberately left in the body of His legislative and administrative ordinances.[294] [294 Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Baha'u'llah, p.

147-8.] Shoghi Effendi's statement that 'divorced' from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Baha'u'llah would be 'mutilated' does not mean that without the Guardian the House of Justice would be ineffective.

He is rather emphasizing the inseparability of the institutions; in other words, the two institutions are 'complementary' in their functions.

In explaining this principle of inseparability, the Universal House of Justice wrote to an individual:

As you point out with many quotations, Shoghi Effendi repeatedly stressed the inseparability of these two institutions.

Whereas he obviously envisaged their functioning together, it cannot logically be deduced from this that one is unable to function in the absence of the other.

During the whole thirty-six years of his Guardianship Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice.

Now the Universal House of Justice must function without the Guardian, but the principle of inseparability remains.

The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of Baha'u'llah merely because there is no living Guardian.

We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Baha'i World Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant, or to be tempted to compromise with the clear Texts in order to find somehow, in some way, a 'Guardian'.^[295] [295 The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, pp.

86-7.] Indeed, if 'divorced from the institution of the Guardianship' means that the House of Justice without a Guardian is incapacitated, then we might ask, what about Shoghi Effendi functioning without the House of Justice?

For he says that 'severed from the no less essential institution of the Universal House of Justice this same System ... would be paralyzed'.

But obviously that was not the case.

Functioning without the institution of the House of Justice, Shoghi Effendi brought unprecedented victories to the Cause, as evidenced by the vitality of the institutions of the Cause, the phenomenal achievements of the Baha'i community, and the spirit of joy, enthusiasm and self-sacrifice which animated its members during his ministry.

Thus, we observe that the words 'divorced from' and 'mutilated' are used in the above celebrated passage to indicate that the twin pillars of the Administrative Order, namely, the institutions of the Guardianship and the

Universal House of Justice, are 'inseparable even when one of them is absent.

That 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament made provision for a successor to Shoghi Effendi did not necessarily mean that there would be one.

In this connection, the Universal House of Justice states:

Future Guardians are clearly envisaged and referred to in the Writings, but there is nowhere an promise or guarantee that the line of Guardians would endure forever; on the contrary there are clear indications that the line could be broken.

Yet, in spite of this, there is a repeated insistence in the Writings on the indestructibility of the Covenant and the immutability of God's Purpose for this Day.

One of the most striking passages which envisage the possibility of such a break in the line of Guardians is in the Kitab-i-Aqdas itself:

The endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs.

No one has the right to lay hold on them without leave from the Dawning-Place of Revelation.

After Him the decision rests with the Aghsan (Branches), and after them with the House of Justice -- should it be established in the world by then -- so that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Sites exalted in this Cause, and for that which they have been commanded by God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful.

Otherwise the endowments should be referred to the people of Baha, who speak not without His leave and who pass no judgement but in accordance with that which God has ordained in this Tablet, they who are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth, so that they may spend them on that which has been decreed in the Holy Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful.

The passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 precipitated the very situation provided for in this passage, in that the line of Aghsan ended before the House of Justice had been elected.

Although, as is seen, the ending of the line of Aghsan at some stage was provided for, we must never underestimate the grievous loss that the Faith has suffered.

God's purpose for mankind remains unchanged, however, and the mighty Covenant of Baha'u'llah remains impregnable.[296] [296 The Universal House of Justice, Messages from the Universal House of Justice, pp.

40-1.] This is one passage in the Kitab-i-Aqdas to which Shoghi Effendi refers in his Dispensation of Baha'u'llah when he writes 'the verses of the

Kitab-i-Aqdas the implications of which clearly anticipate the institution of the Guardianship'.[297] [297 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p.

147.] In the verse cited above Baha'u'llah states: 'After Him [Baha'u'llah] the decision rests with the Aghsan (Branches).' The word Aghsan, being plural, indicates that there will be more than one Branch; in this case, two: 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Most Great Branch, and Shoghi Effendi, the Chosen Branch.

This foreshadows a break in the line of the Aghsan as Baha'u'llah states, 'and after them with the House of Justice -- should it be established in the world by then'.

By 'the House of Justice' is meant the Universal House of Justice, for Baha'u'llah refers to it as a world institution.

When Shoghi Effendi passed away there was no House of Justice.

So it can be seen that the above passage in the Kitab-i-Aqdas was prophetic, in that a period of more than five years separated the passing of Shoghi Effendi from the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, and the Hands of the Cause during this period -- 'the people of Baha who speak not without His leave' -- fulfilled the last provision stated in the above text.

We can see, therefore, that the break in the line of Guardians, the custodianship of the Faith by the Hands of the Cause, and the subsequent establishment of the Universal House of Justice were vital developments that were known to Baha'u'llah and revealed by Him.

The statement, 'The people of Baha who speak not without His leave' is precisely applicable to the Hands of the Cause, because during the <p362> period of the custodianship the Hands of the Cause faithfully carried out the instructions of the Guardian.

They did not introduce any innovations in the Faith, nor did they express their own opinions or exert undue influence on the future development of the Baha'i community throughout the world.

As we meditate on the above passage from the Kitab-i-Aqdas it becomes clear that the break in the line of the Guardians after Shoghi Effendi was not an unforeseen event.

Having foreknowledge of this act, Baha'u'llah revealed the sequence of events leading to the establishment of the House of Justice.

Shoghi Effendi also, by implication, referred to the time when there would be no Guardian to direct the affairs of the Cause and the House of Justice would be the Head of the Faith.

This reference is found in a letter he wrote to the British National Assembly in 1951, in which he paid the National Assembly a glowing tribute for its launching of the 'Africa Campaign'.

This was a historic project in which, for the first time in the history of the

Formative Age, four National Spiritual Assemblies in both hemispheres worked together under the direction of the British National Assembly with the aim of establishing the institutions of the Faith on the continent of Africa.

Shoghi Effendi hailed this international cooperation as a befitting prelude to the formation of a future world-embracing Crusade in which all National Assemblies would take part.

Two years later he launched the Ten Year Crusade.

In the 1951 letter Shoghi Effendi stated that after this Crusade, other international teaching plans would be launched by the Universal House of Justice.

These are his words:

On the success of this enterprise [Ten Year World Crusade], unprecedented in its scope, unique in its character and immense in its spiritual potentialities, must depend the initiation, at a later period in the Formative Age of the Faith, of undertakings embracing within their range all National Assemblies functioning throughout the Baha'i World, undertakings constituting in themselves a prelude to the launching of world-wide enterprises destined to be embarked upon, in future epochs of that same age, by the Universal House of Justice, that will symbolize the unity and coordinate and unify the activities of these National Assemblies.[298] [298 Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, p.

261.] Bearing in mind our discussions in this and previous chapters, it is clear that Shoghi Effendi, confident of the indestructibility of the Covenant and assured of divine guidance from the Author of the Faith and the Centre of the Covenant, remained silent on the question of his successor. He knew that the institutions of the Faith which he had reared with such hard work and sacrifice would be able to deal effectively with the situation after his passing, bringing into being the Universal House of Justice, one of the twin successors of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and a divinely guided institution forever inseparable from the Guardianship. <p364>

37 The Chief Stewards, the Custodians Shoghi Effendi passed away in the sixty-first year of his life on 4 November 1957, in London, half way through the Ten Year Crusade.

His death, caused by a sudden heart attack in his sleep following Asian flu, came as a cruel blow to the Baha'is of the world and was yet another test of their steadfastness in the Covenant.

This unexpected tragedy plunged the Baha'i world into a state of utter grief and sorrow and shook the community of the Most Great Name to its foundations.

The news flashed around the world in the following cable:

Shoghi Effendi beloved of all hearts sacred trust given believers by Master passed away sudden heart attack in sleep following Asiatic flu.

Urge believers remain steadfast cling institution Hands lovingly reared recently reinforced emphasized by beloved Guardian.

Only oneness heart oneness purpose can befittingly testify loyalty all National Assemblies believers departed Guardian who sacrificed self utterly for service Faith.

Ruhiyyih[299] [299 Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

447.] Later, the news of the funeral was cabled to the Baha'i world:

Beloved all hearts precious Guardian Cause God passed peacefully away yesterday after Asiatic flu.

Appeal Hands National Assemblies Auxiliary Boards shelter believers assist meet heartrending supreme test.

Funeral our beloved Guardian Saturday London Hands Assembly Board members invited attend any press release should state meeting Hands shortly Haifa will make announcement to Baha'i world regarding future plans.

Urge hold memorial meetings Saturday.

Ruhiyyih[300] [300 ibid. (Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

447.)] These two cables were sent to the Baha'i communities from the city of Haifa, based on a decision that all communications to the Baha'i world should be issued from its World Centre.

The information that the Hands of the Cause were to meet in Haifa to 'arrange future plans' was welcomed by the Baha'is because the Hands had been appointed by the Guardian for the protection and propagation of the Faith and were its highest dignitaries.

There were <p365> 27 Hands living when Shoghi Effendi passed away and nobody was more suited to advise the believers about the future development of the Cause and to consider the question of a successor to Shoghi Effendi.

Almost the entire Baha'i community expected that the will and testament of Shoghi Effendi would announce the appointment of his successor, as the wills of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha had done.

For almost a month, the Baha'is of the world waited anxiously for news of this matter from the beloved and trusted Hands of the Cause but the news, when it finally came, was that the Guardian had left no will.

It is significant that five months before he passed away, Shoghi Effendi sent a cablegram to the Baha'i world in which he conferred upon the Hands of the Cause the responsibility of protecting the Baha'i community.

In another message one month before his passing, he referred to the Hands as 'the Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth'.[*] These two messages from Shoghi Effendi contained strong indications regarding the future destiny of the Cause and led the Baha'i community to rally around the

Hands after his passing.

The first message, quoted in full in chapter 34, was sent on 4 June 1957. [* See chapter 33.] Under the guidance and loving care of 'Abdu'l-Baha the infant Faith of Baha'u'llah grew up protected from the onslaught of the Covenant-breakers and acquired greater strength and vitality.

The message of Baha'u'llah reached the peoples both of the East and the West and, although not fully integrated, small Baha'i communities sprang up in several countries of the world.

Again, measures similar to those taken by Baha'u'llah were adopted by 'Abdu'l-Baha when He appointed Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian to nurture the tender and flourishing Faith, which was still vulnerable to attacks from within and without the community.

During the 36 years of the Guardianship Shoghi Effendi built up the foundations of the institutions of the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah, which were to act as channels for the outpouring of the spiritual energies latent in His Revelation.

These institutions, which derive their authority from the Kitab-i-Aqdas and from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha became bastions of protection for the Baha'is of the world.

When Shoghi Effendi passed away, the Administrative Order was well established.

By virtue of these institutions the Faith of Baha'u'llah had become impregnable and the body of the believers was united and harmonized.

The forces of negation, which had attacked the Faith from within after the ascensions of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and <p366> which had posed severe threats to its unity, were now impotent to penetrate the mighty stronghold of the Administrative Order that Shoghi Effendi had built up with meticulous care and with so much personal suffering.

After the sudden passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Baha'i community, having learned from the Hands of the Cause that Shoghi Effendi had left no will, was at first shaken and dismayed, but soon it recovered and organised itself to carry on the work without a Guardian.

The following are excerpts from the first letter by the Hands of the Cause addressed to the Baha'is of the world on this issue:

Beloved Friends:

Nine days had not yet elapsed after the interment of the sacred remains of our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, in London, when the Hands of the Cause, to the number of twenty-six, assembled at the World Centre of the Faith, in our capacity as 'Chief Stewards of the embryonic World Commonwealth of Baha'u'llah', to consult together on the most tragic situation facing the Baha'is since the Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha and to take all necessary and appropriate measures to safeguard the highest

interests of our Faith.

On November 18th the Hands conducted a Memorial Meeting at Bahji, in the Haram-i-Aqdas surrounding the most sacred Shrine in the Baha'i world, afterward entering the Holy Tomb itself and prostrating ourselves in utter humility at the Sacred Threshold.

On the following morning, November 19th, nine Hands of the Cause; selected from the Holy Land, and the several continents of East and West, with Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum, broke the seals placed upon the beloved Guardian's safe and desk and made careful examination of their precious contents.

These same Hands, rejoining the other Hands assembled in the Mansion of Baha'u'llah at Bahji, certified that Shoghi Effendi had left no Will and Testament.

It was likewise certified that the beloved Guardian had left no heir The Aghsan (branches) one and all are either dead or have been declared violators of the Covenant by the Guardian for their faithlessness to the Master's Will and Testament and their hostility to him named first Guardian in that sacred document.

The first effect of the realization that no successor to Shoghi Effendi could have been appointed by him was to plunge the Hands of the Cause into the very abyss of despair.

What must happen to the world community of his devoted followers if the Leader, the Inspirer, the Planner of all Baha'i activities in all countries and islands of the seas could no longer fulfil his unique mission?

From this dark abyss, however, contemplation of the Guardian's own life of complete sacrifice and his peerless services gradually redeemed our anguished hearts.

Shoghi Effendi himself, we know, would have been the first to remind the Hands, and the widespread body of the believers, that the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah <p367> has quickened those powers and resources of faith within mankind which will achieve the unity of the peoples and the triumph of His World Order.

In this new light of understanding the company of the Hands could perceive with heightened gratitude the existence of those innumerable blessings which Shoghi Effendi had created and left as his true legacy to all Baha'is.

Has not the World Centre, with its sacred Shrines and institutions, been firmly established?

Has not the Message been established in 254 countries and dependencies?

Have not the National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies, forerunners of

the Universal House of Justice, been implanted in twenty-six great areas of all continents?

Has not the Guardian left us not only his incomparable translations, for English-reading Baha'is, of the Baha'i sacred literature but also his own master works of interpretation which disclose to us the unshatterable edifice of an evolving Baha'i Order and world community?

Has not the Guardian, building upon the enduring foundation of the Master's Tablets of the Divine Plan, created the World Crusade to guide our work until 1963? ...Such reflections could but, in such a world-shattering experience as all Baha'is have this month endured, reveal to us how strongly Shoghi Effendi has laid the foundations of the World Order of Baha'u'llah through the appointment of Hands of the Cause and likewise the appointment of the International Baha'i Council, the institution destined to evolve into the Universal House of Justice.

In our capacity of Chief Stewards of the embryonic World Commonwealth of Baha'u'llah, we Hands of the Cause have as constituted a body of nine Hands to serve at the Baha'i World Centre.

This body of nine Hands will energetically deal with the protection of the Faith whenever attacks, whether from within or outside the Baha'i community, are reported by Hands from their areas or by National or Regional Assemblies, or whether they arise within the Holy Land.

Correspondence will likewise be maintained with the Hands of the Cause working in the several continents.

This same body will correspond with National Assemblies on matters connected with the prosecution of the objectives of the Ten Year Plan.

On matters involving administrative questions this same body will assist National Assemblies by citing those passages of the Baha'i sacred literature which direct the Assemblies to a sound solution.

As to the International Baha'i Council, appointed by the Guardian and heralded in his communications to the Baha'i world, that body will in the course of time finally fulfil its purpose through the formation of the Universal House of Justice, that supreme body upon which infallibility, as the Master's Testament assures us, is divinely conferred:

The source of all good and freed from all error.'...

Meanwhile the entire body of the Hands assembled by the nine Hands of the World Centre will decide when and how the International Baha'i Council is to evolve through the successive stages outlined by the Guardian, culminating in the call to election of the Universal House of Justice by the membership of all National Spiritual Assemblies.

When that divinely ordained Body comes into existence, all the conditions of the Faith can be examined anew and the measures necessary for its

future operation determined in consultation with the Hands of the Cause.[301] [301 'Proclamation by the Hands of the Cause to the Baha'is of East and West', 25 November 1957, in Baha'i World, vol.

13, pp.

341-3.] The believers faithfully rallied around the Hands of the Cause, who now assumed the function of guiding the Baha'i world.

All National Spiritual Assemblies declared their loyalty to the Hands and turned to that institution with devotion.

The nine Hands appointed to serve at the World Centre were referred to as 'Custodians of the Faith'.

From the outset the Hands made it clear to the Baha'is that, unlike the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice, the Hands were not promised infallible guidance.

The only way that they could carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily was to follow faithfully the provisions of the Ten Year Plan as delineated by the Guardian.

In this way, there was no danger of misguiding the community.

The greatest achievement of the Hands in this period is that they did not deviate a hair's breadth from the teachings and guidance of Shoghi Effendi.

For more than five years they held the reins of the Cause in their hands -- a period that may be regarded as the most critical stage in the history of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

From the day the Faith was born until the passing of Shoghi Effendi divine protection had been vouchsafed to the community.

For 113 years the infant Faith of Baha'u'llah had been nurtured by the infallible guidance of its Central Figures and its Guardian.

Now it was entrusted to the care of a number of religious leaders, the Hands of the Cause, who did not have this promise of divine guidance.

It was a period fraught with dangers.

In the same way that a newly built airplane is subjected to a series of rigorous tests in order to be sure that it works properly, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah was severely tried during these six years and found to be absolutely impregnable.

The custodianship of the Hands was itself a proof of the invincibility of the Covenant, in that, unlike the leaders of former religions who introduced many man-made practices into the teachings of their Prophets, the Hands of the Cause did not add even a single dot to the Cause, nor did they introduce any innovation into the workings of its institutions.

They guided the Baha'i community strictly in accordance with the holy text and

the writings of the Guardian.

Their responses to questions from National Spiritual Assemblies and individuals were based on the holy writings and if they could not find the answer in the Tablets of Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha or in the letters of Shoghi Effendi they strictly refrained from making any pronouncement.

Such questions were left to be determined by the Universal House of Justice in the future.

The Hands acted with such loyalty that when they handed over the Cause of God, pure and unadulterated, to the elected body of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 the whole Baha'i world acclaimed their devotion.

This generation and those yet unborn owe the Hands of the Cause an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

Through their faithfulness they took the Ark of the Covenant from the hands of the Guardian, steered it for over five years through treacherous waters, brought it safely to the shores of salvation and humbly delivered it into the hands of the Universal House of Justice.

This period witnessed the emergence of a new brand of Covenant-breakers, headed by Mason Remey, who had himself been appointed a Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi and was one of the signatories of the first declaration of the Hands issued after the passing of Shoghi Effendi.

In order to appreciate the genesis of this rebellion against the Covenant we must look back at the Baha'i community as it was then.

At that time there were some believers who thought that the Faith must always have a Guardian.

When it became clear that Shoghi Effendi had not appointed a successor, some Baha'is failed to appreciate the true significance of Shoghi Effendi's silence in this matter.

Because they had not understood the spirit of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, they insisted that a second Guardian must be created.

Mason Remey, after a distinguished life of service, succumbed to both ambition and arrogance, which impelled him, without any word of instruction from Shoghi Effendi, to concoct the extraordinarily tortuous argument on which he based his claim to the Guardianship and assumed for himself the responsibility of guiding the Baha'i world.

In His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha extolled Shoghi Effendi as the 'sign of God', the 'chosen branch', the 'blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees', 'the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas'.

Such a being was created by God especially to be the Guardian of the Cause and his appointment was made by the Centre of the Covenant Himself.

He was a descendant both of Baha'u'llah and of the family of the Bab.

How could a few individuals who looked for leadership and sought power for their own selfish interests raise up a lesser man to the station of the Guardianship?

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha laid down the conditions that Shoghi Effendi's successor must be either the 'first-born' of the Guardian or <p370> another Ghusun (male descendant of Baha'u'llah) and that the Hands of the Cause must give their assent to his choice.

How could Mason Remey fulfil these conditions?

It is interesting to note that, in a Tablet to the Hand of the Cause of God Mulla 'Ali-Akbar, 'Abdu'l-Baha makes this important statement:

...for 'Abdu'l-Baha is in a tempest of dangers and infinitely abhors differences of opinion...Praise be to God, there are no grounds for differences.

The Bab, the Exalted One, is the Morn of Truth, the splendour of Whose light shineth through all regions.

He is also the Harbinger of the Most Great Light, the Abha Luminary.

The Blessed Beauty is the One promised by the sacred books of the past, the revelation of the Source of light that shone upon Mount Sinai, Whose fire glowed in the midst of the Burning Bush.

We are, one and all, servants of Their threshold, and stand each as a lowly keeper at Their door.

My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one has the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship.

The Most Holy Book is the Book to which all peoples shall refer, and in it the Laws of God have been revealed.

Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the Universal House of Justice.

There will be no grounds for difference...

Beware, beware lest anyone create a rift or stir up sedition.[302] [302 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p.

47.] After Mason Remey made his absurd claim, the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land tried their utmost to bring him to his senses.

But in his delusion he persisted on his errant course; consequently he and those few who followed him were declared to be Covenant-breakers.

The Baha'i community was once again purged by this process; the impurities that would have imposed dire afflictions upon the Faith, had they been allowed to remain within the fold, were cast out, resulting in the revitalization of the

body of the Cause of God.

This episode of Covenant-breaking by Mason Remey was one of the flimsiest of all rebellions in the history of the Faith.

It did not take very long before a number of those who had been misled by him realized their mistake, repented and returned to the community or withdrew from the Faith altogether.

Mason Remey's efforts to form a following for himself failed miserably.

Ultimately, he went so far as to deny the infallibility of Shoghi Effendi and to impute errors to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

After his death, serious rivalries broke out between his lieutenants, who claimed to be his successors.

The divinely ordained instruments serving the Covenant of Baha'u'llah have been so strengthened today that the efforts of this group of Covenant-breakers <p371> have come to naught and the power of the Covenant has driven them into oblivion.

Those few who gathered around Mason Remey -- and others who in recent times have taken his place -- have tried to justify their rebellion against the Covenant.

They misled themselves through their interpretation of the word 'branch' mentioned in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha regarding a successor to Shoghi Effendi.

They claimed that since Baha'u'llah referred to human beings as 'the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch', any believer was a branch who could succeed Shoghi Effendi.

This assumption was made either through self-deception or ignorance -- or perhaps both.

The word Ghusn (branch), used by Baha'u'llah to refer to His male descendants, is Arabic; the term in the other passage is Persian and is a different word, never used by Baha'u'llah to refer to His male descendants.

Both, however, have been translated into English as 'branch'.

Before Mason Remey's preposterous claim, the wisdom of the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament that the Hands of the Cause 'must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor' was not clear to some.

But after Remey's defection, it became evident that this requirement was a means for the protection of the Cause of God.

Far from assenting to the validity of his appointment as successor to Shoghi Effendi, the Hands were able unanimously to deny it.

Propelled by the forces of the Covenant, during the custodianship of the Hands

of the Cause of God the Faith of Baha'u'llah advanced to such an extent as to eclipse the victories that had been won in preceding decades.

The teaching work in five continents of the globe was intensified as the believers exerted themselves to win the goals of the Ten Year Crusade that the Guardian had formulated.

Great numbers entered the Faith, especially in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Tens of thousands swelled the number of believers in the sub-continent of India when the Baha'i community there experienced large scale entry by troops.

The number of local spiritual assemblies, the bedrock upon which the national spiritual assemblies were established, vastly increased and more national spiritual assemblies were also formed during the remaining years of the Ten Year Crusade.

In 1961 the Hands of the Cause arranged for the election of the International Baha'i Council, the forerunner of the Universal House of Justice.

The electors were members of the national spiritual assemblies that were functioning at the time in the five continents of the globe.

In this way the International Baha'i Council, whose members had been appointed by the Guardian, was transformed into an elected body. <p372> The call for the election of the Universal House of Justice was made by the Hands of the Cause in their message of 5 November 1961 to the Baha'i world, from which the following excerpts are taken:

With the erection in 1962 of twelve more future pillars[*] of that supreme legislative Body of the Baha'i world, a firm foundation will have been laid for the election of 'that Universal House of Justice which', Shoghi Effendi stated, 'as its title implies, is to be the exponent and guardian of that Divine Justice which can alone ensure the security of, and establish the reign of law and order in, a strangely disordered world.' [* National spiritual assemblies.

These twelve national spiritual assemblies (11 in Europe, one in Ceylon) brought the number of national spiritual assemblies in the world to 56.]

We are now able to envisage the steps that must still be taken before that 'Ark' referred to in Baha'u'llah's prophetic Tablet of Carmel shall come into being, an ark whose dwellers, the Guardian told us, 'are the men of the Supreme House of Justice which, in conformity with the exact provisions of the Will and Testament of the Centre of the Mighty Covenant, is the Body which should legislate on laws not explicitly revealed in the Text.

In this Dispensation, these laws are destined to flow from this Holy Mountain, even as in the Mosaic Dispensation the law of God was promulgated from Zion.' The Chief Stewards of the Faith are therefore calling a Convention in the Holy Land for the election of the Universal House of Justice on the first, second and third days of Ridvan,

1963.

The members of all National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies elected by the Baha'is in Ridvan, 1962, will, in conformity with the teachings, constitute the electoral body empowered to vote for this crowning unit of the embryonic World Order of Baha'u'llah, upon whose deliberations the unique bounty of receiving divine inspiration has been bestowed, and whose decisions are infallibly guided by both the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

After long and conscientious consideration of the needs of the present hour and the writings of our dearly-loved Guardian, the following decision has been reached:

All male voting members throughout the Baha'i world are eligible for election to the Universal House of Justice.

The Hands of the Cause do not limit the freedom of the electors.

However, as they have been given the explicit duties of guarding over the security and ensuring the propagation of the Faith, they ask the electors to leave them free at this time to discharge their duties.

When that supreme and infallible Body has been elected it will decide on all matters concerning its own membership.[303] [303 Conclave Message 1961, in Ministry of the Custodians, pp.

321-2.] On 21 April 1963, exactly one hundred years after the declaration of Baha'u'llah in the Garden of Ridvan in Baghdad, the members of <p373> 56 national spiritual assemblies throughout the world took part in the election of the Universal House of Justice.

The voting occurred in the home of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Haifa, in a profoundly spiritual atmosphere.

Thus the 'sailing of the Ark upon Mount Carmel', prophesied by Baha'u'llah, took place and the House of Justice came into being.

It was a moment of relief and supreme joy for the members of the national spiritual assemblies and the Hands of the Cause to witness the birth of an institution which is to be the source of divine guidance until the end of this Dispensation.

On this momentous occasion the Hands of the Cause sent the following message to the Baha'i communities throughout the world:

OCCASION WORLDWIDE CELEBRATIONS MOST GREAT JUBILEE COMMEMORATING
CENTENARY ASCENSION BAHA'U'LLAH THRONE HIS SOVEREIGNTY WITH HEARTS
OVERFLOWING GRATITUDE HIS UNFAILING PROTECTION OVERFLOWING BOUNTIES
JOYOUSLY ANNOUNCE FRIENDS EAST WEST ELECTION SUPREME LEGISLATIVE BODY
ORDAINED BY HIM IN HIS MOST HOLY BOOK PROMISED BY HIM RECEIVE HIS
INFALLIBLE GUIDANCE STOP MEMBERS FIRST HISTORIC HOUSE JUSTICE DULY
ELECTED BY DELEGATES COMPRISING MEMBERS FIFIYSIX NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES ARE
CHARLES WOLCOTT ALI NAKHJAVANI BORRAH KAVELIN IAN SEMPLE LOTFULLAH HAKIM

DAVID HOFMAN HUGH CHANCE AMOZ GIBSON HUSHMAND FATHEAZAM STOP TO
JUBILATION ENTIRE BAHAI WORLD VICTORIOUS COMPLETION BELOVED GUARDIAN'S
UNIQUE CRUSADE NOW ADDED HUMBLE GRATITUDE PROFOUND THANKSGIVING
FOLLOWERS BAHU'LLAH FOR ERECTION UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE AUGUST BODY TO
WHOM ALL BELIEVERS MUST TURN WHOSE DESTINY IS TO GUIDE UNFOLDMENT HIS
EMBRYONIC WORLD ORDER THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS PRESCRIBED BY
BAHA'U'LLAH ELABORATED BY ABDU'L-BAHA LABORIOUSLY ERECTED BY SHOGHI
EFFENDI AND ENSURE EARLY DAWN GOLDEN AGE FAITH WHEN THE WORD OF THE LORD
WILL COVER THE EARTH AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA STOP...[304] [304
Cablegram from the Hands of the Cause, 21 April 1963, in *ibid.* pp.

425-6. (Ministry of the Custodians.)] <p374>

38 The Universal House of Justice Baha'u'llah ordained the
institution of the Universal House of Justice as a channel of divine guidance
and endowed it with infallibility.

These are His words, as revealed in the *Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih*:

It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel
together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in
the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them.

God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth, and He, verily,
is the Provider, the Omniscient.[305] [305 Baha'u'llah, *Tablets*, p.

68.] Further, in the *Tablet of Ishraqat*, Baha'u'llah states:

This passage, now written by the Pen of Glory, is accounted as part of
the Most Holy Book:

The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of
the people.

They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the
daysprings of authority in His countries.

O people of God!

That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two
pillars, reward and punishment.

These two pillars are the souses of life to the world.

Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an
expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the House of
Justice that the members thereof may act according to the needs and
requirements of the time.

They that, for the sake of God, arise to serve His Cause, are the
recipients of divine inspiration from the unseen Kingdom.

It is incumbent upon all to be obedient unto them.

All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice, but acts

of worship must be observed according to that which God hath revealed in His Book.[306] [306 ibid. pp.

128-9. (Baha'u'llah, Tablets.)] In the same Tablet Baha'u'llah further enjoins the men of the House of Justice to train people and raise up the nations:

It is incumbent upon the men of Gods House of Justice to fix their gaze by day and by night upon that which hath shone forth from the Pen of Glory for the training of peoples, the upbuilding of nations, the protection of man and the safeguarding of his honour.[307] [307 ibid. p.

125. (Baha'u'llah, Tablets.)] <p375> These passages revealed by the Author of the Faith demonstrate that the Universal House of Justice derives its authority directly from Baha'u'llah Himself.

There is also the promise of divine guidance which He vouchsafes unto that Body, for He says: 'God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth...'[308] [308 ibid. p.

68. (Baha'u'llah, Tablets.)] The authority and infallibility which Baha'u'llah has conferred upon the Universal House of Justice have been further strengthened by the words of the Master in His Tablets, especially the following passages of His Will and Testament:

17-WT The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of the Cause of God as well as the Universal House of Justice, to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both).

Whatsoever they decide is of God.

Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God...

And again He writes:

36-WT This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Baha (may my life be offered up for them): 'His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Bab), is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the forerunner of the Ancient Beauty.

His Holiness the Abha Beauty (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence.

All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.' Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice.

That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant.

With the creation of the Universal House of Justice a new era opened in the history of the Baha'i Faith.

Divine guidance had been vouchsafed to the community for almost 113 years, first through the persons of the Manifestations of God, then through the chosen Centre of the Cause and the authorized interpreter of His words.

But now, with the passing of Shoghi Effendi and the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, the vehicle of that guidance was changed from the channel of an individual, organically linked to the Manifestation of God, to an elected body of fallible members whose collective resolutions are guided by Baha'u'llah, who conferred infallibility upon the institution. <p376?

This provision of the continuity of divine guidance on matters which are within the prerogative of the House of Justice, and which are clearly defined to exclude any changes to the laws, the teachings and other provisions revealed in the Baha'i scriptures, is unique in the history of religion.

Never before has a Manifestation of God given authority to a council elected by universal suffrage to enact laws and administer the affairs of His religion with the assurance that it will be guided by God in its decisions.

In this Dispensation, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah has provided mankind with the continuity of divine guidance on all problems that have caused differences, questions that are obscure, and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book.

The manner of the election of the Universal House of Justice has been prescribed by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament:

36-WT By this House is meant that Universal House of Justice which is to be elected from all countries, that is from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England.

The Universal House of Justice was instituted in 1963, when members of the national spiritual assemblies, in a prayerful attitude and in an atmosphere of intense spirituality and profound devotion, elected as members of this supreme institution nine souls from among the Baha'is of the world.

The occasion is considered by the Baha'is to be, next to the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Faith, the most momentous event in the history of the Formative Age of the Faith.

Even the manner of the election itself was befitting that institution described as the 'sole refuge of a tottering civilization'.

The election of the Universal House of Justice now takes place every five years in the same atmosphere of spirituality and dedication.

Baha'i elections are unlike any of the other forms of election currently practised in the various parts of the world.

For a Baha'i, it is an act of devotion to God to elect members of Baha'i institutions.

There are no candidates, no propaganda and no canvassing of any kind and the elections are conducted in a spirit of prayer and meditation.

It is a sacred responsibility of the electorate to vote for those 'who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience'. [309] The act of voting in Baha'i elections is free and secret; even the closest of relatives or friends do not consult together on their choice.

To do so would be tantamount to breaking one of God's sacred spiritual commandments. [309 Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p.

88.] <p377> Every religion has spiritual and moral teachings.

The Sermon on the Mount, for example, epitomizing the spiritual and moral teachings of Christ, has made a deep and abiding impression upon the followers of Jesus.

Other religions have similar spiritual teachings.

The passage of time does not usually affect the reverence with which the adherents view these teachings; for example, Muslims conscientiously carry out the law of daily prayer because they consider this teaching to be God's commandment and regard its violation as a sinful act.

Not until the advent of the Baha'i Dispensation did a Manifestation of God include administrative principles among His spiritual teachings.

Baha'u'llah has introduced an entirely new dimension; He has placed the spiritual and administrative principles on a par and so a violation of an administrative principle, such as electioneering, is as grave a betrayal of the Cause of Baha'u'llah as breaking a spiritual law.

The purity, the integrity and incorruptibility of Baha'i institutions are thereby preserved and the institutions themselves are protected from malpractice.

Because the Universal House of Justice was ordained by Baha'u'llah as a channel of divine guidance and endowed by Him with infallibility, it should not be considered as merely the international administrative body of the Faith.

The question of infallibility has already been discussed in the Introduction.

The Manifestations of God -- in this day, the Bab and Baha'u'llah -- are inherently possessed of supreme infallibility.

In this they are analogous to the sun, which produces its own heat and light, and is thus independent of other sources of energy. But 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice are under the protection of Baha'u'llah, who conferred infallibility upon them.

They are like the moon, in which light is not inherent but rather reflected by the sun.

Their infallibility is validated in the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and specifically in Baha'u'llah's Kitab-i-'Ahd (the Book of the Covenant) and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The following are the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha in this connection:

To epitomize: essential infallibility belongs especially to the supreme Manifestations, and acquired infallibility is granted to every holy soul.

For instance, the Universal House of Justice, if it be established under the necessary conditions -- with members elected from all the people -- that House of Justice will be under the protection and the unerring guidance of God.

If that House of Justice shall decide unanimously, or by a majority, upon any question not mentioned in the Book, that decision and command will be guarded from mistake.

Now the members of the House of Justice have not, individually, essential infallibility; but the body of the House of Justice is under the protection and the unerring guidance of God: this is called conferred infallibility.[310] [310 'Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, pp.

172-3.] <p378> From study of the writings cited above, it becomes clear that it is an article of faith for a Baha'i to believe in the authority and infallibility of the Universal House of Justice.

An individual embraces the Faith of Baha'u'llah when he recognizes Him to be the Manifestation of God for this age.

But this is only the beginning of the process of becoming a Baha'i.

The recognition of Baha'u'llah must be followed by an acknowledgement of the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the Centre of the Covenant and Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Faith and belief that their words and their interpretations of the holy writings are divinely guided and infallible.

Similarly, a Baha'i must believe that the Universal House of Justice is now the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution, that its pronouncements, legislation and general instructions are all derived from the unerring guidance of Baha'u'llah and the Bab, and, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself.' It does not seem possible for a person who is not a Baha'i to accept the House of Justice as 'the source of all good and freed from all error', nor is it possible to prove this statement to him scientifically.

The only way that someone can become convinced of the authority and infallibility of the Universal House of Justice is to recognize Baha'u'llah as God's Messenger for this age.

Then, as a matter of faith, he will be able to accept His assurances in this regard and become convinced of the truths enshrined in His words.

As the believer grows in his faith and acquires greater depth in his understanding of the teachings of Baha'u'llah, he becomes progressively more assured that the Blessed Beauty 'shall guard it [the Universal House of Justice] from error and will protect it under the wing of His sanctity and infallibility'.

Remarking further on the protection which the Blessed Beauty provides for the Universal House of Justice, the Master states:

Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions.

God forbid!

The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.

Say, O People:

Verily the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful, that is under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified, and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely ordained and of <p379> the Kingdom of Heaven and whose laws are inspired and spiritual.[311] [311 'Abdu'l-Baha quoted in the Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, pp.

84-5.] Even a cursory review of the workings of the House of Justice since its establishment in 1963 makes it clear to a believer that the assurances given by 'Abdu'l-Baha have all been fulfilled, that every directive issued by that body has been divinely inspired and that every plan it has devised and every act it has carried out have been blessed by Providence.

Its achievements and victories, both at the World Centre of the Faith and around the world, and the progress it has made during the last three decades despite its modest resources, have been miraculous.

In circumstances of crisis as well as triumph, the House of Justice has been enabled to steer the Baha'i community on the course set for it by the hand of the Almighty.

All these accomplishments are entirely due to the assistance and confirmations of Baha'u'llah, which have reached it continuously and guided every step it has taken in the execution of God's plan for mankind.

It is natural that the members of the House of Justice are always conscious of that outpouring of divine assistance; they know only too well that the

decisions of the House are guided by Baha'u'llah.

They have openly declared before their electors their sense of unworthiness to serve on that august institution but have confidently taken on the burden of such immense responsibility in the assurance of the protection, guidance and confirmations of Baha'u'llah that reach them during their deliberations.

One of the most important decisions made by the Universal House of Justice soon after its election was to clarify the issue of another Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi.

As we have already stated in chapter 37, since 'Abdu'l-Baha remained silent about how to deal with the situation in which there was no lineal descendant of Shoghi Effendi or another Ghosn to succeed him as the second Guardian, the question had to be resolved by the House of Justice and not the Guardian of the Faith.

The following statement was issued on 6 October 1963:

After prayerful and careful study of the Holy Texts bearing upon the question of the appointment of the successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, and after prolonged consultation which included consideration of the views of the Hands of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land, the Universal House of Justice finds that there is no way to appoint or legislate to make it possible to appoint a second Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi.[312] [312 The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p.

11.] A similar statement was issued by the House of Justice concerning the Hands of the Cause of God: <p380> There is no way to appoint, or to legislate to make it possible to appoint, Hands of the Cause of God.

Responsibility for decisions of matters of general policy affecting the institution of the Hands of the Cause, which was formerly exercised by the beloved Guardian, now devolves upon the Universal House of Justice as the supreme and central institution of the Faith to which all must turn.[313] [313 *ibid.* p.

41. (The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance.)] There were other issues that the House of Justice also had to resolve because the absence of a second Guardian created a situation for which Abdu'l-Baha had left no guidance and for which no provision had been made.

In other words, the holy writings did not deal with certain issues and therefore their resolution needed the legislation of the House of Justice.

For example, among the buildings which Shoghi Effendi recommended to be constructed on a far-flung arc on Mount Carmel was the Seat of the institution of the Guardianship, as well as that of the Hands of the Cause.

The House of Justice had to legislate to change these into the Centre for the Study of the Sacred Texts and the Seat of the International Teaching Centre.

To give another example of a situation about which there was no specific guidance, 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament states that the Guardian has the right to expel any member of the House of Justice who commits 'a sin injurious to the common weal'.

But he does not say what should be done if there is no Guardian and so the House of Justice decided that this function should fall upon the Universal House of Justice itself.

In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha describes some of the functions of the Universal House of Justice:

37-WT It is incumbent upon these members (of the Universal House of Justice) to gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book.

Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself.

And inasmuch as this House of Justice hath power to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear upon daily transactions, so also it hath power to repeal the same.

Thus, for example, the House of Justice enacteth today a certain law and enforceth it, and a hundred years hence, circumstances having profoundly changed and the conditions having altered, another House of Justice will then have power, according to the exigencies of the time, to alter that law.

This it can do because that law formeth no part of the Divine Explicit Text.

The House of Justice is both the initiator and the abrogator of its own laws. <p381> 25-WT And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers.

Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind.

By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one.

Unto this body all things must be referred.

It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text.

By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved and the guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body.

Should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him.

Should any of the members commit a sin, injurious to the common weal, the guardian of the Cause of God hath at his own discretion the right to expel him...

In these two passages, 'Abdu'l-Baha gives a wide range of authority to the House of Justice.

It has to make decisions on the following: 'All problems which cause difference' 'Questions that are obscure' 'Matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book' 'Unto this body all things must be referred' 'It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text' 'By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved' These, together with the exhortations of Baha'u'llah Himself, constitute a list of duties and functions which the Universal House of Justice must discharge.

These functions exclude 'interpretation of the Holy Text', which is a special prerogative of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi as authorized Interpreters of the Word of God.

There is a vast difference between the interpretations of the Guardian and the elucidations of the House of Justice in the exercise of its function to 'deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure, and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book'.

The elucidation of the House of Justice originates from its legislative function.

It offers guidance and elucidates what must be done in cases where there is some ambiguity in the interpretations of the Guardian or 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The legislation of the House of Justice is based on the elucidation of the issues involved and can be amended by the House of Justice when circumstances change, whereas the interpretations of the Guardian are statements of truth that cannot be changed.

As previously stated, an important feature of the functioning of the House of Justice is that it consults the writings of the Guardian when it begins the process of legislation or is about to make decisions on various issues.

In this way, it ensures that its pronouncements are not in conflict with the meaning of the holy text as interpreted by the Guardian.

Thus until the end of this Dispensation, there will be a meaningful interaction between the two pillars of the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah, namely the institution of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.

Far from being divorced from each other, these two institutions will ensure their organic unity and will guarantee the sound development of the Baha'i community through the integration of the interpretative and legislative

functions of the Administrative Order.

In His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

25-WT ...the guardian of the Cause of God is its [the Universal House of Justice] sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body.

While this situation did not materialize, we observe a great wisdom in 'Abdu'l-Baha's appointment of the Guardian as the head of the House of Justice.

The result was that the House of Justice decided not to have officers.

In the House of Justice all members have equal responsibility; each one is a servant of Baha'u'llah.

The membership of the Universal House of Justice is confined to men, a position taken from the explicit writings of Baha'u'llah and therefore not subject to change through legislation of the House of Justice.

The fact that the members of the House of Justice are men should not be regarded as a negation of the principle of the equality of men and women proclaimed by Baha'u'llah in His teachings.

Concerning the equality of men and women, 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

And among the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the equality of women and men.

The world of humanity has two wings -- one is women and the other men.

Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly.

Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible.

Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be.[314] [314 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections, p.

302.] <p383> To appreciate this apparent contradiction, one should look at different aspects of equality.

First, there is the equality of the spirit.

We are told that although God has created men and women to be physically different, there is no difference between the soul of a man and the soul of a woman.

Both have the same attributes of God and are created in His image and this is the most important aspect of equality. 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

Know thou, O handmaid, that in the sight of Baha, women are accounted the same as men, and God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness.

That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them.

Whosoever draweth nearer to God, that one is the most favoured, whether man or woman.

How many a handmaid, ardent and devoted, hath, within the sheltering shade of Baha, proved superior to the men, and surpassed the famous of the earth.[315] [315 *ibid.* pp .79-80. ('Abdu'l-Baha, Selections.)] Another aspect of equality is that of rights and privileges.

Here again 'Abdu'l-Baha is unequivocal:

In the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, women are advancing side by side with the men.

There is no area or instance where they will lag behind: they have equal rights with men, and will enter, in the future, into all branches of the administration of society.

Such will be their elevation that, in every area of endeavour, they will occupy the highest levels in the human world[.316] [316 'Abdu'l-Baha in *Compilation*, vol.

1, p.

416.] Equality, however, should not be confused with identity of function, as it is not always possible for women and men to perform identical functions.

Baha'u'llah, in creating the institution of the Universal House of Justice, has limited its membership to men.

In a Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Baha confirms this:

According to the ordinances of the Faith of God, women are the equals of men in all rights save only that of membership on the Universal House of Justice, for, as hath been stated in the text of the Book, both the head and the members of the House of Justice must be men.

However, in all other bodies, such as the Temple Construction Committee, the Teaching Committee, the Spiritual Assembly, and in charitable and scientific associations, women share equally in all rights with men.[317] [317 Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to Corinne True, translated by the Baha'i World Centre, 1977.

The original translation was made by Ameen Farid on 29 July 1909.] The wisdom of Baha'u'llah's injunction is not apparent today because we are too close to this nascent institution.

However 'Abdu'l-Baha has <p384> promised that the wisdom of this commandment of Baha'u'llah will become clear in the future:

The House of Justice, however, according to the explicit text of the Law of God, is confined to men; this for a wisdom of the Lord God's, which will ere long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon.[318] [318 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections*, p.

80.] The Guardian commented:

The Baha'is should accept this statement of the Master in a spirit of deep faith, confident that there is a divine guidance and wisdom behind it which will be gradually unfolded to the eyes of the world.[319] [319 From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 28 July 1936, in Compilation, vol.

2, p.

369.] And the Universal House of Justice has made the following point:

To the general premise that women and men have equality in the Faith, this, as often explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha, is a fundamental principle deriving from Baha'u'llah and therefore His mention of the 'Men of Justice' in the Kitab-i-Aqdas should be considered in light of that principle.[320] [320 From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 29 June 1976 in *ibid.* p.

371. (Compilation, vol.

2.)] The Seat of the Universal House of Justice is on Mount Cannel in Haifa, as foretold by Baha'u'llah in the Tablet of Carmel, the charter for the building of the World Centre of the Faith.

In one of his letters to the Baha'is of the East, Shoghi Effendi elucidates some of the significances of the Tablet of Carmel and, in particular, the passage: 'Ere long will God sail His Ark upon Thee, and will manifest the people of Baha who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.'[321] [321 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, p.

5.] In this great Tablet [of Cannel] which unveils divine mysteries and heralds the establishment of two mighty, majestic and momentous undertakings -- one of which is spiritual and the other administrative, both at the World Centre of the Faith -- Baha'u'llah refers to an 'Ark', whose dwellers are the men of the Supreme House of Justice, which, in conformity with the exact provisions of the Will and Testament of the Centre of the Mighty Covenant, is the body which should lay down laws not explicitly revealed in the Text.

In this Dispensation, these laws are destined to flow from this Holy Mountain, even as in the Mosaic Dispensation the law of God was promulgated from Zion.

The 'sailing of the Ark of His laws is a reference to the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, which is indeed the Seat of Legislation, one of the branches of the World Administrative Centre of the Baha'is on this Holy Mountain...[322] [322 Letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the East, Naw-Ruz 111 - 1954, in Compilation, vol.

1, pp.

341-2.] <p385> In their writings Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha counsel the

Universal House of Justice to promote the best interests of mankind and to work for the betterment of the affairs of the world.

In the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah thus reveals:

O ye Men of Justice!

Be ye, in the realm of God, shepherds unto His sheep and guard them from the ravening wolves that have appeared in disguise, even as ye would guard your own sons.

Thus exhorteth you the Counsellor, the Faithful.[323] [323 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

52.] In a Tablet, the Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, Baha'u'llah addresses the members of the Universal House of Justice in these words:

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.[324] [324 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, pp.

69-70.] And in the Tablet of Ishraqat He reveals:

The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God.

Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity imparteth eternal life, and showers imperishable benefits upon mankind.

It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God's House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world.

In like manner it is incumbent upon them to enquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions.

We call upon the manifestations of the power of God -- the sovereigns and rulers on earth -- to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.[325] [325 ibid. pp.

129-30. (Baha'u'llah, Tablets.)] From the foregoing statements made by

Baha'u'llah and the exhortations of 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament, it is clear that the Universal House of Justice is the protector of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the channel through which the forces of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah will flow to mankind.

Through this august institution the <p386> unity of the Baha'i community and the integrity of the Faith will be preserved.

One of the causes of disunity in former Dispensations has been that the leaders of religion and men of learning have differed in their interpretations of the teachings of their faith and through their conflicting views they have created divisions within their communities.

But in this Dispensation the door opening the way to allow such controversies is completely closed.

In the last passage of His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

55-WT To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular conviction.

All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice.

And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.

The Glory of Glories rest upon you!

Baha'is give credence to the interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi and consider them to be authentic and infallible, while any statement of an individual that is contrary to the spirit and form of the authorized interpretations of the Word of God is not acceptable.

Furthermore, no pronouncements by the learned on various aspects of the Faith are considered valid unless sanctioned by the Universal House of Justice.

The following commentary on the subject is from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice.

In the religion of Islam, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified.

These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances.

All these were enforced.

Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice.

The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Baha'i community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division, and dispersion.

The oneness of the Word would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken.[326] [326 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Introduction to Kitab-i-Aqdas, p.

5.] <p387> This statement must not lead the reader to think that the hands of Baha'i scholars are tied or that they are unable to undertake their own research and reach their own conclusions on matters connected with the Faith.

On the contrary, every believer is free to read the writings and make his own interpretation, as long as he makes it clear that his views are his own and are not authoritative.

The Universal House of Justice has clarified this subject:

A clear distinction is made in our Faith between authoritative interpretation and the interpretation or understanding that each individual arrives at for himself from his study of its teachings.

While the former is confined to the Guardian, the latter, according to the guidance given to us by the Guardian himself, should by no means be suppressed.

In fact such individual interpretation is considered the fruit of man's rational power and conducive to a better understanding of the teachings, provided that no disputes or arguments arise among the friends and the individual himself understands and makes it clear that his views are merely his own.

Individual interpretations continually change as one grows in comprehension of the teachings.

As Shoghi Effendi explained: "To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Baha'u'llah and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form.

There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for.

They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own.

As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most careful lest we fall into this error and injure the Movement we so much adore.

There is no limit to the study of the Cause.

The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in them and

the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.' So, although individual insights can be enlightening and helpful, they can also be misleading.

The friends must therefore learn to listen to the views of others without being over-awed or allowing their faith to be shaken, and to express their own views without pressing them on their fellow Baha'is.[327] [327 From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 27 May 1966, in Compilation, vol.

1, p.

358.] In every Dispensation, the Manifestation of God has promulgated a number of teachings and ordinances that may be described as the framework of that religion.

These teachings have been designed by God to bring about the advancement of those who have embraced them.

They are always adapted to suit the condition of the people and are given according to their capacity.

As a result of the application of these teachings in their lives, the members of a religious community develop higher levels of understanding.

In the course of their progress they eventually reach a position where the teachings of their religion no longer adequately satisfy their spiritual and mental needs.

When the teachings and laws of a religion become outdated, when they are no longer practicable in a new age, the followers have arrogated to themselves the right to amend or alter these teachings so that they will conform with new conditions prevailing at the time.

But man has no right to interfere with the revealed teachings of God.

Only a new Manifestation of God can abrogate the laws of a previous Dispensation and bring new laws for a new age.

Otherwise, man's interference will cause the teachings of a religion to become adulterated.

Baha'u'llah envisaged -- and this has already become evident -- that in His Dispensation man will advance and progress at an unprecedented rate, needing new laws at every stage of his development.

Therefore, He empowered the Universal House of Justice to enact secondary laws befitting the circumstances of the time, laws which can later be altered as conditions change.

It must be noted, however, that the teachings, laws and ordinances revealed by Baha'u'llah Himself are unalterable until the advent of a future Manifestation of God, who will have the right to abrogate them. 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

Those matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice.

The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place.

Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly.[328] [328 'Abdu'l-Baha quoted in the Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p.

84.] A significant development since the establishment of the House of Justice is that the Covenant-breakers -- especially those in the Holy Land -- have been effectively thwarted in their plans and their fortunes have declined to the point of impotence.

Gone are the days after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, when an ignoble band of faithless men and women, including most members of His family and headed by no less a person than Baha'u'llah's son, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, rose up against the Master with all their power and prestige and tried to wrest from Him the reins of the Cause of God, which had been entrusted to Him by His heavenly Father.

Gone are the days when some of the most erudite and outstanding teachers of the Faith, together with a number of influential men who ranked foremost in the community, rebelled against 'Abdu'l-Baha, viciously attacked the newly born institution of the Covenant and caused grievous convulsions within the community of the Most Great Name.

Gone are the days when falsehoods and outrageous misrepresentations against the Centre of the Covenant by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali gained credibility among the people, both within and without this small and seemingly fragile community.

<p389> Gone are the days when the Master was maliciously accused in public by His unfaithful brothers of the most heinous crimes, causing alarm and apprehension within government circles in the Holy Land and further afield at the heart of the Ottoman Empire.

Gone are the days when, through his persistent machinations and intrigues, the Arch-breaker of the Covenant succeeded in poisoning the mind of the Sultan of Turkey to such an extent that he ordered 'Abdu'l-Baha's incarceration within the walls of the prison city, an ordeal which He endured for eight years.

And gone are the days when the youthful Guardian of the Cause was subjected to untold sufferings at the hands of the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family and the old Covenant-breakers, who, assisted by a number of erstwhile outstanding teachers of the Faith -- then violators of the Covenant -- opposed him for more than three decades.

Now, with the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, the situation is changed and the precious institution of the Covenant bequeathed by Baha'u'llah to His followers has been greatly fortified.

Although there will always be some souls from among the followers who, from time to time, will rebel against the Cause of God and arise to break the Covenant, they will never be able to divide the Faith into sects and destroy the unity of its community.

The truth of this can be seen in the history of the Faith.

For almost one hundred years, desperate endeavours were made by various groups of Covenant-breakers who launched fierce onslaughts against the Cause of Baha'u'llah in order to bring about schism within its worldwide community.

And despite all this, their efforts were in vain and they failed miserably in their objectives.

Baha'u'llah has thus clearly proven that this is a 'day that shall not be followed by night'.^[329] [329 Baha'u'llah, in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.

245.] In the Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

25-WT This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them.

The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.

This relationship between the Universal House of Justice and the governments, described by 'Abdu'l-Baha, refers to the time when the authority of the Universal House of Justice will have been recognized by the nations of the world.

At that time the legislature and the executive constituting the essential components of the World Order of Baha'u'llah will harmoniously interact.

The supreme authority of <p390> the House of Justice, divinely conferred upon it, will be the guarantor of the unity of the nations and peoples of the world.

In response to a question about 'the government' stated in the passage of the Will and Testament cited above, Shoghi Effendi's secretary wrote on his behalf:

By 'Government'... is meant the executive body which will enforce the laws when the Baha'i Faith has reached the point when it is recognized and accepted entirely by any particular nation.^[330] [330 From letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 18 April 1941, in *Lights of Guidance*, no.

1604, p.

483.] And in another letter Shoghi Effendi stated:

Not only will the present-day Spiritual Assemblies be styled differently

in future, but they will be enabled also to add to their present functions those powers, duties, and prerogatives necessitated by the recognition of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, not merely as one of the recognized religious systems of the world, but as the State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power.

And as the Baha'i Faith permeates the masses of the peoples of East and West, and its truth is embraced by the majority of the peoples of a number of the Sovereign States of the world, will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power, and exercise, as the supreme organ of the Baha'i Commonwealth, all the rights, the duties, and responsibilities incumbent upon the world's future super-state.[331] [331 Shoghi Effendi, World Order, pp.

6-7.] Envisioning the mighty victories of the future, Shoghi Effendi foretells in his letters to the Persian believers that through the guidance of the Universal House of Justice the Cause of God will be exalted and the sovereignty of Baha'u'llah will be made manifest to the peoples of the world.

The following passages are translated from one of these letters:

The National Spiritual Assemblies, like unto pillars, will be gradually and firmly established in every country on the strong and fortified foundations of the Local Assemblies.

On these pillars; the mighty edifice, the Universal House of Justice, will be erected, raising high its noble frame above the world of existence.

The unity of the followers of Baha'u'llah will thus be realized and fulfilled from one end of the earth to the other ... and the living waters of everlasting life will stream forth from that fountain-head of God's World Order upon all the warring nations and peoples of the world, to wash away the evils and iniquities of the realm of dust, and heal man's age-old ills and ailments...[332] [332 Letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of Persia, 27 November 1929, translated from the Persian in Compilation, vol.

1, p.

333.] Then will the Throne of Baha'u'llah's sovereignty be founded in the promised land and the scales of justice be raised on high.

Then <p391> will the banner of the independence of the Faith be unfurled, and His Most Great Law be unveiled and rivers of laws and ordinances stream forth from this snow-white spot with all-conquering power and awe-inspiring majesty, the like of which past ages have never seen.

Then will appear the truth of what was revealed by the Tongue of Grandeur: 'Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings:

He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come!

His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendour is revealed.' '...O Carmel ...

Well is it with him that circleth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory, and recounteth that which the bounty of the Lord, thy God, hath showered upon thee...

Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Baha who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.' Through it the pillars of the Faith on this earth will be firmly established and its hidden powers be revealed, its signs shine forth, its banners be unfurled and its light be shed upon all peoples.[333] [333 Letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of Persia, 27 November 1929, translated from the Arabic in ibid. pp.

333-4. (Compilation, vol.

1.)] <p392>

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Huququ'llah, Obedience to Government, Supreme Tribunal Huququ'llah 27-WT O friends of 'Abdu'l-Baha!

The Lord, as a sign of His infinite bounties, hath graciously favoured His servants by providing for a fixed money offering (Huquq), to be dutifully presented unto Him, though He, the True One, and His servants have been at all times independent of all created things, and God verily is the All-Possessing, exalted above the need of any gift from His creatures.

This fixed money offering, however, causeth the people to become firm and steadfast and draweth Divine increase upon them.

It is to be offered through the guardian of the Cause of God, that it may be expended for the diffusion of the Fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Word, for benevolent pursuits and for the common weal.

In the Kitab-i-Aqdas (the Most Holy Book), Baha'u'llah revealed the law of Huququ'llah (the Right of God).

It applies to those whose possessions reach a certain value, beyond which they are bidden by God to pay 19 per cent of that value to the Centre of the Cause.

In one of His Tablets, revealed in the words of His amanuensis, Baha'u'llah states that when the full text of the Kitab-i-Aqdas was completed He did not order its release for some time because it contained the law of Huquq, which was given by God as a sign of His mercy and loving-kindness unto His servants.

He explains that the reason for withholding the Book temporarily was His apprehension lest some of the believers might not carry out this commandment or might come to wrong conclusions.

The mere contemplation of this, He says, is unworthy of the Day of God.

The very thought that some, in their immaturity, might have assumed that the Huquq was intended for Baha'u'llah's personal use must have been extremely painful to Him.

The most cursory study of His life and teachings amply demonstrates that He constantly exhorted His followers to detach themselves from earthly possessions and not to place their affections on the things of this world.

In His <p393> Tablet to Napoleon III, Baha'u'llah admonishes the emperor in these words, which clearly demonstrate the worthlessness of this material world in His sight:

Exultest thou over the treasures thou dost possess, knowing they shall perish?

Rejoicest thou in that thou rulest a span of earth, when the whole world, in the estimation of the people of Baha, is worth as much as the black in the eye of a dead ant?[334] [334 Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

56.] And in another Tablet He makes a similar statement:

By the righteousness of God!

The world, its vanities and its glory, and whatever delights it can offer, are all, in the sight of God, as worthless as, nay even more contemptible than, dust and ashes.

Would that the hearts of men could comprehend it.

Wash yourselves thoroughly, O people of Baha, from the defilement of the world, and of all that pertaineth unto it.[335] [335 Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, Advent of Divine Justice, pp.

30-1.] During the days of Baha'u'llah, the majority of the believers in Persia were poor and some were needy.

But when Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin[*] visited them, they had, through sacrifice, set aside small sums of money and were able to offer them to the Cause of God.

It must be made clear that under Baha'u'llah's supervision the funds were spent for the promotion of the Cause and very little, if any, for His own expenses or those of His companions.

The history of the life of Baha'u'llah bears ample testimony to this fact, for during most of the 40 years of His ministry He lived in the utmost poverty.

There were days when a mere loaf of bread was not available to Him and the garments He wore were the only clothes He had.

There were many occasions when He was in great need but He did not accept financial help from the friends.

The last few years of His earthly life, although relatively more comfortable, were nevertheless greatly influenced by the austerity that had characterized

His life from the days of the Siyah-Chal in Tihiran, when all His possessions had been confiscated and He had been deprived of the means to support Himself and His family. [* Trustee of Huquq appointed by Baha'u'llah.

See Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

3, chapter 4.] Desire for wealth is nonexistent in the person of the Manifestation of God.

He abides in a realm that is independent of all creation and He is detached from all earthly things.

Baha'u'llah stated in many of His Tablets that this mortal world is only a handful of dust and as utter nothingness in His sight.

In His Will and Testament, the Kitab-i'Ahd, He left us these exalted words:

<p394> Although the Realm of Glory hath none of the vanities of the world, yet within the treasury of trust and resignation We have bequeathed to Our heirs an excellent and priceless heritage.

Earthly treasures We have not bequeathed, nor have We added such cares as they entail.

By God!

In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed.

Consider ye and call to mind that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'an: 'Woe betide every slanderer and defamer, him that layeth up riches and counteth them.' Fleeting are the riches of the world; all that perisheth and changeth is not, and hath never been, worthy of attention, except to a recognized measure.[336] [336 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, p.

219.] The same attitude of detachment from earthly things so permeated the souls of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, the two successive Centres of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, that it was against their nature to turn their affection to the things of this world.

They both followed the example of Baha'u'llah and lived austere lives.

Although they received large contributions from the friends, they authorized their spending strictly for the promotion of the Cause of God and did not have the slightest inclination to spend the funds for their own personal ends.

Like Baha'u'llah, neither of them had any personal assets, whether monetary or of any other type.

When 'Abdu'l-Baha travelled to the West to spread the Cause of Baha'u'llah and diffuse the divine fragrances in Europe and America, He had to use some of the funds which the Persian friends had contributed to Haji Amin as Huququ'llah.

But He observed such care in spending the absolute minimum for Himself that His companions sometimes felt concerned about the lack of comfort that often resulted.

The renowned chronicler of 'Abdu'l-Baha's journeys to the West, Mirza Mahmud-i-Zarqani, His devoted secretary and companion, has recorded in his diary (Badayi'u'l-Athar) that when 'Abdu'l-Baha and His party were travelling across the United States, the train journey proved to be tiring -- especially for 'Abdu'l-Baha, who was nearly 70 years of age.

Yet in spite of this, He frequently declined to pay the extra small sum of money for sleeping accommodation on the train.

Instead He would sit up all night on the hard wooden seats and close His eyes to rest.

But, as demonstrated on that journey, He opened His purse and generously placed coins of silver and gold in the palms of the poor and needy wherever He found them.

How different are the ways of God and man!

During those same epoch-making journeys 'Abdu'l-Baha demonstrated a magnanimity and detachment characteristic of God's chosen ones by declining with graciousness all offers of funds and gifts from <p395> friends and strangers.

In his diary Mirza Mahmud recounts a story of 'Abdu'l-Baha when He was in New York shortly before His departure from the United States:

Today some of the friends offered money to the Master but He would not accept it despite their pleading.

Instead He told them, 'Distribute it among the poor on my behalf.

It will be as though I have given it to them.

But the most acceptable gift to me is the unity of the believers, service to the Cause of God, diffusion of the divine fragrances and adherence to the counsels of the Abha Beauty.' The believers were saddened because He did not accept their gifts.

However, since these were the last days of His visit and He was about to leave, the New York Baha'is collected several gifts for the women of the holy household and for the Greatest Holy Leaf.

Some of the believers agreed among themselves to go to 'Abdu'l-Baha and cling to His robe until He accepted their gifts.

They came and begged He accept their offerings.

The Master called them, saying:

I am most grateful for your services; in truth you have served me.

You have extended hospitality.

Night and day you have been ready to serve and to diffuse the divine fragrances.

I shall never forget your services, for you have no purpose

but the will of God and you desire no station but entry into the Kingdom of God.

Now you have brought presents for the members of my family.

They are most acceptable and excellent but better than all these are the gifts of the love of God which remain preserved in the treasuries of the heart.

These gifts are evanescent but those are eternal; these jewels must be kept in boxes and vaults and they will eventually perish but those jewels remain in the treasuries of the heart and will remain throughout the world of God for eternity.

Thus I will take to them your love, which is the greatest of all gifts.

In our house they do not wear diamond rings nor do they keep rubies.

That house is sanctified above such adornments.

I, however, have accepted your gifts; but I entrust them to you for you to sell and send the proceeds to the fund for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in Chicago.

When the friends continued to plead with Him, He said: 'I want to take from you a present which will endure in the eternal world and a jewel which belongs to the treasuries of the heart.

This is better.' No matter how much the friends supplicated and pleaded, He would not accept their gifts and instead asked them all to contribute towards the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar fund.

He did this everywhere He travelled.[337] [337 Mahmud-i-Zarqani, Mahmud's Diary, pp.

414-15.] <p396> Returning to the subject of Huququ'llah, Baha'u'llah ordains this institution in the following passage of the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

Should anyone acquire one hundred mithqals[*] of gold, nineteen mithqals thereof are God's and to be rendered unto Him, the Fashioner of earth and heaven.

Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of so great a bounty.

This We have commanded you, though We are well able to dispense with you and with all who are in the heavens and on earth; in it there are benefits and wisdoms beyond the ken of anyone but God, the Omniscient, the All-Informed.

Say:

By this means He hath desired to purify what ye possess and to enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can comprehend save those whom God hath willed.

He, in truth, is the Beneficent, the Gracious, the Bountiful.

O people!

Deal not faithlessly with the Right of God, nor, without His leave, make free with its disposal.

Thus hath His commandment been established in the holy Tablets, and in this exalted Book.

He who dealeth faithlessly with God shall in justice meet with faithlessness himself he, however, who acteth in accordance with God's bidding shall receive a blessing from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Gracious, the Bestower, the Generous, the Ancient of Days.

He, verily, hath willed for you that which is yet beyond your knowledge, but which shall be known to you when, after this fleeting life, your souls soar heavenwards and the trappings of your earthly joys are folded up.

Thus admonisheth you He in Whose possession is the Guarded Tablet.[338] [* Each mithqal is equal to 3.6416666 grams.] [338 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

97.] The minimum amount subject to Huququ'llah is reached when one's possessions are worth the number of Vahid (19); that is, whenever one owneth 19 mithqals of gold, or acquireth possessions attaining this value, after having deducted therefrom the yearly expenses, the Huquq becometh applicable and its payment is obligatory.[339] [339 Baha'u'llah, in Huququ'llah, no.

18.] With regard to the application of the law of Huququ'llah, Shoghi Effendi has stated through his secretary:

Regarding the Huququ'llah ... this is applied to one's merchandise, property and income.

After deducting the necessary expenses, whatever is left as profit, and is an addition to one's capital, such a sum is subject to Huquq.

When one has paid Huquq once on a particular sum, that sum is no longer subject to Huquq, unless it should pass from one person to another.

One's residence, and the household furnishings are exempt from Huquq...

Huququ'llah is paid to the Centre of the Cause.[340] [340 .

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 4 April - 3 May 1927, in *ibid.* no.

80. (Huququ'llah.)] <p397> Baha'u'llah was very anxious that no one should ever feel forced to pay the Huquq.

He instructed Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin, the Trustee of the Huquq, and other eminent Baha'is not to accept money from anyone unless they were sure that the

individual wished to give with the utmost joy and devotion.

In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah forbade the soliciting of Huquq by the Trustees, as seen in this part of a Tablet revealed in honour of His Trustee Haji Amin:

O Abu'l Hasan:

May my Glory rest upon thee!

Fix thy gaze upon the glory of the Cause.

Speak forth that which will attract the hearts and the minds.

To demand the Huquq is in no wise permissible.

This command was revealed in the Book of God for various necessary matters ordained by God to be dependent upon material means.

Therefore, if someone, with utmost pleasure and gladness, nay with insistence, wisheth to partake of this blessing thou mayest accept.

Otherwise, acceptance is not permissible.[341] [341 Baha'u'llah, in *ibid.* no.

9. (Huququ'llah.)] The concept that a portion of one's possessions is the right of God and belongs to Him may be better appreciated through observation of nature and examination of certain physical laws.

As previously stated, laws that exist in the physical world are also present in the spiritual worlds of God and religious teachings are the spiritual counterparts of physical laws.

The law of Huququ'llah, for example, finds its parallel in the growth of a tree, where the blossoms, the flowers and the fruits do not originate from the tree but are the hidden properties of the soil, which the tree brings out.

Thus the entire substance of the tree comes from the earth, which produces the root, the trunk, the branches, the leaves and the fruits and provides all the nourishment for the tree's growth and fruition.

When the tree sheds its leaves upon the earth each year, it gives back to its creator, as a matter of course, a portion of its wealth.

But the fallen leaves do not benefit the earth; they act as a fertilizer and therefore their benefit reverts to the tree itself.

This physical process is similar to the effects of the law of Huququ'llah and, as Baha'u'llah has stated, 'The benefit of such deeds [payment of the Huquq] reverteth unto the individuals themselves.'[342] [342 *ibid.* no.

27. (Baha'u'llah, in Huququ'llah.)] During Baha'u'llah's ministry the law of Huquq was applicable only to a very small number of Baha'is.

The great majority of the community members were poor and not liable to pay the Huquq.

Often the Trustee of Baha'u'llah was unable to fully cover the expenses of the Baha'i teachers and those in need.

Of course, Haji Amin, the Trustee, was not pleased about this.

In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah makes a sweet and humorous remark about His Trustee.

He says: <p398> We must impose a fine upon Jinab-i-Amin!

We have one treasurer and he is bankrupt!

Gracious God, there is one treasury belonging to God and that is empty of funds.

Indeed, by virtue of its exalted station, such a treasury ought to be freed and sanctified from earthly things and not be confused with the treasuries of the world.[343] [343 Unpublished, Iran National Baha'i Archives, no.

27, pp.

206-7.] The law of Huquq was observed only by the Baha'is of the East until 1992, when the Universal House of Justice made it universally applicable.

Before taking this step, the Universal House of Justice ensured that, over the period of a few years, the believers became fully familiar with the law and its application.

The Huquq should not be confused with the contributions of a believer to the International Funds.

Although both are donated to the Centre of the Cause -- today to the Universal House of Justice -- there is a great difference between the two.

In reality, the Huquq does not belong to the individual, as it is the right of God, whereas ordinary donations are given by the believer from his own resources and are motivated by a heartfelt desire to give of one's own substance for the promotion of the Cause of God.

Obedience to Government 28-9-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

It is incumbent upon you to be submissive to all monarchs that are just and to show your fidelity to every righteous king; Serve ye the sovereigns of the world with utmost truthfulness and loyalty.

Show obedience unto them and be their well-wishers.

Without their leave and permission do not meddle with political affairs, for disloyalty to the just sovereign is disloyalty to God Himself.

This is my counsel and the commandment of God unto you.

Well is it with them that act accordingly.

One of the fundamental teachings of the Faith of Baha'u'llah is obedience to

one's government, as seen in these words of Baha'u'llah revealed in the Tablet of Bisharat:

In every country where any of this people reside, they must behave towards the government of that country with loyalty, honesty and truthfulness.

This is that which hath been revealed at the behest of Him Who is the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.[344] [344 Baha'u'llah, Tablets, pp.

22-3.] In another Tablet Baha'u'llah writes:

The one true God, exalted be His glory, hath bestowed the government of the earth upon the kings.

To none is given the right to act <p399> in any manner that would run counter to the considered views of them who are in authority.[345] [345 Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p.

241.] In many of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha also exhorts the believers to be obedient and faithful to their governments, as the following passage reveals:

Furthermore each and every one is required to show obedience, submission and loyalty towards his own government.

Today no state in the world is in a condition of peace or tranquillity, for security and trust have vanished from among the people.

Both the governed and the governors are alike in danger.

The only group of people which today submitteth peacefully and loyally to the laws and ordinances of government and dealeth honestly and frankly with the people, is none other than this wronged community.

For while all sects and races in Persia and Turkestan are absorbed in promoting their own interests and only obey their governments either with the hope of reward or from fear of punishment, the Baha'is are the well-wishers of the government, obedient to its laws and bearing love towards all peoples.

Such obedience and submission is made incumbent and obligatory upon all by the clear Text of the Abha Beauty.

Therefore the believers, in obedience to the command of the True One, show the utmost sincerity and goodwill towards all nations; and should any soul act contrary to the laws of the government he would consider himself responsible before God, deserving divine wrath and chastisement for his sin and wrongdoing.[346] [346 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections, pp.

293.] Baha'is obey the government on those matters which do not violate the spiritual principles of their Faith.

However, should any government require Baha'is to deny their Faith or take an action which would violate one its spiritual principles, they will refuse to

obey, even if the penalty is death.

Supreme Tribunal Speaking about the future state of affairs in the world, 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament, writes:

22-WT ...that contention and conflict amidst peoples, kindreds, nations and governments may disappear, that all the dwellers on earth may become one people and one race, that the world may become even as one home.

Should differences arise they shall be amicably and conclusively settled by the Supreme Tribunal, that shall include members from all the governments and peoples of the world. <p400> The establishment of a Supreme Tribunal is one of the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

In a Tablet addressed to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, in the Hague, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote in 1919:

For example, the question of universal peace, about which Baha'u'llah says that the Supreme Tribunal must be established: although the League of Nations has been brought into existence, yet it is incapable of establishing universal peace.

But the Supreme Tribunal which Baha'u'llah has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power.

And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation -- that is to say parliaments -- should elect two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day.

The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country.

The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government.

From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation.

When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be, any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant.

In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal.

Consider what a firm foundation this is!

But by a limited and restricted League the purpose will not be realized as it ought and should.

This is the truth about the situation, which has been stated...[347]

[347 *ibid.* ('Abdu'l-Baha, Selections, pp.

306-7.)] The Guardian further elaborates on this subject:

Some form of a world Super-State must needs be evolved, in whose favour all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions.

Such a state will have to include within its orbit an International Executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a World Parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; <p401> and a Supreme Tribunal whose judgement will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration.

A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labour definitely recognized; in which the clamour of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law -- the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives -- shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship -- such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Baha'u'llah, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.[348] [348 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, p.

40-1.] And in a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi it is stated:

The Universal Court of Arbitration and the International Tribunal are the same.

When the Baha'i State will be established they will be merged in the Universal House of Justice.[349] [349 From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 17 June 1933.] <p402>

40

Steadfastness in the Covenant

The part that man has to play in the Covenant with his Creator is described by Baha'u'llah in the opening paragraph of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*:

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation.

Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed.

It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world.

These twin duties are inseparable.

Neither is acceptable without the other.

Thus hath it been deemed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.[350] [350 Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, para.

1.] We see, then, that there are two requirements of man in this Covenant: to recognize the Manifestation of God as the source of all good and then to follow His commandments.

As previously stated, one of the most important commandments of Baha'u'llah is to turn to the Centre of His Covenant after Him.

This injunction was revealed in both the Kitab-i-Aqdas and the Kitab-i-'Ahd.

Therefore, to a true Baha'i who is steadfast in the Covenant, obedience to the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha is obedience to God.

As important as recognition of the station of Baha'u'llah and belief in Him are, they are not a sufficient guarantee of faith unless one remains loyal and steadfast in His Covenant.

One of the distinguishing features of the Faith of Baha'u'llah is that He has not abandoned His followers to their own devices but has left in their midst a source of divine guidance to which they can turn.

He conferred His divine powers and authority upon 'Abdu'l-Baha and made a firm Covenant with the believers to follow and obey Him with absolute devotion and love.

This Covenant was extended to include Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice.

Faith in Baha'u'llah is, therefore, not a mere acknowledgement of His divine message but also involves <p403> obedience and faithfulness to those upon whom He conferred the mantle of infallibility.

The Kitab-i-'Ahd and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha may be summarized in two words: 'turn towards'.

Baha'u'llah enjoined His followers to 'turn towards' 'Abdu'l-Baha, after whose

passing the believers had again to 'turn towards' Shoghi Effendi.

Today they 'turn towards' the Universal House of Justice.

To emphasize this important feature of the Covenant, the following analogy may be helpful.

An aircraft flies because its engines create a special condition that enables the machine to do so; without them the craft will not move.

Similarly, belief in Baha'u'llah as the Supreme Manifestation of God in this age uplifts the soul and enables it to soar into the spiritual realms.

A believer's faith in Baha'u'llah thus acts like the engine in the analogy.

But a powerful engine, however necessary, cannot ensure the safety of an aircraft or its smooth landing at its destination.

There is a need for the navigational signals which a modern aircraft receives from the control tower to determine its direction, height and speed, and the pilot obeys these instructions until the machine lands safely.

Without these navigational aids and the pilot's readiness to follow them, there is every likelihood that a disaster will take place.

Similarly, faith in Baha'u'llah is not sufficient unto itself.

The believer must faithfully obey the guidance he receives from the Centre of the Cause.

If someone reaches the pinnacle of faith and certitude in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah but refuses to follow the guidance of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice, he cannot be considered a true believer.

Many people today frown upon the word 'obedience'.

In present-day society, in which all moral and spiritual values are declining, the concept of obedience is often associated with dictatorship, tyranny, religious fanaticism and narrow-mindedness.

This view is held by educated men and women who are otherwise open-minded and intelligent.

These people come from all walks of life; some belong to religious movements with liberal leanings, while others may be humanists, agnostics or atheists.

They have keenly observed the terrible consequences that blind obedience to various political regimes or religious hierarchies has engendered and they are fearful of any movement, whether religious or secular, that demands absolute obedience to its commandments.

One can appreciate the honesty of these people and sympathize with their views, for they may have only experienced injustice and cruelty everywhere.

However, in his daily life a human being wholeheartedly obeys the directives of

many individuals or institutions that speak with the voice of truth.

He is willing to accept authority that appears credible and <p404> trustworthy.

For instance, a motorist will unhesitatingly follow the signpost on a road until he reaches his destination.

This blind following springs from his faith in the authority of the body that has set up the signposts.

Similarly, a patient will willingly allow a surgeon to operate on a cancerous growth because he has faith in the doctor's diagnosis.

A similar response results from an individual's recognition of the truth of the Cause of God.

Once he sees the teachings as credible, he will not find it difficult to obey them.

And since man's part in the Covenant of God is obedience to God's teachings, it is clear that he cannot fulfil his obligation unless he recognizes the truth of His Revelation.

When the individual recognizes Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God, a spark of faith is ignited in his heart.

At first a faint glimmer of light, this spark must be allowed to become a fire of ever-growing intensity for it is then that the believer will fall in love with Baha'u'llah. But how can a person who has just embraced this belief draw closer to Baha'u'llah, fan into flame the spark of his faith and increase his love for Him day by day?

A statement in Islam, which Baha'u'llah confirms and reiterates, says that 'Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.' The assertion that the heart is the dwelling-place of the knowledge of God may sound strange to some because it is commonly thought that the mind, rather than the heart, is the vehicle for acquiring knowledge.

But faith and knowledge of God, like seeds, are planted first in the heart.

It is only afterwards that the mind grasps the truth and begins to understand it.

In the end it is the interaction of the two -- the heart and the mind -- that brings confirmation and certitude to the soul.

Although in some cases a believer's faith in Baha'u'llah may come to him intellectually, its intensification and growth day by day cannot continue purely through intellectual pursuits.

And if a person's faith does not increase with the passage of time, it is like a child who is born but fails to grow.

Such a person is very likely to feel a measure of doubt in his innermost heart concerning the Faith and may experience great conflicts in his mind, especially

when he goes through tests.

Although intellectually he may accept Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God and may even be well versed in His writings, he does not have that absolute certitude that endows a human being with spiritual qualities and confers upon him perpetual contentment, assurance and happiness.

The heart is the focal point of warmth and love.

It is characteristic of the heart to fall in love with another but it is the individual who finds and chooses the object of that love.

If he turns his affections to the material world, his heart will very easily become attached to it.

But <p405> if he turns to God and spiritual things, then his heart can fall in love with his Creator, provided he fulfils one condition stated by Baha'u'llah:

O Son of Being!

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent.

Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for my Manifestation.[351]

[351 Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words, Arabic no.

59.] How can one sanctify the heart?

In another passage, Baha'u'llah explains:

O Son of Dust!

All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee, except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of my beauty and glory; yet thou didst give My home and dwelling to another than Me; and whenever the manifestation of My holiness sought His own abode, a stranger found He there, and, homeless, hastened unto the sanctuary of the Beloved.[352]

[352 ibid.

Persian no.

27. (Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words.)] And again:

O My Friend in Word!

Ponder awhile.

Hast thou ever heard that friend and foe should abide in one heart?

Cast out then the stranger, that the Friend may enter His home.[353]

[353 ibid.

Persian no.

26. (Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words.)] To acquire faith, then, and to enable the revelation of God to shine within the heart, one must cast out the 'stranger', or man's attachment to this world, of which the most formidable and most harmful type is attachment to one's own self.

It manifests itself mainly in pride in one's own knowledge and other accomplishments, such as rank and position.

Love of one's self renders the individual opinionated, self-centred, proud and egotistical and, in fact, denudes him of spiritual qualities.

Such a person has indeed harboured within his heart a great enemy, namely, the 'stranger' referred to by Baha'u'llah.

Even if he becomes a Baha'i, he will find it difficult to derive spiritual upliftment from the writings of Baha'u'llah because this attachment has become a barrier between himself and God.

To read the writings purely with the eye of intellect, while proudly regarding oneself as a being endowed with great qualities and accomplishments, undoubtedly closes the door to the bounties and confirmations of Baha'u'llah, and His words therefore cannot influence the heart.

When a person truly recognizes Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God he becomes humble before Him and this is one of the main prerequisites for driving the 'stranger', step by step, out of one's heart. 'Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee'[354] is Baha'u'llah's clear admonition to man: [354 *ibid.*]

Arabic no.

42. (Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words.)] <p406> Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth.[355] [355 *ibid.*]

Persian no.

11. (Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words.)] There is a beautiful Persian story in verse that elucidates this point quite vividly.

It concerns a drop of rain falling down from the clouds.

The drop knows itself to be the water of life, the most precious element that God had created, and so it is proud of itself.

Boasting all the way down, it suddenly sees that it is falling into an ocean, whereupon it recognizes its own insignificance and exclaims: 'If this exists then what am I?' When the ocean hears this expression of humility it attracts the drop to itself and, as a reward, makes it a companion of the pearl.

The following portion of one of the obligatory prayers of Baha'u'llah, though very brief, is reminiscent of the story of the drop and the ocean, and serves as a perfect confession of who we are:

I bear witness, O my God, that thou has created me to know Thee and to worship Thee.

I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.[356] [356 Baha'u'llah, in Baha'i Prayers, p.

4.] The daily recital of any of the three obligatory prayers can act as a mighty weapon in the spiritual battle against one's own self, a battle that every believer must fight in order to subdue his greatest enemy and drive the 'stranger' away.

The recital of the obligatory prayer, which is enjoined upon every believer by Baha'u'llah and constitutes one of the most sacred rites of the Faith, is a major factor in enabling a soul to recognize its own impotence in relation to its Creator and to acknowledge its own shortcomings.

The saying of obligatory prayers, along with the daily recitation of the holy writings as ordained by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and a deeper study of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, will enable the believer to gain a glimpse of the majesty and grandeur of the Blessed Beauty.

Like the drop when it sees the ocean, he will become humble and self-effacing.

The 'stranger' will be driven out and the heart will be filled with the spirit of God's Faith.

The following prayer revealed by a caring Master for His devoted lovers is a fitting conclusion to this book.

12-WT O God, my God!

Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion, protect them with the watchful eye of Thy loving kindness from all rancour, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy care and, safe from <p407> the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious Signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy Divine Unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy Holy Kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thy all-swaying power that cometh from Thy Realm of Glory.

Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious!

<p408> Appendix 1

The Administrative Order, by Shoghi Effendi A word should now be said regarding the theory on which this Administrative Order is based and the principle that must govern the operation of its chief institutions.

It would be utterly misleading to attempt a comparison between this unique, this divinely-conceived Order and any of the diverse systems which the minds of men, at various periods of their history, have contrived for the government of human institutions.

Such an attempt would in itself betray a lack of complete appreciation of the excellence of the handiwork of its great Author.

How could it be otherwise when we remember that this Order constitutes the very

pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Baha'u'llah is designed to establish upon earth?

The divers and ever-shifting systems of human polity, whether past or present, whether originating in the East or in the West, offer no adequate criterion wherewith to estimate the potency of its hidden virtues or to appraise the solidity of its foundations.

The Baha'i Commonwealth of the future, of which this vast Administrative Order is the sole framework, is, both in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems.

No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of the recognized types of theocracy, whether it be the Hebrew Commonwealth, or the various Christian ecclesiastical organizations, or the Imamate or the Caliphate in Islam -- none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned.

This new-born Administrative Order incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any one of them, and without introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess.

It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by <p409> mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded.

The Administrative Order of the Faith of Baha'u'llah must in no wise be regarded as purely democratic in character inasmuch as the basic assumption which requires all democracies to depend fundamentally upon getting their mandate from the people is altogether lacking in this Dispensation.

In the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, in the enactment of the legislation necessary to supplement the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be borne in mind, are not, as Baha'u'llah's utterances clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them.

They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience.

They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the

right of an unfettered decision. 'God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth,' is Baha'u'llah's incontrovertible assurance.

They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation.

Moreover, he who symbolizes the hereditary principle in this Dispensation has been made the interpreter of the words of its Author, and ceases consequently by virtue of the actual authority vested in him, to be the figurehead invariably associated with the prevailing systems of constitutional monarchies.

Nor can the Baha'i Administrative Order be dismissed as a hard and rigid system of unmitigated autocracy or as an idle imitation of any form of absolutistic ecclesiastical government, whether it be the Papacy, the Imamate or any other similar institution, for the obvious reason that upon the international elected representatives of the followers of Baha'u'llah has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Baha'i writings, Neither the Guardian of the Faith nor any institution apart from the International House of Justice can ever usurp this vital and essential power or encroach upon that sacred right.

The abolition of professional priesthood with its accompanying sacraments of baptism, of communion and of confession of sins, the laws requiring the election by universal suffrage of all local, national, and international Houses of Justice, the total absence of episcopal authority with its attendant privileges, corruptions and bureaucratic tendencies, are further <p410> evidences of the non-autocratic character of the Baha'i Administrative Order and of its inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs.

Nor is this Order identified with the name of Baha'u'llah to be confused with any system of purely aristocratic government in view of the fact that it upholds, on the one hand, the hereditary principle and entrusts the Guardian of the Faith with the obligation of interpreting its teachings, and provides, on the other, for the free and direct election from among the mass of the faithful of the body that constitutes its highest legislative organ.

Whereas this Administrative Order cannot be said to have been modelled after any of these recognized systems of government, it nevertheless embodies, reconciles and assimilates within its framework such wholesome elements as are to be found in each one of them.

The hereditary authority which the Guardian is called upon to exercise, the vital and essential functions which the Universal House of Justice discharges, the specific provisions requiring its democratic election by the representatives of the faithful -- these combine to demonstrate the truth that this divinely revealed Order, which can never be identified with any of the standard types of government referred to by Aristotle in his works, embodies and blends with the spiritual verities on which it is based the beneficent

elements which are to be found in each one of them.

The admitted evils inherent in each of these systems being rigidly and permanently excluded, this unique Order, however long it may endure and however extensive its ramifications, cannot ever degenerate into any form of despotism, of oligarchy, or of demagoguery which must sooner or later corrupt the machinery of all man-made and essentially defective political institutions.

Dearly-beloved friends!

Significant as are the origins of this mighty administrative structure, and however unique its features, the happenings that may be said to have heralded its birth and signalized the initial stage of its evolution seem no less remarkable.

How striking, how edifying the contrast between the process of slow and steady consolidation that characterizes the growth of its infant strength and the devastating onrush of the forces of disintegration that are assailing the outworn institutions, both religious and secular, of present-day society!

The vitality which the organic institutions of this great, this ever-expanding Order so strongly exhibit; the obstacles which the high courage, the undaunted resolution of its administrators have already surmounted; the fire of an unquenchable enthusiasm that glows with undiminished fervour in the hearts of its itinerant teachers; the heights of self-sacrifice which its champion-builders are now attaining; the breadth of vision, the confident hope, the creative joy, the inward peace, the uncompromising integrity, the exemplary discipline, the unyielding unity and solidarity which its stalwart defenders manifest; the degree to which its moving Spirit has shown itself capable of assimilating the diversified elements within its pale, of cleansing them of all forms of prejudice and of fusing them with its own structure -- these are evidences of a power which a disillusioned and sadly shaken society can ill afford to ignore.

Compare these splendid manifestations of the spirit animating this vibrant body of the Faith of Baha'u'llah with the cries and agony, the follies and vanities, the bitterness and prejudices, the wickedness and divisions of an ailing and chaotic world.

Witness the fear that torments its leaders and paralyzes the action of its blind and bewildered statesmen.

How fierce the hatreds, how false the ambitions, how petty the pursuits, how deep-rooted the suspicions of its peoples!

How disquieting the lawlessness, the corruption, the unbelief that are eating into the vitals of a tottering civilization!

Might not this process of steady deterioration which is insidiously invading so many departments of human activity and thought be regarded as a necessary accompaniment to the rise of this almighty Arm of Baha'u'llah?

Might we not look upon the momentous happenings which, in the course of the past twenty years, have so deeply agitated every continent of the earth, as ominous signs simultaneously proclaiming the agonies of a disintegrating civilization and the birthpangs of that World Order -- that Ark of human salvation -- that must needs arise upon its ruins?

The catastrophic fall of mighty monarchies and empires in the European continent, allusions to some of which may be found in the prophecies of Baha'u'llah; the decline that has set in, and is still continuing, in the fortunes of the Shi'ih hierarchy in His own native land; the fall of the Qajar -- dynasty, the traditional enemy of His Faith; the overthrow of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, the sustaining pillars of Sunni Islam, to which the destruction of Jerusalem in the latter part of the first century of the Christian era offers a striking parallel; the wave of secularization which is invading the Muhammadan ecclesiastical institutions in Egypt and sapping the loyalty of its staunchest supporters; the humiliating blows that have afflicted some of the most powerful Churches of Christendom in Russia, in Western Europe and Central America; the dissemination of those subversive doctrines that are undermining the foundations and overthrowing the structure of seemingly impregnable strongholds in the political and social spheres of human activity; the signs of an impending catastrophe, strangely reminiscent of the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West, which threatens to engulf the whole structure of present-day civilization -- all witness to the tumult which <p412> the birth of this mighty Organ of the Religion of Baha'u'llah has cast into the world -- a tumult which will grow in scope and in intensity as the implications of this constantly evolving Scheme are more fully understood and its ramifications more widely extended over the surface of the globe.

A word more in conclusion.

The rise and establishment of this Administrative Order -- the shell that shields and enshrines so precious a gem -- constitutes the hall-mark of this second and formative age of the Baha'i era.

It will come to be regarded, as it recedes farther and farther from our eyes, as the chief agency empowered to usher in the concluding phase, the consummation of this glorious Dispensation.

Let no one, while this System is still in its infancy, misconceive its character, belittle its significance or misrepresent its purpose.

The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day.

The Source from which it derives its inspiration is no one less than Baha'u'llah Himself.

Its shield and defender are the embattled hosts of the Abha Kingdom.

Its seed is the blood of no less than twenty thousand martyrs who have offered up their lives that it may be born and flourish.

the Fountainhead of Justice, the Creator of a new World Order, the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of all mankind, has proclaimed the advent of God's Kingdom on earth, has formulated its laws and ordinances, enunciated its principles, and ordained its institutions.

To direct and canalize the forces released by His Revelation He instituted His Covenant, whose power has preserved the integrity of His Faith, maintained its unity and stimulated its world-wide expansion throughout the successive ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

It continues to fulfil its life-giving purpose through the agency of the Universal <p414> House of Justice whose fundamental object, as one of the twin successors of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.

The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion, declares Baha'u'llah, is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men.

Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity.

This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation.

Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure.

Unto the Most Holy Book, 'Abdu'l-Baha declares in His Will and Testament, every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice.

The provenance, the authority, the duties, the sphere of action of the Universal House of Justice all derive from the revealed Word of Baha'u'llah which, together with the interpretations and expositions of the Centre of the Covenant and of the Guardian of the Cause -- who, after 'Abdu'l-Baha is the sole authority in the interpretation of Baha'i Scripture -- constitute the binding terms of reference of the Universal House of Justice and are its bedrock foundation.

The authority of these Texts is absolute and immutable until such time as Almighty God shall reveal His new Manifestation to Whom will belong all authority and power.

There being no successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, the Universal House of Justice is the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution, to which all must turn, and on it rests the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God.

Further, there devolve upon it the duties of directing and coordinating the

work of the Hands of the Cause, of ensuring the continuing discharge of the functions of protection and propagation vested in that institution, and of providing for the receipt and disbursement of the Huququ'llah.

Among the powers and duties with which the Universal House of Justice has been invested are:

To ensure the preservation of the Sacred Texts and to safeguard their inviolability; to analyse, classify, and coordinate the Writings; and to defend and protect the Cause of God and emancipate it from the fetters of repression and persecution; To advance the interests of the Faith of God; to reclaim, propagate and teach its Message; to expand and consolidate the institutions of its Administrative Order; to usher in the World Order of Baha'u'llah; to promote the attainment of those spiritual qualities which should characterize Baha'i life individually and collectively; to do its utmost for the realization of greater cordiality and comity amongst the nations and for the attainment of universal peace; and to foster that which is conducive to the enlightenment and illumination of the souls of men and the advancement and betterment of the world; To enact laws and ordinances not expressly recorded in the Sacred Texts; to abrogate, according to the changes and requirements of the time, its own enactments; to deliberate and decide upon all problems which have caused difference; to elucidate questions that are obscure; to safeguard the personal rights, freedom and initiative of individuals; and to give attention to the preservation of human honour, to the development of countries and the stability of states; To promulgate and apply the laws and principles of the Faith; to safeguard and enforce that rectitude of conduct which the Law of God enjoins; to preserve and develop the Spiritual and Administrative Centre of the Baha'i Faith, permanently fixed in the twin cities of 'Akka and Haifa; to administer the affairs of the Baha'i community throughout the world; to guide, organize, coordinate and unify its activities; to found institutions; to be responsible for ensuring that no body or institution within the Cause abuse its privileges or decline in the exercise of its rights and prerogatives; and to provide for the receipt, disposition, administration and safeguarding of the funds, endowments and other properties that are entrusted to its care; To adjudicate disputes falling within its purview; to give judgement in cases of violation of the laws of the Faith and to pronounce sanctions for such violations; to provide for the enforcement of its decisions; to provide for the arbitration and settlement of disputes arising between peoples; and to be the exponent and guardian of that Divine Justice which can alone ensure the security of, and establish the reign of law and order in, the world.

The members of the Universal House of Justice, designated by Baha'u'llah 'the Men of Justice', 'the people of Baha who have been mentioned in the Book of Names', 'the Trustees of God amongst His servants and the daysprings of

authority in His countries', shall in the discharge of their responsibilities ever bear in mind the following standards set forth by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause of God:

In the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, in the enactment of the legislation necessary to supplement the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should borne in mind, are not, as Baha'u'llah's utterances <p416> clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them.

They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience.

They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision. 'God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth', is Baha'u'llah's incontrovertible assurance.

They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation.

The Universal House of Justice was first elected on the first day of the Festival of Ridvan in the one hundred and twentieth year of the Baha'i Era, [*] when the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies, in accordance with the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and in response to the summons of the Hands of the Cause of God, the Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth, brought into being this 'crowning glory' of the administrative institutions of Baha'u'llah, the very 'nucleus and forerunner' of His World Order.

Now, therefore, in obedience to the Command of God and with entire reliance upon Him, we, the members of the Universal House of Justice, set our hands and its seal to this Declaration of Trust which, together with the By-Laws hereto appended, form the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice. [* 21 April 1963 AD.] Hugh E.

Chance Hushmand Fatheazam Amoz E.

Gibson David Hofman H.

Borrah Kavelin Ali Nakhjavani David S.

Ruhe Ian C.

Semple Charles Wolcott Signed in the City of Haifa on the fourth day of the month of Qawl in the one hundred and twenty-ninth year of the Baha'i Era,

corresponding to the twenty-sixth day of the month of November in the year 1972 according to the Gregorian calendar. <p417>

APPENDIX 2

BY-LAWS Preamble The Universal

House of Justice is the supreme institution of an Administrative Order whose salient features, whose authority and whose principles of operation are clearly enunciated in the Sacred Writings of the Baha'i Faith and their authorized interpretations.

This Administrative Order consists, on the one hand, of a series of elected councils, universal, secondary and local, in which are vested legislative, executive and judicial powers over the Baha'i community and, on the other, of eminent and devoted believers appointed for the specific purposes of protecting and propagating the Faith of Baha'u'llah under the guidance of the Head of that Faith.

This Administrative Order is the nucleus and pattern of the World Order adumbrated by Baha'u'llah.

In the course of its divinely propelled organic growth its institutions will expand, putting forth auxiliary branches and developing subordinate agencies, multiplying their activities and diversifying their functions, in consonance with the principles and purposes revealed by Baha'u'llah for the progress of the human race.

I.

Membership in the Baha'i Community The Baha'i Community shall consist of all persons recognized by the Universal House of Justice as possessing the qualifications of Baha'i faith and practice.

1.

In order to be eligible to vote and hold elective office, a Baha'i must have attained the age of twenty-one years.

2.

The rights, privileges and duties of individual Baha'is are as set forth in the Writings of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi and as laid down by the Universal House of Justice.

II.

Local Spiritual Assemblies Whenever in any locality the number of Baha'is resident therein who have attained the age of twenty-one exceeds nine, these shall on the First Day of Ridvan convene and elect a local administrative body of nine members to be known as the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of that locality.

Every such Spiritual Assembly shall be elected annually thereafter upon each successive First Day of Ridvan.

The members <p418> shall hold office for the term of one year or until their

successors are elected.

When, however, the number of Baha'is as aforesaid in any locality is exactly nine, these shall on the First Day of Ridvan constitute themselves the Local Spiritual Assembly by joint declaration.

1.

The general powers and duties of a Local Spiritual Assembly are as set forth in the Writings of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi and as laid down by the Universal House of Justice.

2.

A Local Spiritual Assembly shall exercise full jurisdiction over all Baha'i activities and affairs within its locality, subject to the provisions of the Local Baha'i Constitution.[*] [* By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly] 3.

The area of jurisdiction of a Local Spiritual Assembly shall be decided by the National Spiritual Assembly in accordance with the principle laid down for each country by the Universal House of Justice.

III.

National Spiritual Assemblies Whenever it is decided by the Universal House of Justice to form in any country or region a National Spiritual Assembly, the voting members of the Baha'i community of that country or region shall, in a manner and at a time to be decided by the Universal House of Justice, elect their delegates to their National Convention.

These delegates shall, in turn, elect in the manner provided in the National Baha'i Constitution[**] a body of nine members to be known as the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of that country or region.

The members shall continue in office for a period of one year or until their successors shall be elected. [** Declaration of Trust and By-Laws of a National Spiritual Assembly.] 1.

The general powers and duties of a National Spiritual Assembly are as set forth in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi and as laid down by the Universal House of Justice.

2.

The National Spiritual Assembly shall have exclusive jurisdiction and authority over all the activities and affairs of the Baha'i Faith throughout its area.

It shall endeavour to stimulate, unify and coordinate the manifold activities of the Local Spiritual Assemblies and of individual Baha'is in its area and by all possible means assist them to <p419> promote the oneness of mankind.

It shall furthermore represent its national Baha'i community in relation to other national Baha'i communities and to the Universal House of Justice.

3.

The area of jurisdiction of a National Spiritual Assembly shall be as defined by the Universal House of Justice.

4.

The principal business of the National Convention shall be consultation on Baha'i activities, plans and policies and the election of the members of the National Spiritual Assembly, as set forth in the National Baha'i Constitution.

(a) If in any year the National Spiritual Assembly shall consider that it is impracticable or unwise to hold the National Convention, the said Assembly shall provide ways and means by which the annual election and the other essential business of the Convention may be conducted.

(b) Vacancies in the membership of the National Spiritual Assembly shall be filled by a vote of the delegates composing the Convention which elected the Assembly, the ballot to be taken by correspondence or in any other manner decided by the National Spiritual Assembly.

IV.

Obligations of Members of Spiritual Assemblies Among the most outstanding and sacred duties incumbent upon those who have been called upon to initiate, direct and coordinate the affairs of the Cause of God as members of its Spiritual Assemblies are: to win by every means in their power the confidence and affection of those whom it is their privilege to serve; to investigate and acquaint themselves with the considered views, the prevailing sentiments and the personal convictions of those whose welfare it is their solemn obligation to promote; to purge their deliberations and the general conduct of their affairs of self-contained aloofness, the suspicion of secrecy, the stifling atmosphere of dictatorial assertiveness and of every word and deed that may savour of partiality, self-centredness and prejudice; and while retaining the sacred right of final decision in their hands, to invite discussion, ventilate grievances, welcome advice and foster the sense of interdependence and co-partnership, of understanding and mutual confidence between themselves and all other Baha'is. <p420> V.

The Universal House of Justice The Universal House of Justice shall consist of nine men who have been elected from the Baha'i community in the manner hereinafter provided.

1.

Election The members of the Universal House of Justice shall be elected by secret ballot by the members of all National Spiritual Assemblies at a meeting to be known as the International Baha'i Convention.

(a) An election of the Universal House of Justice shall be held once every five years unless otherwise decided by the Universal House of Justice, and those elected shall continue in office until such time as their successors shall be elected and the first meeting of these successors is duly held.

(b) Upon receiving the call to Convention each National Spiritual

Assembly shall submit to the Universal House of Justice a list of the names of its members.

The recognition and seating of the delegates to the International Convention shall be vested in the Universal House of Justice.

(c) The principal business of the International Convention shall be to elect the members of the Universal House of Justice to deliberate on the affairs of the Baha'i Cause throughout the world, and to make recommendations and suggestions for the consideration of the Universal House of Justice.

(d) The sessions of the International Convention shall be conducted in such manner as the Universal House of Justice shall from time to time decide.

(e) The Universal House of Justice shall provide a procedure whereby those delegates who are unable to be present in person at the International Convention shall cast their ballots for the election of the members of the Universal House of Justice.

(f) If at the time of an election the Universal House of Justice shall consider that it is impracticable or unwise to hold the

International Convention it shall determine how the election shall take place.

(g) On the day of the election the ballots of all voters shall be scrutinized and counted and the result certified by tellers appointed in accordance with the instructions of the Universal House of Justice.

(h) If a member of a National Spiritual Assembly who has voted by mail ceases to be a member of that National Spiritual Assembly between the time of casting his ballot and the date of the counting of the ballots, his ballot shall nevertheless remain valid unless in the interval his successor shall have been elected and the ballot of such successor shall have been received by the tellers.

(i) In case by reason of a tie vote or votes the full membership of the Universal House of Justice is not determined on the first ballot, then one or more additional ballots shall be held on the persons tied until all members are elected.

The electors in the case of additional ballots shall be the members of National Spiritual Assemblies in office at the time each subsequent vote is taken.

2.

Vacancies in Membership A vacancy in the membership of the Universal House of Justice will occur upon the death of a member or in the following cases:

(a) Should any member of the Universal House of Justice commit a sin injurious to the common weal, he may be dismissed from membership by the Universal House of Justice.

(b) The Universal House of Justice may at its discretion declare a vacancy with respect to any member who in its judgement is unable to fulfil the functions of membership.

(c) A member may relinquish his membership on the Universal House of Justice only with the approval of the Universal House of Justice.

3.

By-Election If a vacancy in the membership of the Universal House of Justice occurs, the Universal House of Justice shall call a by-election at the earliest possible date unless such date, in the judgement of the <p422> Universal House of Justice, falls too close to the date of a regular election of the entire membership, in which case the Universal House of Justice may, at its discretion, defer the filling of the vacancy to the time of the regular election.

If a by-election is held, the voters shall be the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies in office at the time of the by-election.

4.

Meetings (a) After the election of the Universal House of Justice the first meeting shall be called by the member elected by the highest number of votes or, in his absence or other incapacity, by the member elected by the next highest number of votes or, in case two or more members have received the same highest number of votes, then by the member selected by lot from among those members.

Subsequent meetings shall be called in the manner decided by the Universal House of Justice. (b) The Universal House of Justice has no officers.

It shall provide for the conduct of its meetings and shall organize its activities in such manner as it shall from time to time decide.

(c) The business of the Universal House of Justice shall be conducted by the full membership in consultation, except that the Universal House of Justice may from time to time provide for quorums of less than the full membership for specified classes of business.

5.

Signature The signature of the Universal House of Justice shall be the words 'The Universal House of Justice' or in Persian 'Baytul-'Adl-i-A'zam' written by hand by any one of its members upon authority of the Universal House of Justice, to which shall be affixed in each case the Seal of the Universal House of Justice.

6.

Records The Universal House of Justice shall provide for the recording and verification of its decisions in such manner as it shall, from time to time, judge necessary. <p423> VI.

Baha'i Elections In order to preserve the spiritual character and purpose of Baha'i elections the practices of nomination or electioneering, or any other procedure or activity detrimental to that character and purpose shall be eschewed.

A silent and prayerful atmosphere shall prevail during the election so that each elector may vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection inspire him

to uphold.

1.

All Baha'i elections, except elections of officers of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies and committees, shall be by plurality vote taken by secret ballot.

2.

Election of the officers of a Spiritual Assembly or committee shall be by majority vote of the Assembly or committee taken by secret ballot.

3.

In case by reason of a tie vote or votes the full membership of an elected body is not determined on the first ballot, then one or more additional ballots shall be taken on the persons tied until all members are elected.

4.

The duties and rights of a Baha'i elector may not be assigned nor may they be exercised by proxy.

VII.

The Right of Review The Universal House of Justice has the right to review any decision or action of any Spiritual Assembly, National or Local, and to approve, modify or reverse such decision or action.

The Universal House of Justice also has the right to intervene in any matter in which a Spiritual Assembly is failing to take action or to reach a decision and, at its discretion, to require that action be taken, or itself to take action directly in the matter.

VIII.

Appeals The right of appeal exists in the circumstances, and shall be exercised according to the procedures, outlined below:

1. (a) Any member of a local Baha'i community may appeal from a decision of his Local Spiritual Assembly to the National Spiritual Assembly which shall determine whether it shall take jurisdiction of the matter or refer it back to the Local Spiritual Assembly for <p424> reconsideration.

If such an appeal concerns the membership of a person in the Baha'i community, the National Spiritual Assembly is obliged to take jurisdiction of and decide the case. (b) Any Baha'i may appeal from a decision of his National Spiritual Assembly to the Universal House of Justice which shall determine whether it shall take jurisdiction of the matter or leave it within the final jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly. (c) If any differences arise between two

or more Local Spiritual Assemblies and if these Assemblies are unable to resolve them, any one such Assembly may bring the matter to the National

Spiritual Assembly which shall thereupon take jurisdiction of the case.

If the decision of the National Spiritual Assembly thereon is unsatisfactory to any of the Assemblies concerned, or if a Local Spiritual Assembly at any time has reason to believe that actions of its National Spiritual Assembly are affecting adversely the welfare and unity of that Local Assembly's community, it shall, in either case, after seeking to compose its difference of opinion with the National Spiritual Assembly, have the right to appeal to the Universal House of Justice, which shall determine whether it shall take jurisdiction of the matter or leave it within the final jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly.

2.

An appellant, whether institution or individual, shall in the first instance make appeal to the Assembly whose decision is questioned, either for reconsideration of the case by that Assembly or for submission to a higher body.

In the latter case the Assembly is in duty bound to submit the appeal together with full particulars of the matter.

If an Assembly refuses to submit the appeal, or fails to do so within a reasonable time, the appellant may take the case directly to the higher authority.

X.

The Boards of Counsellors The institution of the Boards of Counsellors was brought into being by the Universal House of Justice to extend into the future the specific functions of protection and propagation conferred upon the Hands of the Cause of God.

The members of these boards are appointed by the Universal House of Justice.
<p425> 1.

The term of office of a Counsellor, the number of Counsellors on each Board, and the boundaries of the zone in which each Board of Counsellors shall operate, shall be decided by the Universal House of Justice.

2.

A Counsellor functions as such only within his zone and should he move his residence out of the zone for which he is appointed he automatically relinquishes his appointment.

3.

The rank and specific duties of a Counsellor render him ineligible for service on local or national administrative bodies.

If elected to the Universal House of Justice he ceases to be a Counsellor.

X.

The Auxiliary Boards In each zone there shall be two Auxiliary Boards, one for the protection and one for the propagation of the Faith, the numbers of whose members shall be set by the Universal House of Justice.

The members of these Auxiliary Boards shall serve under the direction of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and shall act as their deputies, assistants and advisers.

1.

The members of the Auxiliary Boards shall be appointed from among the believers of that zone by the Continental Board of Counsellors.

2.

Each Auxiliary Board member shall be allotted a specific area in which to serve and, unless specifically deputized by the Counsellors, shall not function as a member of the Auxiliary Board outside that area.

3.

An Auxiliary Board member is eligible for any elective office but if elected to an administrative post on a national or local level must decide whether to retain membership on the Board or accept the administrative post, since he may not serve in both capacities at the same time.

If elected to the Universal House of Justice he ceases to be a member of the Auxiliary Board.

XI.

Amendment This Constitution may be amended by decision of the Universal House of Justice when the full membership is present. <p426>

Appendix 3 Guide to Paragraphs in the Will and Testament The following guide, which is presented in two sections, provides an easy reference linking passages of the Will and Testament to chapters of this book.

In the first section, the paragraphs of the Will and Testament are listed in order and show in which chapters of The Child of the Covenant they are discussed.

In the second section, the order is reversed, with the chapters of The Child of the Covenant appearing in order and indicating which paragraphs of the Will and Testament are covered in each chapter.

The Will and Testament consists of 56 paragraphs.

These are shown here as 1-WT up to 55-WT.

The subject matter in each paragraph is discussed in one or more chapters of the book.

Will & Opening lines Chapters in
 Testament of paragraph of Child of
 the Paragraphs Will and Testament

Covenant 1-WT All-Praise to Him who, by the Shield of His Covenant...

4 2-WT Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest upon...

27 3-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

The greatest of all things...

5, 6, 7, 8 4-WT And still another of His trials was the hostility...

9, 10, 11 5-WT O ye that stand fast and firm in the Covenant!

12, 13, 14, 15,
 21, 22, 24 6-WT What deviation can be greater than breaking the
 Covenant!

16, 17, 18,
 19, 20, 21 7-WT A few months ago, in concert with others...

22 8-WT According to the direct and sacred command of God...

22 9-WT In like manner, the focal Centre of Hate...

21 10-WT O God, my God!

Thou seest this wronged servant of Thine...

22, 24 <p427 11-WT In short, O ye beloved of the Lord!

26 12-WT O God, my God!

Shield Thy trusted servant from the evils...

40 13-WT O ye that stand fast in the Covenant.

When the hour cometh...

25 14-WT In these days, the most important of all things is
 the guidance...

25 15-WT The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all
 earthly things...

25 16-WT O my loving friends!

After the passing away of this wronged one...

27, 35 17-WT The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of
 the Cause of God...

13, 28, 29, 31 18-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

It is incumbent upon the guardian...

35 19-WT The Hands of the Cause of God must elect from
 their own number...

36 20-WT O friends!

The Hands of the Cause of God must be nominated...

35 21-WT The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God are to diffuse...

32 22-WT This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction...

33, 39 23-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

In this sacred Dispensation, conflict...

24 24-WT Wherefore, O my loving friends!

Consort with all the peoples...

24 25-WT And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained...

38 26-WT O Lord, my God!

Assist thy loved ones to be firm in Thy Faith...

-- 27-WT O friends of 'Abdu'l-Baha!

The Lord, as a sign of His infinite bounties...

39 28-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

It is incumbent upon you to be submissive...

39 29-WT This is my counsel and the commandment of God unto you.

39 30-WT O my Lord, my heart's desire, Thou Whom I ever invoke...

22 <p428> 31-WT Yet now Thou seest them, O Lord, my God!

23 32-WT Adversities have waxed still more severe as they rose...

12, 16, 22, 23 33-WT Lord!

Thou seest all things weeping me and my kindred rejoicing...

22 34-WT I call upon Thee, O Lord my God! with my tongue...

23 35-WT Thou art the Powerful...

23 36-WT O dearly beloved friends!

I am now in very great danger...

23, 24, 38 37-WT It is incumbent upon these members...

38 38-WT And now, one of the greatest and most fundamental principles
26, 24, 30 39-WT In short, according to the explicit Divine Text...

26 40-WT Gracious God!

After Mirza Badi'u'llah had declared...

16 41-WT My purpose is, however, to show that it is incumbent...

30 42-WT O ye beloved of the Lord!

Strive with all your heart...

24 43-WT O God, My God!

I call Thee, Thy Prophets...

24 44-WT O my God! my Beloved, my heart's Desire!

Thou knowest...

22 45-WT Thou seest, O my God! how my long-suffering...

22 46-WT Lord!

My cup of woe runneth over...

22 47-WT Thou art, verily, the Merciful...

22 48-WT O ye the true, the sincere, the faithful friends...

21 49-WT When, in all parts of the earth, the enemies of God...

12 50-WT Thereupon the loved ones of the Lord arose

22 51-WT And as they lost their cause, grew hopeless

22 52-WT Hence, the beloved of the Lord must entirely shun them...

24, 30 53-WT Whosoever and whatsoever meeting becometh a hindrance...

25 54-WT O ye faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

31 55-WT For he is, after 'Abdu'l-Baha, the guardian of the Cause...

29, 31, 38 <p429?

APPENDIX 3 Chapters Chapter

Paragraphs in Child Titles

in Will and of the

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	-- 3	Tests of Faith
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	3 6	The Suffering of the Bab and
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the Mountains of Kurdistan	3 8	Baha'u'llah's Exiles
	3 9	Mirza Yahya
	3 10	The Breaker of the
Covenant of the Bab	4 11	Open Rebellion of
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36, 37, 55	39	Huququ'llah, Obedience to Government,	
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7.

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9.

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10.

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11.

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12.

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13.

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14. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Will and Testament, p.

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15.

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16.

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17.

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18.

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19.

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20. *ibid.* pp.

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21.

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28.

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29.

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30.

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33.

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34.

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35.

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39-40.

36.

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37.

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38.

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39.

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41. ibid. para.

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42.

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43. 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Rabbani, Priceless Pearl, p.

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45.

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46.

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47.

The full text of this Tablet, with an explanation of its significance, is given in Taherzadeh, Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

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48.

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49. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections, p.

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51.

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52. ibid. p.

153 53.

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54.

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55.

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56.

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57.

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66.

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69.

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71.

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72.

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74.

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79.

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80.

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81. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Risaliy-i-Ayyam-i-Tis'ah*, p.

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82.

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35.

83.

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84. *ibid.* p.

156.

85. *ibid.* p.

157.

86. *ibid.* pp.

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87.

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88. *ibid.*

89. *ibid.* pp.

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90. *ibid.* pp.

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180-2.

92.

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102.

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116. ibid. p.

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122. *ibid.*, p.

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123.

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