

CHAPTER NINE: THE DIVINE PLAN

THE CAUSE OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is the same as the Cause of Christ. It is the same Temple and the same Foundation. Both of these are spiritual springtimes and seasons of the soul-refreshing awakening and the cause of the renovation of the life of mankind. The spring of this year is the same as the spring of last year. The origins and ends are the same. The sun of today is the sun of yesterday. In the coming of Christ, the divine teachings were given in accordance with the infancy of the human race. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh have the same basic principles, but are according to the stage of the maturity of the world and the requirements of this illumined age.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE GREATEST NAME

O ye Cohorts of God! Today in the present world each community is wandering in a wilderness, moving in accord with some passion and desire, and running to and fro in pursuance of his own imagination. Among the communities of the world, this community of the “Most Great Name” is free from every thought, keeping aloof from every project and scheme, arising with the purest designs and intentions, and striving and endeavoring with the utmost hope to live in accordance with the divine teachings in order that the surface of the earth become the delectable paradise, the nether world become the mirror of the Kingdom, the universe become another universe, and the human race attain to higher morals, conduct and manners.

O ye Cohorts of God! Through the protection and help of the Blessed Perfection—may my life be a sacrifice to His beloved ones!—you must conduct and deport yourselves in such a manner that you may stand out among other souls distinguished by a brilliancy like unto the sun. If any one of you enters a city he must become the center of attraction because of the sincerity, faithfulness, love, honesty, fidelity, truthfulness and loving-kindness of his disposition and nature toward all the inhabitants of the world, that the people of the city may all cry out: “This person is unquestionably a Bahá'í; for his manners, his behavior, his conduct, his morals, his nature and his disposition are of the attributes of the Bahá'ís.” Until you do attain to this station, you have not fulfilled the Covenant and the Testament of God. For according to the irrefutable texts, He has taken from us a firm covenant that we may

live and act in accord with the divine exhortations, commands and lordly teachings.

O ye Cohorts of God! Now is the time when the signs and the perfections of the “Most Great Name” become manifest and clear in this golden cycle in order that it may become demonstrated and established beyond doubt that this period is the period of the Blessed Perfection, and this cycle is distinguished from all other cycles and epochs.

GOD LOVETH THOSE WHO WORK IN GROUPS

O ye friends of God! Today is the day of union and this age is the age of harmony in the world of existence. “Verily, God loveth those who are working in His path in groups, for they are a solid foundation.” Consider ye that he says “in groups,” united and bound together, supporting one another. “To work,” mentioned in this holy verse, does not mean, in this greatest age, to perform it with swords, spears, shafts and arrows, but rather with sincere intentions, good designs, useful advices, divine moralities, beautiful actions, spiritual qualities, educating the public, guiding the souls of mankind, diffusing spiritual fragrances, explaining divine illustrations, showing convincing proofs and doing charitable deeds. When the holy souls, through the angelic power, will arise to show forth these celestial characteristics, establishing a band of harmony, each of these souls shall be regarded as one thousand persons and the waves of this greatest ocean shall be considered as the army of the hosts of the Supreme Concourse.

What a great blessing it is when the torrents, streams, currents, tides, and drops are all gathered in one place! They will form a great ocean and the real harmony shall overcome and reign in such a manner that all the rules, laws, distinctions and differences of the imaginations of these souls shall disappear and vanish like little drops and shall be submerged in the ocean of spiritual unity. By the Ancient Beauty, in this case and condition, the blessings of the great ocean will overflow and canals shall become as spacious as an endless ocean and each drop shall become as a boundless sea!

O ye friends of God! Strive to attain to this high and sublime station and show forth such a brightness in these days that its radiance may appear from the eternal horizons. This is the real foundation of the Cause of God; this is the essence of the divine doctrine; this is the cause of the revelation of the heavenly Scriptures; this is the means of the appearance of the Sun of the divine world; this is the way of the establishment of God upon the bodily throne.

THE DIVINE SHEPHERD

Every flock of the sheep of God which is protected under the shadow of the Divine Shepherd will not be scattered, but when the sheep are dispersed from the flock, they will necessarily be caught and torn by the wolf.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to flock together! It is incumbent upon you to be united! It is incumbent upon you to expose yourselves to the fragrances of God at every time and moment!

THE FUNDAMENTAL AIM

The aim of the appearance of the Blessed Perfection—may my life be a sacrifice for His beloved ones!—was the unity and agreement of all the people of the world. Therefore, my utmost desire, firstly, is the accord and union and love of the believers and after that of all the people of the world. Now, if unity and agreement is not established among the believers, I will become heartbroken and the afflictions will leave a greater imprint upon me. But if the fragrance of love and unity among the believers is wafted to my nostrils, every trial will become a mercy, every unhappiness a joy, every difficulty an expansion, every misery a treasure and every hardship a felicity.

THIS MEETING IS BLESSED

Praise be to God! that ye are gathered in one assembly like unto the stars of the Pleiades, are illumined with the light of the knowledge of God and through the outpouring of the cloud of the love of God, ye are the fresh flowers of the meadow and plain; ye are intimate and familiar with infinite unity and love.

Therefore, this meeting is blessed. But if it is firmly established and become constant, it will bring forth great results and most weighty developments will be attained. Consequently, persevere ye in renewing your meetings and display utmost magnanimity in firmness and steadfastness. When the root of the tree of the garden is well established and its protection is safeguarded, it will bring forth luscious fruits.

Likewise, when the regiment of an army and the individuals of a cohort are united and related with ease, untold triumphs will be acquired. But if they come together one day and disperse another day, no fruits will be produced.

Therefore, as ye have prepared an army of heaven and become the host of life, ye must continue to hold meetings, have spiritual communications, be firm in resolution, steadfast in purpose and be constant and persevering so that ye may win celestial conquests.

THE SPIRITUAL ELECTION

The blessed letter indicating the election of the Spiritual Meeting was received and proved a source of joy. Thank God, the beloved of that city, in perfect unity, love and oneness, held the new election and were confirmed and strengthened to elect such holy souls as are near the divine Threshold and known by the republic of the beloved to be firm and steadfast in the Covenant.

Now they (the members) must, in perfect spirit and fragrance, in sincerity of heart, in attraction by the fragrances of God and by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, engage in service; in the promotion of the Word of God; the diffusion of the fragrances of God; the training of souls; the promulgation of the Most Great Peace. They must raise the Banner of Guidance and become the host of the Supreme Concourse.

Indeed, blessed souls have been elected. When I read their names, spiritual joy was immediately realized, for, praise be to God! certain souls have appeared in that continent who are servants of the Kingdom, self-sacrificing ones of the Peerless Majesty.

O ye friends of mine! Illuminate the meeting with the light of the love of God, make it joyful and happy through the melody of the Kingdom of Holiness, and with heavenly food and through the "Lord's Supper" confer life.

THE HOUSE OF JUSTICE

O thou party who art assisted by the Hosts of the Kingdom of El-Abhá!

Blessed are ye who are assembled in the shadow of the Word of God, who are abiding

in the cave of the Covenant of God, who are comforted by dwelling in the Paradise of El-Abhá, who are cheerfully moved with the breezes which blow from the point of the providence of God, and who have arisen to render service to the Cause of God, to promulgate the Religion of God, to promote the Word of God and to hoist the standards of sanctity in those regions and climes.

By the life of El-Bahá! Verily, the perfect and divine power will breathe in you with bounties from the Holy Spirit and enable you to accomplish a thing the like of which hath never been seen by the eye of existence.

O party of the Covenant! Verily, the Beauty of El-Bahá hath promised the most great assistance to the beloved who are firm in the Covenant and to confirm them through the mightiest power. Ye will surely find in your luminous assembly such signs as will shine within hearts and souls. Adhere to the hem of the robe of the Lofty One and do your best to spread the Covenant of God and to be kindled with the fire of the love of God, so that your hearts may move with joy through the fragrances of humbleness which are being diffused from the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Make feet firm, strengthen hearts and rely upon the everlasting bounties which Will successively pour on you from the Kingdom of El-Abhá. Know, verily, the lights of will shine forth unto you during your gathering together in the brilliant Paradise.

It is incumbent on you to have union and harmony. It is incumbent upon you to have affinity and accord, so that ye may become united in body and soul as the Pleiades, and as strings of brilliant pearls. Thereby your foundation will be laid, your argument will become manifest, your stars will beam forth and your souls will be comforted.

Whenever ye enter the council-chamber, recite this prayer with a heart throbbing with the love of God and a tongue purified from all but His remembrance, that the All-Powerful may graciously aid you to achieve supreme victory:—

“O God, my God! We are servants of Thine that have turned with devotion to Thy Holy Face, that have detached ourselves from all beside Thee in this glorious Day. We have gathered in this spiritual assembly, united in our views and thoughts, with our purposes harmonized to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind. O Lord, our God! Make us the signs of Thy Divine Guidance, the Standards of Thy exalted Faith amongst men, servants to Thy mighty Covenant. O Thou our Lord Most High! Manifestations of Thy Divine Unity in Thine Abhá Kingdom, and resplendent stars shining upon all regions. Lord! Aid us to become seas surging with the billows of Thy wondrous Grace, streams flowing from Thy all-glorious Heights, goodly fruits upon the Tree of Thy heavenly Cause, trees waving through the breezes of Thy Bounty in Thy celestial Vineyard. O God! Make our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy

Divine Unity, our hearts cheered with the outpourings of Thy Grace, that we may unite even as the waves of one sea and become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light; that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world. Thou art the Gracious, the Bountiful, the Bestower, the Almighty, the Merciful, the Compassionate.”

The signature of that meeting should be the Spiritual Gathering (House of Spirituality) and the wisdom is that hereafter the government should not infer by the term “House of Justice” that a court is signified, that it is connected with political affairs, or that at any time it will interfere with governmental affairs.

Hereafter, enemies will be many. They would use this subject as a cause for disturbing the mind of the government and confusing the thoughts of the public. The intention was to make known that by the term Spiritual Gathering (House of Spirituality), that Gathering has not the least connection with material affairs, and that its whole aim and consultation is confined to matters connected with spiritual affairs.

OBEDIENCE TO THE ASSEMBLY

In this day, the gathering of a board for consultation is of great importance and a great necessity. For all, obedience to it is a necessity, especially because the members (of it) are the hands of the Cause.

So they (members) must confer and consult in such a way that neither disagreement nor abhorrence may occur. When meeting or consultation, each must use perfect liberty in stating his views and unveiling the proof of his demonstration. If another contradicts him, he must not become excited because if there be no investigation or verification of questions and matters, the agreeable view will not be discovered neither understood. The brilliant light which comes from the collision of thoughts is the “lightener” of facts.

If all views are in harmony at the end of a conference, it will be excellent; but if, God forbid! disagreement occurs, then the decision must be according to the greater number in harmony. If, after reaching the result, one or other of the members does not agree with it, neither of the other members nor any one must argue with or reproach him, but keep silence; then they will write to this Servant.

None (of the members of the board) must spread the matters or methods pertaining to the conference. At the opening of the conference they are to ask God for

special assistance and help and for their Ruler and his assistants and for the Governors of the country.

During the conference no hint must be entertained regarding political affairs. All conferences must be regarding the matters of benefit, both as a whole and individually, such as the guarding of all in all cases, their protection and preservation, the improvement of character, the training of children, etc.

If any person wishes to speak of government affairs, or to interfere with the order of Governors, the others must not combine with him because the Cause of God is withdrawn entirely from political affairs; the political realm pertains only to the Rulers of those matters: it has nothing to do with the souls who are exerting their utmost energy to harmonizing affairs, helping character and inciting (the people) to strive for perfections. Therefore no soul is allowed to interfere with (political) matters, but only in that which is commanded.

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ IS PRESENT

Thou hast written concerning the meetings and the gathering places of the believers of God. Such assemblies and congregations will greatly aid the promotion of the Word—and all the audience, whether friends or not friends, become affected. But when the friends have the intention of entering in these meetings and assemblies, they must first make the purpose pure, disengage the heart from all other reflections, ask the inexhaustible divine confirmation and with the utmost devotion and humility set their feet in the gathering-place. Let them not introduce any topic in the meeting except the mentioning of the True One, neither must they confuse that merciful assembly with perplexed outside questions. They must either teach or open their tongues in propounding argument, either commune or supplicate and pray to God, either read Tablets or give out advices or exhortations

Make ye an effort in every meeting that the Lord’s Supper may become realized and the heavenly food descend. This heavenly food is knowledge, understanding, faith, assurance, love, affinity, kindness, purity of purpose, attraction of hearts and the union of souls. It was this manner of the Lord’s Supper which descended from the heavenly kingdom in the day of Christ. When the meeting is conducted after this manner, then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also is present in heart and soul, though His body may not be with you.

THE CENTER OF DECISION

If any differences of opinion may arise in those regions you must keep yourself entirely aloof and show forth love and kindness to all, saying it is better to refer to the ordained Center all the affairs. Whatever He commands that very thing is acceptable and beloved. You must be satisfied with this. Strife is the cause of the dispersion of the Word of God. Whatever I say and write, that is the duty of all to comply with. Beside that no other word is permitted.

Regarding the establishment of the board of translation. This matter is yet a theory, but its realization depends upon many affairs which are far from attainment at present. Until these affairs are realized, the board of translation will not find an outward expression.

The most great work to accomplish is this:—that ye must strive so that the believers of God in America may arise to union and concord. The most important feat in this day is harmony and agreement. No soul must interfere with another and no one must find fault with the rest. Praise be to God that all of them are believers in the Beauty of Abhá, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá is glad and happy on that account. But they must arise to perform good deeds according to divine instructions, so that they may guide the people with heavenly actions and manners:—to such an extent that all the inhabitants of the world may draw conclusions from their behavior and deeds, that these persons are Bahá'ís. For the manifestation of such deeds and actions from anybody else except Bahá'ís is impossible and impracticable.

This is the foundation of the religion of God and the law of God! Blessed is the one who practices them!

THE BASIS OF UNION

Organize ye Spiritual Assemblies; lay ye the foundation of union and concord in this world; destroy ye the fabric of strife and war from the face of the earth; construct ye the temple of harmony and agreement; enkindle ye the light of the realm of the oneness of humanity; open ye your eyes; gaze and behold ye the other world! The kingdom of peace, salvation, uprightness and reconciliation is founded in the invisible world, and it will by degrees become manifest and apparent through the power of the Word of God!

I supplicate God that ye may become the army of that kingdom, in order that by the power of the Most Great Name, the friends of God may conquer this world

through love, friendship and the strength of the Kingdom of peace; the human race become compassionate, and bloodshed and carnage be completely effaced from the universe.

The spirit of truth is soaring on the supreme apex, like unto a bird, in order that it may discover a severed heart and alight therein and make its nest.

I hope that all the friends become manifestors of knowledge and the centers of merciful feelings. Each of them become like unto an angel and radiate heavenly deeds, thoughts and actions.

THE SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written of the organization of an assembly in that city. Look not at the small number; nay, rather seek the pure hearts. One holy soul is better than one thousand other souls. If a few souls gather together in a beloved meeting with the feelings of the Kingdom, with the divine attractions, with pure hearts and with absolute purity and holiness, to consort in spirit and fragrance, that gathering will have its effect upon all the world. The conditions, the words and the deeds of that gathering will lead a world to eternal happiness and will be an evidence of the favors of the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit will strengthen them and the hosts of the Supreme Concourse will render them victorious and the angels of Abhá will come in succession. By angels is meant the divine confirmations and heavenly powers. Angels are also those holy souls who have severed attachment to the earthly world, who are free from the fetters of self and passion and who have attached their hearts to the divine realm and the merciful kingdom. They are of the kingdom, heavenly; they are of the merciful One, divine. They are the manifestations of the divine grace and the dawns of spiritual bounty.

The spiritual meetings, which are organized in this cycle of God and this divine century, have never had their simile or likeness in bygone cycles. For the great meetings were under the protection of aristocratic men, while these meetings are under the protection of the bounty of El-Abhá. The helper or supporter of those was either a prince or a king; either a priest was the principal, or a great republic; but the helper, the assistant, the confirmer and the inspirer of these spiritual meetings is His Majesty the everlasting God.

Consider not the present condition, but rather foresee the future and the end. A seed in the beginning is very small, but in the end a great tree. One should not

consider the seed, but the tree and its abundance of blossoms, leaves and fruits.

Consider the days of Jesus, when there was only a small body of people, and then observe the great tree which grew from that seed and what an abundant fruit it produced. This is greater than that, forasmuch as it is the calling of the Lord of Hosts and the voice of the trumpet of the living God; it is the summons unto the harmony and unison of the world, and it is the banner of faithfulness, trustworthiness and friendship among the different nations and sects of the universe; it is the light of the Sun of Truth and the spirituality of the Majestic One. Verily this great cycle will encompass all the horizons and ultimately all the nations will gather together under this standard.

O ye who are firm in the Covenant!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is constantly engaged in ideal communication with any Spiritual Assembly which is instituted through the divine bounty, and the members of which are in the utmost devotion turning to the divine kingdom and are firm in the Covenant. To them He is heartily attached and with them He is linked by everlasting ties. Thus correspondence with them is sincere, constant and uninterrupted. The Spiritual Assemblies which are organized for the sake of teaching the truth, whether Assemblies for men, Assemblies for women or mixed Assemblies are all accepted and are conducive to the spreading of the fragrances of God. This is essential. Likewise the public meetings in which one day during the week the believers gather to be engaged in the commemoration of God, to read Communes and deliver effective speeches is acceptable and beloved. But now is not the time—it is utterly impossible to establish the House of Justice which is mentioned in the Book of Aqdas, nay rather it is impracticable and not to be thought of, that is for the time when the Cause is proclaimed and the Commands have become effective. Therefore now is not the time for the House of Justice, which must be established by general election. Its mention is not permissible and its realization impossible.

Endeavor ye as much as possible that differences may not arise in the affairs; let not every insignificant matter become the cause of disagreement. If such conditions exist the end will be complete dispersion. The believers and maid-servants of the Merciful must all consider how to produce harmony, so that the unity of the human world may be realized, not that every wholly unimportant subject become conducive to differences of opinion.

It is my hope that the friends and the maid-servants of America become united on all subjects and not disagree at all. If they agree upon a subject, even though it be wrong, it is better than to disagree and be in the right, for this difference will produce

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

The members of the Spiritual Meeting must endeavor, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to make the souls real Bahá'ís. If they attain this glorious purpose, that country will be illumined and that land will become a veritable paradise, all nations will look to that assembly and from the explanation and exposition thereof receive realities and meanings.

Trust no man save him whose breast hath been dilated by God through the light of faith, whom God hath confirmed in His religion, and who is severed from all else save God and attracted by His fragrances.

In future, of course, certain people will come to you claiming faith; do not believe them nor trust them, unless after critical examination, search and investigation, and a long period of waiting, they shall appear to be faithful and truthful in word, confident in heart, attracted in spirit, pure in intention, patient in hardship, enduring the most severe tests; then associate with them. Because some sects will send certain men to mingle with you in order to throw suspicion upon those who are weak, therefore avoid them carefully. But let such be hidden that you may not become a cause of hindrance.

Thou hast written regarding the articles and papers which are written by the believers of God and the forwarding of them to this land for correction. This servant, on account of the multitude of works and occupations, hath no time whatever to attend to this matter. If these articles are read in the spiritual assembly of each city in America and the printing and spreading of them is advised and approved by the assembly, it is acceptable. This permission is granted so that those souls do not become disappointed and may be engaged in the composition and printing of instructive papers.

MERCY AND JUSTICE

The foundation of the Kingdom of God is laid upon justice, fairness, mercy, sympathy and kindness to every soul. Then strive ye with heart and soul to practice love and kindness to the world of humanity at large, except to those souls who are selfish and insincere. It is not advisable to show kindness to a person who is a tyrant, a traitor or

a thief because kindness encourages him to become worse and does not awaken him. The more kindness you show to a liar the more he is apt to lie, for he thinks that you know not, while you do know, but extreme kindness keeps you from revealing your knowledge.

INTER-ASSEMBLY UNION

The Spiritual Meeting of men and the Spiritual Meeting of women in Chicago are indeed endeavoring to serve. If they unite, as they should, they will produce great results. Especially, if the Spiritual Meetings of Chicago unite with those of New York and become bound together, in a short while the fragrance of the divine garden, which giveth life, will perfume all regions.

The Spiritual Meeting of Consultation of New York must be in the utmost union and harmony with the Spiritual Meeting of Consultation of Chicago, and that which they deem advisable to publish, these two Meetings of Consultation must unitedly approve of it and deem its publication advisable. Then the Meeting of Consultation must send one copy thereof to 'Akká, in order that it may be also approved of here and then returned, and that then it may be printed and published.

That the two Spiritual Meetings of Chicago and New York must be in unity and harmony is very important, and when a Spiritual Meeting may be also organized in Washington in a befitting manner, these two meetings must be also in unity and harmony with that meeting.

To be brief, it hath been decided by the desire of God that union and harmony may day by day increase among the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful One, in the West. Not until this is realized will the affairs advance by any means whatever! And the greatest means for the union and harmony of all is Spiritual Meetings. This matter is very important and is as a magnet for divine confirmation. If the beauty of this Divine Beloved One—that is, unity of believers—does appear in the ornament of the Kingdom of Abhá, it is certain that those countries will, in a short time, become the Paradise of Abhá and the light of unity and singleness will shine upon the whole world from the West. We are endeavoring with all heart and soul, have no rest night and day, nor a moment of tranquillity, so that we may make the world of humanity the mirror of the divine unity; how much more the beloved of God! And this wish and hope shall appear and shine forth at that time when the true friends of God may arise and act in accord with the teachings of the Beauty of Abhá—may my life be a sacrifice to His beloved ones! One of the

teachings is that love and faithfulness must so prevail in the hearts that men may see the stranger as a friend, the sinner as an intimate fellow, may count enemies as allies, regard foes as loving comrades, call their executioner the giver of life, consider the denier as a believer and the unbeliever as a faithful one—that is, men must behave in such a manner as may befit the believers, the faithful, the friend and the confidant. If this lamp may shine in a befitting manner in the assemblage of the world you will find that the regions will become fragrant and the world become a delectable paradise, the surface of the earth will become an excellent garden, the world will become as one home, the different nations will become as one kind, and the peoples and nationalities of the East and West will become as one household. I hope such a day may come and such lights may dawn and such a Countenance may appear in the utmost beauty.

O ye dear friends of mine! The Assemblies of those regions must be connected with one another and must communicate with each other. Even communicate with the Assemblies of the East, so that this may become the means of the great unity and concord.

THE MASHRIQU'L-ADHKÁR

Ye have written regarding the erection of the Temple and the purchase of the ground, or the finding of a place to be as a home for the gathering of the believers. At this moment that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is immersed in the ocean of calamities, this news caused him joy and happiness, that—praise be to God!—the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful are thinking to serve the Kingdom of God.

Concerning the erection of the Temple: Now all the believers must become united, so that the Temple may be built soon in one place. For should the believers undertake the erection of the Temple in many places, it will not become completed anywhere; and as in Chicago they have preceded every other place to plan the erection of the Temple, undoubtedly to cooperate and help them is nobler and a necessity. Then, when it is built in one place, it will become erected in many other places. If, for the present, you prepare or establish a home in New York, though by renting it, to become a center for the gathering of the believers of God, it is very acceptable. God willing, in all the states of America in the future there will be erected Temples with infinite architectural beauty, art, with pleasing proportion and handsome and attractive appearances; especially in New York. But for the present, be ye satisfied with a rented place.

O friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His co-sharers and partners in the servitude of the Lord of Hosts! Verily the greatest affair and the most important matter today is to establish a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and to found a Temple from which the voice of praises may rise to the Kingdom of the majestic Lord. Blessings be upon you for having thought to do so and intending to erect such an edifice, advancing all in devoting your wealth in this great purpose and in this splendid work. You will soon see the angels of confirmation following after you and the hosts of reinforcement crowding before you.

When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is accomplished, when the lights are emanating therefrom, the righteous ones are presenting themselves therein, the prayers are performed with supplication towards the mysterious Kingdom, the voice of glorification is raised to the Lord, the Supreme, then the believers shall rejoice, the hearts shall be dilated and overflow with the love of the All-living and Self-existent God. The people shall hasten to worship in that heavenly Temple, the fragrances of God will be elevated, the divine teachings will be established in the hearts like the establishment of the Spirit in mankind; the people will then stand firm in the Cause of your Lord, the Merciful. Praise and greetings be upon you.

Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple, shall be erected in America! I entreat God to assist the confirmed believers in accomplishing this great service and with entire zeal to rear this mighty structure which shall be renowned throughout the world. The support of God will be with those believers in that district that they may be successful in their undertaking, for the Cause is great and great; because this is the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that country and from it the praise of God shall ascend to the Kingdom of Mystery and the tumult of His exaltation and greetings from the whole world shall be heard!

Whosoever arises for the service of this building shall be assisted with a great power from His Supreme Kingdom and upon him spiritual and heavenly blessings shall descend, which shall fill his heart with wonderful consolation and enlighten his eyes by beholding the glorious and eternal God!

The contribution that thou hast made to the Temple is beloved. The Temple is the most great foundation of the world of humanity and it hath many branches. Although the Temple is the place of worship, with it is connected a hospital, pharmacy, pilgrims' house, school for the orphans, and a university for the study of high sciences. Every Temple is connected with these five things. I hope that now in America they will build a Temple and gradually add to it the hospital, school, university, pharmacy and pilgrims' house with the utmost efficiency and thoroughness. Thou shouldst make known to the believers these details, so that they

may realize how important the Temple is. The Temple is not only a place for worship; nay, it is perfect in every way.

Thy letter hath arrived and the contents have given glad-tidings that the ground for the Temple hath been bought and also told about the meeting which was held concerning the needs for the Temple. From this news great fragrance and joy were produced. Thanks be to God that thou hast helped to establish a meeting for this purpose. I hope that the members of this meeting will become the receivers of the divine benevolence and be aided by the heavenly assistances. But consult with the House of Spirituality of Chicago. Ye must all be perfectly united and harmonious until, through this harmony, ye may perpetually receive help from the Kingdom of God.

Concerning the members of this spiritual meeting, you suggested that they be selected from all the spiritual meetings of the other cities of America. I quite approve and am very much pleased with this plan. This will become the cause of harmony in the Word in all America. Therefore, ask every spiritual meeting in the other cities that they will each select one and send him, and from these selected ones and with those who are selected from the Chicago meeting, establish a new meeting for the provision of the needs of the Temple. If this be established with perfect fragrance and joy, it will produce great results. In this new meeting, especially for the establishment of the Temple, women are also to be members.

Give to all the divine friends the glad-tidings of the boundless heavenly blessings and tell them that the glances of the eyes of Providence are upon them and the perfect favor and bounty are descending upon them.

Thy detailed letter was received. Its contents indicated that thou didst travel in the cities of America and visited the friends of God until thou didst reach the general Convention held in Chicago for the building of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. In thy letter thou hast written in praise and commendation of the illumination of that Convention. Truly I say, the Convention of the Bahá'í delegates in Chicago was a heavenly gathering and confirmed by Divine Assistance.

The splendor of the Kingdom of Abhá shone forth and the soul-refreshing breeze wafted from the direction of Providence.

It was an effulgence from the rays of the Sun of Truth that the friends of God gathered in that illumined Assembly with the utmost love, unity and concord. The intentions of every one were reinforced by divine confirmation, the aim of every one was service in the Cause of God, servitude in the Threshold of the Almighty and the erection of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. The results of that Convention in the future will

be far-reaching and most important, and evident signs shall become manifest. As it was the first general Convention in America, it displayed wonderful influence. The gathering of that illumined Assembly in such a short space of time would have been impossible without the power of the divine Covenant and Testament. But the Covenant has such a great sway that it astonishes the minds. In every region the sign of the power of the Convention is apparent and manifest.

For instance, in Írán the fire of revolution blazed in such wise that all communities, government and nations, became afflicted with the most severe trials; but the power of the Covenant protected the Bahá'í friends to such a degree that in this turbulent storm no dust fell upon them, except in one locality, which became the cause of the spreading of the Religion of God and the diffusion of the Word of God. Now all the parties in Írán are wondering how the people of Bahá were guarded and protected. Praise be to God that in Tìhrán and all the provinces of Írán the Call of God has been raised, the Ensign of the Covenant has been unfurled, the cry of “Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!” has been heard and the melody of the Kingdom of Abhá has been promulgated among the people of intelligence....

Thou hast written concerning the organization of a council for the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. This news brought much spirit and fragrance, for the nine delegates, sent by the various assemblies, gathered in that meeting and consulted concerning the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the most important matter and the greatest divine institute. Consider how the first institute of His Holiness Moses, after His exodus from Egypt, was the “Tent of Martyrdom” which He raised and which was the traveling Temple. It was a tent which they pitched in the desert, wherever they abode, and worshipped in it. Likewise, after His Holiness Christ—may the spirit of the world be a sacrifice to Him!—the first institute by the disciples was a Temple. They planned a church in every country. Consider the Gospel and the importance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will become evident.

In fine, I hope that all the beloved of God, collectively, in the continent of America, men and women, will strive night and day until the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár be erected in the utmost solidity and beauty.

THE COLLECTIVE CENTER OF THE KINGDOM

TO THE ASSEMBLIES AND MEETINGS OF THE BELIEVERS OF GOD AND THE

MAID-SERVANTS OF THE MERCIFUL IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA:

Upon them be Bahá'u'lláh El-Abhá!

He is God

O ye heavenly souls, sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

God says in the *Qur'an*: "Take ye hold of the Cord of God, all of you, and become ye not disunited."

In the contingent world there are many collective centers which are conducive to association and unity between the children of men. For example, patriotism is a collective center; nationalism is a collective center; identity of interests is a collective center; political alliance is a collective center; the union of ideals is a collective center, and the prosperity of the world of humanity is dependent upon the organization and promotion of the collective centers. Nevertheless, all the above institutions are in reality, the matter and not the substance, accidental and not eternal—temporary and not everlasting. With the appearance of great revolutions and upheavals, all these collective centers are swept away. But the Collective Center of the Kingdom, embodying the Institutes and Divine Teachings, is the eternal Collective Center. It establishes relationship between the East and the West, organizes the oneness of the world of humanity, and destroys the foundation of differences. It overcomes and includes all the other collective centers. Like unto the ray of the sun, it dispels entirely the darkness, encompassing all the regions, bestows ideal life, and causes the effulgence of divine illumination. Through the breaths of the Holy Spirit it performs miracles; the Orient and the Occident embrace each other, the North and South become intimates and associates; conflicting and contending opinions disappear; antagonistic aims are brushed aside, the law of the struggle for existence is abrogated, and the canopy of the oneness of the world of humanity is raised on the apex of the globe, casting its shade over all the races of men. Consequently, the real Collective Center is the body of the divine teachings, which include all the degrees and embrace all the universal relations and necessary laws of humanity.

Consider! The people of the East and the West were in the utmost strangeness. Now to what a high degree they are acquainted with each other and united together! How far are the inhabitants of *Írán* from the remotest countries of America! And now observe how great has been the influence of the heavenly power, for the distance of thousands of miles has become identical with one step! How various nations that have had no relations or similarity with each other are now united and agreed through this divine potency! Indeed to God belongs power in the past and in the

future! And verily God is powerful over all things!

Consider! When the rain, the heat, the sun and the gentle zephyrs cooperate with each other, what beautiful gardens are produced! How the various kinds of hyacinths, flowers, trees and plants associate with each other and are conducive to the adornment and charm of one another! Hence the oneness of the bounty of the sun, the oneness of rain and the oneness of the breeze have so overcome all other considerations, that the variety of hues, fragrances and tastes have increased the adornment, the attraction and sweetness of the whole. In a similar manner, when the divine Collective Center and the outpouring of the Sun of Reality and the breaths of the Holy Spirit are brought together, the variety of races and the differences existing between countries will become the cause of the embellishment, decoration and elegance of the world of humanity.

Therefore, the believers of God throughout all the Republics of America, through the divine power, must become the cause of the promotion of heavenly teachings and the establishment of the oneness of humanity. Every one of the important souls must arise blowing over all parts of America the breath of life conferring upon the people a new spirit, baptizing them with the fire of the love of God, the water of life, and the breaths of the Holy Spirit—so that the second birth may become realized. For it is written in the Gospel: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.”

Therefore, O ye believers of God in the United States and Canada! Select ye important personages, or that they by themselves, becoming severed from rest and composure of the world, may arise and travel throughout Alaska, the Republic of Mexico, and south of Mexico, in the Central American Republics, such as Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Belize; and through the great South American Republics, such as Argentine, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, French Guiana, Dutch Guiana, British Guiana, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile; also in the group of the West Indies Islands such as Cuba, Haiti, Porto Rico, Jamaica and Santo Domingo, and the group of Islands of the Lesser Antilles, the Islands of Bahama and the Islands of Bermuda; likewise to the Islands of the east, west and south of South America, such as Trinidad, Falkland Islands, Galapagos Islands, Juan Fernandez and Tobago. Visit ye especially the city of Bahia, on the eastern shore of Brazil. Because in the past years this city was christened with the name, Bahia, there is no doubt that it has been through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, the believers of God must display the utmost effort, upraise the divine melody throughout those regions, promulgate the heavenly teachings and waft

over all, the spirit of eternal life; so that those Republics may become so illumined with the splendors and the effulgences of the Sun of Reality that they may become the objects of the praise and commendation of all other countries. Likewise, ye must give great attention to the Republic of Panama, for in that point the Occident and the Orient find each other united through the Panama Canal, and it is also situated between the two great oceans. That place will become very important in the future. The teachings once established there, they will unite the East and the West, the North and the South.

Hence the intention must be purified, the effort ennobled and exalted, so that ye may establish affinity between the hearts of the world of humanity. This glorious aim will not become realized save through the promotion of divine teachings which are the foundations of the holy religions.

Consider how the religions of God served the world of humanity! How the religion of Torah became conducive to the glory and honor and progress of the Israelitish nation! How the breaths of the Holy Spirit of His Holiness Christ created affinity and unity between divergent communities and quarreling families! How the sacred power of His Holiness Muḥammad became the means of uniting and harmonizing the contentious tribes and the different clans of Peninsular Arabia—to such an extent that one thousand tribes were welded into one tribe, strife and discord was done away with, all of them unitedly and with one accord strove in advancing the cause of culture and civilization, and thus were freed from the lowest degree of degradation, soaring toward the height of everlasting glory! Is it possible to find a greater Collective Center in the phenomenal world than this? In comparison to this Divine Collective Center, the national collective center, the patriotic collective center, the political collective center, and the cultural and intellectual collective center are like child's play!

Now strive ye that the Collective Center of the sacred religions, for the inculcation of which all the Prophets were manifested and which is no other than the spirit of the Divine Teachings,—be spread in all parts of America—so that each one of you may shine forth from the horizon of Reality like unto the morning star, divine illumination may overcome the darkness of nature, and the world of humanity may become enlightened. This is the most great work! Should ye become confirmed therein, this world will become another world, the surface of the earth will become the delectable Paradise, and eternal Institutions be founded.

Let whosoever travels to different parts to teach, peruse over mountain, desert, land and sea this supplication!

O God! O God! Thou seest my weakness, lowliness and humility amongst Thy creatures; nevertheless I have trusted on Thee and have arisen in the promotion of Thy Teachings amongst Thy strong servants, relying on Thy power and might!

O Lord! I am a broken-winged bird and desire to soar in this Thy space to which there is no limit. How is it possible for me to do this save through Thy providence and grace, Thy confirmation and assistance!

O Lord! Have pity on my weakness and strengthen me with Thy power!

O Lord! Have pity on my impotency and assist me with Thy might and majesty!

O Lord! Should the breaths of the Holy Spirit confirm the weakest of creatures, he shall attain to the highest station of greatness and shall possess anything he desireth. Indeed Thou hast assisted Thy servants in the past, and they were the weakest of Thy creatures, the lowliest of Thy servants and the most insignificant of those who lived upon the earth; but through Thy sanction and potency they took precedence over the most glorious of Thy people and the most noble of Thy mankind. Whereas formerly they were as moths, they became royal falcons and whereas before they were as bubbles they became seas. Through Thy bestowal, Thy mercy and Thy most great favor, they became stars shining in the horizon of guidance, birds singing in the rose garden of immortality, lions roaring in the forest of knowledge and wisdom, and whales swimming in the oceans of life.

Verily, Thou art the clement, the powerful, the mighty, and the most merciful of the merciful!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH THE LORD OF HOSTS

TO THE BELIEVERS OF GOD AND THE MAID-SERVANTS OF THE MERCIFUL OF
THE BAHÁ'Í ASSEMBLIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA:

Upon them be Bahá'u'lláh El-Abhá!

He is God

O ye apostles of Bahá'u'lláh,—May my life be a ransom to you!

The blessed Person of the Promised One is interpreted in the Holy Book as the Lord of Hosts, i.e., the heavenly armies. By heavenly armies those souls are intended who are entirely freed from the human world, transformed into celestial spirits and have become divine angels. Such souls are the rays of the Sun of Reality who will

illumine all the continents. Each one is holding in his hand a trumpet, blowing the breath of life over all the regions. They are delivered from human qualities and the defects of the world of nature, are characterized with the characteristics of God, and are attracted with the fragrances of the Merciful. Like unto the apostles of Christ, who were filled with Him, these souls also have become filled with His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, i.e., the love of Bahá'u'lláh has so mastered every organ, part and limb of their bodies, as to leave no effect by the promptings of the human world.

These souls are the armies of God and the conquerors of the East and the West. Should one of them turn his face toward some direction and summon the people to the Kingdom of God, all the ideal forces and lordly confirmations will rush to his support and reinforcement. He will behold all the doors open and all the strong fortifications and impregnable castles razed to the ground. Singly and alone he will attack the armies of the world, defeat the right and left wings of the hosts of all the countries, break through the lines of the legions of all the nations and carry his attack to the very center of the powers of the earth. This is the meaning of the Hosts of God.

Any soul from among the believers of Bahá'u'lláh who attains to this station, will become known as the Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore strive ye with heart and soul—so that ye may reach this lofty and exalted position, be established on the throne of everlasting glory, and crown your heads with the shining diadem of the Kingdom, whose brilliant jewels may irradiate upon centuries and cycles.

O ye kind friends! Uplift your magnanimity and soar high toward the apex of heaven—so that your blessed hearts may become illumined more and more, day by day, through the Rays of the Sun of Reality, i.e., His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh; at every moment the spirits may obtain a new life, and the darkness of the world of nature may be entirely dispelled—thus ye may become incarnate light and personified spirit, become entirely unaware of the sordid matters of this world and in touch with the affairs of the divine world.

Consider ye what doors His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has opened before you, and what a high and exalted station He has destined for you, and what bounties He has prepared for you! Should we become intoxicated with this cup, the sovereignty of this globe of earth will become lower in our estimation than the children's plays. Should they place in the arena the crown of the government of the whole world, and invite each one of us to accept it, undoubtedly we shall not condescend, and shall refuse to accept it.

To attain to this supreme station is, however, dependent on the realization of certain conditions.

The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God. For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error. It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and the firm pillar of the religion of God. Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá'í world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Bahá'í world. It is evident that the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else. Had the Covenant not come to pass, had it not been revealed from the Supreme Pen and had not the Book of the Covenant, like unto the ray of the Sun of Reality, illuminated the world, the forces of the Cause of God would have been utterly scattered and certain souls who were the prisoners of their own passions and lusts would have taken into their hands an axe cutting the root of this Blessed Tree. Every person would have pushed forward his own desire and every individual aired his own opinion! Notwithstanding this great Covenant, a few negligent souls galloped with their chargers into the battlefield, thinking perchance they might be able to weaken the foundation of the Cause of God: but praise be to God, all of them were afflicted with regret and loss, and ere long they shall see themselves in poignant despair. Therefore, in the beginning one must make his steps firm in the Covenant—so that the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh may encircle from all sides, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse may become the supporters and the helpers, and the exhortations and advices of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, like unto the pictures engraved on stone, may remain permanent and ineffaceable in the tablets of the hearts.

The second condition: Fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the Holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the Holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abhá, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits.

O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship! Love, love! Unity, unity!—So that the power

of the Bahá'í Cause may appear and become manifest in the world of existence. Just at this moment I am engaged in your commemoration and this heart is in the utmost glow and excitement! Were ye to realize how this conscience is attracted with the love of the friends, unquestionably ye would obtain such a degree of joy and fragrance that ye would all become enamored with each other!

The third condition: Teachers must continually travel to all parts of the continent, nay, rather, to all parts of the world, but they must travel like 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who journeyed throughout the cities of America. He was sanctified and free from every attachment and in the utmost severance. Just as His Holiness Christ says: "Shake off the very dust from your feet."

Ye have observed that while in America many souls in the utmost of supplication and entreaty desired to offer some gifts, but this servant, in accord with the exhortations and behests of the Blessed Perfection, never accepted a thing, although on certain occasions we were in most straitened circumstances. But on the other hand, if a soul for the sake of God, voluntarily and out of his pure desire, wishes to offer a contribution (toward the expenses of a teacher) in order to make the contributor happy, the teacher may accept a small sum, but must live with utmost contentment.

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others! Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach the severance to others!

In short, O ye believers of God! Endeavor ye; so that ye may take hold of every means in the promulgation of the religion of God and the diffusion of the fragrances of God. Amongst other things is the holding of the meetings for teaching—so that blessed souls and the old ones from amongst the believers may gather together the youths of the love of God in schools of instruction and teach them all the divine proofs and irrefragable arguments, explain and elucidate the history of the Cause, and interpret also the prophecies and proofs which are recorded and are extant in the divine Books and Epistles regarding the Manifestation of the Promised One, so that the young ones may go in perfect knowledge in all these degrees.

Likewise, whenever it is possible a committee must be organized for the translation of the Tablets. Wise souls who have mastered and studied perfectly the Iranian, Arabic and foreign languages, or know one of the foreign languages must

commence translating Tablets and books containing the proofs of this Revelation, and publishing those books, circulate them throughout the five continents of the globe.

Similarly, the Magazine, the *Star of the West* must be edited in the utmost regularity, but its contents must be the promulgator of the Cause of God—so that both in the East and the West, they may become informed of the most important events.

In short, in all the meetings, whether public or private, nothing should be discussed save that which is under consideration, and all the articles be centered around the Cause of God. Promiscuous talks must not be dragged in and contention is absolutely forbidden.

The teachers traveling in different directions must know the language of the country in which they will enter. For example, a person being proficient in the Japanese language may travel in Japan, or a person knowing the Chinese language may hasten to China, and so forth.

In short, after this universal war, the people have obtained extraordinary capacity to hearken to the divine teachings, for the wisdom of this war is this: That it may become proven to all that the fire of war is world-consuming, whereas the rays of peace are world-enlightening. One is death, the other is life; this is extinction, that is immortality; one is the most great calamity, the other is the most great bounty; this is darkness, that is light; this is eternal humiliation and that is everlasting glory; one is the destroyer of the foundation of man, the other is the founder of the prosperity of the human race.

Consequently, a number of souls may arise and act in accordance with the aforesaid conditions, and hasten to all parts of the world, especially from America to Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia, and travel through Japan and China. Likewise, from Germany teachers and believers may travel to the continents of America, Africa, Japan and China; in brief, they may travel through all the continents and islands of the globe. Thus in a short space of time, most wonderful results will be produced, the banner of Universal Peace will be waving on the apex of the world and the lights of the oneness of the world of humanity may illumine the universe.

In brief, O ye believers of God! The text of the Divine Book is this: If two souls quarrel and contend about a question of the Divine questions, differing and disputing, both are wrong. The wisdom of this incontrovertible law of God is this: That between two souls from amongst the believers of God, no contention and dispute might arise; that they may speak with each other with infinite amity and love.

Should there appear the least trace of controversy, they must remain silent, and both parties must continue their discussions no longer, but ask the reality of the question from the Interpreter. This is the irrefutable command!

THE MASTER'S LAST TABLET TO AMERICA

O ye friends of God!

'Abdu'l-Bahá is day and night thinking of you and mentioning you, for the friends of God are dear to Him. Every morning at dawn I supplicate the Kingdom of God and ask that you may be filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that you may become brilliant candles, shine with the light of guidance and dispel the darkness of error. Rest assured that the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom will continuously reach you.

Through the power of the divine springtime, the downpour of the celestial clouds and the heat of the Sun of Reality, the tree of life is just beginning to grow. Before long, it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruits, and cast its shade over the East and the West. This Tree of Life is the Book of the Covenant.

In America, in these days, severe winds have surrounded the Lamp of the Covenant, hoping that this brilliant Light may be extinguished, and this Tree of Life may be uprooted. Certain weak, capricious, malicious and ignorant souls have been shaken by the earthquake of hatred, of animosity, have striven to efface the Divine Covenant and Testament, and render the clear water muddy so that in it they might fish. They have arisen against the Center of the Covenant like the people of Bayán who attacked the Blessed Beauty and every moment uttered a calumny. Every day they seek a pretext and secretly arouse doubts, so that the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh may be completely annihilated in America.

O friends of God! Be awake, be awake; be vigilant, be vigilant! His Holiness, the Báb, made a Covenant for Bahá'u'lláh with all the people of the Bayán, so that on the day of appearance of "Him Whom God shall manifest"—and of the radiation of the Light of Bahá'u'lláh, they might believe and be assured, arise in service and promulgate the Word of God. Later the people of the Bayán, like Mírzá Yahyá and many others, arose against the Blessed Beauty, invented every sort of calumny, aroused doubt in the minds of the people, and from the Books of His Holiness the Báb—that were full of references to "Him Whom God shall manifest"—tried to prove Bahá'u'lláh false. Every day they wrote and spread a pamphlet opposing Bahá'u'lláh,

caused trouble and perplexity among the people; they inflicted the greatest injury and cruelty, yet counted themselves firm in the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb. However, when the light of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, lighted the universe, then all the faithful and sincere souls were freed from the darkness of the violation of the people of the Bayán and shone like brilliant candles.

Bahá'u'lláh, in all the Tablets and Epistles, forbade the true and firm friends from associating and meeting the violators of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, saying that no one should go near them because their breath is like the poison of the snake that kills instantly.

In the Hidden Words, He says: “Esteem the friendship of the just, but withhold both mind and hand from the company of the wicked.”

Addressing one of the friends, He says: “It is clear to your honor that before long Satan, in the garb of man, will reach that land and will try to mislead the friends of the Divine Beauty through temptations which arouse the desires of self, and will cause them to follow the footsteps of Satan away from the right and glorious path, and prevent them from attaining the Blessed Shore of the King of Oneness. This is a hidden information of which we have informed the chosen ones lest they may be deprived of their praiseworthy station by associating with the embodiments of hatred. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the friends of God to shun any person in whom they perceive the emanation of hatred for the Glorious Beauty of Abhá, though he may quote all the Heavenly Utterances and cling to all the Books.” He continues—Glorious be His Name!—“Protect yourselves with utmost vigilance, lest you be entrapped in the snare of deception and fraud.” This is the advice of the Pen of Destiny.

In another address, He says: “Therefore, to avoid these people will be the nearest path by which to attain the divine good pleasure; because their breath is infectious, like unto poison.”

In another Tablet, He says: “O Kázim, close thine eye to the people of the world; drink the water of knowledge from the heavenly cup bearers, and listen not to the nonsensical utterances of the manifestations of Satan, because the manifestations of Satan are occupying today the observation posts of the glorious path of God, and preventing the people by every means of deception and ruse. Before long you will witness the turning away of the people of Bayán from the Manifestation of the Merciful.”

In another Tablet, He says: “Endeavor to your utmost to protect yourselves, because Satan appears in different robes and appeals to everyone according to each

person's own way until he becomes like unto him—then he will leave him alone.” In another Tablet, He says: “Shun any man in whom you perceive enmity for this Servant, though he may appear in the garb of piety of the former and later people, or may arise to the worship of the two worlds.”

In another Tablet, He says: “O Mahdí! Be informed by these utterances and shun the manifestations of the people of hell, the rising place of Nimrods, the rising place of Pharaohs, the fountain of Tagut, and the soothsayers.”

Again He says: “Say, O my friend and my pure ones! Listen to the Voice of this Beloved Prisoner in this Great Prison. If you detect in any man the least perceptible breath of violation, shun him and keep away from him.” Then He says: “Verily, they are manifestations of Satan.”

In another Tablet, He says: “And turn your faces to the Great Countenance for before long the foul odors of the wicked persons will pass over these regions. God willing, you may remain protected during these days.”

In the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, 6th to 9th verses, His Holiness Christ says: “But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh. Wherefore if thy hand or thy feet offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.”

And in the 21st chapter and 38th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says: “But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir, come let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him.”

Also in the 22nd chapter and the 14th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says “But many are called and few are chosen.”

In the Holy Writings of His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, in a thousand places at least, the violators of the Covenant are execrated and condemned. Some of the heavenly passages will be mentioned.

In short, all the friends in America know that the founders of this sedition—namely, the violators of the Covenant—are people whose aims are known to all the friends. Yet, O glorious God, they are deceived by them!

Praise be to God, you know with perfect clearness that His Holiness Christ, was

extremely kind and loving, yet there were people like Judas Iscariot who—by their own deeds—separated themselves from Christ. Therefore, what fault of Christ's could that be? Now the Nakzeen say that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is despotic, drives some people out and excommunicates like the Pope. This is not so at all! Any person who has left (the Cause), did so because of his own actions, intrigues and evil plots. If this objection be raised against 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they must also object to the Blessed Beauty who, with distinct and conclusive command, forbids the friends from companionship and familiarity with the violators of the people of Bayán.

Supplication! O Lord of the Covenant! O luminous Star of the world! The persecuted 'Abdu'l-Bahá has fallen into the hands of persons who appear as sheep and in reality are ferocious wolves; they exercise every sort of oppression, endeavor to destroy the foundation of the Covenant,—and claim to be Bahá'ís. They strike at the root of the Tree of the Covenant—and count themselves persecuted—just as did the people of Bayán who broke the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, and from six directions shot arrows of reproach and calumny at Thy Blessed Body. Notwithstanding this great oppression, they call themselves oppressed. Now this Servant of Thy Threshold has also fallen into the hands of oppressors. Every hour they contrive new intrigues and fraud, and bring forth new calumny.

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! Protect the Stronghold of Thy Cause from these thieves, and safeguard the lamps of the Kingdom from these malevolent winds!

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not rest a moment until He had raised Thy Cause and the Standard of the Kingdom of Abhá waved over the world. Now some people have arisen with intrigues and evil aspirations to trample this flag in America, but My hope is in Thy confirmations. Leave Me not single, alone and oppressed! As Thou didst promise, verbally and in writing, that Thou wouldst protect this deer of the pasture of Thy love from the attacks of the hounds of hatred and animosity, and that Thou wouldst safeguard this persecuted sheep from the claws and teeth of the ferocious wolves,—now do I await the appearance of Thy bounties and the realization of Thy definite promise. Thou art the true Protector, and Thou art the Lord of the Covenant! Therefore, protect this Lamp which Thou hast lighted, from the severe winds.

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! I have forsaken the world and its people, am heartbroken because of the unfaithful, and am weary. In the cage of this world I flutter like a frightened bird and long for the flight to Thy Kingdom.

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! Make me to drink the cup of sacrifice, and free Me! Relieve Me from these difficulties, hardships, afflictions and troubles! Thou art the assister, the helper, the protector and the supporter!

Now some of the writings, prayers and verses of the Blessed Beauty will be mentioned in which association with the violators is forbidden. In the Iranian Commune, He says:

“Protect this Servant from the doubts of the persons who have turned away from Thee and are deprived of the sea of Thy knowledge. O God! O God! Protect this Servant through Thy bounty and generosity from the evil of Thine enemies who have broken Thy Covenant and Testament.”

In another place He says: “O My God and the Aim of My Life! Protect this weak one with Thy Mighty hand from the voice of the Naegh.”

Also He says: “Ye have taken one whom I hate to be thy beloved, and My enemy to be thy friend.”

Also He says: “The company of the wicked ones increaseth sorrow, and the association with the pious ones removeth rust from the heart. The one who desires to associate with God, let him associate with His friends; the one who wishes to hear the Words of God, let him hear the words of His chosen ones.”

Also He says: “Do not associate with the wicked, because the company of the wicked changeth the light of life into the fire of remorse. If thou asketh for the bounties of the Holy Spirit, associate with the pure ones, because they have quaffed the eternal chalice from the hands of the Cupbearer of eternity.”

Also He says: “The greatest of degradation is to leave the Shadow of God and enter under the shadow of Satan.”

Also He says: “O ye servants! There is nothing in this heart save the effulgences of the splendor of the morn of Meeting, and it does not speak but the absolute truth from your Lord. Therefore, do not follow self; break not God’s Covenant and violate not His Testament. Proceed with perfect steadfastness, and with heart, soul and tongue, turn unto Him, and be not of the thoughtless.”

And still He says: “You have forgotten God’s Covenant and violated His Testament.”

And again He says: “If anyone comes to you with the book of the wicked, put him behind you.”

“Among the people are those who have broken the Covenant, and among them are those who have followed what was ordained by the All-Knower, the All-Wise. My affliction is not from My imprisonment and persecution, or from what comes to Me from My rebellious servants,—but from the actions of those who attribute themselves to this persecuted One and commit among the people that which is degrading to the honor of God. Verily, they are of the seditious.”

Likewise speaking for the violators, He says: “Thou hast made the pulpits for Thy mention, the proclamation of Thy Word and the manifestation of Thy Cause, and we have ascended them to proclaim the breaking of Thy Covenant and Testament.”

Likewise, He says: “Take what has been ordained for you and follow not those who have broken God’s Covenant and Testament, for lo! they are the people of error.”

Again He says: “Those who have broken the Covenant of God, notwithstanding His Commands, and have turned away, they are the people of error before the most Opulent, the Exalted.”

And He says: “Those who have been faithful to God’s Covenant are of the highest ones in the sight of the exalted Lord. Those who have become negligent are of the people of fire in the sight of Thy Lord, the Beloved, the Independent.”

Likewise He says: “Blessed is the servant or maid-servant who believes, and woe to the polytheists who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and deviated from My Right Path.”

Likewise He says: “I implore of Thee not to deprive me of what Thou possessest or what Thou hast ordained for Thy chosen ones who have not broken Thy Covenant and Testament. Say! Die with your hatred! Verily, He is come by Whom the pillars of the world have been shaken and because of Whom the feet have stumbled—save those who have not broken the Covenant, but have followed what God revealed in His Book.”

Likewise He says: “The Supreme Concourse will pray for the one who is adorned with the garment of faithfulness between heaven and earth; but he who breaks the Covenant is cursed by heaven and earth.”

Likewise He says: “Take hold of what has been revealed unto you, with a power superior to that of the hands of the unbelievers who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have turned from the Face.”

Also He says: “O Yahyá! Verily the Book has come! Take it with a power from Us and do not follow those who have broken the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have denied what has been revealed from the Powerful, the All-Knower.”

Likewise He says: “I awoke this morning, O My God, under the shadow of Thy great bounty and have taken, with Thy power, the pen to mention Thee with such mention as shall be a light unto the pure, and fire unto the wicked who have violated Thy Covenant, denied Thy Verses and put aside the Kawthar of life which appeared by Thy command and was revealed by the finger of Thy will.”

Here, in a Tablet to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, He says also: “O God! This is a Branch which has sprung forth from the Tree of Oneness, the Sadrat of Thy Unity. O God! Thou

seest Him looking to Thee and clinging to the rope of Thy Bounties. Protect Him in the shelter of Thy Mercy! Thou knowest, O My God, that I do not desire Him save for what Thou dost desire Him, and I do not choose Him save for what Thou dost choose Him. Assist Him with the Hosts of Thy earth and Thy heaven. Assist, O God, those who assist Him, and choose those who choose Him. Confirm those who draw nigh unto Him, and debase those who deny Him and do not want Him. O God, Thou seest that at this moment of Revelation My Pen shakes and My Being trembles. I ask Thee, By My impatience in Thy Love and My willingness to proclaim Thy Cause, to ordain for Him and His friends, what Thou hast ordained for Thy Messengers and the faithful ones of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the powerful and the omnipotent! By God, O people, My eye weeps, and the eye of 'Alí weeps in the Supreme Concourse; My heart throbs, and the heart of Muḥammad throbs in the Courts of Abhá; My heart and the hearts of the Prophets lament with the people of knowledge, if you are those who are possessed of sight. My sorrow is not for Myself, but for the One Who comes after Me in the Shadow of the Cause with a clear, undeniable reign; because these will not acknowledge His Manifestation and will deny His evidences and verses, will dispute His power, will antagonize Him and will be traitors to His Cause as they did to His Person in those days—and ye were witnesses.”

Again in a Tablet to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, He says: “O Greatest Branch! Verily, Thy illness caused Me sorrow, but God will cure Thee, and He is the most generous and best helper. Glory be upon Thee and upon those who serve Thee and encircle Thee! Woe and torment be upon him who opposes and torments Thee! Blessed is he who befriends Thee, and hell be for him who opposes Thee!”

Likewise He says: “Is it possible that after the dawning of the sun of Thy Testament from the horizon of Thy greatest Tablet that any feet shall slip away from the right Path? We said, O My Supreme Pen, it behooves Thee to do as Thou hast been bidden by God, the exalted and the great. Do not ask about that which melts Thy heart and those of the denizens of Paradise who encompass Thy wonderful Cause. Thou shouldst not know what We have hidden from Thee. Thy Lord is the veiler and the knower. Turn Thy most luminous Face to the greatest aspect and say: O My Merciful God! Decorate the Heaven of Bayán with the stars of steadfastness, trust and truth. Verily, Thou art the Powerful over what Thou willest. There is no God save Thee, the wise and the generous.”

In short, from these Holy Utterances and those of His Holiness Christ, it becomes clear, evident and proved, that man should associate with people who are firm in the Covenant and Testament, and befriend the pure ones; because bad associates bring about infection of bad qualities. It is like leprosy; it is impossible for a man to

associate and befriend a leper and not be infected. This command is for the sake of protection and to safeguard.

Consider this text of the New Testament: the brothers of His Holiness Christ, came to Him and they said: "These are your brothers." He answered that His brothers were those who believed in God, and refused to associate with His own brothers.

Likewise *Qurratu'l-'Ayn*, who is celebrated in all the world, when she believed in God and was attracted to the Divine Breaths, she forsook her two eldest sons, although they were her two oldest children, because they did not become believers, and thereafter did not meet them. She said: "All the friends of God are my children, but these two are not. I will have nothing to do with them."

Consider! The Divine Gardener cuts off the dry or weak branch from the good tree and grafts to it, a branch from another tree. He both separates and unites. This is that which His Holiness Christ says: that from all the world they come and enter the Kingdom, and the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out. Noah's grandson, Canaan, was detested in the sight of Noah and others were accepted. The brothers of the Blessed Beauty detached themselves from Him, and the Blessed Beauty never met them. He said: "This is an eternal separation between you and Me." All this was not because the Blessed Beauty was despotic; but because these persons, through their own actions and words deprived themselves from the bounties and bestowals of the Blessed Beauty. His Holiness Christ did not exercise despotism in the case of Judas Iscariot and His own brothers,—but they separated themselves.

In short, the point is this: 'Abdu'l-Bahá is extremely kind, but when the disease is leprosy, what am I to do? Just as in bodily diseases we must prevent intermingling and infection and put into effect sanitary laws—because the infectious physical diseases uproot the foundation of humanity; likewise one must protect and safeguard the blessed souls from the breaths and fatal spiritual diseases; otherwise violation, like the plague, will become a contagion and all will perish. In the early days, after the Ascension of the Blessed Beauty, the Center of violation was alone; little by little the infection spread; and this was due to companionship and association.

EXCERPTS FROM THE WILL AND TESTAMENT OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

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 affects 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.

Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest upon that primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree, grown out, blest, tender, verdant and flourishing from the Twin Holy Trees; the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the twin surging seas; upon the offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, the twigs of the Celestial Tree, they that in the Day of the Great Dividing have stood fast and firm in the Covenant; upon the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God that have diffused widely the Divine Fragrances, declared His Proofs, proclaimed His Faith, published abroad His Law, detached themselves from all things but Him, stood for righteousness in this world, and kindled the Fire of the Love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants; upon them that have believed, rested assured, stood steadfast in His Covenant and followed the Light that after my passing shineth from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance for behold! he is the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees. Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind.

O ye beloved of the Lord! The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word. Ten thousand souls have shed streams of their sacred blood in this path, their precious lives they offered in sacrifice unto Him, hastened wrapt in holy ecstasy unto the glorious field of martyrdom, upraised the Standard of God's Faith and writ with their life-blood upon the Tablet of the world the verses of His Divine Unity. The sacred breast of His Holiness, the Exalted One, (may my life be a sacrifice unto Him) was made a target to many a dart of woe, and in *Mázindarán*, the Blessed feet of the *Abhá* Beauty (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) were so grievously scourged as to bleed and be sore wounded. His neck also was put into captive chains and His feet made fast in the stocks. In every hour, for a period of fifty years, a new trial and calamity befell Him and fresh afflictions and cares beset Him. One of them: after having suffered intense vicissitudes, He was made homeless and a wanderer and fell a victim to still new vexations and troubles. In *Íráq*, the Day-Star of the world was so exposed to the wiles of the people of malice as to be eclipsed in splendor. Later on He was sent an exile to the Great City (Constantinople) and

thence to the Land of Mystery (Adrianople), whence, grievously wronged, He was eventually transferred to the Most Great Prison ('Akká) . He Whom the world hath wronged (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) was four times banished from city to city, till at last condemned to perpetual confinement, He was incarcerated in this Prison, the prison of highway robbers, of brigands and of manslayers. All this is but one of the trials that have afflicted the Blessed Beauty, the rest being even as grievous as this.

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. O God, my God! Thou seest this wronged servant of Thine, held fast in the talons of ferocious lions, of ravening wolves, of bloodthirsty 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. 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.

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 rancor, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy Cause and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious Signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy Divine Unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy Holy Kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thy all-swaying power that cometh from Thy Realm of Glory. Thou art the All-bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious!

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 Afnán, that are steadfast in the Covenant of God, and have branched from the Tree of Holiness; the Hands, (pillars) of the Cause of God, (the glory of the Lord rest upon them), and all the friends and loved ones, one and all to bestir themselves and arise with heart and soul and in one accord, to diffuse the sweet savors of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith. It behoveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest and steadfast to the end they must raise in every land the triumphal cry “O Thou the Glory of Glories!” (Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá), must achieve renown in the world wherever they go, must burn brightly even as a candle in every meeting and must kindle the flame of Divine love in every assembly; that the light of truth may rise resplendent in the midmost heart of the world, that throughout the East and throughout the West a vast concourse may gather under the shadow of the Word of God, that the sweet savors 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. 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 Abhá Kingdom roused the East and the West. The beloved of God must also follow the same example. This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Bahá!

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

O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghsán (Branches), the Afnán (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abhá Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi—the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees and the fruit grown from the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of

Holiness,—as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the *Aghṣán*, the *Afnán*, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn. He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants.

The sacred and youthful branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice, to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the *Abhá* Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God. May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him! The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God. It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice, upon all the *Aghṣán*, the *Afnán*, the Hands of the Cause of God to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before Him. He that opposeth him hath opposed the True One, will make a breach in the Cause of God, will subvert His word and will become a manifestation of the Center of Sedition. Beware, beware, lest the days after the ascension (of *Bahá'u'lláh*) be repeated when the Center of Sedition waxed haughty and rebellious and with Divine Unity for his excuse deprived himself and perturbed and poisoned others. No doubt every vainglorious one that purposeth dissension and discord will not openly declare his evil purposes, nay rather, even as impure gold, would he seize upon divers measures and various pretexts that he may separate the gathering of the people of *Bahá*. My object is to show that the Hands of the Cause of God must be ever watchful and so soon as they find anyone beginning to oppose and protest against the guardian of the Cause of God cast him out from the congregation of the people of *Bahá* and in no wise accept any excuse from him. How often hath grievous error been disguised in the garb of truth, that it might sow the seeds of doubt in the hearts of men!

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. He that is appointed must manifest in himself

detachment from all worldly things, must be the essence of purity, must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning. Thus, should the first-born of the guardian of the Cause of God not manifest in himself the truth of the words: —"The child is the secret essence of its sire," that is, should he not inherit of the spiritual within him (the guardian of the Cause of God) and his glorious lineage not be matched with a goodly character, then must he (the guardian of the Cause of God), choose another branch to succeed him.

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

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

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

This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the guardian of the Cause of God. He must continually urge them to strive and endeavor to the utmost of their ability to diffuse the sweet savors of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world, for it is the light of Divine Guidance that causeth all the universe to be illumined. To disregard, though it be for a moment this absolute command which is binding upon everyone, is in no wise permitted, that the existent world may become even as the Abhá Paradise, that the surface of the earth may become heavenly, that contention and conflict amidst peoples, kindreds, nations and governments may disappear, that all the dwellers on earth may become one people and one race, that the world may become even as one home. 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.

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, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. So intense must be the spirit of love and loving-kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them. For universality is of God and all limitations earthly. Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples. The vivifying breeze reviveth every living creature and all beings endued with life obtain their share and portion at His heavenly board. In like manner, the affections and loving-kindness of the servants of the One True God must be bountifully and universally extended to all mankind. Regarding this, restrictions and limitations are in no wise permitted.

Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancor 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 yourself, 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.

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind. By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries, a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one. Unto this body all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text. By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved and the guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the

distinguished member for life of that body. Should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him. Should any of the members commit a sin, injurious to the common weal, the guardian of the Cause of God hath at his own discretion the right to expel him, whereupon the people must elect another one in his stead. This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them. The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.

O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon you to be submissive to all monarchs that are just and 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.

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. This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them). 'His Holiness, the Exalted One, (the Báb) is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abhá Beauty, (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.' " Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant. By this House is meant that Universal House 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.

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.

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 endeavor 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.

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.

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!

Whosoever and whatsoever meeting becometh a hindrance to the diffusion of the Light of Faith, let the loved ones give them counsel and say: "Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves? Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abhá Beauty and teach the Cause of God." Caution and prudence, however, must be observed even as recorded in the Book. The veil must in no wise be suddenly rent asunder. The Glory of

Glories rest upon you.

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

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

The Glory of Glories rest upon you!
