

The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith

A compilation of extracts from the Bahá'í Writings

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Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

- 1 Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. Fear ye God, O My servants, one and all.

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas", p. 73

- 2 Were any man to taste the sweetness of the words which the lips of the All-Merciful have willed to utter, he would, though the treasures of the earth be in his possession, renounce them one and all, that he might vindicate the truth of even one of His commandments, shining above the Dayspring of His bountiful care and loving-kindness.

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas", p. 20

- 3 Whoso hath inhaled the sweet fragrance of the All-Merciful, and recognized the Source of this utterance, will welcome with his own eyes the shafts of the enemy, that he may establish the truth of the laws of God amongst men. Well is it with him that hath turned thereunto, and apprehended the meaning of His decisive decree.

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas", p. 22

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

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Aqdas", pp. 85-86

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

Bahá'u'lláh, from a newly translated Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh

- 6 Gather ye together with the utmost joy and fellowship and recite the verses revealed by the merciful Lord. By so doing the doors to true knowledge will be opened to your inner beings, and ye will then feel your souls endowed with steadfastness and your hearts filled with radiant joy.

Bahá'u'lláh, from a newly translated Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh

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

Bahá'u'lláh, from a newly translated Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh

- 8 Whoso hath searched the depths of the oceans that lie hid within these exalted words, and fathomed their import, can be said to have discovered a glimmer of the unspeakable glory with which this mighty, this sublime, and most holy Revelation hath been endowed.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 10

- 9 Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God—exalted be His glory. This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 194

- 10 It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 250

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

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

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 262

- 12 Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 295

- 13 My servants! My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 326

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

with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and allencompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?...

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", pp. 327-328

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

Bahá'u'lláh, "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 343

- 16 Now is the moment in which to cleanse thyself with the waters of detachment that have flowed out from the Supreme Pen, and to ponder, wholly for the sake of God, those things which, time and again, have been sent down or manifested, and then to strive, as much as lieth in thee, to quench, through the power of wisdom and the force of thy utterance, the fire of enmity and hatred which smouldereth in the hearts of the peoples of the world. The Divine Messengers have been sent down, and their Books were revealed, for the purpose of promoting the knowledge of God, and of furthering unity and fellowship amongst men.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 12

- 17 Know thou that he is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of My love, and cast away all else besides Me, and taken firm hold on that which hath been sent down from the Kingdom of My wondrous utterance. He, verily, is even as an eye unto mankind, and as the spirit of life unto the body of all creation. Glorified be the All-Merciful Who hath enlightened him, and caused him to arise and serve His great and mighty Cause. Verily, such a man is blessed by the Concourse on high, and by them who dwell within the Tabernacle of Grandeur, who have quaffed My sealed Wine in My Name, the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 83

- 18 Incline your ears to the words of this unlettered One, wherewith He summoneth you unto God, the Ever-Abiding. Better is this for you than all the treasures of the earth,

could ye but comprehend it.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 129

- 19 With fixed and steady gaze, born of the unerring eye of God, scan for a while the horizon of divine knowledge, and contemplate those words of perfection which the Eternal hath revealed, that haply the mysteries of divine wisdom, hidden ere now beneath the veil of glory and treasured within the tabernacle of His grace, may be made manifest unto you.

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Íqán", pp. 15-16

- 20 Inasmuch as it hath been clearly shown that only those who are initiated into the divine mysteries can comprehend the melodies uttered by the Bird of Heaven, it is therefore incumbent upon every one to seek enlightenment from the illumined in heart and from the Treasuries of divine mysteries regarding the intricacies of God's Faith and the abstruse allusions in the utterances of the Daysprings of Holiness. Thus will these mysteries be unraveled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely through the assistance of God and the outpourings of His grace. "Ask ye, therefore, of them that have the custody of the Scriptures, if ye know it not."¹

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Íqán", p. 177

¹ Qur'án 16:43

- 21 The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Íqán", p. 194

- 22 O brother, we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God, that perchance we may be warned by the unmistakable counsels of the Book, and give heed to the admonitions recorded in the holy Tablets; that we may not cavil at the Revealer of the verses, that we may resign ourselves wholly to His Cause, and embrace wholeheartedly His law, that haply we may enter the court of His mercy, and dwell upon the shore of His grace. He, verily, is merciful, and forgiving towards His servants.

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Íqán", p. 200

- 23 The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words "One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest. To this truth the above-mentioned tradition beareth witness.

Bahá'u'lláh, "The Kitáb-i-Íqán", p. 219-20

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

Bahá'u'lláh, "Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas", p. 143

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

Bahá'u'lláh, "Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas", p. 200

- 26 Inspire then my soul, O my God, with Thy wondrous remembrance, that I may glorify Thy name. Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh", p. 83

Extracts from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 27 And from amongst all creatures He hath singled out man, to grant him His most wondrous gift, and hath made him to attain the bounties of the Company on High. That most precious of gifts is attainment unto His unfailing guidance, that the inner reality of humankind should become as a niche to hold this lamp; and when the scattering splendours of this light do beat against the bright glass of the heart, the heart's purity maketh the beams to blaze out even stronger than before, and to shine in glory on the minds and souls of men.

The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed as to the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God, be they young or old, be they men or women, each one according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshalling the divine proofs and evidences.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Compilation, "Bahá'í Education", p. 7

- 28 When your hearts are wholly attracted to the one true God you will acquire divine knowledge, will become attentive to the proofs and testimonies and will commit to memory the glad-tidings concerning the Manifestations of the Beauty of the All-Merciful, as mentioned in the heavenly Scriptures. Then ye shall behold how wondrous are His confirmations and how gracious is His assistance.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 29 It is imperative to acquire the knowledge of divine proofs and evidences, and to acquaint oneself with convincing testimonies which demonstrate the revelation of God's resplendent Light. The study group thou didst organize hath inspired much joy and happiness to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Thou must exert much effort and show forth perseverance and constancy that, God willing, through the reviving breaths of His mercy, souls may be so educated as to become like radiant candles shining in the assemblage of divine knowledge and understanding. This matter is highly important. It is binding on everyone and must be regarded as an obligation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 30 In truth thou art now rendering a great service to the basic foundations of the Cause

of God, inasmuch as the cornerstone of its structure is the promotion of His Faith, the awakening of the people, the diffusion of the divine teachings and the education of mankind, and all this dependeth on instructing the friends in the teaching work. I beseech God that within a short time thou mayest be able to acquaint the children of the Abhá Paradise with the divine mysteries and truths and to rend asunder the veils of idle imaginings, that each one of them become a fluent speaker and be able to guide many others to the Cause of God. Then will the outpourings of the heavenly bounties become manifest and the invisible hosts of the Kingdom, armed with conclusive proofs and evidences, will conquer the realms of the inner realities and domains of the hearts of men, even as a single seed developing into seven ears of grain.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 31 In this day there is nothing more important than the instruction and study of clear proofs and convincing, heavenly arguments, for therein lie the source of life and the path of salvation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 32 The method of instruction you have devised, namely, to begin by proving the existence and oneness of God, the Lord of Eternity, then to establish the validity of the mission proclaimed by the prophets and messengers, and finally to explain the signs, the marvels and wonders of the universe, is highly acceptable and you should proceed accordingly. Confirmations from the Lord of Glory will assuredly be vouchsafed. Memorizing the texts of the holy Tablets, and of perspicuous words and statements is highly praiseworthy. You should exert the utmost endeavour in your efforts to educate, to expound, and to instruct.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 33 Whatever meeting is held to celebrate the memory of the Abhá Beauty and to listen to the recital of the divine utterances is indeed a rose garden of the Kingdom and that gathering is strengthened by the reviving breaths of holiness that waft from the unseen world, inasmuch as the outpourings of divine grace are the light of that gathering and the effulgent splendours of His mercy are made manifest. I beseech God that those radiant faces may be enabled to shine resplendent in the assemblage of the realm of holiness and that those enraptured beings may be gathered together in

the heaven of His mercifulness, that they may chant the verses of praise and glorification in the Abhá Kingdom, raise the voice of jubilation in the realm on high and the cry of exultation and ecstasy in the Abhá Paradise.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 34 O beloved of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! There is no doubt that thou art assiduously engaged in serving the Cause, giving eloquent talks at the meetings of the friends, and elucidating divine mysteries. These exertions will cause the outpourings of His invisible assistance to descend, and, as a magnet, will attract the divine bounties. I earnestly hope that through the vitalizing breath of the Holy Spirit thou mayest be strengthened day by day, and be empowered to deliver more eloquent addresses.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 35 ...the Báb hath said: "Should a tiny ant desire in this day to be possessed of such power as to be able to unravel the abstrusest and most bewildering passages of the Qur'án, its wish will no doubt be fulfilled, inasmuch as the mystery of eternal might vibrates within the innermost being of all created things."² If so helpless a creature can be endowed with so subtle a capacity, how much more efficacious must be the power released through the liberal effusions of the grace of Bahá'u'lláh!

...Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned.

Compilation, "Bahá'í Education", p. 41

² Cf. "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters" [rev. ed.] (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 126-27.

- 36 If it were possible that in every city a few of the awakened ones, when opportunity is offered, could hold a meeting, and therein habitually present the proofs and arguments of God, this would do much to expand the consciousness of man; provided, however, that the discourse be kept to this one theme.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Bahá'í Meetings/The Nineteen Day Feast", p.7

- 37 It behoveth us one and all to recite day and night both the Persian and Arabic Hidden Words, to pray fervently and supplicate tearfully that we may be enabled to

conduct ourselves in accordance with these divine counsels. These holy words have not been revealed to be heard but to be practiced.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 38 We should memorize the Hidden Words, follow the exhortations of the Incomparable Lord, and conduct ourselves in a manner which befitteth our servitude at the threshold of the One True God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 39 Be assured in thyself that if thou dost conduct thyself in accordance with the Hidden Words revealed in Persian and in Arabic, thou shalt become a torch of fire of the love of God, an embodiment of humility, of lowliness, of evanescence and of selflessness.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 40 The Hidden Words is a treasury of divine mysteries. When thou ponderest its contents, the doors of the mysteries will open.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a newly translated Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 41 Praise thou God that at last, through the divine teachings, thou hast obtained both sight and insight to the highest degree, and hast become firmly rooted in certitude and faith. It is my hope that others as well will achieve illumined eyes and hearing ears, and attain to everlasting life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 33

- 42 Read ye The Hidden Words, ponder the inner meanings thereof, act in accord therewith. Read, with close attention, the Tablets of Ṭarázát (Ornaments), Kalímát (Words of Paradise), Tajallíyyát (Effulgences), Ishráqát (Splendours), and Bishárát (Glad Tidings), and rise up as ye are bidden in the heavenly teachings. Thus may each one of you be even as a candle casting its light, the centre of attraction wherever people come together; and from you, as from a bed of flowers, may sweet scents be shed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", pp. 39

- 43 Direct thine attention to the holy Tablets; read thou the *Ishráqát* , *Tajallíyyát*, the Words of Paradise, the Glad Tidings, the *Ṭarázát*, the Most Holy Book. Then wilt thou see that today these heavenly Teachings are the remedy for a sick and suffering world, and a healing balm for the sores on the body of mankind. They are the spirit of life, the ark of salvation, the magnet to draw down eternal glory, the dynamic power to motivate the inner self of man.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 65

- 44 We hear that the Tablets of *Ishráqát* (Splendours), *Ṭarázát* (Ornaments), *Bishárát* (Glad Tidings), *Tajallíyyát* (Effulgences), and *Kalímát* (Words of Paradise) have been translated and published in those regions. In these Tablets will ye have a model of how to be and how to live.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 84

- 45 Whatsoever gathering is arranged with the utmost love, and where those who attend are turning their faces toward the Kingdom of God, and where the discourse is of the Teachings of God, and the effect of which is to cause those present to advance—that gathering is the Lord's, and that festive table hath come down from heaven.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 95

- 46 Whensoever a company of people shall gather in a meeting place, shall engage in glorifying God, and shall speak with one another of the mysteries of God, beyond any doubt the breathings of the Holy Spirit will blow gently over them, and each shall receive a share thereof.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 100

- 47 O thou true friend! Read, in the school of God, the lessons of the spirit, and learn from love's Teacher the innermost truths. Seek out the secrets of Heaven, and tell of the overflowing grace and favour of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 116

- 48 There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakeable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the

expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 133

- 49 Thou didst ask as to acquiring knowledge: read thou the Books and Tablets of God, and the articles written to demonstrate the truth of this Faith. Included among them are the *Íqán*, which hath been translated into English, the works of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, and those of some others among the believers. In the days to come a great number of holy Tablets and other sacred writings will be translated, and thou shouldst read these as well. Likewise, ask thou of God that the magnet of His love should draw unto thee the knowledge of Him. Once a soul becometh holy in all things, purified, sanctified, the gates of the knowledge of God will open wide before his eyes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", pp. 200

- 50 It is incumbent upon you to ponder in your hearts and meditate upon His words, and humbly to call upon Him, and to put away self in His heavenly Cause. These are the things that will make of you signs of guidance unto all mankind, and brilliant stars shining down from the all-highest horizon, and towering trees in the Abhá Paradise.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", p. 252

- 51 O maid-servant of God! Chant the Words of God and, pondering over their meaning, transform them into actions! I ask God to cause thee to attain a high station in the Kingdom of Life forever and ever.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás", p. 85

- 52 Hold meetings and read and chant the heavenly teachings, so that city may be illumined with the light of reality and that country become a veritable paradise by the strength of the Holy Spirit, for this cycle is the cycle of the Glorious Lord and the melody of oneness and solidarity of the world of mankind must reach the ears of the East and West.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás", p. 631

Extracts from the Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

- 53 Both before and after putting off this material form, there is progress in perfection but not in state. So beings are consummated in perfect man. There is no other being higher than a perfect man. But man when he has reached this state can still make progress in perfections but not in state because there is no state higher than that of a perfect man to which he can transfer himself. He only progresses in the state of humanity, for the human perfections are infinite. Thus, however learned a man may be, we can imagine one more learned.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Some Answered Questions", p. 237

- 54 The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart—so will you become strong followers of the light, truly spiritual, heavenly soldiers of God, acquiring and spreading the true civilization in Persia, in Europe, and in the whole world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Paris Talks", p. 22

- 55 The Spirit breathing through the Holy Scriptures is food for all who hunger. God Who has given the revelation to His Prophets will surely give of His abundance daily bread to all those who ask Him faithfully.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Paris Talks", p. 57

- 56 God sent His Prophets into the world to teach and enlighten man, to explain to him the mystery of the Power of the Holy Spirit, to enable him to reflect the light, and so in his turn, to be the source of guidance to others. The Heavenly Books, the Bible, the Qur'án, and the other Holy Writings have been given by God as guides into the paths of Divine virtue, love, justice and peace.

Therefore I say unto you that ye should strive to follow the counsels of these Blessed Books, and so order your lives that ye may, following the examples set before you, become yourselves the saints of the Most High!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Paris Talks", pp. 61-62

- 57 Seek with all your hearts this Heavenly Light, so that you may be enabled to understand the realities, that you may know the secret things of God, that the hidden

ways may be made plain before your eyes.

This light may be likened unto a mirror, and as a mirror reflects all that is before it, so this Light shows to the eyes of our spirits all that exists in God's Kingdom and causes the realities of things to be made visible. By the help of this effulgent Light all the spiritual interpretation of the Holy Writings has been made plain, the hidden things of God's Universe have become manifest, and we have been enabled to comprehend the Divine purposes for man.

I pray that God in His mercy may illumine your hearts and souls with His glorious Light, then shall each one of you shine as a radiant star in the dark places of the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Paris Talks", p. 69-70

- 58 I counsel you that you study earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, so that, God helping you, you may in deed and truth become Bahá'ís.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Paris Talks", p. 96

- 59 Bahá'u'lláh says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time—he cannot both speak and meditate.

It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed.

You cannot apply the name "man" to any being void of this faculty of meditation; without it he would be a mere animal, lower than the beasts.

Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit—the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation.

The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food.

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the

secrets of things-in-themselves....

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Paris Talks", pp. 174-175

- 60 Praise be to God! you have heard the call of the Kingdom. Your eyes are opened; you have turned to God. Your purpose is the good-pleasure of God, the understanding of the mysteries of the heart and investigation of the realities. Day and night you must strive that you may attain to the significances of the heavenly kingdom, perceive the signs of divinity, acquire certainty of knowledge and realize that this world has a creator, a vivifier, a provider, an architect,—knowing this through proofs and evidences and not through susceptibilities,—nay, rather, through decisive arguments and real vision; that is to say, visualizing it as clearly as the outer eye beholds the sun. In this way may you behold the presence of God and attain to the knowledge of the holy, divine Manifestations.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Foundations of World Unity", p. 65

- 61 I have been informed that the purpose of your class meeting is to study the significances and mysteries of the Holy Scriptures and understand the meaning of the divine Testaments. It is a cause of great happiness to me that you are turning unto the Kingdom of God, that you desire to approach the presence of God and to become informed of the realities and precepts of God. It is my hope that you may put forth your most earnest endeavor to accomplish this end, that you may investigate and study the Holy Scriptures word by word so that you may attain knowledge of the mysteries hidden therein. Be not satisfied with words, but seek to understand the spiritual meanings hidden in the heart of the words.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The Promulgation of Universal Peace", pp. 458-459

- 62 May your souls be illumined by the light of the Words of God, and may you become repositories of the mysteries of God, for no comfort is greater and no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings. If a man understands the real meaning of a poet's verses such as those of Shakespeare, he is pleased and rejoiced. How much greater his joy and pleasure when he perceives the reality of the Holy Scriptures and becomes informed of the mysteries of the Kingdom!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The Promulgation of Universal Peace", p. 460

- 63 Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parable in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come. When the spiritually minded dive deeply into the ocean of their meaning they bring to the surface the pearls of their inner significance. There is no greater pleasure than to study God's Word with a spiritual mind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "'Abdu'l-Bahá in London", p. 80

- 64 It is very good to memorize the logical points and proofs of the Holy Books. Those proofs and evidences which establish the fact that Bahá'u'lláh is the fulfillment of the Promises of the Holy Books. These proofs ought to be collected and memorized. As soon as someone will ask you - What are your proofs? - you may cry out at the top of your voice and say: "Here they are!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Star of the West", Vol. 3, no. 11 [27 Sept. 1912], p. 4

- 65 Live thou in accord with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Do not only read them. There is a vast difference between the soul who merely reads the words of Bahá'u'lláh and the one who tries to live them. Read thou the "Hidden Words". Ponder over their meanings and embody the behests into thy life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Star of the West", Vol. 7, no.18 [7 Dec. 1917], p. 178

- 66 The cause of God is like unto a college. The believers are like unto the students. The college is founded for the sake of the acquirements of science, arts and literature. If the sciences are not achieved and the scholars are not educated the object of the college is not achieved. The students must show the results of their study in their lives. Now the friends must so live and conduct themselves as to bring greater glory and results to the religion of God. To them the cause of God must be a dynamic force transforming the lives of men and not a question of meetings, committees, futile discussions, unnecessary debate and political wire-pulling.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Star of the West", Vol. 7, no.18 [7 Feb. 1917], p. 178

- 67 The first thing to do is to acquire a thirst for Spirituality, then Live the Life! Live the Life! Live the Life! The way to acquire this thirst is to meditate upon the future life. Study the Holy Words, read your Bible, read the Holy Books, especially study the Holy Utterances of Bahá'u'lláh; Prayer and Meditation, take much time for these

two. Then will you know this Great Thirst, and then only can you begin to Live the Life!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Star of the West", Vol. 19, no.3 [Jun. 1928], p. 69

- 68 Knowledge is love, Study, listen to exhortations, think, try to understand the wisdom and greatness of God. The soil must be fertilized before the seed can be sown.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "Star of the West", Vol. 20, no.10 [Jan. 1930], 314

Extracts from Letters written by Shoghi Effendi

- 69 Praise be to God that the spirit of the Holy Writings and tablets which have been revealed in this wondrous Dispensation concerning matters of major or minor importance, whether essential or otherwise, related to the sciences and the arts, to natural philosophy, literature, politics or economics, have so permeated the world that since the inception of the world in the course of past Dispensations and bygone ages nothing like it has ever been seen or heard. Indeed if an avowed follower of Bahá'u'lláh were to immerse himself in, and fathom the depths of, the ocean of these heavenly teachings, and with utmost care and attention deduce from each of them the subtle mysteries and consummate wisdom that lie enshrined therein, such a person's life, materially, intellectually and spiritually, will be safe from toil and trouble, unaffected by setbacks and perils, or any sadness or despondency.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 13 January 1923 to the friends in Ádharbáyján

- 70 Now surely, if ever, is the time for us, the chosen ones of Bahá'u'lláh and the bearers of His Message to the world, to endeavor by day and by night, to deepen, first and foremost, the Spirit of His Cause in our own individual lives, and then labor, and labor incessantly to exemplify in all our dealings with our fellow-men that noble Spirit of which His beloved Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá has been all the days of His life a true and unique exponent...

Let us, with a pure heart, with humility and earnestness, turn afresh to His counsels and exhortations, and seek from that Source of Celestial Potency all the guidance, the spirit, the power which we shall need for the fulfillment of our mission in this life.

Shoghi Effendi, "Bahá'í Administration", p. 35

- 71 What you have undertaken to achieve, under the guidance and instruction of that valiant and indefatigable servant of the Abhá Threshold, my well beloved brother Dr. Bagdadi, is highly praiseworthy and of supreme importance. Never flinch in your great enterprise. Deepen your knowledge of the Cause. Strive to extend the sphere of your activities and seek to understand and promote the harmony that must exist between true science and Divine Revelation. I will never fail to pray for you. I have great hopes in the ultimate triumph of the task before you.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 23 January 1924 to the Bahá'í Young People of Chicago, USA

- 72 If you read the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá with selflessness and care and concentrate upon them, you will discover truths unknown to you before and will obtain an insight into the problems that have baffled the great thinkers of the world. God in His essence can not be comprehended nor assume bodily form. We can only approach Him through the knowledge of His Manifestations. I pray that you may drink deep of the fountainhead of Their Sacred Teachings. I assure you of my prayers for your recovery and success.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 30 January 1925 to an individual believer

- 73 The Bahá'í youth must be taught how to teach the Cause of God. Their knowledge of the fundamentals of the Faith must be deepened and the standard of their education in science and literature enhanced. They must become thoroughly familiar with the language used and the example set by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His public addresses throughout the West. They must also be acquainted with those essential prerequisites of teaching as recorded in the Holy Books and Tablets.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 9 June 1925 to the Spiritual Assembly of the East

- 74 I strongly urge you to devote, while you are pursuing your studies, as much time as you possibly can to a thorough study of the history and teachings of our Beloved Cause. This is the prerequisite of a future successful career of service to the Bahá'í Faith in which I hope and pray you will distinguish yourself in the days to come.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 18 May 1926 to an individual believer

- 75 I will pray for you that you may be inspired to do whatever is His will and pleasure, that your vision may be clarified, your heart emptied of vain desire, and your mind

purified from whatsoever hinders you from grasping the truths that underlie the Faith. Study the teachings profoundly that the light of Divine Guidance may illumine your path and remove every obstacle from your way.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 26 April 1927 to an individual believer

- 76 The youthful and eager workers for the Cause ... occupy a warm place in my heart. I will remember their hopes, their plans, their activities in my hours of prayer at the Holy Shrine. I urge them to study profoundly the revealed utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and the discourses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and not to rely unduly on the representation and interpretation of the Teachings given by Bahá'í speakers and teachers. May the Almighty sustain you and guide you in your work.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 20 March 1929 to an individual believer

- 77 Ours is the duty to ponder these things in our heart, to strive to widen our vision, and to deepen our comprehension of this Cause, and to arise, resolutely and unreservedly, to play our part, however small, in this greatest drama of the world's spiritual history.

Shoghi Effendi, "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 26

- 78 I would strongly urge you to utilize, to the utmost possible extent, the wealth of authentic material gathered in Nabíl's stirring Narrative and to encourage the youth to master and to digest the facts recorded therein as a basis for their future work in the teaching field, and as a sustenance to their spiritual life and activities in the service of the Cause.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 9 November 1932 to an individual believer

- 79 I certainly advise you to concentrate next year on the Dawn-Breakers, as well as on the needs, the principles and the purpose of Bahá'í Administration. The Cause in your land is still in its formative period. It needs men and women of vision, of capacity and understanding. May your newly-established school render inestimable services in this as well as in other fields of activity. I will pray for your high endeavours from the depths of my heart. Rest assured and persevere.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 25 September 1933 to an individual believer

- 80 To strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's stupendous Revelation must, it is my unalterable conviction, remain the first obligation and the object of the constant endeavor of each one of its loyal adherents. An exact and thorough comprehension of so vast a system, so sublime a revelation, so sacred a trust, is for obvious reasons beyond the reach and ken of our finite minds. We can, however, and it is our bounden duty to seek to derive fresh inspiration and added sustenance as we labor for the propagation of His Faith through a clearer apprehension of the truths it enshrines and the principles on which it is based.

Shoghi Effendi, "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh", p. 100

- 81 I grieve to learn of the situation which the disharmony of the believers has created. Emphasis should be laid by all members, and with increasing force and determination, upon the essentials of the Administrative Order as explained in the book entitled "Bahá'í Administration". Whatever is not provided, should be referred to your National Assembly. The decision of the majority must, under all circumstances be upheld and enforced. Persevere and never lose heart and courage.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 9 May 1934 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India

- 82 I would urge you to concentrate from now on upon the essentials of Bahá'í belief and the distinguishing features of the Administrative Order and endeavour to teach these truths to whomsoever may seem to you to be receptive. It would constitute a magnificent act of service in your long record of devoted endeavours on behalf of this glorious Cause.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 31 July 1934 to an individual believer

- 83 Those who participate in such a campaign, whether in an organizing capacity, or as workers to whose care the execution of the task itself has been committed, must, as an essential preliminary to the discharge of their duties, thoroughly familiarize themselves with the various aspects of the history and teachings of their Faith. In their efforts to achieve this purpose they must study for themselves, conscientiously and painstakingly, the literature of their Faith, delve into its teachings, assimilate its laws and principles, ponder its admonitions, tenets and purposes, commit to memory certain of its exhortations and prayers, master the essentials of its administration, and keep abreast of its current affairs and latest developments.

Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 49

- 84 As the processes impelling a rapidly evolving Order on the highroad of its destiny multiply and gather momentum, attention should be increasingly directed to the vital need of ensuring, by every means possible, the deepening of the faith, the understanding and the spiritual life of the individuals who, as the privileged members of this community, are called upon to participate in this glorious unfoldment and are lending their assistance to this historic evolution. A profound study of the Faith which they have espoused, its history, its spiritual as well as administrative principles; a thorough understanding of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; a deeper realization of the implication of the claims advanced by the Founders of the Faith; strict adherence to the laws and principles which They have established; a greater dedication to the fundamentals and verities enshrined in Their teachings - these constitute, I feel convinced, the urgent need of the members of this rapidly expanding community. For upon this spiritual foundation must depend the solidity of the institutions which they are now so painstakingly erecting. Every outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Bahá'í institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development. From this vital, this ever-present need attention must, at no time, be diverted; nor must it be, under any circumstances, neglected, or subordinated to the less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Bahá'í administrative institutions.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 30 December 1948 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

- 85 ...the paramount duty of deepening the spiritual life of these newly fledged, these precious and highly esteemed co-workers, and of enlightening their minds regarding the essential verities enshrined in their Faith, its fundamental institutions, its history and genesis—the twin Covenants of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the present Administrative Order, the future World Order, the Laws of the Most Holy Book, the inseparable institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice, the salient events of the Heroic and Formative Ages of the Faith, and its relationship with the Dispensations that have preceded it, its attitude toward the social and political organizations by which it is surrounded—must continue to constitute the most vital aspect of the great spiritual Crusade launched by the champions of the Faith from among the peoples of their sister republics in the South.

Shoghi Effendi, "Citadel of Faith", pp. 76-77

- 86 The deepening and enrichment of the spiritual life of the individual believer, his increasing comprehension of the essential verities underlying his Faith, his training in its administrative processes, his understanding of the fundamentals of the Covenants established by the Author and the authorized Interpreter of its teachings should be made the supreme objectives of the national representatives responsible for the edification, the progress and consolidation of these communities.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 1 March 1951 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand

- 87 Nor must the elected representatives of this community neglect their supreme responsibility to safeguard the spiritual life of its members, to continually enrich that life by every means in their power, to deepen their grasp of the distinguishing features and the fundamental verities of the Bahá'í Faith, and to encourage and inspire them to reflect its spirit and precepts in their personal lives and conduct.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 1 March 1951 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South America

- 88 As to the process of internal expansion and consolidation gains momentum, the elected national representatives of this community must not fail to consecrate themselves to the no less fundamental task of enriching continually the spiritual life of its members, of deepening their understanding of the essential verities, tenets and principles underlying their Faith, of demanding a strict adherence to its laws and statutes, and of setting an example to their fellow-believers through a fuller reflection, in their personal lives and conduct, of the ennobling truths animating the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 24 June 1954 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Central America

- 89 Above all, the utmost endeavour should be exerted by your Assembly to familiarize the newly enrolled believers with the fundamental and spiritual verities of the Faith, and with the origins, the aims and purposes, as well as the processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order, to acquaint them more fully with the history of the Faith, to instill in them a deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to enrich their spiritual life, to rouse them to a greater effort and a closer participation in both the teaching of the Faith and the administration of its activities, and to inspire them to make the necessary sacrifices for the furtherance

of its vital interests. For as the body of avowed supporters of the Faith is enlarged, and the basis of the structure of its Administrative Order is broadened, and the fame of the rising community spreads far and wide, a parallel progress must be achieved, if the fruits already garnered are to endure, in the spiritual quickening of its members and the deepening of their inner life.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 26 June 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

- 90 ...a firmer grasp of the essential verities of the Faith; a more profound study of its history and a deeper understanding of the genesis, the significance, the workings, and the present status and achievements of its embryonic World Order and of the Covenant to which it owes its birth and vitality - these remain the rock bottom requirements which alone can guarantee the opening, and hasten the advent, of that blissful era which every British Bahá'í heart so eagerly anticipates, and the glories of which can, at present, be but dimly discerned.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 30 August 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles

Extracts from Letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

- 91 The Sacred Books are full of allusions to this new dispensation. In the Book of Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh gives the key-note and explains some of the outstanding passages hoping that the friends will continue to study the Sacred Books by themselves and unfold the mysteries found therein. The people, failing to comprehend the meaning of the symbols and the truth of the Sacred Verses, thought them to be myths and unrealizable dreams. It is the duty of the friends who have been endowed by Bahá'u'lláh with the power of discernment to study these Sacred Books, ponder upon their passages and teach the disheartened people of the earth the treasures of knowledge they enclose.

From a letter dated 11 March 1923 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 92 If the younger Bahá'í generation, in whom Shoghi Effendi has great hopes, take the pains of studying the Cause deeply and thoroughly, read its history, find its underlying principles and become both well informed and energetic, they surely can achieve a great deal. It is upon their shoulders that the Master has laid the tremendous work of teaching. They are the ones to raise the call of the Kingdom and

arouse the people from slumber. If they fail the Cause is doomed to stagnation.

From a letter dated 26 April 1923 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India

- 93 To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form. There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be careful lest we fall under this error and injure the Movement we do so much adore.

There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the writings the more truths we can find in them and the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.

From a letter dated 25 April 1926 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 94 Shoghi Effendi is especially delighted to know that the younger group are studying the Will and Testament as this document is indispensable for a complete understanding of the spirit, of the mission and of the future state of the Bahá'í Cause. It would be well to have a competent friend explain to them some of the passages.

From a letter dated 28 February 1928 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 95 Shoghi Effendi is sure that the more you study the Cause and its teachings the more you will realize what a mission it has to give to this world at this time. Dr. Jowett of Balliol rightly said that this is the greatest light that has appeared in the world since Christianity, that the present generation is too near to it to appreciate its import, that only in the future its significance will become manifest. I do not believe that even the Bahá'ís can conceive the wonderful and fundamental change the tenets of this movement and the spirit of the teachings and the life of its Founders are going to make in the heart and mind of this generation and the future ones.

From a letter dated 17 December 1928 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 96 He sincerely hopes that your group will daily increase in number and gradually begin to radiate its light of guidance to the neighbouring regions.

Before that stage is reached, however, you should exert all your efforts upon deepening your knowledge of the teachings and literature of the Cause. The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master are like vast seas, the deeper you go into them, the more priceless treasures you will find. And it is only after acquiring those treasures that we can hope to share them with others.

From a letter dated 4 March 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'is of Columbus, Ohio, USA

- 97 ...Shoghi Effendi hoped that you will exert all your efforts first in deepening your own knowledge of the teachings and then to strive to attract other people. You should form study classes and read the Important books that have been published especially the *Iqán* which contains the basic tenets of the Faith. The one who ponders over that book and grasps its full significance will obtain a clear insight into the old scriptures and appreciate the true mission of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

From a letter dated 27 March 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of St. Louis, Missouri, USA

- 98 Being a Bahá'í you are certainly aware of the fact that Bahá'u'lláh considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and ethical aspects. This should be the program of the Bahá'í youth all over the world.

From a letter dated 9 July 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 99 Concerning the course of study you may follow: Shoghi Effendi prefers you find what subject you like most and for which you are best fitted especially after consulting with your Mother. The Cause is such that we can serve it no matter what our profession may be. The only necessity is that we be spiritually minded and not be guided by purely material considerations. We should also not let our studies detain us from deepening our knowledge of the literature of the Cause.

From a letter dated 9 November 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 100 Shoghi Effendi feels that the real purpose of these Summer Schools is to deepen the knowledge of the friends. Lectures are very essential for they give a wonderful picture

of the subject matter. But it is not sufficient to have a picture; the friends deepen their knowledge and this can be achieved if, together with the lectures, there are study classes and seminar work carried on by the same lecturer.

The world is undoubtedly facing a great crisis and the social, economic and political conditions are becoming daily more complex. Should the friends desire to take the lead in reforming the world, they should start by educating themselves and understand what the troubles and problems really are which baffle the mind of man. It is in these Summer Schools that this training should be provided for the friends.

From a letter dated 27 January 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 101 Besides the friends should arrange proper study classes and deepen their knowledge of the teachings. It is only through such thorough understanding of the literature of the Cause that you can appreciate the real message that Bahá'u'lláh has brought to the world. Only then would you see how incomplete and futile is the work of the other societies and movements that at present exist in the world.

From a letter dated 1 February 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 102 Shoghi Effendi hopes that you will exert all your efforts to deepen your knowledge of the literature of the Movement, until you become fully acquainted with its spirit and tenets. Unless you do obtain such a firm hold you will never be able to teach others and render real service to the promulgation of the Faith. Of special importance is the Book of the Íqán which explains the attitude of the Cause towards the prophets of God and their mission in the history of society. Besides this there is "Some Answered Questions" of the Master and "The Dawn-Breakers" of Nabíl. Every Bahá'í should master these books and be able to explain their contents to others. Besides their importance, they are interesting and most absorbing.

From a letter dated 9 February 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 103 Surely the ideal way of teaching is to prove our points by constant reference to the actual words of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master. This will save the Cause from being misinterpreted by individuals. It is what these divine Lights say that is truth and therefore should be the authorities of our statements. This, however, does not mean that our freedom of expression is limited. We can always find new ways of approach to that truth or explain or explain how they influence our life and condition. The more deep our studies the more we can understand the significance of the teachings.

In this Cause we cannot divorce the letter from the spirit of the words. As Bahá'u'lláh says we should take the outward significance and super-impose upon it the inner. Either without the other is wrong and defective.

From a letter dated 16 February 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 104 Another essential thing is that those who do embrace the Faith should be constantly urged to study the literature of the Cause. It is not sufficient that our numbers should increase, we want people whose faith stands on a rock and no trial can move. We want people who will in turn arise and carry the Message to other people and guide other souls.

From a letter dated 13 April 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 105 Shoghi Effendi undertook the translation of the Dawn-Breakers only after being convinced that its publication will arouse the friends to greater self-sacrifice and a more determined way of teaching. Otherwise he would not have devoted so much time to it.

Reading about the life and activities of those heroic souls is bound to influence our mode of living and of the importance we attach to our services in the Cause. Shoghi Effendi therefore hopes that the friends will read, nay rather study that book, and encourage their young people to do that as well...

It is also very important to hold study classes and go deep in the teachings. A great harm is done by starting to teach without being firmly grounded in the literature. "Little knowledge is dangerous" fully applies to the teaching work. The friends should read the Writings to be able to quote from the Tablets when discussing subjects pertaining to the Faith.

From a letter dated 9 May 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 106 He fully approves the idea of holding study classes, for the deeper the friends go in their understanding of the teachings the more firm and steadfast they will become and more unwavering in their support of the institutions of the Faith. Books such as the "Íqán", "Some Answered Questions" and "The Dawn-Breakers" should be mastered by every Bahá'í. The first two books will reveal the significance of this divine revelation as well as the unity of all the Prophets of old. The last book will show how the Faith was ushered into the world and how its early adherents

heroically faced martyrdom and suffering in their desire to establish the Cause throughout the world. Knowing the life of those heroes will create in us the urge to follow their footsteps and achieve the same.

From a letter dated 9 June 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi an individual believer

- 107 He sincerely hopes that every one of those individuals who expressed his desire to join the Movement will gradually become so confirmed that no amount of trials and tribulations will deter him from sharing in the work of spreading the Faith throughout the world.

Before undertaking such a task, however it is necessary that they should deepen their knowledge of the teachings. They should learn to study the words for themselves and both grasp their significance and also become imbued with their spirit. The hope of Shoghi Effendi is not only to increase the number of the friends but also to have truer and more understanding Bahá'ís. The task of the teachers is to produce such efficient servants for our beloved Faith.

From a letter dated 18 October 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 108 The Master used to attach more importance to the learning by heart of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. During His days it was a usual work of the children of the household to learn Tablets by heart...

From a letter dated 19 October 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 109 Books such as the "Íqán", "Some Answered Questions", the "Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh", Nabíl's Narrative and Dr. Esslemont's book should be read and read over again by every soul who desires to serve the Movement or considers himself an active member of the group.

From a letter dated 9 November 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 110 Definite courses should be given along the different phases of the Bahá'í Faith and in a manner that will stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home, for the period of a few days is not sufficient to learn everything. They have to be taught the habit of studying the Cause constantly, for the more we read the Words the more will the truth they contain be revealed to us.

From a letter dated 24 November 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi an individual believer

- 111 It is, however, very important that these new-comers should study the teachings and become thoroughly familiar with them, otherwise their faith will be established upon shifting sand and could be easily demolished. The words of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master, however, have a creative power and are sure to awaken in the reader the undying fire of the love of God.

From a letter dated 17 February 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi an individual believer

- 112 He does not ask us to follow Him blindly; as He says in one of His Tablets, God had endowed man with a mind to operate as a torchlight and guide him to truth. Read His words, consider His teachings, and measure their value in the light of contemporary problems and the truth will surely be revealed to you.

From a letter dated 26 February 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, "Bahá'í News" 80, January 1934, p. 5

- 113 Shoghi Effendi found great pleasure and spiritual upliftment while working on the translation of Nabíl's Narrative. The life of those who figure in it is so stirring that every one who reads those accounts is bound to be affected and impelled to follow their footsteps of sacrifice in the path of the Faith. The Guardian believes, therefore, that it should be studied by the friends, especially the youth who need some inspiration to carry them through these troubled days.

From a letter dated 11 March 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi an individual believer

- 114 The second point which the Guardian wishes you to stress and to keep always in mind is the necessity for every local and active member of your committee to fully concentrate on the thorough study and understanding of the spiritual and administrative principles of the Faith, as a necessary step for active and fruitful teaching. You should first equip yourselves with the necessary amount of knowledge about the Cause and then, and only then, try to teach.

From a letter dated August 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'í Youth Committee, "Bahá'í World", Vol. 5 1932-1934, p. 372

- 115 Your thorough and continued study of the teachings, as expressed by your readiness to be in close and constant touch with all Bahá'í publications, is, indeed, remarkable.

For besides deepening your knowledge of the basic tenets of the Faith and of keeping you in close contact with its administrative developments it gives you an opportunity to prepare yourself for the teaching of the Cause. To study and to teach, these are the twofold and sacred obligations of every responsible and active follower of the Faith.

From a letter dated 13 August 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 116 In these gloomy days, when the world is caught into the whirlpool of agnosticism and materialism, the Guardian is eagerly looking to such devoted and ardent believers like you, to arise and proclaim the Holy Word of God which is humanity's unique and most effective ark of salvation. Nothing short of that can save our civilization from falling into chaos and anarchy. It is, therefore, the sacred responsibility of every loyal follower of the Faith to fully realize the tremendous task he is called upon to fulfill, and to seek all those measures which can enable him to contribute his share, however modest, to the progress of the Cause. And it is evident that such a goal cannot be attained unless we are adequately imbued with the spirit and informed of the basic tenets and teachings of the Faith.

The Guardian would, therefore, strongly urge you to get increasingly familiar with the literature of the Cause, to study and investigate all its aspects, whether spiritual, social or administrative, so that you may, in a not distant future, be able to rank among the distinguished and outstanding teachers and exponents of the Movement.

From a letter dated 10 September 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 117 His brotherly advice to you, and to all loyal and ardent young believers like you, is that you should deepen your knowledge of the history and the tenets of the Faith, not merely by means of careful and thorough study, but also through active, whole-hearted and continued participation in all the activities, whether administrative or otherwise, of your community. The Bahá'í community life provides you with an indispensable laboratory where you can translate into living and constructive action, the principles which you imbibe from the teachings. By becoming a real part of that living organism you can catch the real spirit which runs throughout the Bahá'í Teachings. To study the principles, and to try to live according to them, are, therefore, the two essential mediums through which you can insure the development and progress of your inner spiritual life and of your outer existence as well. May Bahá'u'lláh enable you to attain this high station, and may He keep the torch of faith

forever burning in your hearts!

From a letter dated 2 November 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 118 These sources of disagreement and of difference are all due to the lack of thorough understanding, on the part of many of the believers, of the basic laws and principles of Bahá'í Administration. Despite our Guardian's repeated and emphatic instructions and recommendations that the friends should deepen their knowledge, through both study and practice, of all the administrative teachings of the Faith yet, some have, for some reason or another, neglected to do so. The result has been that they are working in the dark, not knowing where to look for guidance in all such matters.

From a letter dated 11 November 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 119 The Guardian...was gratified to learn of the progress of your academic studies, and of your future plans for the study and teaching of the Cause. The spirit which is moving and sustaining you in the service of the Faith is, indeed, remarkable, and through it you will undoubtedly be moved to render great and imperishable services to Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The university training which you are receiving at present will be of immense help to you in your efforts to present the Message in intellectual circles. In these days when people are so skeptical about religion and look with so much contempt towards religious organizations and movements, there seems to be more need than ever for our young Bahá'ís to be well-equipped intellectually, so that they may be in a position to present the Message in a befitting way, and in a manner that would convince every unbiased observer of the effectiveness and power of the teachings.

In view of that Shoghi Effendi would urge you to persevere in your studies, and trusts that as a result you will be greatly assisted in your teaching activities.

From a letter dated 5 May 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 120 The Guardian would strongly urge each and every member of the N.S.A. to carefully peruse, and to quietly ponder upon the outer meaning and upon the inner spirit as well, of all his communications on the subject of the origin, nature and present day functioning of the Administrative Order of the Faith. A compilation of these letters has been lately published in the States under the title "Bahá'í Administration", and a complete knowledge of that book seems to be quite essential to the right handling of

the administrative problems facing your N.S.A. at present.

From a letter dated 9 May 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India

- 121 Shoghi Effendi was pleased to learn of the response which his last general communication (“The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh”) addressed to the friends in the West has awakened in your community. It is his hope that the believers will, through their careful and continued study of this important communication acquire a new vision of the Cause, and will be stimulated to redouble their efforts for the expansion and consolidation of their work for the Faith.

From a letter dated 11 May 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 122 Shoghi Effendi wishes me to express his deep-felt appreciation of your intention to study the Qur’án. The knowledge of this revealed holy Book is, indeed, indispensable to every Bahá’í who wishes to adequately understand the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh. And in view of that the Guardian has been invariably encouraging the friends to make as thorough a study of this Book as possible, particularly in their summer schools. Sale’s translation is the most scholarly we have, but Rodwell’s version is more literary, and hence easier for reading.

From a letter dated 23 November 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 123 He feels, indeed, that the time has come for the German believers to acquire a thorough knowledge as well as a full understanding of such important Tablets as Bahá’u’lláh’s “Book of My Covenant” and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament, both of which constitute the very bedrock upon which the entire administrative system of the Faith has been raised and established. As to the “Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh” it also constitutes an invaluable supplement to these afore-mentioned Tablets.

From a letter dated 10 January 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 124 Your emphasis on the study of the Administration, he feels, is most timely and of a vital practical importance, inasmuch as it serves to consolidate and direct towards a definite objective your general teaching work. Without the study and application of the Administration the teaching of the Cause becomes not only meaningless, but loses in effectiveness and in scope.

From a letter dated 31 May 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 125 With regard to the school's program for the next summer; the Guardian would certainly advise, and even urge the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'án, as the knowledge of this Sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand, and intelligently read the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Although there are very few persons among our Western Bahá'ís who are capable of handling such a course in a scholarly way yet, the mere lack of such competent teachers should encourage and stimulate the believers to get better acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures of Islám. In this way, there will gradually appear some distinguished Bahá'ís who will be so well versed in teachings of Islám as to be able to guide the believers in their study of that religion.

From a letter dated 2 December 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 126 The Guardian feels particularly appreciative of the emphasis your [National Youth] Committee has laid on the study of the "Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", which book, he believes should be the continued guide and companion of every believer, specially those who are actively engaged in teaching the Cause. It is his fervent hope that this book will kindle in the heart of all the friends a new light, whereby they will receive a fuller guidance and a greater measure of inspiration in their labours for the Cause.

From a letter dated 28 January 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 127 He is particularly pleased to realize that the book of Gleanings is of such a tremendous inspiration to the Bahá'í youth, and that they all are making a careful study of its contents with the view of preparing themselves for proper teaching work. His hope is that this volume will enable them to gain a fuller consciousness of their functions and responsibilities, and to arise and set the example before the rest of the believers, not only in the field of teaching, but in all the other fields of Bahá'í activity as well. He is ardently supplicating Bahá'u'lláh on your behalf, and on behalf of the whole body of young Bahá'ís throughout the States, and specially the National Youth Committee, that you may be given the inspiration, knowledge and guidance to press forward to efficient and loyal service.

From a letter dated 2 February 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 128 An effort should be made to raise the standard of studies, so as to provide the Bahá'í student with a thorough knowledge of the Cause that would enable him to expound it befittingly to the educated public.

From a letter dated 8 November 1937 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 129 He has noted, in particular, with genuine satisfaction the recommendations issued by the National Youth Committee to the members of our Bahá'í youth to make a deeper study of the Master's Will and to ponder more carefully on its manifold and far-reaching implications. He hopes that the Regional Youth Conferences ... have devoted all the time necessary for the study and discussion of this all-important subject, and have given it the full emphasis it deserves. He will pray that the results obtained may be such as to give all the attendants a clear and wider vision of the tasks, responsibilities and obligations they will be called upon to discharge during this year, and a renewed stimulus to contribute their full share to the success and complete fulfillment of the Seven-Year Plan.

The Guardian would advise that in their studies of the Will and Testament the young believers should use the "Dispensation", which will undoubtedly help them considerably to grasp the full implications of that sacred and historic Document which he has described as the "Charter of the New World Order".

From a letter dated 9 January 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 130 It is his fervent hope and his heart's ardent prayer that you may increasingly deepen in your faith, and steadily gain in your understanding and appreciation of the teachings, and display such earnestness and perseverance in your Bahá'í studies as to gradually acquire the full knowledge, training and experience necessary for active and effective service to the Faith in the future.

Although still young in age, you should endeavour from now, through close association with your fellow-believers, and through your faithful application to your Bahá'í studies, to prepare yourself for that day when you will be called upon, as a grown-up and responsible member of the Community, to take full part in the activities of the Cause, and thus prove yourself worthy of being a member of the world-wide Fellowship created by Bahá'u'lláh.

The Guardian was truly pleased to note that you have already started reading some Bahá'í books, and would specially advise you to endeavour to commit to memory certain passages from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and in particular, some of

His prayers. This training would undoubtedly be of tremendous help to you in your future studies of the Cause, and would also serve to considerably deepen and enrich your own spiritual life at present.

From a letter dated 10 April 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 131 Those standards of Bahá'í conduct, which he himself has set forth in his last general epistle, "The Advent of Divine Justice", and which it should be the paramount duty of every loyal and conscientious believer to endeavour to uphold and promote, deserve serious study and meditation...

The principle and methods laid down by the Guardian in his "Advent of Divine Justice" on this vital subject of Bahá'í ethics, should indeed prove of invaluable inspiration and guidance to all the students and friends attending the Summer School classes, and thus prepare them to better appreciate the privileges, and more adequately discharge the responsibilities, of their citizenship in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

From a letter dated 20 May 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 132 Surely, the believers, no matter how qualified they may be, whether as teachers or administrators, and however high their intellectual and spiritual merits, should never be looked upon as a standard whereby to evaluate and measure the divine authority and mission of the Faith. It is to the Teachings themselves, and to the lives of the Founders of the Cause that the believers should look for their guidance and inspiration, and only by keeping strictly to such true attitude can they hope to establish their loyalty to Bahá'u'lláh upon an enduring and unassailable basis. You should take heart, therefore, and with unrelaxing vigilance and unremitting effort endeavour to play your full share in the gradual unfoldment of this Divine World Order.

From a letter dated 23 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 133 His advice to you is to continue deepening your knowledge and understanding of this Revelation, both by means of patient and thorough study of Bahá'í writings, and through active association with your fellow-believers and close participation in the activities of your local Bahá'í community.

From a letter dated 12 February 1940 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 134 The responsibility of young believers is very great, as they must not only fit themselves to inherit the work of older Bahá'ís and carry on the affairs of the Cause in general, but the world which lies ahead of them—as promised by Bahá'u'lláh—will be a world chastened by its sufferings, ready to listen to His Divine Message at last; and consequently a very high character will be expected of the exponents of such a religion. To deepen their knowledge, to perfect themselves in the Bahá'í standards of virtue and upright conduct, should be the paramount duty of every young Bahá'í.

From a letter dated 6 June 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'í Youth of Bombay

- 135 You Bahá'í children and young people have both great privileges and great obligations ahead of you, for your generation will be the ones to help build up a new, better and more beautiful world after the dark years of this war are passed. You should prepare yourselves for this great task by trying to grasp the true meaning of the teachings and not just merely accepting them as something you are taught. They are like a wonderful new world of thought just beginning to be explored, and when we realize that Bahá'u'lláh has brought teachings and laws for a thousand years to come, we can readily see that each new generation may find some greater meaning in the writings than the ones gone before did.

From a letter dated 14 October 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 136 Regarding your question concerning your studies: as this is a purely personal matter that concerns your own future, the Guardian feels you should decide it yourself, in consultation with your parents. He urges you, however, to devote yourself as much as possible to studying and spreading the Bahá'í teachings, whatever your other occupations may be.

From a letter dated 26 May 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 137 The Cause needs more Bahá'í scholars, people who not only are devoted and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also have a deep grasp of the Teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world.

The Cause has the remedy for all the world's ills. The reason why more people

don't accept it is because the Bahá'ís are not always capable of presenting it to them in a way that meets the immediate needs of their minds. Young Bahá'ís like yourself must prepare themselves to really bring the Message to their generation who need it so desperately and who can understand the language it speaks so well.

He would advise you among other books to study the Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as His method of approaching the mind of the public cannot be surpassed.

From a letter dated 21 October 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 138 The Guardian hopes that along with whatever other studies you take up, you will continually study the teachings and endeavour to acquire a profound knowledge of them. The importance of young Bahá'ís becoming thoroughly steeped in every branch of the teachings cannot be over-emphasized, as they have great teaching tasks ahead of them to accomplish.

From a letter dated 24 December 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 139 Young men and women in the Faith must be deep and thoughtful scholars of its teachings, so that they can teach in a way that will convince people that all the problems facing them have a remedy. They must grasp the Administration, so that they can wisely and efficiently administer the ever-growing affairs of the Cause; and they must exemplify the Bahá'í way of living. All this is not easy - but the Guardian is always encouraged to see the spirit animating such young believers as yourself. He has high hopes of what your generation will accomplish.

From a letter dated 12 May 1944 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 140 He feels that in your contact with the believers and in teaching new souls, you should help them obtain a full knowledge and understanding of the Covenant and the Will and Testament. This will strengthen them to meet every test, and to understand the nature of the spiritual disease which afflicts those who turn against the Institutions of the Faith. These are, indeed, times of testing and trial, for the whole world and for the believers, too.

From a letter dated 15 August 1945 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 141 He quite agrees with you that the Bahá'ís need deepening in the teachings - a course

of adult education would be excellent if it could be carried out and the friends would participate. The principles, administration and fundamentals of the Faith are well known, but the friends need greatly to study the more profound works which would give them spiritual maturity to a greater degree, unify their community life, and enable them to better exemplify the Bahá'í way of living; in other words, to "lead the life".

From a letter dated 24 August 1946 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 142 By promoting the vital interests of the Faith's institutions the Guardian means, amongst other things, that we should help our Assemblies by electing wise and capable members, upholding their decisions, making suggestions for the work at Feasts, and consulting properly on the affairs of the Cause; contributing to the Fund; deepening our knowledge of the administrative order, etc.

From a letter dated 18 March 1946 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 143 The Guardian feels that a sound knowledge of history, including religious history, and also social and economic subjects, is of great help in teaching the Cause to intelligent people; as to what subjects within the Faith you should concentrate on he feels that young Bahá'ís should gain a mastery of such books as the "Gleanings", "The Dawn-Breakers", "God Passes By", the "Íqán", "Some Answered Questions" and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the Faith should be deeply studied...

From a letter dated 4 May 1946 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 144 There is no objection to the friends memorizing prayers; on the contrary it is excellent for them to do so.

From a letter dated 6 September 1946 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 145 Great risks remain ahead: not only must the work the Master, in His Mercy, gave to the North American friends to do, be accomplished, but a deeper spirit of love and unity must be cultivated by the believers within their own communities. The friends themselves are still in many ways spiritually immature; they must study the teachings more profoundly, and learn to function as truly mature souls in all their relationships, both within the Cause and with their fellow-men.

From a letter dated 5 February 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Teaneck, New Jersey, U.S.A

- 146 He feels that many of the perplexities that arise in your mind could be dissipated if you always conceived of the teachings as one great whole with many facets. Truth may, in covering different subjects, appear to be contradictory, and yet it is all one if you carry the thought through to the end....

He hopes you will ... rest assured inwardly that for these things which sometimes seem difficult to understand there is usually a quite simple and reasonable explanation.

From a letter dated 24 February 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 147 By “verities of the Faith” he means the great teachings and fundamentals enshrined in our Bahá'í literature; these we can find by reading the books, studying under Bahá'í scholars at summer schools and in classes, and through the aid of study outlines.

From a letter dated 19 April 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 148 Shoghi Effendi has for years urged the Bahá'ís (who asked his advice, and in general also), to study history, economics, sociology, etc., in order to be au courant with all the progressive movements and thoughts being put forth today, and so that they could correlate these to the Bahá'í teachings. What he wants the Bahá'ís to do is to study more, not to study less. The more general knowledge, scientific and otherwise, they possess, the better. Likewise he is constantly urging them to really study the Bahá'í teachings more deeply. One might liken Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to a sphere; there are points poles apart, and in between the thoughts and doctrines that unite them.

From a letter dated 5 July 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 149 He is indeed pleased to know that the book of “Prayers and Meditations” by Bahá'u'lláh has been out in time to enable the friends to read it during the Fast, and he has every hope that the perusal of such a precious volume will help deepen, more than any other publication, the spirit of devotion and faith in the friends, and thus charge them with all the spiritual power they require for the accomplishment of their

tremendous duties towards the Cause.

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, published in "Bahá'í News", no. 212, October 1948, p.1

- 150 He feels that what the German Bahá'ís need—and must have—more than anything else in the world is a far deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Master. This is the rock-foundation without which no sound superstructure can be built. Neither the administration, nor the general teaching work of the Cause in Germany, will progress, or be able to accomplish anything, unless the believers are truly firm, deep, spiritually convinced Bahá'ís. An intellectual grasp of the teachings is purely superficial; with the first real test such believers are shaken from the bough! But once a Bahá'í has the profound conviction of the authority from God, vested in the Prophet, passed on to the Master, and by Him, to the Guardians, and which flows out through the assemblies and creates order based on obedience - once a Bahá'í has this, nothing can shake him.

From a letter dated 11 April 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 151 As he has cabled the N.S.A. a few days ago, he feels that the difficulties which have arisen ... are mainly due to the fact that the believers need to be deepened in their knowledge and appreciation of the Covenants of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This is the stronghold of the faith of every Bahá'í, and that which enables him to withstand every test and the attacks of the enemies outside the Faith, and the far more dangerous, insidious, lukewarm people inside the Faith who have no real attachment to the Covenant, and consequently uphold the intellectual aspect of the teachings while at the same time undermining the spiritual foundation upon which the whole Cause of God rests.

From a letter dated 15 April 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 152 It seems what we need now is a more profound and co-ordinated Bahá'í scholarship in order to attract such men as you are contacting. The world has - at least the thinking world - caught up by now with all the great and universal principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh over 70 years ago, and so of course it does not sound "new" to them. But we know that the deeper teachings, the capacity of His projected world order to re-create society, are new and dynamic. It is these we must learn to present intelligently and enticingly to such men!

From a letter dated 3 July 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 153 If the Bahá'ís want to be really effective in teaching the Cause they need to be informed and able to discuss intelligently, intellectually, the present condition of the world and its problems. We need Bahá'í scholars, not only people far, far more deeply aware of what our teachings really are, but also well read and well educated people, capable of correlating our teachings to the current thoughts of the leaders of society. We Bahá'ís should, in other words, arm our minds with knowledge in order to better demonstrate to, especially, the educated classes, the truths enshrined in our Faith.

From a letter dated 5 July 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 154 He was grieved to hear of some of the things you describe. It shows great spiritual immaturity on the part of some of the Bahá'ís and an astonishing lack of understanding and study of the teachings.

You must not make the great mistake of judging our Faith by one community which obviously needs to study and obey the Bahá'í teachings. Human frailties and peculiarities can be a great test. But the only way, or perhaps I should say the first and best way, to remedy such situations, is to oneself do what is right. One soul can be the cause of the spiritual illumination of a continent. Now that you have seen, and remedied, a great fault in your life, now that you see more clearly what is lacking in your own community, there is nothing to prevent you from arising and showing such an example, such a love and spirit of service, as to enkindle the hearts of your fellow Bahá'ís.

He urges you to study deeply the teachings, teach others, study with those Bahá'ís who are anxious to do so, the deeper teachings of our Faith, and through example, effort and prayer, bring about a change.

From a letter dated 30 September 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 155 Mature teachers are needed in so many places. Unfortunately there are not enough of them to go around and do all the work waiting to be done! That is why it is so important for the new European Bahá'ís, like yourself, to study deeply the teachings and qualify themselves to take over the work begun by their American brothers and sisters, in order to release these pioneers for work in places where the need is greater.

Just one mature soul, with spiritual understanding and a profound knowledge of the Faith, can set a whole country ablaze - so great is the power of the Cause to work

through a pure and selfless channel.

From a letter dated 6 November 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 156 ...whilst actively teaching, the friends must themselves be taught and deepened in the spirit of the Faith, which brings love and unity.

From a letter dated 17 July 1951 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 157 He was very pleased to hear you do a lot of lecturing of the Cause; this very important field of service and one you should devote as much time as possible. The public must hear of the Faith, and new ways and means must be devised to bring it to their attention. He also urges you to study the teachings themselves deeper. Bahá'í scholarship is needed more than worldly scholarship, for one is spiritual and the other more or less transient. There is a real lack in the Cause of people who know the Teachings thoroughly, especially their deeper truths, and who can consequently teach the souls properly and lay a permanent foundation, one that tests and trials will not shake down.

From a letter dated 27 August 1951 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 158 When a person becomes a Bahá'í, what takes place is that the seed of the spirit starts to grow in the human soul. This seed must be watered by the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. These gifts of the spirit are received through prayer, meditation, study of the Holy Utterances and service to the Cause of God....

Naturally there will be periods of distress and difficulty, and even severe tests; but if that person turns firmly toward the divine Manifestation, studies carefully His spiritual teachings and receives the blessings of the Holy Spirit, he will find that in reality these tests and difficulties have been gifts of God to enable him to grow and develop.

From a letter dated 6 October 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 159 It is better to have one Bahá'í who understands the teachings and is wholeheartedly convinced of their truth, than a number of Bahá'ís who are not well aware of the Cause, and deep-rooted in the Covenant.

From a letter dated 22 January 1955 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 160 He is very happy to have this opportunity of welcoming you into the service of our glorious Faith, and he urges you to quietly and steadily read the Teachings, as in this way you will fit yourself to teach others, and also deepen your own understanding and lay a foundation in your own soul and character which no amount of tests and trials can change or destroy.

From a letter dated 28 April 1955 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 161 Success will crown the efforts of the friends on the home front, when they meditate [on] the teachings, pray fervently for divine confirmations for their work, study the teachings so they may carry their spirit to the seeker, and then act; and above all persevere in action. When these steps are followed, and the teaching work carried on sacrificially and with devoted enthusiasm, the Faith will spread rapidly.

From a letter dated 26 March 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 162 There is a desperate need for deepening the Bahá'ís themselves in their own faith. They do not study the Teachings enough. They do not therefore either act as wholeheartedly as Bahá'ís as they should, or derive the spiritual strength from the Faith which studying, praying and meditating brings.

From a letter dated 26 March 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 163 Some of the younger believers, from letters and reports received here, seem to lack a firm grounding on such matters as the Will and Testament and the deeper spiritual teachings of the Faith. Whenever the grasp of these fundamentals is weak, the friends are almost sure to pay undue attention to secondary procedures, to quibble over details, to lose themselves in personalities, and to founder in a sea of unnecessary inharmony. This has nothing to do with their devotion, their loyalty, their zeal, their eagerness to serve. It is merely a question of not having received, perhaps through lack of sufficient teachers to carry on the all-important work of deepening the friends in their own faith, a strong enough education in the Covenant before the duties and responsibilities of the Administrative Order were thrust upon them.

From a letter dated 26 June 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada

- 164 It is evident that one of the reasons that the work on the home front in America is so seriously lagging is that the Bahá'ís themselves, though undoubtedly devoted, loyal and conscientious, are not always very deeply grounded in the spiritual fundamentals of their Faith. This produces maladjustment, so to speak, in the nature of their service to the Cause; and only through a deeper understanding of their Faith and the inner spiritual strength that this understanding brings will they be able to reinforce themselves to meet their tasks, to see the joy of discharging their duties and grasping their privileges.

From a letter dated 19 July 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

- 165 The friends need only read the Writings; the answers are all in them; we have no priests in this Faith to interpret or answer for us.

From a letter dated 23 April 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer

- 166 It is not enough to bring people into the Faith, one must educate them and deepen their love for it and their knowledge of its teachings, after they declare themselves. As the Bahá'ís are few in number, especially the active teachers, and there is a great deal of work to be done, the education of these new believers is often sadly neglected, and then results are seen such as the resignations you have had recently. In this respect, the Summer Schools can be of the greatest help the friends, new and old Bahá'ís alike, for in them they can study, and enjoy the feeling of Bahá'í companionship which is, alas, usually lacking in their home communities, owing to the smallness of their numbers.

From a letter dated 18 July 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada
