

Sacrifice

Compilation on “The Field of Sacrifice”

By Bahá'u'lláh, The Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi

Compiled by Ehsan Bayat

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1. Extracts from the Writings of the Báb

O Thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days.

(The Báb, Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 59)

Glorified art Thou, O my God! I invoke Thee by Thy Most Great Name through which the hidden secrets of God, the Most Exalted, were divulged and the kindreds of all nations converged toward the focal centre of faith and certitude, through which Thy luminous Words streamed forth for the quickening of mankind and the essence of all knowledge was revealed from that Embodiment of bounty. May my life, my inmost being, my soul and my body be offered up as a sacrifice for the dust ennobled by His footsteps.

(The Báb, Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 199)

2. Extracts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

Consider the multitude of lives that have been, and are still being, sacrificed in a world

deluded by a mere phantom which the vain imaginations of its peoples have conceived. Render thanks unto God, inasmuch as ye have attained unto your heart's Desire, and been united to Him Who is the Promise of all nations. Guard ye, with the aid of the one true God—exalted be His glory—the integrity of the station which ye have attained, and cleave to that which shall promote His Cause. He, verily, enjoineth on you what is right and conducive to the exaltation of man's station.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 6)

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 85-86)

How vast the number of those sanctified beings, those symbols of certitude, who, in their great love for thee¹, have laid down their lives and sacrificed their all for thy sake!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 109)

¹ Land of Táj' (Tíhrán)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 196)

By the righteousness of God! If thou wert present before My Throne and didst hearken

unto the Tongue of might and grandeur, thou wouldst sacrifice thy body, thy soul, thine entire being as a token of thy love for God, the Sovereign, the Protector, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, and wouldst so thrill to the fascination of His Voice that every pen would be powerless to recount thy station and every eloquent speaker would be confounded in his attempt to describe it. Ponder a while concerning this Revelation and its invincible sovereignty; aid it then as it beseemeth thy Lord, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful. Direct thou the people unto the Dayspring of glory. Verily it is He Himself Who is established upon His mighty Throne. Through Him hath the horizon of this Prison been made to shine and by Him have all that are in the heavens and on the earth been illumined.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 263)

By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory. What unspeakable cruelties they that have occupied the seats of authority and learning have inflicted upon the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue! Content with a transitory dominion, they have deprived themselves of an everlasting sovereignty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 14-15)

These Essences of being are the shining Exemplars of sacrifice. They have offered, and will continue to offer up their lives, their substance, their souls, their spirit, their all, in the path of the Well-Beloved. By them, no station, however exalted, could be more dearly cherished. For lovers have no desire but the good-pleasure of their Beloved, and have no aim except reunion with Him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 119)

Behold how they preceded all the peoples of the earth in attaining unto His holy Presence—the Presence of God Himself—how they renounced the world and all that is therein, and sacrificed freely and joyously their lives at the feet of that Manifestation of the All-Glorious.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 147)

Wherefore, O my friend, it behooveth Us to exert the highest endeavour to attain unto that City, and, by the grace of God and His loving-kindness, rend asunder the “veils of

glory”; so that, with inflexible steadfastness, we may sacrifice our drooping souls in the path of the New Beloved. We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favour of that grace. That city is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 183-184)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 229)

3. Extracts from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Therefore we also must strive in this pathway of love and service, sacrificing life and possessions, passing our days in devotion, consecrating our efforts wholly to the cause of God, so that, God willing, the ensign of universal religion may be uplifted in the world of mankind and the oneness of the world of humanity be established.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 231)

Another unity is the spiritual unity which emanates from the breaths of the Holy Spirit. This is greater than the unity of mankind. Human unity or solidarity may be likened to the body whereas unity from the breaths of the Holy Spirit is the spirit animating the body. This is a perfect unity. It creates such a condition in mankind that each one will make sacrifices for the other and the utmost desire will be to forfeit life and all that pertains to it in behalf of another’s good.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 258)

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is voluntary sharing of one’s property with others among mankind. This voluntary sharing is greater than equality, and consists in this, that man should not prefer himself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others. But this should not be introduced by coercion so that it

becomes a law and man is compelled to follow it. Nay, rather, man should voluntarily and of his own choice sacrifice his property and life for others, and spend willingly for the poor, just as is done in Írán among the Bahá'ís.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 288)

Thousands of souls have given their lives in the arena of sacrifice and have fallen as victims under the swords of oppression and cruelty. Thousands of esteemed families have been uprooted and destroyed. Thousands of children have been made fatherless. Thousands of fathers have been bereft of their sons. Thousands of mothers have wept and lamented for their boys who have been beheaded. All this oppression and cruelty, rapacity and blood-thirstiness did not hinder or prevent the spread of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They spread more and more every day, and their power and might became more evident.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 293)

When the darkness of ignorance and heedlessness concerning the realm of eternity and bereavement from the True One had encircled the universe, then the resplendent Luminary dawned and the brilliant Light illumined the horizon of the East. Hence, the Sun of Reality shone forth, scattering the sparkling lights of the Kingdom to the East and to the West. Those who had seeing eyes found the Most Great Glad-Tidings, began to cry the call, “O blessed are we! O blessed are we!”—and have beheld the reality of things in themselves, have discovered the mysteries of the Kingdom, were released from superstition and doubts, perceived the lights of Truth and became so intoxicated with the cup of the love of God, that, wholly forgetting themselves and the world while dancing, they ran with utmost joy and ecstasy to the city of Martyrdom, sacrificing their minds and their lives upon the altar of Love.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 352)

The souls who sacrifice self, become detached from the imperfections of the realm of man and free from the shackles of this ephemeral world, assuredly the splendors of the rays of divine union shall shine in their hearts and in the eternal paradise they shall find ideal relationship, union and happiness.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 373)

That is to say, man must become evanescent in God. Must forget his own selfish conditions that he may thus arise to the station of sacrifice. It should be to such a degree that if he sleep, it should not be for pleasure, but to rest the body in order to do better, to speak better, to explain more beautifully, to serve the servants of God and to prove the truths. When he remains awake, he should seek to be attentive, serve the Cause of God and sacrifice his own stations for those of God. When he attains to this station, the confirmations of the Holy Spirit will surely reach him, and man with this power can withstand all who inhabit the earth.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 384)

Through the protection and help of the Blessed Perfection—may my life be a sacrifice to His beloved ones!—you must conduct and deport yourselves in such a manner that you may stand out among other souls distinguished by a brilliancy like unto the sun. If any one of you enters a city he must become the center of attraction because of the sincerity, faithfulness, love, honesty, fidelity, truthfulness and loving-kindness of his disposition and nature toward all the inhabitants of the world, that the people of the city may all cry out: “This person is unquestionably a Bahá’í; for his manners, his behavior, his conduct, his morals, his nature and his disposition are of the attributes of the Bahá’ís.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 400)

The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God. For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh from the doubts of the people of error. It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and the firm pillar of the religion of God.

... The second condition: Fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 426)

Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves? Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abhá Beauty and teach the Cause of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 448)

This is the day when dogmas must be sacrificed in our search for truth. We must leave behind all save what is necessary for the needs of today, nor attach ourselves to any form or ritual which is in opposition to moral evolution.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 67)

With the door of such splendor open, will you continue to be negligent? Let us prepare to sacrifice our lives, so that the divine conflagration may blaze in the east and the west. May it become a holocaust that will attract the entire race!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 68)

First of all, be ready to sacrifice your lives for one another, to prefer the general well-being to your personal well-being. Create relationships that nothing can shake; form an assembly that nothing can break up; have a mind that never ceases acquiring riches that nothing can destroy. If love did not exist, what of reality would remain? It is the fire of the love of God which renders man superior to the animal. Strengthen this superior force through which is attained all the progress in the world.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 112)

Certain rich ones have sacrificed their possessions and even their lives for this cause. Riches did not prove an obstacle for them and they are like unto stars in the heaven of both worlds - flames of reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 135)

There must needs be some tremendous force to upraise the standard of eternal friendship between nations and this force must come through self-sacrifice and universal service.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 180)

His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed this one reality and spread the message of the “Most Great Peace”. Even in prison he rested not until he lighted this lamp in the East.

Praise be to God! all who have accepted his teachings are lovers of peace, peacemakers ready to sacrifice their lives and expend their possessions for it. Now let this standard be upraised in the West and many will respond to the call.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 27)

Therefore you must assist the poor as much as possible, even by sacrifice of yourself. No deed of man is greater before God than helping the poor. Spiritual conditions are not dependent upon the possession of worldly treasures or the absence of them.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 36)

Consider how the greatest men in the world—whether among prophets or philosophers—all have forfeited their own comfort, have sacrificed their own pleasure for the well-being of humanity. They have sacrificed their own lives for the body politic. They have sacrificed their own wealth for that of the general welfare. They have forfeited their own honor for the honor of mankind. Therefore it becomes evident that this is the highest attainment for the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 42-43)

By what means can man acquire these things? How shall he obtain these merciful gifts and powers? First, through the knowledge of God. Second, through the love of God. Third, through faith. Fourth, through philanthropic deeds. Fifth, through self-sacrifice. Sixth, through severance from this world. Seventh, through sanctity and holiness. Unless he acquires these forces and attains to these requirements he will surely be deprived of the life that is eternal. But if he possesses the knowledge of God, becomes ignited through the fire of the love of God, witnesses the great and mighty signs of the Kingdom, becomes the cause of love among mankind, and lives in the utmost state of sanctity and holiness, he shall surely attain to second birth, be baptized by the Holy Spirit and enjoy everlasting existence.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 64)

Observe how rarely human souls sacrifice their pleasure or comfort for others; how improbable that a man would offer his eye or suffer himself to be dismembered for the benefit of another. Yet all the divine Manifestations suffered, offered their lives and blood, sacrificed their existence, comfort and all they possessed for the sake of mankind.

Therefore consider how much they love. Were it not for their love for humanity, spiritual love would be mere nomenclature. Were it not for their illumination, human souls would not be radiant. How effective is their love! This is a sign of the love of God; a ray of the Sun of Reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 90)

Wherefore, look not on the degree of your capacity, ask not if you are worthy of the task: rest ye your hopes on the help and loving-kindness, the favours and bestowals of Bahá’u’lláh—may my soul be offered up for His friends! Urge on the steed of high endeavour over the field of sacrifice, and carry away from this wide arena the prize of divine grace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 26)

O thou who art serving the world of humanity! Thy letter was received and from its contents we felt exceedingly glad. It was a decisive proof and a brilliant evidence. It is appropriate and befitting that in this illumined age—the age of the progress of the world of humanity—we should be self-sacrificing and should serve the human race. Every universal cause is divine and every particular one is temporal. The principles of the divine Manifestations of God were, therefore, all-universal and all-inclusive.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 73)

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth. The martyr’s field is the place of detachment from self, that the anthems of eternity may be upraised. Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendours; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things. This is boundless grace; this is the highest sovereignty; this is the life that dieth not. All else save this is at the last but manifest perdition and great loss.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 81-82)

With reference to what is meant by an individual becoming entirely forgetful of self: the intent is that he should rise up and sacrifice himself in the true sense, that is, he should obliterate the promptings of the human condition, and rid himself of such

characteristics as are worthy of blame and constitute the gloomy darkness of this life on earth—not that he should allow his physical health to deteriorate and his body to become infirm.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 189)

O servant of Bahá! Be self-sacrificing in the path of God, and wing thy flight unto the heavens of the love of the Abhá Beauty, for any movement animated by love moveth from the periphery to the centre, from space to the Day-Star of the universe. Perchance thou deemest this to be difficult, but I tell thee that such cannot be the case, for when the motivating and guiding power is the divine force of magnetism it is possible, by its aid, to traverse time and space easily and swiftly. Glory be upon the people of Bahá.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 207)

Regarding the statement in *The Hidden Words*, that man must renounce his own self, the meaning is that he must renounce his inordinate desires, his selfish purposes and the promptings of his human self, and seek out the holy breathings of the spirit, and follow the yearnings of his higher self, and immerse himself in the sea of sacrifice, with his heart fixed upon the beauty of the All-Glorious.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 216)

It behoveth you to ponder on all those well-beloved ones who hastened to the holy field of sacrifice, those precious souls who offered up their lives. Bear ye in mind what streams of sacred blood were poured away, how many a righteous heart was commingled with its gore, how many a breast was the target of tyranny’s spear, how many a chaste body was ripped to shreds. How then could it be right for us even to think of saving ourselves! To curry favour with stranger or kin, and make a show of compromise! Should we not, rather, take the pathway of the righteous, and follow in the footsteps of those great ones gone before?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 230)

O ye lovers of God! Do not dwell on what is coming to pass in this holy place, and be ye in no wise alarmed. Whatsoever may happen is for the best, because affliction is but the essence of bounty, and sorrow and toil are mercy unalloyed, and anguish is peace of mind, and to make a sacrifice is to receive a gift, and whatsoever may come to pass

hath issued from God's grace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 256-257)

Soon will our handful of days, our vanishing life, be gone, and we shall pass, empty-handed, into the hollow that is dug for those who speak no more; wherefore must we bind our hearts to the manifest Beauty, and cling to the lifeline that faileth never. We must gird ourselves for service, kindle love's flame, and burn away in its heat. We must loose our tongues till we set the wide world's heart afire, and with bright rays of guidance blot out the armies of the night, and then, for His sake, on the field of sacrifice, fling down our lives.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 279)

O Thou divine Providence, pitiful are we, grant us Thy succour; homeless wanderers, give us Thy shelter; scattered, do Thou unite us; astray, gather us to Thy fold; bereft, do Thou bestow upon us a share and portion; athirst, lead us to the well-spring of Life; frail, strengthen us that we may arise to help Thy Cause and offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in the pathway of guidance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 329)

Therefore must the friends of God engender that tenderness which cometh from Heaven, and bestow love in the spirit upon all humankind. With every soul must they deal according to the Divine counsellings and admonitions; to all must they show forth kindness and good faith; to all must they wish well. They must sacrifice themselves for their friends, and wish good fortune to their foes. They must comfort the ill-natured, and treat their oppressors with loving-kindness. They must be as refreshing water to the thirsty, and to the sick, a swift remedy, a healing balm to those in pain and a solace to every burdened heart. They must be a guiding light to those who have gone astray, a sure leader for the lost. They must be seeing eyes to the blind, hearing ears to the deaf, and to the dead eternal life, and to the despondent joy forever.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 333)

Our body is like the cage, and the spirit is like the bird. We see that without the cage this bird flies in the world of sleep; therefore, if the cage becomes broken, the bird will continue and exist. Its feelings will be even more powerful, its perceptions greater, and

its happiness increased. In truth, from hell it reaches a paradise of delights because for the thankful birds there is no paradise greater than freedom from the cage. That is why with utmost joy and happiness the martyrs hasten to the plain of sacrifice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 228)

Entrance into the Kingdom is through the love of God, through detachment, through holiness and chastity, through truthfulness, purity, steadfastness, faithfulness and the sacrifice of life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 242)

To be a real Christian is to be a servant in His Cause and Kingdom, to go forth under His banner of peace and love toward all mankind, to be self-sacrificing and obedient, to become quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit, to be mirrors reflecting the radiance of the divinity of Christ, to be fruitful trees in the garden of His planting, to refresh the world by the water of life of His teachings—in all things to be like Him and filled with the spirit of His love.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 6)

Therefore, I desire that your hearts may be directed to the Kingdom of God, that your intentions may be pure and sincere, your purposes turned toward altruistic accomplishment unmindful of your own welfare; nay, rather, may all your intentions center in the welfare of humanity, and may you seek to sacrifice yourselves in the pathway of devotion to mankind. Even as Jesus Christ forfeited His life, may you, likewise, offer yourselves in the threshold of sacrifice for the betterment of the world; and just as Bahá’u’lláh suffered severe ordeals and calamities nearly fifty years for you, may you be willing to undergo difficulties and withstand catastrophes for humanity in general. May you bear these trials and tests most willingly and joyously, for every night is followed by a day, and every day has a night. Every spring has an autumn, and every autumn has its spring. The coming of a Manifestation of God is the season of spiritual spring.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 54)

Consider how the Báb endured difficulties and tribulations; how He gave His life in the Cause of God; how He was attracted to the love of the Blessed Beauty, Bahá’u’lláh;

and how He announced the glad tidings of His manifestation. We must follow His heavenly example; we must be self-sacrificing and aglow with the fire of the love of God. We must partake of the bounty and grace of the Lord, for the Báb has admonished us to arise in service to the Cause of God, to be absolutely severed from all else save God during the day of the Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, to be completely attracted by the love of Bahá'u'lláh, to love all humanity for His sake, to be lenient and merciful to all for Him and to upbuild the oneness of the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 139)

Therefore, we also must strive in this pathway of love and service, sacrificing life and possessions, passing our days in devotion, consecrating our efforts wholly to the Cause of God so that, God willing, the ensign of universal religion may be uplifted in the world of mankind and the oneness of the world of humanity be established.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 146)

Those blessed souls were confirmed with divine nearness through the love of God. Divine nearness is dependent upon attainment to the knowledge of God, upon severance from all else save God. It is contingent upon self-sacrifice and to be found only through forfeiting wealth and worldly possessions. It is made possible through the baptism of water and fire revealed in the Gospels. Water symbolizes the water of life, which is knowledge, and fire is the fire of the love of God; therefore, man must be baptized with the water of life, the Holy Spirit and the fire of the love of the Kingdom. Until he attains these three degrees, nearness to God is not possible. This is the process by which the Bahá'ís of Persia have attained it. They gave their lives for this station, sacrificed honor, comfort and possessions, hastened with the utmost joy to the place of martyrdom; their blood was spilled, their bodies were tortured and destroyed, their homes pillaged, their children carried into captivity. They endured all these conditions joyfully and willingly. Through such sacrifice nearness to God is made possible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 147)

Bahá'u'lláh proclaims in the *Hidden Words* that God inspires His servants and is revealed through them. He says, “Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.” Therefore, we learn that nearness to God is possible through devotion to Him, through entrance into the Kingdom and service to humanity; it is attained by unity with mankind and

through loving-kindness to all; it is dependent upon investigation of truth, acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, service in the cause of universal peace and personal sanctification. In a word, nearness to God necessitates sacrifice of self, severance and the giving up of all to Him.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahà, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 148)

Now must we, likewise, bind ourselves together in the utmost unity, be kind and loving to each other, sacrificing all our possessions, our honor, yea, even our lives for each other. Then will it be proved that we have acted according to the teachings of God, that we have been real believers in the oneness of God and unity of mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahà, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 156)

Sometimes the difficulties are arduous, but out of love for the friends of God and with desire to sacrifice myself in the pathway of God, I bear them in gladness. The purpose is the result which is accomplished—love and unity among mankind. For the world is dark with discord and selfishness, hearts are negligent, souls are bereft of God and His heavenly bestowals.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahà, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 184)

It is my wish that they may be assisted to become servants of the heavenly Kingdom, captives in the service of the will of God. This captivity is freedom; this sacrifice is glorification; this labor is reward; this need is bestowal. For service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahà, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 186)

The souls who followed Bahá’u’lláh from every nation have become as one family living in agreement and accord, willing to sacrifice life for each other. The Muslim will give his life for the Christian, the Christian for the Jew and all of them for the Zoroastrian. They live together in love, fellowship and unity. They have attained to the condition of rebirth in the Spirit of God. They have become revived and regenerated through the breaths of the Holy Spirit.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahà, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 202)

You must give the message through action and deed, not alone by word. Word must be conjoined with deed. You must love your friend better than yourself; yes, be willing to sacrifice yourself. The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh has not yet appeared in this country. I desire that you be ready to sacrifice everything for each other, even life itself; then I will know that the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh has been established. I will pray for you that you may become the cause of upraising the lights of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 218)

In brief, two kings arose against Bahá'u'lláh: the Sháh of Persia and the Sultán of Turkey. They imprisoned Him in the fortress of ‘Akká in order to extinguish His light and exterminate His Cause. But Bahá'u'lláh while in prison wrote severe letters of arraignment to them. He declared that imprisonment was no obstacle to Him. He said, “This imprisonment will prove to be the means of the promotion of My Cause. This imprisonment shall be the incentive for the spreading of My teachings. No harm shall come to Me because I have sacrificed My life, I have sacrificed My blood, I have sacrificed My possessions, I have sacrificed all and for Me this imprisonment is no loss.” And just as He declared, so it came to pass. In prison He hoisted His banner, and His Cause spread throughout the world. It has reached America. Now the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is extending to all nations of the earth. You go to Asia, and wherever you travel you will find Bahá'ís. You go to Africa, Europe; there you will find the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. In America it is just beginning to grow and spread.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 224)

There is a cordial thanksgiving, too, which expresses itself in the deeds and actions of man when his heart is filled with gratitude. For example, God has conferred upon man the gift of guidance, and in thankfulness for this great gift certain deeds must emanate from him. To express his gratitude for the favors of God man must show forth praiseworthy actions. In response to these bestowals he must render good deeds, be self-sacrificing, loving the servants of God, forfeiting even life for them, showing kindness to all the creatures. He must be severed from the world, attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá, the face radiant, the tongue eloquent, the ear attentive, striving day and night to attain the good pleasure of God. Whatsoever he wishes to do must be in harmony with the good pleasure of God. He must observe and see what is the will of God and act accordingly. There can be no doubt that such commendable deeds are thankfulness for the favors of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 236)

Consider what Christ accomplished. He caused souls to attain a station where with complete willingness and joy they laid down their lives. What a power! Thousands of human souls, in the utmost joy because of their spiritual susceptibilities, were so attracted to God that they were dispossessed of volition, deprived of will in His path. If they had been told simply that sacrifice in the path of God was good and praiseworthy, this would never have happened. They would not have acted. Christ attracted them, wrested the reins of control from them, and they went forth in ecstasy to sacrifice themselves.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 251)

We must use our utmost endeavors in order that the Holy Spirit may influence minds and hearts toward peace, the bounties of God surround, the divine effulgences become successive, human souls advance, minds expand in wider vision, souls become more holy and the world of humanity be rid of its great menace. For the betterment of the world Bahá’u’lláh endured all the hardships, ordeals and vicissitudes of life, sacrificing His very being and comfort, forfeiting His estates, possessions and honor—all that pertains to human existence—not for one year, nay, rather, for nearly fifty years. During this long period He was subjected to persecution and abuse, was cast into prison, was banished from His native land, underwent severities and humiliation and was exiled four times. He was first exiled from Persia to Baghdád, thence to Constantinople, thence to Rumelia and finally to the great prison-fortress of ‘Akká in Syria, where He passed the remainder of His life. Every day a new oppression and abuse was heaped upon Him until He winged His flight from the dungeon to the supreme world and returned to His Lord. He endured these ordeals and difficulties in order that this earthly human world might become heavenly, that the illumination of the divine Kingdom should become a reality in human hearts, that the individual members of mankind might progress, the power of the Holy Spirit increase its efficacy and penetration and the happiness of the world of humanity be assured.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 322)

Therefore, all individuals present here must be in the attitude of perfect love and fellowship, manifesting the utmost humility and self-sacrifice, turning our thoughts toward the Kingdom of God so that our meeting may be an expression of the glorified hosts of the Supreme Concourse.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 334)

In order to understand the reality of sacrifice let us consider the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is true that He sacrificed Himself for our sake. What is the meaning of this? When Christ appeared, He knew that He must proclaim Himself in opposition to all the nations and peoples of the earth. He knew that mankind would arise against Him and inflict upon Him all manner of tribulations. There is no doubt that one who put forth such a claim as Christ announced would arouse the hostility of the world and be subjected to personal abuse. He realized that His blood would be shed and His body rent by violence. Notwithstanding His knowledge of what would befall Him, He arose to proclaim His message, suffered all tribulation and hardships from the people and finally offered His life as a sacrifice in order to illumine humanity—gave His blood in order to guide the world of mankind. He accepted every calamity and suffering in order to guide men to the truth. Had He desired to save His own life, and were He without wish to offer Himself in sacrifice, He would not have been able to guide a single soul. There was no doubt that His blessed blood would be shed and His body broken. Nevertheless, that Holy Soul accepted calamity and death in His love for mankind. This is one of the meanings of sacrifice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 450)

The body of Christ was but human. There could be no question that the physical body was born from the womb of Mary. But the reality of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the perfections of Christ all came from heaven. Consequently, by saying He was the bread which came from heaven He meant that the perfections which He showed forth were divine perfections, that the blessings within Him were heavenly gifts and bestowals, that His light was the light of Reality. He said, “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” That is to say, whosoever assimilates these divine perfections which are within me will never die; whosoever has a share and partakes of these heavenly bounties I embody will find eternal life; he who takes unto himself these divine lights shall find everlasting life. How manifest the meaning is! How evident! For the soul which acquires divine perfections and seeks heavenly illumination from the teachings of Christ will undoubtedly live eternally. This is also one of the mysteries of sacrifice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 450-451)

As to the third meaning of sacrifice, it is this: If you plant a seed in the ground, a tree

will become manifest from that seed. The seed sacrifices itself to the tree that will come from it. The seed is outwardly lost, destroyed; but the same seed which is sacrificed will be absorbed and embodied in the tree, its blossoms, fruit and branches. If the identity of that seed had not been sacrificed to the tree which became manifest from it, no branches, blossoms or fruits would have been forthcoming. Christ outwardly disappeared. His personal identity became hidden from the eyes, even as the identity of the seed disappeared; but the bounties, divine qualities and perfections of Christ became manifest in the Christian community which Christ founded through sacrificing Himself. When you look at the tree, you will realize that the perfections, blessings, properties and beauty of the seed have become manifest in the branches, twigs, blossoms and fruit; consequently, the seed has sacrificed itself to the tree. Had it not done so, the tree would not have come into existence. Christ, like unto the seed, sacrificed Himself for the tree of Christianity. Therefore, His perfections, bounties, favors, lights and graces became manifest in the Christian community, for the coming of which He sacrificed Himself.

As to the fourth significance of sacrifice: It is the principle that a reality sacrifices its own characteristics. Man must sever himself from the influences of the world of matter, from the world of nature and its laws; for the material world is the world of corruption and death. It is the world of evil and darkness, of animalism and ferocity, bloodthirstiness, ambition and avarice, of self-worship, egotism and passion; it is the world of nature. Man must strip himself of all these imperfections, must sacrifice these tendencies which are peculiar to the outer and material world of existence.

On the other hand, man must acquire heavenly qualities and attain divine attributes. He must become the image and likeness of God. He must seek the bounty of the eternal, become the manifestor of the love of God, the light of guidance, the tree of life and the depository of the bounties of God. That is to say, man must sacrifice the qualities and attributes of the world of nature for the qualities and attributes of the world of God. For instance, consider the substance we call iron. Observe its qualities; it is solid, black, cold. These are the characteristics of iron. When the same iron absorbs heat from the fire, it sacrifices its attribute of solidity for the attribute of fluidity. It sacrifices its attribute of darkness for the attribute of light, which is a quality of the fire. It sacrifices its attribute of coldness to the quality of heat which the fire possesses so that in the iron there remains no solidity, darkness or cold. It becomes illumined and transformed, having sacrificed its qualities to the qualities and attributes of the fire.

Likewise, man, when separated and severed from the attributes of the world of nature, sacrifices the qualities and exigencies of that mortal realm and manifests the

perfections of the Kingdom, just as the qualities of the iron disappeared and the qualities of the fire appeared in their place.

Every man trained through the teachings of God and illumined by the light of His guidance, who becomes a believer in God and His signs and is enkindled with the fire of the love of God, sacrifices the imperfections of nature for the sake of divine perfections. Consequently, every perfect person, every illumined, heavenly individual stands in the station of sacrifice. It is my hope that through the assistance and providence of God and through the bounties of the Kingdom of Abhá you may be entirely severed from the imperfections of the world of nature, purified from selfish, human desires, receiving life from the Kingdom of Abhá and attaining heavenly graces.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 451-452)

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

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Will and Testament*, pp. 10-11)

4. Extracts from the Writings of Shoghi Effendi

No obstacle is insuperable, no sacrifice too great for attainment of supremely important objective.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 45)

Hope is welling up in my anxious, overburdened heart that the North American Bahá’í Community may yet emerge triumphant over the prevailing crisis, demonstrate its capacity to preserve its hard-won prizes and redeem its pledges through a further display of its qualities of unconquerable faith, unbreakable solidarity, dauntless valor

and heroic self-sacrifice, and vindicate its right to primacy in the world community of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 46)

They must strive, ceaselessly strive, ready for any emergency, steeled to meet any degree of opposition, unsatisfied with any measure of progress as yet achieved, prepared to make sacrifices far exceeding any they have already willingly made, and confident that such striving, such readiness, such resolution, such high-mindedness, such sacrifice will earn them the palm of a victory still more soul-satisfying and resounding in its magnificence than any as yet won since the inception of their mission.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 62)

Its members, without exception, are called upon to steel themselves without delay to face an unexpected emergency, seize a God-given opportunity, meet a supreme challenge, and show forth a tenacity of purpose, a solidarity in sacrifice, an austerity in everyday life, worthy the Martyr-Prophet of their Faith as well as their heroic spiritual forebears, the hundredth anniversary of whose agonizing tribulations, including captivity, sieges, betrayals, spoliation and martyrdom, is being commemorated during this same period.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 66)

However severe the challenge, however multiple the tasks, however short the time, however somber the world outlook, however limited the material resources of a hard-pressed adolescent community, the untapped sources of celestial strength from which it can draw are measureless, in their potencies, and will unhesitatingly pour forth their energizing influences if the necessary daily effort be made and the required sacrifices be willingly accepted.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 85)

No sacrifice can be deemed too great, no expenditure of material resources, no degree of renunciation of worldly benefits, comfort and pleasures, can be regarded as excessive when we recall the precious blood that flowed, the many lives that were snuffed out, the wealth of material possessions that was plundered during these most tumultuous and cataclysmic years of the Heroic Age of our Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 93)

Above all, the accumulating deficit which has lately again thrown its somber shadow on an otherwise resplendent record of service, must, through a renewed display of self-abnegation, which, though not commensurate with the sacrifice of so many souls immolated on the altar of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, may at least faintly reflect its poignant heroism, be obliterated, once and for all, from the record of a splendid stewardship to His Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 103)

The unseen legions, standing rank upon rank, and eager to pour forth from the Kingdom on high the full measure of their celestial strength on the individual participants of this incomparably glorious Crusade, are powerless unless and until each potential crusader decides for himself, and perseveres in his determination, to rush into the arena of service ready to sacrifice his all for the Cause he is called upon to champion.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 131)

Let them resolve, instantly and unhesitatingly, to place, each according to his circumstances, his share on the altar of Bahá'í sacrifice, lest, on a sudden, unforeseen calamities rob them of a considerable portion of the earthly things they have amassed.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 131)

With one or two exceptions, greatly to be deplored, this valiant community has, ever since the inception of this Spiritual Crusade, and in every sphere of Bahá'í activities in which its participators have both individually and collectively been assiduously engaged, set an example of whole-hearted dedication, dogged perseverance, unstinting self-sacrifice and undeviating loyalty worthy of emulation by its sister, as well as its daughter, communities over the entire face of the globe.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 143)

The community of the organized promoters of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the American continent—the spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of an heroic Age, who by

their death proclaimed the birth of that Faith—must, in turn, usher in, not by their death but through living sacrifice, that promised World Order, the shell ordained to enshrine that priceless jewel, the world civilization, of which the Faith itself is the sole begetter.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 7)

What other community has proved itself to be fired by so noble a vision, or willing to rise to such heights of self-sacrifice, or ready to achieve so great a measure of solidarity, as to be able to raise, in so short a time and in the course of such crucial years, an edifice that can well deserve to be regarded as the greatest contribution ever made by the West to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh?

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 8)

As to racial prejudice, the corrosion of which, for well-nigh a century, has bitten into the fiber, and attacked the whole social structure of American society, it should be regarded as constituting the most vital and challenging issue confronting the Bahá'í community at the present stage of its evolution. The ceaseless exertions which this issue of paramount importance calls for, the sacrifices it must impose, the care and vigilance it demands, the moral courage and fortitude it requires, the tact and sympathy it necessitates, invest this problem, which the American believers are still far from having satisfactorily resolved, with an urgency and importance that cannot be overestimated.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 33)

I appeal to you, therefore, friends and fellow-disciples of Bahá'u'lláh, for a more abundant measure of self-sacrifice, for a higher standard of concerted effort, for a still more compelling evidence of the reality of the faith that glows within you.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 67)
