

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas

Bahá'u'lláh

النسخة العربية الأصلية



The Kitáb-i-Aqdas

The Most Holy Book

Bahá'u'lláh



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In the name of Him Who is the Supreme Ruler over all that hath been and all that is to be.

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behooveth everyone who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.

They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples. He that turneth away from them is accounted among the abject and foolish. We, verily, have commanded you to refuse the dictates of your evil passions and corrupt desires, and not to transgress the bounds which the Pen of the Most High hath fixed, for these are the breath of life unto all created things. The seas of Divine wisdom and Divine utterance have risen under the breath of the breeze of the All-Merciful. Hasten to drink your fill, O men of understanding! They that have violated the Covenant of God by breaking His commandments, and have turned back on their heels, these have erred grievously in the sight of God, the All-Possessing, the Most High.

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation. Were any man to



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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.

Say: From My laws, the sweet-smelling savor of My garment can be smelled,¹ and by their aid, the standards of Victory will be planted upon the highest peaks. The Tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: "Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty." Happy is the lover that hath inhaled the divine fragrance of his Best-Beloved from these words, laden with the perfume of a grace which no tongue can describe. By My life! He who hath drunk the choice wine of fairness from the hands of My bountiful favor will circle around My commandments that shine above the Dayspring of My creation.

Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power.² To this beareth witness that which the Pen of Revelation hath revealed. Meditate upon this, O men of insight!

1. This is an allusion to the story of Joseph in the Qur'án and the Old Testament, in which Joseph's garment, brought by his brothers to Jacob, their father, enabled Jacob to identify his beloved long-lost son. The metaphor of the fragrant "*garment*" is frequently used in the Bahá'í Writings to refer to the recognition of the Manifestation of God and His Revelation. Bahá'u'lláh, in one of His Tablets, describes Himself as the "*Divine Joseph*" Who has been "*bartered away*" by the heedless "*for the most paltry of prices.*" The Báb, in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', identifies Bahá'u'lláh as the "*true Joseph*" and forecasts the ordeals that He would endure at the hands of His treacherous brother. Likewise, Shoghi Effendi draws a parallel between the intense jealousy which the preeminence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had aroused in His half-brother, Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí, and the deadly envy "which the superior excellence of Joseph had kindled in the hearts of his brothers."

2. The consumption of wine and other intoxicants is prohibited in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Reference to the use of "wine" in an allegorical sense — such as being the cause of spiritual ecstasy — is found, not only in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, but in the Bible, in the Qur'án, and in ancient Hindu traditions.

For example, in the Qur'án the righteous are promised that they will be given to drink of the "*choice sealed wine.*" In His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh identifies the "*choice Wine*" with His Revelation whose "*musk-laden fragrance*" has been wafted "*upon all created things.*" He states that He has "*unsealed*" this "*Wine,*" thereby disclosing spiritual truths that were hitherto unknown, and enabling those who quaff thereof to "*discern the splendors of the light of divine unity*" and to "*grasp the essential purpose underlying the Scriptures of God.*"

In one of His meditations, Bahá'u'lláh entreats God to supply the believers with "*the choice Wine of Thy mercy, that it may cause them to be forgetful of anyone except Thee, and to arise to serve Thy Cause, and to be steadfast in their love for Thee.*"

We have enjoined obligatory prayer upon you,³ with nine rak'ahs,⁴ to be offered at noon and in the morning and the evening⁵ unto God, the Revealer of Verses. We have relieved you of a greater number,⁶ as a command in the Book of God. He, verily, is the Ordainer, the Omnipotent, the Unrestrained. When ye desire to perform this prayer, turn ye towards the Court of My Most Holy Presence, this Hallowed Spot that God hath made the Center round which circle the Concourse on High, and which He hath decreed to be the Point of Adoration for the denizens of the Cities of Eternity,⁷ and the Source of Command unto all that are in heaven and on earth; and when the Sun of Truth and Utterance shall set, turn your faces towards the Spot that We have ordained for you.⁸ He, verily, is Almighty and Omniscient.

Everything that is hath come to be through His irresistible decree. Whenever My laws appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance, they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder. He doeth what He

3. In Arabic, there are several words for prayer. The word “ṣalāt,” which appears here in the original, refers to a particular category of prayers, the recitation of which at specific times of the day is enjoined on the believers. To differentiate this category of prayers from other kinds, the word has been translated as “obligatory prayer.”

Bahá'u'lláh states that “obligatory prayer and fasting occupy an exalted station in the sight of God” (Q&A [93]). ‘Abdu'l-Bahá affirms that such prayers are “conducive to humility and submissiveness, to setting one’s face towards God and expressing devotion to Him,” and that through these prayers “man holdeth communion with God, seeketh to draw near unto Him, converseth with the true Beloved of his heart, and attaineth spiritual stations.”

The Obligatory Prayer referred to in this verse has been superseded by the three Obligatory Prayers later revealed by Bahá'u'lláh (Q&A [63]). The texts of the three prayers currently in use, together with instructions regarding their recital, are to be found in this volume in Some Texts Supplementary to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. A number of the items in Questions and Answers deal with aspects of the three new Obligatory Prayers. Bahá'u'lláh clarifies that the individual is permitted to choose any one of the three Obligatory Prayers (Q&A [65]). Other provisions are elucidated in Questions and Answers, numbers [66], [67], [81], and [82]. The details of the law concerning obligatory prayer are summarized in section IV.A.1.–17. of the Synopsis and Codification.

4. A rak'ah is the recitation of specifically revealed verses accompanied by a prescribed set of genuflections and other movements. The Obligatory Prayer originally enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh upon His followers consisted of nine rak'ahs. The precise nature of this prayer and the specific instructions for its recitation are unknown, as the prayer has been lost.

In a Tablet commenting on the presently binding Obligatory Prayers, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá indicates that “in every word and movement of the Obligatory Prayer there are allusions, mysteries and a wisdom that man is unable to comprehend, and letters and scrolls cannot contain.” Shoghi Effendi explains that the few simple directions given by Bahá'u'lláh for the recital of certain prayers not only have a spiritual significance but that they also help the individual “to fully concentrate when praying and meditating.”

5. Regarding the definition of the words “morning,” “noon” and “evening,” at which times the currently binding medium Obligatory Prayer is to be recited, Bahá'u'lláh has stated that these coincide with “sunrise, noon and sunset” (Q&A [83]). He specifies that the “allowable times for Obligatory Prayers are from morning till noon, from noon till sunset, and from sunset till two hours thereafter.” Further, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá has stated that the morning Obligatory Prayer may be said as early as dawn. The definition of “noon” as the period “from noon till sunset” applies to the recitation of the short Obligatory Prayer as well as the medium one.

pleaseth. He chooseth, and none may question His choice. Whatsoever He, the Well-Beloved, ordaineth, the same is, verily, beloved. To this He Who is the Lord of all creation beareth Me, witness. 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.

We have set forth the details of obligatory prayer in another Tablet.⁹ Blessed is he who observeth that whereunto he hath been bidden by Him Who ruleth over all mankind. In the Prayer for the Dead¹⁰ six specific passages have been sent down by God, the Revealer of Verses.¹¹ Let one who is able to read recite that which hath been revealed to precede these passages; and as for him

6. The requirements for obligatory prayer called for in the Bábí and Islámic Dispensations were more demanding than those for the performance of the Obligatory Prayer consisting of nine rak'ahs that was prescribed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. In the Bayán, the Báb prescribed an Obligatory Prayer consisting of nineteen rak'ahs which was to be performed once in a twenty-four-hour period — from noon of one day to noon of the next. The Muslim prayer is recited five times a day, namely, in the early morning, at midday, in the afternoon and evening, and at night. While the number of rak'ahs varies according to the time of recitation, a total of seventeen rak'ahs are offered in the course of a day.

7. The “*Point of Adoration*,” that is, the point to which the worshiper should turn when offering obligatory prayer, is called the Qiblih. The concept of Qiblih has existed in previous religions. Jerusalem in the past had been fixed for this purpose. Muḥammad changed the Qiblih to Mecca. The Báb's instructions in the Arabic Bayán were:

The Qiblih is indeed He Whom God will make manifest; whenever He moveth, it moveth, until He shall come to rest. This passage is quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and confirmed by Him in the above-noted verse. He has also indicated that facing in the direction of the Qiblih is a “*fixed requirement for the recitation of obligatory prayer*” (Q&A [14] and [67]). However, for other prayers and devotions the individual may face in any direction.

8. Bahá'u'lláh ordains His resting-place as the Qiblih after His passing. The Most Holy Tomb is at Bahjí, 'Akká. 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes that Spot as the “*luminous Shrine*,” “*the place around which circumambulate the Concourse on High*.” In a letter written on his behalf, Shoghi Effendi uses the analogy of the plant turning in the direction of the sun to explain the spiritual significance of turning towards the Qiblih: ... just as the plant stretches out to the sunlight — from which it receives life and growth — so we turn our hearts to the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh, when we pray; ... we turn our faces ... to where His dust lies on this earth as a symbol of the inner act.

9. The original Obligatory Prayer had “*for reasons of wisdom*” been revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in a separate Tablet (Q&A [63]). It was not released to the believers in His lifetime, having been superseded by the three Obligatory Prayers now in use. Shortly after the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the text of this prayer, along with a number of other Tablets, was stolen by Muḥammad-'Alí, the Arch-breaker of His Covenant.

10.

The Prayer for the Dead (see Some Texts Supplementary to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas) is the only Bahá'í obligatory prayer which is to be recited in congregation; it is to be recited by one believer while all present stand in

who is unable, God hath relieved him of this requirement. He, of a truth, is the Mighty, the Pardoner.

Hair doth not invalidate your prayer, nor aught from which the spirit hath departed, such as bones and the like. Ye are free to wear the fur of the sable as ye would that of the beaver, the squirrel, and other animals;¹² the prohibition of its use hath stemmed, not from the Qur'án, but from the misconceptions of the divines. He, verily, is the All-Glorious, the All-Knowing.

We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity;¹³ this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. He hath exempted from this those who are weak from illness or age,¹⁴ as a bounty from His Presence, and He is the Forgiving, the Generous. God hath granted you leave to prostrate yourselves on any surface that is clean,¹⁵ for We have removed in this regard the limitation that had been laid down in the Book; God, indeed, hath knowledge of that whereof ye know naught. Let him that findeth no water for ablution repeat five times the words "In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure," and then proceed to his devotions.¹⁶ Such is the command of the Lord of all worlds. In regions where the days and

silence. Bahá'u'lláh has clarified that the Prayer for the Dead is required only when the deceased is an adult (Q&A [70]), that the recital should precede the interment of the deceased, and that there is no requirement to face the Qiblih when saying this prayer (Q&A [85]). Further details concerning the Prayer for the Dead are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.A. 13.–14.

11. The passages that form part of the Prayer for the Dead comprise the repetition of the greeting "Alláh-u-Abhá" (God is the All-Glorious) six times, each followed by nineteen repetitions of one of six specifically revealed verses. These verses are identical with those in the Prayer for the Dead revealed by the Báb in the Bayán. Bahá'u'lláh added a supplication to precede these passages.

12. In some earlier religious Dispensations, the wearing of the hair of certain animals or having certain other objects on one's person was held to invalidate one's prayer. Bahá'u'lláh here confirms the Báb's pronouncement in the Arabic Bayán that such things do not invalidate one's prayer.

13. Bahá'u'lláh defines the "age of maturity with respect to religious duties" as "*fifteen for both men and women*" (Q&A [20]). For details of the period of fasting.

14. The exemption of those who are weak due to illness or advanced age from offering the Obligatory Prayers and from fasting is explained in Questions and Answers. Bahá'u'lláh indicates that in "*time of ill health it is not permissible to observe these obligations*" (Q&A [93]). He defines old age, in this context, as being from seventy (Q&A [74]). In answer to a question, Shoghi Effendi has clarified that people who attain the age of seventy are exempt, whether or not they are weak. Exemption from fasting is also granted to the other specific categories of people listed in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.B.5.

15. The requirements of prayer in previous Dispensations have often included prostration. In the Arabic Bayán the Báb called upon the believers to lay their foreheads on surfaces of crystal when prostrating. Similarly, in Islám, certain restrictions are imposed with regard to the surface on which Muslims are permitted to prostrate. Bahá'u'lláh abrogates such restrictions and simply specifies "*any surface that is clean.*"

16. Ablutions are to be performed by the believer in preparation for the offering of obligatory prayer. They consist of washing the hands and face. If water is unavailable, the repetition five times of the specifically

nights grow long, let times of prayer be gauged by clocks and other instruments that mark the passage of the hours.¹⁷ He, verily, is the Expounder, the Wise.

We have absolved you from the requirement of performing the Prayer of the Signs.¹⁸ On the appearance of fearful natural events call ye to mind the might and majesty of your Lord, He Who heareth and seeth all, and say “Dominion is God’s, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of creation.”

It hath been ordained that obligatory prayer is to be performed by each of you individually. Save in the Prayer for the Dead, the practice of congregational prayer hath been annulled.¹⁹ He, of a truth, is the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

revealed verse is prescribed. Antecedents in earlier Dispensations for the provision of substitute procedures to be followed when no water is available are found in the Qur'án and in the Arabic Bayán.

17. This refers to territories situated in the extreme north or south, where the duration of days and nights varies markedly (Q&A [64] and [103]). This provision applies also to fasting.

18. The Prayer of the Signs is a special form of Muslim obligatory prayer that was ordained to be said in times of natural events, like earthquakes, eclipses, and other such phenomena, which may cause fear and are taken to be signs or acts of God. The requirement of performing this prayer has been annulled. In its place a Bahá'í may say, *“Dominion is God’s, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of creation,”* but this is not obligatory (Q&A [52]).

19. Congregational prayer, in the sense of formal obligatory prayer which is to be recited in accordance with a prescribed ritual as, for example, is the custom in Islám where Friday prayer in the mosque is led by an imám, has been annulled in the Bahá'í Dispensation. The Prayer for the Dead is the only congregational prayer prescribed by Bahá'í law. It is to be recited by one of those present while the remainder of the party stands in silence; the reader has no special status. The congregation is not required to face the Qiblih (Q&A [85]).

The three daily Obligatory Prayers are to be recited individually, not in congregation. There is no prescribed way for the recital of the many other Bahá'í prayers, and all are free to use such non-obligatory prayers in gatherings or individually as they please. In this regard, Shoghi Effendi states that ... although the friends are thus left to follow their own inclination, ... they should take the utmost care that any manner they practice should not acquire too rigid a character, and thus develop into an institution. This is a point which the friends should always bear in mind, lest they deviate from the clear path indicated in the Teachings.

God hath exempted women who are in their courses from obligatory prayer and fasting.²⁰ Let them, instead, after performance of their ablutions, give praise unto God, repeating ninety-five times between the noon of one day and the next “Glorified be God, the Lord of Splendor and Beauty.” Thus hath it been decreed in the Book, if ye be of them that comprehend.

When traveling, if ye should stop and rest in some safe spot, perform ye — men and women alike — a single prostration in place of each unsaid Obligatory Prayer,²¹ and while prostrating say “Glorified be God, the Lord of Might and Majesty, of Grace and Bounty.” Whoso is unable to do this, let him say only “Glorified be God”; this shall assuredly suffice him. He is, of a truth, the all-sufficing, the ever-abiding, the forgiving, compassionate God. Upon completing your prostrations, seat yourselves cross-legged²² men and women alike — and eighteen times repeat “Glorified be God, the Lord of the kingdoms of earth and heaven.” Thus doth the Lord make plain the ways of truth and guidance, ways that lead to one way, which is this Straight Path. Render thanks unto God for this most gracious favor; offer praise unto Him for this bounty that hath encompassed the heavens and the earth; extol Him for this mercy that hath pervaded all creation.

20. Exemption from obligatory prayer and fasting is granted to women who are menstruating; they should, instead, perform their ablutions and repeat 95 times a day between one noon and the next, the verse “*Glorified be God, the Lord of Splendor and Beauty.*” This provision has its antecedent in the Arabic Bayán, where a similar dispensation was granted. In some earlier religious Dispensations, women in their courses were considered ritually unclean and were forbidden to observe the duties of prayer and fasting. The concept of ritual uncleanness has been abolished by Bahá’u’lláh. The Universal House of Justice has clarified that the provisions in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas granting exemptions from certain duties and responsibilities are, as the word indicates, exemptions and not prohibitions. Any believer is, therefore, free to avail himself or herself of an applicable exemption if he or she so wishes. However, the House of Justice counsels that, in deciding whether to do so or not, the believer should use wisdom and realize that Bahá’u’lláh has granted these exemptions for good reason. The prescribed exemption from obligatory prayer, originally related to the Obligatory Prayer consisting of nine rak’ahs, is now applicable to the three Obligatory Prayers which superseded it.

21. Exemption from obligatory prayer is granted to those who find themselves in such a condition of insecurity that the saying of the Obligatory Prayers is not possible. The exemption applies whether one is traveling or at home, and it provides a means whereby Obligatory Prayers which have remained unsaid on account of these insecure circumstances may be compensated for.

Bahá’u’lláh has made it clear that obligatory prayer “*is not suspended during travel*” so long as one can find a “safe spot” in which to perform it (Q&A [58]).

Numbers [21], [58], [59], [60], and [61] in Questions and Answers amplify this provision.

22. The Arabic expression “haykalu’t-tawhíd,” translated here as “*cross-legged*,” means the “posture of unity.” It has traditionally signified a cross-legged position.

Say: God hath made My hidden love the key to the Treasure;²³ would that ye might perceive it! But for the key, the Treasure would to all eternity have remained concealed; would that ye might believe it! Say: This is the Source of Revelation, the Dawning-place of Splendor, Whose brightness hath illumined the horizons of the world. Would that ye might understand! This is, verily, that fixed Decree through which every irrevocable decree hath been established.

O Pen of the Most High!²⁴ Say: O people of the world! We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period,²⁵ and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a feast.²⁶ Thus hath the Daystar of Utterance shone forth above the horizon of the Book as decreed by Him Who is the Lord of the beginning and the end. Let the days in excess of the months be placed before the

23. There is a well-known Islámic tradition concerning God and His creation:

I was a Hidden Treasure. I wished to be made known, and thus I called creation into being in order that I might be known.

References and allusions to this tradition are found throughout the Bahá'í Writings. For example, in one of His prayers, Bahá'u'lláh reveals:

Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! I testify that Thou wast a hidden Treasure wrapped within Thine immemorial Being and an impenetrable Mystery enshrined in Thine own Essence. Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and the Lesser Worlds, and didst choose Man above all Thy creatures, and didst make Him a sign of both of these worlds, O Thou Who art our Lord, the Most Compassionate!

Thou didst raise Him up to occupy Thy throne before all the people of Thy creation. Thou didst enable Him to unravel Thy mysteries, and to shine with the lights of Thine inspiration and Thy Revelation, and to manifest Thy names and Thine attributes. Through Him Thou didst adorn the preamble of the book of Thy creation, O Thou Who art the Ruler of the universe Thou hast fashioned! (Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, XXXVIII)

Likewise, in the Hidden Words, He states:

O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the Spirit of life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His commentary on the above-cited tradition, wrote:

O wayfarer in the path of the Beloved! Know thou that the main purpose of this holy tradition is to make mention of the stages of God's concealment and manifestation within the Embodiments of Truth, They who are the Dawning-places of His All-Glorious Being. For example, before the flame of the undying fire is lit and manifest, it existeth by itself within itself in the hidden identity of the universal Manifestations, and this is the stage of the "Hidden Treasure." And when the blessed Tree is kindled by itself within itself, and that Divine fire burneth by its essence within its essence, this is the stage of "I wished to be made known." And when it shineth forth from the Horizon of the universe with infinite Divine Names and Attributes upon the contingent and placeless worlds, this constituteth the emergence of a new and wondrous creation which correspondeth to the stage of "Thus I called creation into being." And when the sanctified souls rend asunder the veils of all earthly attachments and worldly conditions, and hasten to the stage of gazing on the beauty of the Divine Presence and are honored by recognizing the Manifestation and are able to witness the splendor of God's Most Great Sign in their hearts, then will the purpose of creation,

month of fasting.²⁷ We have ordained that these, amid all nights and days, shall be the manifestations of the letter Há,²⁸ and thus they have not been bounded by the limits of the year and its months. It behooveth the people of Bahá, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation to hail and glorify their Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His Name; and when they end — these days of giving that precede the season of restraint²⁹ let them enter upon the Fast. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Lord of all mankind. The traveler, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the Fast;³⁰ they have been exempted by God as a token of His grace.³¹ He, verily, is the Almighty, the Most Generous.

These are the ordinances of God that have been set down in the Books and Tablets by His Most Exalted Pen. Hold ye fast unto His statutes and commandments, and be not of those who, following their idle fancies and vain imaginings, have clung to the standards fixed by their own

which is the knowledge of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, become manifest.

24. “Pen of the Most High,” “the Supreme Pen” and “the Most Exalted Pen” are references to Bahá’u’lláh, illustrating His function as Revealer of the Word of God.

25. Fasting and obligatory prayer constitute the two pillars that sustain the revealed Law of God. Bahá’u’lláh in one of His Tablets affirms that He has revealed the laws of obligatory prayer and fasting so that through them the believers may draw nigh unto God. Shoghi Effendi indicates that the fasting period, which involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset, is ... essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires. Fasting is enjoined on all the believers once they attain the age of 15 and until they reach the age of 70 years.

A summary of the detailed provisions concerning the law of fasting and of the exemptions granted to certain categories of people is contained in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.B.1.–6. The nineteen-day period of fasting coincides with the Bahá’í month of ‘Alá’, usually 2–20 March, immediately after the termination of the Intercalary Days, and is followed by the feast of Naw-Rúz.

26.

The Báb introduced a new calendar, known now as the Badí’ or Bahá’í calendar. According to this calendar, a day is the period from sunset to sunset. In the Bayán, the Báb ordained the month of ‘Alá’ to be the month of fasting, decreed that the day of Naw-Rúz should mark the termination of that period, and designated Naw-Rúz as the Day of God. Bahá’u’lláh confirms the Badí’ calendar wherein Naw-Rúz is designated as a feast. Naw-Rúz is the first day of the new year. It coincides with the spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere, which usually occurs on 21 March. Bahá’u’lláh explains that this feast day is to be celebrated on whatever day the sun passes into the constellation of Aries (i.e. the vernal equinox), even should this occur one minute before sunset (Q&A [35]). Hence Naw-Rúz could fall on 20, 21, or 22 March, depending on the time of the equinox. Bahá’u’lláh has left the details of many laws to be filled in by the Universal House of Justice. Among these are a number of matters affecting the Bahá’í calendar. The Guardian has stated that the implementation, worldwide, of the law concerning the timing of Naw-Rúz will require the choice of a particular spot on earth which will serve as the standard for the fixing of the time of the spring equinox. He also indicated that the choice of this spot has been left to the decision of the Universal House of Justice.

selves and cast behind their backs the standards laid down by God. Abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sundown,³² and beware lest desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the Book.

It hath been ordained that every believer in God, the Lord of Judgment, shall, each day, having washed his hands and then his face, seat himself and, turning unto God, repeat “Alláh-u-Abhá” ninety-five times.³³ Such was the decree of the Maker of the Heavens when, with majesty and power, He established Himself upon the thrones of His Names. Perform ye, likewise, ablutions for the Obligatory Prayer;³⁴ this is the command of God, the Incomparable, the Unrestrained.

27. The Badí’ calendar is based on the solar year of 365 days, 5 hours, and 50 odd minutes. The year consists of 19 months of 19 days each (i.e. 361 days), with the addition of four extra days (five in a leap year). The Báb did not specifically define the place for the intercalary days in the new calendar. The Kitáb-i-Aqdas resolves this question by assigning the “excess” days a fixed position in the calendar immediately preceding the month of ‘Alá’, the period of fasting. For further details, see the section on the Bahá’í calendar in *The Bahá’í World*, volume XVIII.

28. Known as the Ayyám-i-Há (the Days of Há), the Intercalary Days have the distinction of being associated with “the letter Há.” The abjad numerical value of this Arabic letter is five, which corresponds to the potential number of intercalary days. The letter “Há” has been given several spiritual meanings in the Holy Writings, among which is as a symbol of the Essence of God.

29.

Bahá’u’lláh enjoined upon His followers to devote these days to feasting, rejoicing and charity. In a letter written on Shoghi Effendi’s behalf, it is explained that “the intercalary days are specially set aside for hospitality, the giving of gifts, etc.”

30. The minimum duration of a journey which exempts the believer from fasting is defined by Bahá’u’lláh (Q&A [22] and [75]). The details of this provision are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.B.5.a.i.–v.

Shoghi Effendi has clarified that while travelers are exempt from fasting, they are free to fast if they so wish. He also indicated that the exemption applies during the whole period of one’s travel, not just the hours one is in a train or car, etc.

31. Exemption from fasting is granted to those who are ill or of advanced age, women in their courses, travelers and to women who are pregnant and those who are nursing. This exemption is also extended to people who are engaged in heavy labor, who, at the same time, are advised “to show respect to the law of God and for the exalted station of the Fast” by eating “with frugality and in private” (Q&A [76]). Shoghi Effendi has indicated that the types of work which would exempt people from the Fast will be defined by the Universal House of Justice.

32. This relates to the period of fasting. In one of His Tablets, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, after stating that fasting consists of abstinence from food and drink, further indicates that smoking is a form of “drink.” In Arabic the verb “drink” applies equally to smoking.

33.

“Alláh-u-Abhá” is an Arabic phrase meaning “God the All-Glorious.” It is a form of the Greatest Name of God. In Islám, there is a tradition that among the many names of God, one was the greatest; however, the

Ye have been forbidden to commit murder³⁵ or adultery;³⁶ or to engage in backbiting or calumny;³⁷ shun ye, then, what hath been prohibited in the holy Books and Tablets.

We have divided inheritance into seven categories:³⁸ to the children, We have allotted nine parts comprising five hundred and forty shares; to the wife, eight parts comprising four hundred and eighty shares; to the father, seven parts comprising four hundred and twenty shares; to the mother, six parts comprising three hundred and sixty shares; to the brothers, five parts or three hundred shares; to the sisters, four parts³⁹ or two hundred and forty shares; and to the teachers,⁴⁰ three parts or one hundred and eighty shares. Such was the ordinance of My Forerunner, He Who extolleth My Name in the night season and at the break of day. When We

identity of this Greatest Name was hidden. Bahá'u'lláh has confirmed that the Greatest Name is "Bahá." The various derivatives of the word "Bahá" are also regarded as the Greatest Name. Shoghi Effendi's secretary writing on his behalf explains that; The Greatest Name is the Name of Bahá'u'lláh. "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá" is an invocation meaning: "O Thou Glory of Glories!" "Alláh-u-Abhá" is a greeting which means: "God the All-Glorious." Both refer to Bahá'u'lláh. By Greatest Name is meant that Bahá'u'lláh has appeared in God's Greatest Name, in other words, that He is the supreme Manifestation of God. The greeting "Alláh-u-Abhá" was adopted during the period of Bahá'u'lláh's exile in Adrianople. The repetition of "Alláh-u-Abhá" ninety-five times is to be preceded by the performance of ablutions.

34.

Ablutions are specifically associated with certain prayers. They must precede the offering of the three Obligatory Prayers, the daily recitation of "Alláh-u-Abhá" ninety-five times, and the recital of the verse prescribed as an alternative to obligatory prayer and fasting for women in their courses. The prescribed ablutions consist of washing the hands and the face in preparation for prayer. In the case of the medium Obligatory Prayer, this is accompanied by the recitation of certain verses (see Some Texts Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh Supplementary to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas). That ablutions have a significance beyond washing may be seen from the fact that even should one have bathed oneself immediately before reciting the Obligatory Prayer, it would still be necessary to perform ablutions (Q&A [18]).

When no water is available for ablutions, a prescribed verse is to be repeated five times, and this provision is extended to those for whom the use of water would be physically harmful (Q&A [51]). The detailed provisions of the law concerning ablutions are set out in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.A.10.a.-g., as well as in Questions and Answers numbers [51], [62], [66], [77] and [86].

35.

The prohibition against taking another's life is repeated by Bahá'u'lláh in paragraph [73] of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Penalties are prescribed for premeditated murder. In the case of manslaughter, it is necessary to pay a specified indemnity to the family of the deceased (see Kitáb-i-Aqdas, ¶188).

36. The Arabic word "ziná," here translated as "*adultery*," signifies both fornication and adultery. It applies not only to sexual relations between a married person and someone who is not his or her spouse, but also to extramarital sexual intercourse in general. One form of "ziná" is rape. The only penalty prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh is for those who commit fornication; penalties for other kinds of sexual offense are left to the Universal House of Justice to determine.

37. Backbiting, slander and dwelling on the faults of others have been repeatedly condemned by Bahá'u'lláh. In the Hidden Words, He clearly states: "*O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me.*" And again: "*O Son of*

heard the clamor of the children as yet unborn,⁴¹ We doubled their share and decreased those of the rest. He, of a truth, hath power to ordain whatsoever He desireth, and He doeth as He pleaseth by virtue of His sovereign might.

1. If the deceased is a father and his estate includes a personal residence, such residence passes to the eldest son (Q&A [34]).
2. If the deceased has no male descendants, two-thirds of the residence pass to his female descendants and the remaining third passes to the House of Justice (Q&A [41], [72]).
3. The remainder of the estate is divided among the seven categories of heirs. For details of the number of shares to be received by each group, see Questions and Answers, number [5], and Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.

Man! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness." This strong admonition is further reiterated in His last work, *"the Book of My Covenant"*: *"Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men."*

38. The Bahá'í laws of inheritance apply only in case of intestacy, that is, when the individual dies without leaving a will. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (¶1109), Bahá'u'lláh instructs every believer to write a will. He elsewhere clearly states that the individual has full jurisdiction over his property and is free to determine the manner in which his or her estate is to be divided and to designate, in the will, those, whether Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í, who should inherit (Q&A [69]). In this connection, a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi explains that... even though a Bahá'í is permitted in his will to dispose of his wealth in the way he wishes, yet he is morally and conscientiously bound to always bear in mind, while writing his will, the necessity of his upholding the principle of Bahá'u'lláh regarding the social function of wealth, and the consequent necessity of avoiding its overaccumulation and concentration in a few individuals or groups of individuals. This verse of the Aqdas introduces a lengthy passage, in which Bahá'u'lláh elaborates the Bahá'í law of inheritance. In reading this passage, one should bear in mind that the law is formulated with the presumption that the deceased is a man; its provisions apply, *mutatis mutandis*, when the deceased is a woman.

The system of inheritance which provides for distribution of the deceased's estate among seven categories of heirs (children, spouse, father, mother, brothers, sisters, and teachers) is based on the provisions set out by the Báb in the Bayán. The major features of the Bahá'í laws of inheritance in the case of intestacy are:

39. Questions and Answers amplifies the provisions of the law as it relates to the shares of the inheritance allocated to the brothers and sisters of the deceased. If the brother or sister is from the same father as the deceased, he or she will inherit his or her full allotted share. If, however, the brother or sister is from another father he or she will inherit only two-thirds of the allotted share, the remaining one-third reverting to the House of Justice (Q&A [6]). Further, in the case where the deceased has full brothers or full sisters among his heirs, half-brothers and half-sisters from the mother's side do not inherit (Q&A [53]). The half-brothers and half-sisters will, of course, be due to receive inheritance from their own father's estate.

40. In a Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá compares teachers who are involved with the spiritual education of the child to the *"spiritual father"* who *"endoweth his child with everlasting life."* He explains that this is the reason that *"teachers are listed among the heirs"* in the *"law of God."* Bahá'u'lláh specifies the conditions under which the teacher inherits and the share he or she receives (Q&A [33]).

4. In case there is more than one heir in any category, the share allotted to that class should be divided between them equally, be they male or female.
5. In cases where there is no issue, the share of the children reverts to the House of Justice (Q&A [7], [41]).
6. Should one leave offspring, but either part or all of the other categories of heirs be nonexistent, two-thirds of their shares revert to the offspring and one-third to the House of Justice (Q&A [7]).
7. Should none of the specified categories exist, two-thirds of the estate revert to the nephews and nieces of the deceased. If these do not exist, the same shares revert to the aunts and uncles; lacking these, to their sons and daughters. In any case the remaining third reverts to the House of Justice.
8. Should one leave none of the aforementioned heirs, the entire estate reverts to the House of Justice.
9. Bahá'u'lláh states that non-Bahá'ís have no right to inherit from their Bahá'í parents or relatives (Q&A [34]). Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf indicates that this restriction applies “only to such cases when a Bahá'í dies without leaving a will and when, therefore, his property will have to be divided in accordance with the rules set forth in the Aqdas. Otherwise, a Bahá'í is free to bequeath his property to any person, irrespective of religion, provided however he leaves a will, specifying his wishes.” It is always possible, therefore, for a Bahá'í to provide for his or her non-Bahá'í partner, children or relatives by leaving a will.
10. Additional details of the laws of inheritance are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.3.a.–o.

Should the deceased leave no offspring, their share shall revert to the House of Justice,⁴² to be expended by the Trustees of the All-Merciful on the orphaned and widowed, and on whatsoever will bring benefit to the generality of the people, that all may give thanks unto their Lord, the All-Gracious, the Pardoner.

41.

In the Báb's laws of inheritance, the children of the deceased were allotted nine parts consisting of 540 shares. This allocation constituted less than a quarter of the whole estate. Bahá'u'lláh doubled their portion to 1,080 shares and reduced those allotted to the other six categories of heirs. He also outlines the precise intention of this verse and its implications for the distribution of the inheritance (Q&A [5]).

42. In referring to the House of Justice in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh does not always explicitly distinguish between the Universal House of Justice and the Local House of Justice, both of which institutions are ordained in that Book. He usually refers simply to “*the House of Justice*,” leaving open for later clarification the level or levels of the whole institution to which each law would apply.

In a Tablet enumerating the revenues of the local treasury, 'Abdu'l-Bahá includes those inheritances for which there are no heirs, thus indicating that the House of Justice referred to in these passages of the Aqdas relating to inheritance is the local one.

Should the deceased leave offspring, but none of the other categories of heirs⁴³ that have been specified in the Book, they shall receive two-thirds of the inheritance and the remaining third shall revert to the House of Justice. Such is the command which hath been given, in majesty and glory, by Him Who is the All-Possessing, the Most High.

If the deceased should leave none of the specified heirs, but have among his relatives nephews and nieces, whether on his brother's or his sister's side, two-thirds of the inheritance shall pass to them; or, lacking these, to his uncles and aunts on both his father's and his mother's side, and after them to their sons and daughters. The remaining third of the inheritance shall, in any case, revert to the Seat of Justice. Thus hath it been laid down in the Book by Him Who ruleth over all men.

Should the deceased be survived by none of those whose names have been recorded by the Pen of the Most High, his estate shall, in its entirety, revert to the aforementioned Seat that it may be expended on that which is prescribed by God. He, verily, is the Ordainer, the Omnipotent.

We have assigned the residence and personal clothing of the deceased to the male, not female, offspring, nor to the other heirs.⁴⁴ He, verily, is the Munificent, the All-Bountiful.

Should the son of the deceased have passed away in the days of his father and have left children, they will inherit their father's share,⁴⁵ as prescribed in the Book of God. Divide ye their share amongst them with perfect justice. Thus have the billows of the Ocean of Utterance surged, casting forth the pearls of the laws decreed by the Lord of all mankind.

⁴³. Bahá'u'lláh clarifies that *"This ruling hath both general and specific application, which is to say that whenever any category of this latter class of heirs is absent, two-thirds of their inheritance pass to the offspring and the remaining third to the House of Justice"* (Q&A [7]).

⁴⁴. In a Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicates that the residence and personal clothing of a deceased man remain in the male line. They pass to the eldest son and in the absence of the eldest son, they pass to the second-eldest son, and so on. He explains that this provision is an expression of the law of primogeniture, which has invariably been upheld by the Law of God. In a Tablet to a follower of the Faith in Persia, He wrote: *"In all the Divine Dispensations the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright."* With the distinctions given to the eldest son, however, go concomitant duties. For example, he has the moral responsibility, for the sake of God, to care for his mother and also to consider the needs of the other heirs. Bahá'u'lláh clarifies various aspects of this part of the law of inheritance. He specifies that if there be more than one residence, the principal and most important one passes to the male offspring. The remaining residences will, together with the other possessions of the deceased, have to be divided among the heirs (Q&A [34]), and He indicates that in the absence of male offspring, two-thirds of the principal residence and the personal clothing of the deceased father will revert to the female issue and one-third to the House of Justice (Q&A [72]). Further, when the deceased is a woman, Bahá'u'lláh states that all her used clothing is to be equally divided amongst her daughters. Her unworn clothing, jewels and property must be divided among her heirs, as well as her used clothing if she leaves no daughter (Q&A [37]).

⁴⁵. This aspect of the law applies only in the case of the son who predeceases his father or mother. If the daughter of the deceased be dead and leave issue, her share will have to be divided according to the seven categories specified in the Most Holy Book (Q&A [54]).

If the deceased should leave children who are under age, their share of the inheritance must be entrusted to a reliable individual,⁴⁶ or to a company, that it may be invested on their behalf in trade and business until they come of age. The trustee should be assigned a due share of the profit that hath accrued to it from being thus employed.

Division of the estate should take place only after the Ḥuqúqu'lláh hath been paid, any debts have been settled, the expenses of the funeral and burial defrayed,⁴⁷ and such provision made that the deceased may be carried to his resting-place with dignity and honor. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is Lord of the beginning and the end.

Say: This is that hidden knowledge which shall never change, since its beginning is with nine,⁴⁸ the symbol that betokeneth the concealed and manifest, the inviolable and unapproachably exalted Name. As for what We have appropriated to the children, this is a bounty conferred on them by God, that they may render thanks unto their Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful. These, verily, are the Laws of God; transgress them not at the prompting of your base and selfish desires. Observe ye the injunctions laid upon you by Him Who is the Dawning-place of Utterance. The sincere among His servants will regard the precepts set forth by God as the Water of Life to the followers of every faith, and the Lamp of wisdom and loving providence to all the denizens of earth and heaven.

⁴⁶. The word “amín,” translated in this paragraph as “*reliable individual*” and “*trustee*,” conveys in Arabic a wide range of meanings connected principally with the idea of trustworthiness, but signifying also such qualities as reliability, loyalty, faithfulness, uprightness, honesty, and so forth. Used in legal parlance “amín” denotes, among other things, a trustee, guarantor, custodian, guardian, and keeper.

⁴⁷.

Bahá'u'lláh specifies that the order of precedence for payment of these expenses is first the funeral and burial expenses, then the debts of the deceased, then the Ḥuqúqu'lláh (Q&A [9]). He also specifies that when applying the estate to these, payment must first be made out of the residue of the estate and then, if this is insufficient, out of the residence and personal clothing of the deceased (Q&A [80]).

⁴⁸. In the Arabic Bayán, the Báb described His inheritance law as being “*in accordance with a hidden knowledge in the Book of God — a knowledge that shall never change or be replaced.*” He also stated that the numbers by which the division of the inheritance was expressed had been invested with a significance intended to aid in the recognition of Him Whom God will make manifest. The “*nine*” mentioned here is represented in the Arabic text by the letter “Ṭá,” which is its equivalent in the abjad notation (see Glossary). It is the first element of the Báb’s division of inheritance, where He designates “*nine parts*” as the share of the children. The significance of nine lies in its being the numerical equivalent of the Greatest Name “Bahá,” alluded to in the next part of this verse as “*the concealed and manifest, the inviolable and unapproachably exalted Name.*”

The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established⁴⁹ wherein shall gather counselors to the number of Bahá,⁵⁰ and should it exceed this number it doth not matter. They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen. It behooveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men⁵¹ and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together⁵² and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly. Thus hath the Lord your God commanded you. Beware lest ye put away that which is clearly revealed in His Tablet. Fear God, O ye that perceive.

49.

The institution of the House of Justice consists of elected councils which operate at the local, national and international levels of society. Bahá'u'lláh ordains both the Universal House of Justice and the Local Houses of Justice in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His Will and Testament, provides for the Secondary (National or Regional) Houses of Justice and outlines the method to be pursued for the election of the Universal House of Justice.

In the verse cited above, the reference is to the Local House of Justice, an institution which is to be elected in a locality whenever there are nine or more resident adult Bahá'ís. For this purpose, the definition of adult was temporarily fixed at the age of 21 years by the Guardian, who indicated it was open to change by the Universal House of Justice in the future.

Local and Secondary Houses of Justice are, for the present, known as Local Spiritual Assemblies and National Spiritual Assemblies. Shoghi Effendi has indicated that this is a "temporary appellation" which,

...as the position and aims of the Bahá'í Faith are better understood and more fully recognized, will gradually be superseded by the permanent and more appropriate designation of House of Justice. Not only will the present-day Spiritual Assemblies be styled differently in future, but they will be enabled also to add to their present functions those powers, duties, and prerogatives necessitated by the recognition of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, not merely as one of the recognized religious systems of the world, but as the State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power.

50. The abjad numerical equivalent of "Bahá" is nine. The Universal House of Justice and the National and Local Spiritual Assemblies currently have nine members each, the minimum number prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh.

51. The general powers and duties of the Universal House of Justice, the National Spiritual Assemblies and the Local Spiritual Assemblies and the qualifications for membership are set forth in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the letters of Shoghi Effendi, and in the elucidations of the Universal House of Justice. The major functions of these institutions are outlined in the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, and in those of the National and Local Spiritual Assemblies.

52. Bahá'u'lláh has established consultation as one of the fundamental principles of His Faith and has exhorted the believers to *"take counsel together in all matters."* He describes consultation as *"the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way"* and as *"the bestower of understanding."* Shoghi Effendi states that the "principle of consultation ... constitutes one of the basic laws" of the Bahá'í Administrative Order.

In Questions and Answers, number [99], Bahá'u'lláh outlines an approach to consultation and stresses the importance of achieving unanimity in decision making, failing which the majority decision must prevail.

O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands⁵³ in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance, the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light.

The Lord hath ordained that those of you who are able shall make pilgrimage to the sacred House,⁵⁴ and from this, He hath exempted women as a mercy on His part.⁵⁵ He, of a truth, is the All-Bountiful, the Most Generous.

O people of Bahá! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation⁵⁶ such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of

The Universal House of Justice has clarified that this guidance concerning consultation was revealed before Spiritual Assemblies had been established and was in answer to a question about the Bahá'í teachings on consultation. The House of Justice affirms that the emergence of Spiritual Assemblies, to which the friends may always turn for assistance, in no way prohibits them from following the procedure outlined in Questions and Answers. This approach may be used by the friends, should they wish, when they desire to consult on their personal problems.

⁵³. The Bahá'í House of Worship is dedicated to the praise of God. The House of Worship forms the central edifice of the Maṣḥriqu'l-Adhkár (the Dawning-place of the Praise of God), a complex which, as it unfolds in the future, will comprise in addition to the House of Worship a number of dependencies dedicated to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits. 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes the Maṣḥriqu'l-Adhkár as *"one of the most vital institutions in the world,"* and Shoghi Effendi indicates that it exemplifies in tangible form the integration of "Bahá'í worship and service." Anticipating the future development of this institution, Shoghi Effendi envisages that the House of Worship and its dependencies *"shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant."* In the future, Bahá'í Houses of Worship will be constructed in every town and village.

⁵⁴. Two sacred Houses are covered by this ordinance, the House of the Báb in Shíráz and the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád. Bahá'u'lláh has specified that pilgrimage to either of these two Houses fulfills the requirement of this passage (Q&A [25], [29]). In two separate Tablets, known as Súriy-i-Hajj (Q&A [10]), Bahá'u'lláh has prescribed specific rites for each of these pilgrimages. In this sense, the performance of a pilgrimage is more than simply visiting these two Houses.

After the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá designated the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí as a place of pilgrimage. In a Tablet, He indicates that the *"Most Holy Shrine, the Blessed House in Baghdád and the venerated House of the Báb in Shíráz"* are *"consecrated to pilgrimage,"* and that it is *"obligatory"* to visit these places *"if one can afford it and is able to do so, and if no obstacle stands in one's way."* No rites have been prescribed for pilgrimage to the Most Holy Shrine.

⁵⁵. In the Bayán, the Báb enjoined the ordinance of pilgrimage once in a lifetime upon those of His followers who were financially able to undertake the journey. He stated that the obligation was not binding on women in order to spare them the rigors of travel.

Bahá'u'lláh likewise exempts women from His pilgrimage requirements. The Universal House of Justice has clarified that this exemption is not a prohibition, and that women are free to perform the pilgrimage.

⁵⁶. It is obligatory for men and women to engage in a trade or profession. Bahá'u'lláh exalts *"engagement in such work"* to the *"rank of worship"* of God. The spiritual and practical significance of this law, and the mutual responsibility of the individual and society for its implementation are explained in a letter written on

The kissing of hands hath been forbidden in the Book.⁵⁷ This practice is prohibited by God, the Lord of glory and command. To none is it permitted to seek absolution from another soul,⁵⁸ let repentance be between yourselves and God. He, verily, is the Pardoner, the Bounteous, the Gracious, the One Who absolveth the repentant.

57.

58. Bahá'u'lláh prohibits confession to, and seeking absolution of one's sins from, a human being. Instead one should beg forgiveness from God. In the Tablet of Biṣḥárát, He states that *“such confession before people results in one's humiliation and abasement,”* and He affirms that God *“wisheth not the humiliation of His servants.”*

18

O ye servants of the Merciful One! Arise to serve the Cause of God, in such wise that the cares and sorrows caused by them that have disbelieved in the Dayspring of the Signs of God may not afflict you. At the time when the Promise was fulfilled, and the Promised One made manifest, differences have appeared amongst the kindreds of the earth and each people hath followed its own fancy and idle imaginings.

Amongst the people is he who seateth himself amid the sandals by the door whilst coveting in his heart the seat of honor.⁵⁹ Say: What manner of man art thou, O vain and heedless one, who wouldst appear as other than thou art? And among the people is he who layeth claim to inner knowledge,⁶⁰ and still deeper knowledge concealed within this knowledge. Say: Thou speakest false! By God! What thou dost possess is naught but husks which We have left to thee as bones are left to dogs. By the righteousness of the one true God! Were anyone to wash the feet of all mankind, and were he to worship God in the forests, valleys, and mountains, upon high hills and lofty peaks, to leave no rock or tree, no clod of earth, but was a witness to his worship — yet, should the fragrance of My good pleasure not be inhaled from him, his works would never be acceptable unto God. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Lord of all. How many a man hath secluded himself in the climes of India, denied himself the things that God hath decreed as lawful, imposed upon himself austerities and mortifications,⁶¹ and hath not been remembered by God, the Revealer of Verses. Make not your deeds as snares wherewith to entrap the object of your aspiration, and deprive not yourselves of this Ultimate Objective for which have ever yearned all such as have drawn nigh unto God. Say: The very life of all deeds is My good pleasure, and all things depend upon Mine acceptance. Read ye the Tablets that ye may know what hath

been wrong in something, or that we have some fault of character, and ask another person's forgiveness or pardon, we are quite free to do so. The Universal House of Justice has also clarified that Bahá'u'lláh's prohibition concerning the confession of sins does not prevent an individual from admitting transgressions in the course of consultations held under the aegis of Bahá'í institutions. Likewise, it does not preclude the possibility of seeking advice from a close friend or of a professional counselor regarding such matters.

⁵⁹. Traditionally in the East it has been the practice to remove sandals and shoes before entering a gathering. The part of a room farthest from the entrance is regarded as the head of the room and a place of honor where the most prominent among those present are seated. Others sit in descending order towards the door, by which the shoes and sandals have been left and where the most lowly would sit.

⁶⁰. This is a reference to people who claim access to esoteric knowledge and whose attachment to such knowledge veils them from the Revelation of the Manifestation of God. Elsewhere Bahá'u'lláh affirms: *"They that are the worshipers of the idol which their imaginations have carved, and who call it Inner Reality, such men are in truth accounted among the heathen."*

⁶¹. These verses constitute the prohibition of monasticism and asceticism. See the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.D. 1.y.iii.-iv. In the Words of Paradise Bahá'u'lláh amplifies these provisions. He states: *"Living in seclusion or practicing asceticism is not acceptable in the presence of God,"* and He calls upon those involved to *"observe that which will cause joy and radiance."* He instructs those who have taken up *"their abodes in the caves of the mountains"* or who have *"repaired to graveyards at night"* to abandon these practices, and He enjoins them not to deprive themselves of the *"bounties"* of this world which have been created by God for humankind. And in the Tablet of Bishrá't, while acknowledging the *"pious deeds"* of monks and priests, Bahá'u'lláh calls upon them to *"give up the life of seclusion and direct their steps towards the open world and busy themselves with that which will profit themselves and others."* He also grants them leave *"to enter into wedlock that they may bring forth one who will make mention of God."*

been purposed in the Books of God, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Bounteous. He who attaineth to My love hath title to a throne of gold, to sit thereon in honor over all the world; he who is deprived thereof, though he sit upon the dust, that dust would seek refuge with God, the Lord of all Religions.

Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years,⁶² such a man is assuredly a lying impostor. We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim. Should he repent, God will, no doubt, forgive him. If, however, he persisteth in his error, God will, assuredly, send down one who will deal mercilessly with him. Terrible, indeed, is God in punishing! Whosoever interpreteth this verse otherwise than its obvious meaning is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy which encompasseth all created things. Fear God, and follow not your idle fancies. Nay, rather, follow the bidding of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Wise. Erelong shall clamorous voices be raised in most lands. Shun them, O My people, and follow not the iniquitous and evil-hearted. This is that of which We gave you forewarning when We were dwelling in 'Iráq, then later while in the Land of Mystery, and now from this Resplendent Spot.⁶³

Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the daystar of My beauty is set, and the heaven of My tabernacle is concealed from your eyes. Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men. We are with you at all times and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.

The peoples of the world are fast asleep. Were they to wake from their slumber, they would hasten with eagerness unto God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. They would cast away everything they possess, be it all the treasures of the earth, that their Lord may remember them to the extent of addressing to them but one word. Such is the instruction given you by Him Who holdeth the knowledge of things hidden, in a Tablet which the eye of creation hath not seen, and which is revealed to none except His own Self, the omnipotent Protector of all worlds. So bewildered are they in the drunkenness of their evil desires, that they are powerless to recognize the Lord of all being, Whose voice calleth aloud from every direction: "There is none other God but Me, the Mighty, the All-Wise."

Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful, ye cannot, if ye be of them who judge fairly. The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall

⁶². The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh will last until the coming of the next Manifestation of God, Whose advent will not take place before at least "*a full thousand years*" will have elapsed. Bahá'u'lláh cautions against ascribing to "*this verse*" anything other than its "*obvious meaning*," and in one of His Tablets, He specifies that "*each year*" of this thousand year period consists of "*twelve months according to the Qur'án, and of nineteen months of nineteen days each, according to the Bayán.*"

The intimation of His Revelation to Bahá'u'lláh in the Síyáh-Ḥál of Ṭíhrán, in October 1852, marks the birth of His Prophetic Mission and hence the commencement of the one thousand years or more that must elapse before the appearance of the next Manifestation of God.

⁶³. The "*Land of Mystery*" refers to Adrianople, and "*this Resplendent Spot*" is a reference to 'Akká.

be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty. What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Erelong, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead.

Amongst the people is he whose learning hath made him proud, and who hath been debarred thereby from recognizing My Name, the Self-Subsisting; who, when he heareth the tread of sandals following behind him, waxeth greater in his own esteem⁶⁴ than Nimrod.⁶⁵ Say: O rejected one! Where now is his abode? By God, it is the nethermost fire. Say: O concourse of divines! Hear ye not the shrill voice of My Most Exalted Pen? See ye not this Sun that shineth in refulgent splendor above the All-Glorious Horizon? For how long will ye worship the idols of your evil passions? Forsake your vain imaginings, and turn yourselves unto God, your Everlasting Lord.

Endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. None hath the right to dispose of them without leave from Him Who is the Dawning-place of Revelation. After Him, this authority shall pass to the Aghṣán,⁶⁶ and after them to the House of Justice — should it be established in the world by then — that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Places which have been exalted in this Cause, and for whatsoever hath been enjoined upon them by Him Who is the God of might and power. Otherwise, the endowments shall revert to the people of Bahá⁶⁷ who speak not except by His leave and judge not save in accordance with

64. In the East, the practice has been for followers of a religious leader, out of deference, to walk a pace or two behind him.

65. The Nimrod referred to in this verse is, in both Jewish and Islámic traditions, a King who persecuted Abraham and whose name became symbolic of great pride.

66. “Aghṣán” (plural of Ġhuṣn) is the Arabic word for “Branches.” This term is used by Bahá’u’lláh to designate His male descendants. It has particular implications not only for the disposition of endowments but also for the succession of authority following the passing of Bahá’u’lláh and of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Bahá’u’lláh, in the Book of His Covenant, appointed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, His eldest son, as the Center of His Covenant and the Head of the Faith. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in His Will and Testament, appointed Shoghi Effendi, His eldest grandson, as the Guardian and Head of the Faith.

This passage of the Aqdas, therefore, anticipates the succession of chosen Aghṣán and thus the institution of the Guardianship and envisages the possibility of a break in their line. The passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 precipitated the very situation provided for in this passage, in that the line of Aghṣán ended before the Universal House of Justice had been established.

67. Bahá’u’lláh provides for the possibility that the line of Aghṣán would terminate prior to the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. He designated that in such a situation “*endowments shall revert to the people of Bahá.*” The term “*people of Bahá*” is used with a number of different meanings in

what God hath decreed in this Tablet — lo, they are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth — that they may use them in the manner that hath been laid down in the Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful.

Lament not in your hours of trial, neither rejoice therein; seek ye the Middle Way which is the remembrance of Me in your afflictions and reflection over that which may befall you in future. Thus informeth you He Who is the Omniscient, He Who is aware.

Shave not your heads;⁶⁸ God hath adorned them with hair, and in this, there are signs from the Lord of creation to those who reflect upon the requirements of nature. He, verily, is the God of strength and wisdom. Notwithstanding, it is not seemly to let the hair pass beyond the limit of the ears.⁶⁹ Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Lord of all worlds.

Exile and imprisonment are decreed for the thief,⁷⁰ and, on the third offense, place ye a mark upon his brow so that, thus identified, he may not be accepted in the cities of God and His countries.⁷¹ Beware lest, through compassion, ye neglect to carry out the statutes of the religion of God; do that which hath been bidden you by Him Who is compassionate and merciful. We school you with the rod of wisdom and laws, like unto the father who educateth his son, and this for naught but the protection of your own selves and the elevation of your stations. By My life, were ye to discover what We have desired for you in revealing Our holy laws, ye would offer up your very souls for this sacred, this mighty, and most exalted Faith.

the Bahá'í Writings. In this instance, they are described as those *“who speak not except by His leave and judge not save in accordance with what God hath decreed in this Tablet.”* Following the passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957, the Hands of the Cause of God directed the affairs of the Cause until the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963.

⁶⁸. In some religious traditions, it is considered desirable to shave one's head. The shaving of the head is forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh, and He makes it clear that the provision contained in His Súriy-i-Ḥajj requiring pilgrims to the Holy House in Shíráz to shave their heads has been superseded through this verse of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Q&A [10]).

⁶⁹. Shoghi Effendi has made clear that, unlike the prohibition on shaving the head, this law forbidding the growing of the hair beyond the lobe of the ear pertains only to men. The application of this law will require clarification by the Universal House of Justice.

⁷⁰. Bahá'u'lláh states that the determination of the degree of penalty, in accordance with the seriousness of the offense, rests with the House of Justice (Q&A [49]). The punishments for theft are intended for a future condition of society, when they will be supplemented and applied by the Universal House of Justice.

⁷¹. The mark to be placed on the thief's forehead serves the purpose of warning people of his proclivities. All details concerning the nature of the mark, how the mark is to be applied, how long it must be worn, on what conditions it may be removed, as well as the seriousness of various degrees of theft have been left by Bahá'u'lláh for the Universal House of Justice to determine when the law is applied.

Whoso wisheth to make use of vessels of silver and gold is at liberty to do so.⁷² Take heed lest, when partaking of food, ye plunge your hands into the contents of bowls and platters.⁷³ Adopt ye such usages as are most in keeping with refinement. He, verily, desireth to see in you the manners of the inmates of Paradise in His mighty and most sublime Kingdom. Hold ye fast unto refinement⁷⁴ under all conditions, that your eyes may be preserved from beholding what is repugnant both to your own selves and to the dwellers of Paradise. Should anyone depart therefrom, his deed shall at that moment be rendered vain; yet should he have good reason, God will excuse him. He, in truth, is the Gracious, the Most Bountiful.

He Who is the Dawning-place of God's Cause hath no partner in the Most Great Infallibility.⁷⁵ He it is Who, in the kingdom of creation, is the Manifestation of "He doeth whatsoever He willeth." God hath reserved this distinction unto His own Self, and ordained for none a share in so sublime and transcendent a station. This is the Decree of God, concealed ere now within the veil of impenetrable mystery. We have disclosed it in this Revelation, and have thereby rent asunder the veils of such as have failed to recognize that which the Book of God set forth and who were numbered with the heedless.

Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing⁷⁶ and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth

^{72.}

In the Bayán, the Báb allowed the use of gold and silver utensils, thus abrogating the Islámic condemnation of their use which stems not from an explicit injunction of the Qur'án but from Muslim traditions. Bahá'u'lláh here confirms the Báb's ruling.

^{73.} This prohibition was defined by Shoghi Effendi as "plunging one's hand in food." In many parts of the world it has been customary to eat with the hands from a communal bowl.

^{74.} This is the first of several passages referring to the importance of refinement and cleanliness. The original Arabic word "liṭāfat" rendered here as "*refinement*," has a wide range of meanings with both spiritual and physical implications, such as elegance, gracefulness, cleanliness, civility, politeness, gentleness, delicacy and graciousness, as well as being subtle, refined, sanctified and pure. In accordance with the context of the various passages where it occurs in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, it has been translated either as "*refinement*" or "*cleanliness*."

^{75.} In the Tablet of Ishráqát, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that the Most Great Infallibility is confined to the Manifestations of God.

Chapter 45 in *Some Answered Questions* is devoted to an explanation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of this verse of the Aqdas. In this chapter, He stresses, among other things, the inseparability of essential "*infallibility*" from the Manifestations of God, and asserts that "*whatever emanates from Them is identical with the truth, and conformable to reality*," that "*They are not under the shadow of the former laws*," and "*Whatever They say is the word of God, and whatever They perform is an upright action*."

^{76.} 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His Tablets, not only calls attention to the responsibility of parents to educate all their children, but He also clearly specifies that the "*training and culture of daughters is more necessary than that of sons*," for girls will one day be mothers, and mothers are the first educators of the new generation. If it is not possible, therefore, for a family to educate all the children, preference is to be accorded to daughters since, through educated mothers, the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society.

away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction if he be wealthy and, if not, the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My glory, My loving-kindness, My mercy, that have compassed the world.

God hath imposed a fine on every adulterer and adulteress, to be paid to the House of Justice:⁷⁷ nine mīthqáls of gold, to be doubled if they should repeat the offense.⁷⁸ Such is the penalty which He Who is the Lord of Names hath assigned them in this world, and in the world to come He hath ordained for them a humiliating torment. Should anyone be afflicted by a sin, it behooveth him to repent thereof and return unto his Lord. He, verily, granteth forgiveness unto whomsoever He willeth, and none may question that which it pleaseth Him to ordain. He is, in truth, the Ever-Forgiving, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

Beware lest ye be hindered by the veils of glory from partaking of the crystal waters of this living Fountain. Seize ye the chalice of salvation at this dawning in the name of Him Who causeth the day to break, and drink your fill in praise of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Incomparable.

⁷⁷.

Although the term translated here as adultery refers, in its broadest sense, to unlawful sexual intercourse between either married or unmarried individuals, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has specified that the punishment here prescribed is for sexual intercourse between persons who are unmarried. He indicates that it remains for the Universal House of Justice to determine the penalty for adultery committed by a married individual. (See also Q&A [49].)

In one of His Tablets, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to some of the spiritual and social implications of the violation of the laws of morality and, concerning the penalty here described, He indicates that the aim of this law is to make clear to all that such an action is shameful in the eyes of God and that, in the event that the offense can be established and the fine imposed, the principal purpose is the exposure of the offenders — that they are shamed and disgraced in the eyes of society. He affirms that such exposure is in itself the greatest punishment.

The House of Justice referred to in this verse is presumably the Local House of Justice, currently known as the Local Spiritual Assembly.

⁷⁸. A mīthqál is a unit of weight. The weight of the traditional mīthqál used in the Middle East is equivalent to 24 naḡhuds. However, the mīthqál used by the Bahá’ís consists of 19 naḡhuds, “in accordance with the specification of the Bayán” (Q&A [23]). The weight of nine of these mīthqál equals 32.775 grams or 1.05374 troy ounces.

In relation to the application of the fine, Bahá’u’lláh clearly specifies that each succeeding fine is double the preceding one (Q&A [23]); thus the fine imposed increases in geometrical progression. The imposition of this fine is intended for a future condition of society, at which time the law will be supplemented and applied by the Universal House of Justice.

We have made it lawful for you to listen to music and singing.⁷⁹ Take heed, however, lest listening thereto should cause you to overstep the bounds of propriety and dignity. Let your joy be the joy born of My Most Great Name, a Name that bringeth rapture to the heart, and filleth with ecstasy the minds of all who have drawn nigh unto God. We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion. Truly, We are loath to see you numbered with the foolish.

We have decreed that a third part of all fines shall go to the Seat of Justice, and We admonish its men to observe pure justice, that they may expend what is thus accumulated for such purposes as have been enjoined upon them by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. O ye Men of Justice!⁸⁰ Be ye, in the realm of God, shepherds unto His sheep and guard them from the ravening wolves that have appeared in disguise, even as ye would guard your own sons. Thus exhorteth you the Counselor, the Faithful.

Should differences arise amongst you over any matter, refer it to God while the Sun still shineth above the horizon of this Heaven and, when it hath set, refer ye to whatsoever hath been sent down by Him. This, verily, is sufficient unto the peoples of the world. Say: Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you, there is a wisdom, and in My absence, there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and will aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.

O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber. Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.

Know ye from what heights your Lord, the All-Glorious, is calling? Think ye that ye have recognized the Pen wherewith your Lord, the Lord of all names, commandeth you? Nay, by My life! Did ye but know it, ye would renounce the world and would hasten with your whole hearts to the presence of the Well-Beloved. Your spirits would be so transported by His Word as to throw into commotion the Greater World — how much more this small and petty one! Thus have the showers of My bounty been poured down from the heaven of My loving-kindness, as a token of My grace, that ye may be of the thankful.

⁷⁹. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written that *"Among certain nations of the East, music was considered reprehensible."* Though the Qur'án contains no specific guidance on the subject, some Muslims consider listening to music as unlawful, while others tolerate music within certain bounds and subject to particular conditions.

There are a number of passages in the Bahá'í Writings in praise of music. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for example, asserts that *"music, sung or played, is spiritual food for soul and heart."*

⁸⁰. It has been elucidated in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi that, while the membership of the Universal House of Justice is confined to men, both women and men are eligible for election to Secondary and Local Houses of Justice (currently designated as National and Local Spiritual Assemblies).

The penalties for wounding or striking a person depend upon the severity of the injury; for each degree, the Lord of Judgment hath prescribed a certain indemnity.⁸¹ He is, in truth, the Ordainer, the Mighty, the Most Exalted. We shall, if it be Our Will, set forth these payments in their just degrees — this is a promise on Our part, and He, verily, is the Keeper of His pledge, the Knower of all things.

Verily, it is enjoined upon you to offer a feast, once in every month,⁸² though only water be served; for God hath purposed to bind hearts together, albeit through both earthly and heavenly means.

Beware lest the desires of the flesh and of a corrupt inclination provoke divisions among you. Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counseleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe.

Consider the mercy of God and His gifts. He enjoineth upon you that which shall profit you, though He Himself can well dispense with all creatures. Your evil doings can never harm Us, neither can your good works profit Us. We summon you wholly for the sake of God. To this every man of understanding and insight will testify.

If ye should hunt with beasts or birds of prey, invoke ye the Name of God when ye send them to pursue their quarry; for then whatever they catch shall be lawful unto you, even should ye find it to have died.⁸³ He, verily, is the Omniscient, the All-Informed. Take heed, however, that ye hunt

81. While Bahá'u'lláh specified that the extent of the penalty depends upon “*the severity of the injury*,” there is no record of His having set out the details of the size of the indemnity with regard to each degree of offense. The responsibility to determine these devolves upon the Universal House of Justice.

82.

This injunction has become the basis for the holding of monthly Bahá'í festivities and as such constitutes the ordination of the Nineteen Day Feast. In the Arabic Bayán, the Báb called upon His followers to gather together once every nineteen days to show hospitality and fellowship. Bahá'u'lláh here confirms this and notes the unifying role of such occasions.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi after Him have gradually unfolded the institutional significance of this injunction. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá emphasized the importance of the spiritual and devotional character of these gatherings. Shoghi Effendi, besides further elaborating the devotional and social aspects of the Feast, has developed the administrative element of such gatherings and, in systematically instituting the Feast, has provided for a period of consultation on the affairs of the Bahá'í community, including the sharing of news and messages.

In answer to a question as to whether this injunction is obligatory, Bahá'u'lláh stated it was not (Q&A [48]). Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf further comments:

Attendance at Nineteen Day Feasts is not obligatory but very important, and every believer should consider it a duty and privilege to be present on such occasions.

83. By this law, Bahá'u'lláh greatly simplifies practices and religious regulations of the past relating to hunting. He has also stated that hunting with such weapons as bows and arrows, guns, and the like, is included in this ruling, but that the consumption of game if it is found dead in a trap or a net is prohibited (Q&A [24]).

not to excess.⁸⁴ Tread ye the path of justice and equity in all things. Thus biddeth you He Who is the Dawning-place of Revelation, would that ye might comprehend.

God hath bidden you to show forth kindliness towards My kindred, but He hath granted them no right to the property of others.⁸⁵ He, verily, is self-sufficient, above any need of His creatures.

Should anyone intentionally destroy a house by fire, him also shall ye burn; should anyone deliberately take another's life, him also shall ye put to death.⁸⁶ Take ye hold of the precepts of God with all your strength and power, and abandon the ways of the ignorant. Should ye condemn the arsonist and the murderer to life imprisonment, it would be permissible according to the provisions of the Book.⁸⁷ He, verily, hath power to ordain whatsoever He pleaseth.

84. While hunting is not forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh, He warns against excessive hunting. The Universal House of Justice will, in due course, have to consider what constitutes an excess in hunting.

85. The injunction to show kindness to Bahá'u'lláh's kindred does not give them a share in the property of others. This is in contrast to Shí'ih Muslim practice, in which lineal descendants of Muḥammad are entitled to receive a share of a certain tax.

86. The law of Bahá'u'lláh prescribes the death penalty for murder and arson, with the alternative of life imprisonment (see note [87]).

In His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the difference between revenge and punishment. He affirms that individuals do not have the right to take revenge, that revenge is despised in the eyes of God, and that the motive for punishment is not vengeance, but the imposition of a penalty for the committed offense. In *Some Answered Questions*, He confirms that it is the right of society to impose punishments on criminals for the purpose of protecting its members and defending its existence.

With regard to this provision, Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf gives the following explanation: In the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh has given death as the penalty for murder. However, He has permitted life imprisonment as an alternative. Both practices would be in accordance with His Laws. Some of us may not be able to grasp the wisdom of this when it disagrees with our own limited vision; but we must accept it, knowing His Wisdom, His Mercy and His Justice are perfect and for the salvation of the entire world. If a man were falsely condemned to die, can we not believe Almighty God would compensate him a thousandfold, in the next world, for this human injustice? You cannot give up a salutary law just because on rare occasions the innocent may be punished.

The details of the Bahá'í law of punishment for murder and arson, a law designed for a future state of society, were not specified by Bahá'u'lláh. The various details of the law, such as degrees of offense, whether extenuating circumstances are to be taken into account, and which of the two prescribed punishments is to be the norm are left to the Universal House of Justice to decide in light of prevailing conditions when the law is to be in operation. The manner in which the punishment is to be carried out is also left to the Universal House of Justice to decide.

In relation to arson, this depends on what "house" is burned. There is obviously a tremendous difference in the degree of offense between the person who burns down an empty warehouse and one who sets fire to a school full of children.

87. Shoghi Effendi, in response to a question about this verse of the Aqdas, affirmed that while capital punishment is permitted, an alternative, "life imprisonment," has been provided "whereby the rigors of such a condemnation can be seriously mitigated." He states that "Bahá'u'lláh has given us a choice and has,

God hath prescribed matrimony unto you.⁸⁸ Beware that ye take not unto yourselves more wives than two.⁸⁹ Whoso contenteth himself with a single partner from among the maidservants of God, both he and she shall live in tranquillity. And he who would take into his service a maid may do so with propriety.⁹⁰ Such is the ordinance which, in truth and justice, hath been recorded by the Pen of Revelation. Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves.⁹¹

O people of the world! Follow not the promptings of the self, for it summoneth insistently to wickedness and lust; follow, rather, Him Who is the Possessor of all created things, Who biddeth you to show forth piety, and manifest the fear of God. He, verily, is independent of all His

therefore, left us free to use our own discretion within certain limitations imposed by His law.” In the absence of specific guidance concerning the application of this aspect of Bahá’í law, it remains for the Universal House of Justice to legislate on the matter in the future.

88. Bahá’u’lláh, in one of His Tablets, states that God, in establishing this law, has made marriage “*a fortress for well-being and salvation.*” The Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.1.a.–o., summarizes and synthesizes the provisions in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and Questions and Answers concerning marriage and the conditions under which it is permitted (Q&A [3], [13], [46], [50], [84], and [92]), the law of betrothal (Q&A [43]), the payment of the dowry (Q&A [12], [26], [39], [47], [87], and [88]), the procedures to be adopted in the event of the prolonged absence of a spouse (Q&A [4] and [27]), and sundry other circumstances (Q&A [12] and [47]).

89. While the text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas appears to permit bigamy, Bahá’u’lláh counsels that tranquillity and contentment derive from monogamy. In another Tablet, He underlines the importance of the individual’s acting in such a way as to “*bring comfort to himself and to his partner.*” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the authorized Interpreter of the Bahá’í Writings, states that in the text of the Aqdas monogamy is in effect enjoined. He elaborates this theme in a number of Tablets, including the following:

Know thou that polygamy is not permitted under the law of God, for contentment with one wife hath been clearly stipulated. Taking a second wife is made dependent upon equity and justice being upheld between the two wives, under all conditions. However, observance of justice and equity towards two wives is utterly impossible. The fact that bigamy has been made dependent upon an impossible condition is clear proof of its absolute prohibition. Therefore it is not permissible for a man to have more than one wife. Polygamy is a very ancient practice among the majority of humanity. The introduction of monogamy has been only gradually accomplished by the Manifestations of God. Jesus, for example, did not prohibit polygamy, but abolished divorce except in the case of fornication; Muḥammad limited the number of wives to four, but making plurality of wives contingent on justice, and reintroducing permission for divorce; Bahá’u’lláh, Who was revealing His Teachings in the milieu of a Muslim society, introduced the question of monogamy gradually in accordance with the principles of wisdom and the progressive unfoldment of His purpose. The fact that He left His followers with an infallible Interpreter of His Writings enabled Him to outwardly permit two wives in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas but uphold a condition that enabled ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to elucidate later that the intention of the law was to enforce monogamy.

90. Bahá’u’lláh states that a man may employ a maiden for domestic service. This was not permissible under Shí’ih Muslim practice unless the employer entered into a marriage contract with her. Bahá’u’lláh emphasizes that the “*service*” referred to in this verse is solely “*such as is performed by any other class of servants, be they young or old, in exchange for wages*” (Q&A [30]). An employer has no sexual rights over his maid. She is “*free to choose a husband at whatever time she pleaseth,*” for the purchase of women is forbidden (Q&A [30]).

creatures. Take heed not to stir up mischief in the land after it hath been set in order. Whoso acteth in this way is not of Us, and We are quit of him. Such is the command which hath, through the power of truth, been made manifest from the heaven of Revelation.

It hath been laid down in the Bayán that marriage is dependent upon the consent of both parties. Desiring to establish love, unity and harmony amidst Our servants, We have conditioned it, once the couple's wish is known, upon the permission of their parents,⁹² lest enmity and rancor should arise amongst them. And in this We have yet other purposes. Thus hath Our commandment been ordained.

No marriage may be contracted without payment of a dowry,⁹³ which hath been fixed for city dwellers at nineteen mithqáls of pure gold, and for village dwellers at the same amount in silver.⁹⁴ Whoso wisheth to increase this sum, it is forbidden him to exceed the limit of ninety-five mithqáls. Thus hath the command been writ in majesty and power. If he content himself, however, with a payment of the lowest level, it shall be better for him according to the Book.⁹⁵

91. While marriage is enjoined in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh clarifies that it is not obligatory (Q&A [46]). Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, also declared that "marriage is by no means an obligation," and he affirmed that "in the last resort, it is for the individual to decide whether he wishes to lead a family life or live in a state of celibacy." If a person has to wait a considerable period of time before finding a spouse, or ultimately must remain single, it does not mean that the individual is thereby unable to fulfill his or her life's purpose, which is fundamentally spiritual.

92.

In a letter written on his behalf, Shoghi Effendi has commented on this provision of the law:

Bahá'u'lláh has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is required for a Bahá'í marriage. This applies whether the parents are Bahá'ís or non-Bahá'ís, divorced for years or not. This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of the children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator.

93. The Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.1.j.i.-v., summarizes the main provisions concerning the dowry. These provisions have their antecedents in the Bayán. The dowry is to be paid by the bridegroom to the bride. It is fixed at 19 mithqáls of pure gold for city dwellers, and 19 mithqáls of silver for village dwellers. Bahá'u'lláh indicates that, if, at the time of the wedding, the bridegroom is unable to pay the dowry in full, it is permissible for him to issue a promissory note to the bride (Q&A [39]). With the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh many familiar concepts, customs and institutions are redefined and take on new meaning. One of these is the dowry. The institution of dowry is a very ancient practice in many cultures and takes many forms. In some countries, it is a payment made by the parents of the bride to the bridegroom; in others it is a payment made by the bridegroom to the parents of the bride, called a "bride-price." In both such cases the amount is often quite considerable. The law of Bahá'u'lláh abolishes all such variants and converts the dowry into a symbolic act whereby the bridegroom presents a gift of a certain limited value to the bride.

94. Bahá'u'lláh specifies that the criterion for determining the dowry payment is the location of the permanent residence of the bridegroom, not of the bride (Q&A [87], [88]).

95. In answer to a question about the dowry, Bahá'u'lláh stated:

God, verily, enricheth whomsoever He willeth through both heavenly and earthly means, and He, in truth, hath power over all things.

It hath been decreed by God that, should any one of His servants intend to travel, he must fix for his wife a time when he will return home.⁹⁶ If he return by the promised time, he will have obeyed the bidding of his Lord and shall be numbered by the Pen of His behest among the righteous; otherwise, if there be good reason for delay, he must inform his wife and make the utmost endeavor to return to her. Should neither of these eventualities occur, it behooveth her to wait for a period of nine months, after which there is no impediment to her taking another husband;⁹⁷ but should she wait longer, God, verily, loveth those women and men who show forth patience. Obey ye My commandments, and follow not the ungodly, they who have been reckoned as sinners in God's Holy Tablet. If during the period of her waiting, word should reach her from her husband, she should choose the course that is praiseworthy.⁹⁸ He, of a truth, desireth that His servants and His handmaids should be at peace with one another; take heed

Whatever is revealed in the Bayán, in respect to those residing in cities and villages, is approved and should be carried out. However, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas mention is made of the lowest level. The intention is nineteen mithqáls of silver, specified in the Bayán for village dwellers. This is more pleasing unto God, provided the two parties agree. The purpose is to promote the comfort of all, and to bring about concord and union among the people. Therefore, the greater the consideration shown in these matters the better it will be ... The people of Bahá must associate and deal with each other with the utmost love and sincerity. They should be mindful of the interests of all, especially the friends of God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in one of His Tablets, summarized some of the provisions for determining the level of the dowry. The unit of payment mentioned in the extract, cited below, is the "váḥid." One váḥid is equivalent to nineteen mithqáls. He stated:

City dwellers must pay in gold and village dwellers in silver. It dependeth on the financial means at the disposal of the groom. If he is poor, he payeth one váḥid; if of modest means, he payeth two váḥids; if well-to-do, three váḥids; if wealthy, four váḥids; and if very rich, he giveth five váḥids. It is, in truth, a matter for agreement between the bridegroom, the bride, and their parents. Whatever agreement is reached should be carried out.

In this same Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged the believers to refer questions concerning the application of this law to the Universal House of Justice which has "the authority to legislate." He stressed that "it is this body which will enact laws and legislate upon secondary matters which are not explicit in the Holy Text."

⁹⁶. If the husband leaves without informing his wife of the date of his return, and no news of him reaches her and all trace of him is lost, Bahá'u'lláh has stated that, should the husband have been aware of the law prescribed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the wife may remarry after waiting a full year. If, however, the husband was unaware of the law, the wife must wait until news of her husband reaches her (Q&A [4]).

⁹⁷. In the event of the husband's failure, either to return at the end of the specified period of time or to notify his wife of a delay, the wife must wait nine months, after which she is free to remarry, though it is preferable for her to wait longer (see note [147] for the Bahá'í calendar).

Bahá'u'lláh states that, in such circumstances, should news reach the wife of "her husband's death or murder," she must also wait nine months, prior to remarrying (Q&A [27]). 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in a Tablet, has further clarified that the nine months' waiting period following news of the husband's death applies only if the husband had been away at the time of his death, and not if he dies while at home.

⁹⁸. Bahá'u'lláh defines "the course that is praiseworthy" as "the exercise of patience" (Q&A [4]).

lest ye do aught that may provoke intransigence amongst you. Thus hath the decree been fixed and the promise come to pass. If, however, news should reach her of her husband's death or murder, and be confirmed by general report, or by the testimony of two just witnesses,⁹⁹ it behooveth her to remain single; then, upon completion of the fixed number of months, she is free to adopt the course of her choosing. Such is the bidding of Him Who is mighty and powerful in His command.

Should resentment or antipathy arise between husband and wife, he is not to divorce her but to bide in patience throughout the course of one whole year,¹⁰⁰ that perchance the fragrance of affection may be renewed between them. If upon the completion of this period, their love hath not returned, it is permissible for divorce to take place. God's wisdom, verily, hath encompassed all things. The Lord hath prohibited, in a Tablet inscribed by the Pen of His command, the practice to which ye formerly had recourse when thrice ye had divorced a woman.¹⁰¹ This He hath done as a favor on His part, that ye may be accounted among the thankful. He who hath divorced his wife may choose, upon the passing of each month, to remarry her when there is mutual affection and consent, so long as she hath not taken another husband. Should she have wed again, then, by this other union, the separation is confirmed and the matter is concluded unless, clearly, her circumstances change.¹⁰² Thus hath the decree been inscribed with majesty in this glorious Tablet by Him Who is the Dawning-place of Beauty.

If the wife accompany her husband on a journey, and differences arise between them on the way, he is required to provide her with her expenses for one whole year, and either to return her whence she came or to entrust her, together with the necessities for her journey, to a

⁹⁹. Bahá'u'lláh sets out *"the criterion of justness"* in relation to witnesses as *"a good reputation among the people."* He states that it is not necessary that the witnesses should be Bahá'ís since *"The testimony of all God's servants, of whatever faith or creed, is acceptable before His Throne"* (Q&A [79]).

¹⁰⁰. Divorce is strongly condemned in the Bahá'í Teachings. If, however, antipathy or resentment develop between the marriage partners, divorce is permissible after the lapse of one full year. During this year of patience, the husband is obliged to provide for the financial support of his wife and children, and the couple is urged to strive to reconcile their differences. Shoghi Effendi affirms that both the husband and wife "have equal right to ask for divorce" whenever either partner "feels it absolutely essential to do so."

In Questions and Answers, Bahá'u'lláh elaborates a number of issues concerning the year of patience, its observance (Q&A [12]), establishing the date of its beginning (Q&A [19] and [40]), the conditions for reconciliation (Q&A [38]), and the role of witnesses and the Local House of Justice (Q&A [73] and [98]). In relation to the witnesses, the Universal House of Justice has clarified that in these days the duties of the witnesses in cases of divorce are performed by the Spiritual Assemblies.

The detailed provisions of the Bahá'í laws on divorce are summarized in the Synopsis and Codification, section IV.C.2.a.-i.

¹⁰¹. This relates to a law of Islám set out in the Qur'án which decreed that under certain conditions a man could not remarry his divorced wife unless she had married and been divorced by another man. Bahá'u'lláh affirms that this is the practice which has been prohibited in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Q&A [31]).

¹⁰². Shoghi Effendi states, in a letter written on his behalf, that the intention of "the passing of each month" is not to impose a limitation, and that it is possible for a divorced couple to remarry at any time after their divorce, so long as neither party is currently married to another person.

dependable person who is to escort her home. Thy Lord, verily, ordaineth as He pleaseth, by virtue of a sovereignty that overshadoweth the peoples of the earth.

Should a woman be divorced in consequence of a proven act of infidelity, she shall receive no maintenance during her period of waiting. Thus hath the daystar of Our commandment shone forth resplendent from the firmament of justice. Truly, the Lord loveth union and harmony and abhorreth separation and divorce. Live ye one with another, O people, in radiance and joy. By My life! All that are on earth shall pass away, while good deeds alone shall endure; to the truth of My words, God doth Himself bear witness. Compose your differences, O My servants; then heed ye the admonition of Our Pen of Glory and follow not the arrogant and wayward.

Take heed lest the world beguile you as it beguiled the people who went before you! Observe ye the statutes and precepts of your Lord, and walk ye in this Way which hath been laid out before you in righteousness and truth. They who eschew iniquity and error, who adhere to virtue, are, in the sight of the one true God, among the choicest of His creatures; their names are extolled by the Concourse of the realms above, and by those who dwell in this Tabernacle which hath been raised in the name of God.

It is forbidden you to trade in slaves, be they men or women. It is not for him who is himself a servant to buy another of God's servants, and this hath been prohibited in His Holy Tablet. Thus, by His mercy, hath the commandment been recorded by the Pen of justice. Let no man exalt himself above another; all are but bondslaves before the Lord and all exemplify the truth that there is none other God but Him. He, verily, is the All-Wise, Whose wisdom encompasseth all things.

Adorn yourselves with the raiment of goodly deeds. He whose deeds attain unto God's good pleasure is assuredly of the people of Bahá and is remembered before His throne. Assist ye the Lord of all creation with works of righteousness, and also through wisdom and utterance. Thus, indeed, have ye been commanded in most of the Tablets by Him Who is the All-Merciful. He, truly, is cognizant of what I say. Let none contend with another, and let no soul slay another; this, verily, is that which was forbidden you in a Book that hath lain concealed within the Tabernacle of glory. What! Would ye kill him whom God hath quickened, whom He hath endowed with spirit through a breath from Him? Grievous then would be your trespass before His throne! Fear God, and lift not the hand of injustice and oppression to destroy what He hath Himself raised up; nay, walk ye in the way of God, the True One. No sooner did the hosts of true knowledge appear, bearing the standards of Divine utterance, than the tribes of the religions were put to flight, save only those who willed to drink from the stream of everlasting life in a Paradise created by the breath of the All-Glorious.

God hath decreed, in token of His mercy unto His creatures, that semen is not unclean.¹⁰³ Yield thanks unto Him with joy and radiance, and follow not such as are remote from the Dawning-place of His nearness. Arise ye, under all conditions, to render service to the Cause, for God will assuredly assist you through the power of His sovereignty which overshadoweth the worlds. Cleave ye unto the cord of refinement¹⁰⁴ with such tenacity as to allow no trace of dirt to be seen upon your garments. Such is the injunction of One Who is sanctified above all refinement.

¹⁰³. In a number of religious traditions and in Shí'ih Muslim practice, semen has been declared ritually unclean. Bahá'u'lláh has here dispelled this concept.

Whoso falleth short of this standard with good reason shall incur no blame. God, verily, is the Forgiving, the Merciful. Wash ye every soiled thing with water that hath undergone no alteration in any one of the three respects;¹⁰⁵ take heed not to use water that hath been altered through exposure to the air or to some other agent. Be ye the very essence of cleanliness amongst mankind. This, truly, is what your Lord, the Incomparable, the All-Wise, desireth for you.

God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of “uncleanness,” whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure.¹⁰⁶ He, of a certainty, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. Verily, all created things were immersed in the sea of purification when, on that first day of Riḍván,¹⁰⁷ We shed upon the whole of creation the splendors of Our most excellent Names and Our most exalted Attributes. This, verily, is a token of My loving providence, which hath encompassed all the worlds. Consort ye then with the followers of all religions, and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds if ye be of them who understand.

God hath enjoined upon you to observe the utmost cleanliness, to the extent of washing what is soiled with dust, let alone with hardened dirt and similar defilement. Fear Him, and be of those who are pure. Should the garb of anyone be visibly sullied, his prayers shall not ascend to God, and the celestial Concourse will turn away from him. Make use of rose water, and of pure perfume; this, indeed, is that which God hath loved from the beginning that hath no beginning, in order that there may be diffused from you what your Lord, the Incomparable, the All-Wise, desireth.

¹⁰⁴. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to the effect of “*purity and holiness, cleanliness and refinement*” on the exaltation of “*the human condition*” and “*the development of man’s inner reality*.” He states: “*The fact of having a pure and spotless body exercises an influence upon the spirit of man.*”

¹⁰⁵. The “*three respects*” referred to in this verse are changes in the color, taste or smell of the water. Bahá’u’lláh provides additional guidance concerning pure water and the point at which it is considered unsuitable for use (Q&A [91]).

¹⁰⁶. The concept of ritual “uncleanness,” as understood and practiced in some tribal societies and in the religious communities of certain earlier Dispensations, has been abolished by Bahá’u’lláh. He states that through His Revelation “*all created things were immersed in the sea of purification.*”

¹⁰⁷. This is a reference to the arrival of Bahá’u’lláh and His companions in the Najíbíyyih Garden outside the city of Baghdád, subsequently referred to by the Bahá’ís as the Garden of Riḍván. This event, which took place thirty-one days after Naw-Rúz, in April 1863, signaled the commencement of the period during which Bahá’u’lláh declared His Mission to His companions. In a Tablet, He refers to His Declaration as “*the Day of supreme felicity*” and He describes the Garden of Riḍván as “*the Spot from which He shed upon the whole of creation the splendors of His Name, the All-Merciful.*” Bahá’u’lláh spent twelve days in this Garden prior to departing for Istanbul, the place to which He had been banished. The Declaration of Bahá’u’lláh is celebrated annually by the twelve-day Riḍván Festival, described by Shoghi Effendi as “the holiest and most significant of all Bahá’í festivals”.

God hath relieved you of the ordinance laid down in the Bayán¹⁰⁸ concerning the destruction of books.¹⁰⁹ We have permitted you to read such sciences as are profitable unto you, not such as end in idle disputation;¹¹⁰ better is this for you if ye be of them that comprehend.

O kings of the earth! He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is come. The Kingdom is God's, the omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting. Worship none but God, and, with radiant hearts, lift up your faces unto your Lord, the Lord of all names. This is a Revelation to which whatever ye possess can never be compared, could ye but know it.

We see you rejoicing in that which ye have amassed for others and shutting out yourselves from the worlds which naught except My guarded Tablet can reckon. The treasures ye have laid up

108. The Bayán, the Mother Book of the Bábí Dispensation, was revealed by the Báb in two parts, one Persian and one Arabic. It is the repository of the laws and precepts of the Báb's Dispensation and enshrines most of His references and tributes to "Him Whom God will make manifest" (Bahá'u'lláh), Whose advent He heralded. In *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi indicates that the Bayán should be regarded "primarily as a eulogy of the Promised One rather than as a code of laws and ordinances designed to be a permanent guide to future generations."

'Abdu'l-Bahá has written: "*The Bayán hath been superseded by the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, except in respect of such laws as have been confirmed and mentioned in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.*"

109. In the Tablet of Ishráqát Bahá'u'lláh, referring to the fact that the Báb had made the laws of the Bayán subject to His sanction, states that He put some of the Báb's laws into effect "*by embodying them in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in different words,*" while others He set aside.

With regard to the destruction of books, the Bayán commanded the Báb's followers to destroy all books except those that were written in vindication of the Cause and Religion of God. Bahá'u'lláh abrogates this specific law of the Bayán.

As to the nature and severity of the laws of the Bayán, Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf provides the following comment:

The severe laws and injunctions revealed by the Báb can be properly appreciated and understood only when interpreted in the light of His own statements regarding the nature, purpose and character of His own Dispensation. As these statements clearly reveal, the Bábí Dispensation was essentially in the nature of a religious and indeed social revolution, and its duration had therefore to be short, but full of tragic events, of sweeping and drastic reforms. Those drastic measures enforced by the Báb and His followers were taken with the view of undermining the very foundations of Shí'ih orthodoxy, and thus paving the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. To assert the independence of the new Dispensation, and to prepare also the ground for the approaching Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb had therefore to reveal very severe laws, even though most of them were never enforced. But the mere fact that He revealed them was in itself a proof of the independent character of His Dispensation and was sufficient to create such widespread agitation, and excite such opposition on the part of the clergy that led them to cause His eventual martyrdom.

110. The Bahá'í Writings enjoin the acquisition of knowledge and the study of the arts and sciences. Bahá'ís are admonished to respect people of learning and accomplishment, and are warned against the pursuit of studies that are productive only of futile wrangling.

In His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh counsels the believers to study such sciences and arts as are "*useful*" and would

have drawn you far away from your ultimate objective. This ill beseemeth you, could ye but understand it. Wash from your hearts all earthly defilements, and hasten to enter the Kingdom of your Lord, the Creator of earth and heaven, Who caused the world to tremble and all its peoples to wail, except them that have renounced all things and clung to that which the Hidden Tablet hath ordained.

This is the Day in which He Who held converse with God¹¹¹ hath attained the light of the Ancient of Days, and quaffed the pure waters of reunion from this Cup that hath caused the seas to swell. Say: By the one true God! Sinai¹¹² is circling round the Dayspring of Revelation, while from the heights of the Kingdom the Voice of the Spirit of God¹¹³ is heard proclaiming: "Bestir yourselves, ye proud ones of the earth, and hasten ye unto Him." Carmel hath, in this Day, hastened in longing adoration to attain His court, whilst from the heart of Zion,¹¹⁴ there cometh the cry: "The promise is fulfilled. That which had been announced in the Holy Writ of God, the Most Exalted, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved, is made manifest."

O kings of the earth! The Most Great Law hath been revealed in this Spot, this scene of transcendent splendor. Every hidden thing hath been brought to light by virtue of the Will of the Supreme Ordainer, He Who hath ushered in the Last Hour, through Whom the Moon hath been cleft, and every irrevocable decree expounded.

Ye are but vassals, O kings of the earth! He Who is the King of Kings hath appeared, arrayed in His most wondrous glory, and is summoning you unto Himself, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Take heed lest pride deter you from recognizing the Source of Revelation, lest the things of this world shut you out as by a veil from Him Who is the Creator of heaven. Arise, and serve Him Who is the Desire of all nations, Who hath created you through a word from Him, and ordained you to be, for all time, the emblems of His sovereignty.

By the righteousness of God! It is not Our wish to lay hands on your kingdoms. Our mission is to seize and possess the hearts of men. Upon them, the eyes of Bahá are fastened. To this testifieth the Kingdom of Names, could ye but comprehend it. Whoso followeth his Lord will renounce the world and all that is therein; how much greater, then, must be the detachment of Him Who

further "*the progress and advancement*" of society, and He cautions against sciences which "*begin with words and end with words*," the pursuit of which leads to "*idle disputation*." Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, likened sciences that "begin with words and end with words" to "fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-splittings," and, in another letter, he explained that what Bahá'u'lláh primarily intended by such "sciences" are "those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it to attain the truth."

¹¹¹. This is a traditional Jewish and Islámic title of Moses. Bahá'u'lláh states that with the coming of His Revelation "*human ears have been privileged to hear what He Who conversed with God heard upon Sinai*."

¹¹². The mountain where the Law was revealed by God to Moses.

¹¹³. This is one of the titles used in the Islámic and Bahá'í Writings to designate Jesus Christ.

¹¹⁴. Carmel, the "Vineyard of God," is the mountain in the Holy Land where the Shrine of the Báb and the seat of the world administrative center of the Faith are situated. Zion is a hill in Jerusalem, the traditional site of the tomb of King David, and is symbolic of Jerusalem as a Holy City.

holdeth so august a station! Forsake your palaces, and haste ye to gain admittance into His Kingdom. This, indeed, will profit you both in this world and in the next. To this testifieth the Lord of the realm on high did ye but know it.

How great the blessedness that awaiteth the king who will arise to aid My Cause in My kingdom, who will detach himself from all else but Me! Such a king is numbered with the companions of the Crimson Ark¹¹⁵ the Ark which God hath prepared for the people of Bahá. All must glorify his name, must reverence his station, and aid him to unlock the cities with the keys of My Name, the omnipotent Protector of all that inhabit the visible and invisible kingdoms. Such a king is the very eye of mankind, the luminous ornament on the brow of creation, the fountainhead of blessings unto the whole world. Offer up, O people of Bahá, your substance, nay your very lives, for his assistance.

O Emperor of Austria! He Who is the Dayspring of God's Light dwelt in the prison of 'Akká at the time when thou didst set forth to visit the Aqṣá Mosque.¹¹⁶ Thou passed Him by and inquired not about Him by Whom every house is exalted and every lofty gate unlocked. We, verily, made it a place whereunto the world should turn, that they might remember Me, and yet thou hast rejected Him Who is the Object of this remembrance when He appeared with the Kingdom of God, thy Lord and the Lord of the worlds. We have been with thee at all times and found thee clinging unto the Branch and heedless of the Root. Thy Lord, verily, is a witness unto what I say. We grieved to see thee circle round Our Name, whilst unaware of Us, though We were before thy face. Open thine eyes, that thou mayest behold this glorious Vision, and recognize Him Whom thou invokes in the daytime and in the night season, and gaze on the Light that shineth above this luminous Horizon.

Say: O King of Berlin!¹¹⁷ Give ear unto the Voice calling from this manifest Temple: "Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Everlasting, the Peerless, the Ancient of Days." Take heed lest pride debar thee from recognizing the Dayspring of Divine Revelation, lest earthly desires shut thee out, as by a veil, from the Lord of the Throne above and of the earth below. Thus counseleth thee the Pen of the Most High. He, verily, is the Most Gracious, the All-Bountiful. Do thou remember the one whose power transcended thy power, and whose station excelled thy station.¹¹⁸ Where is

¹¹⁵. The "*Crimson Ark*" refers to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. His followers are designated as the "*companions of the Crimson Ark*," lauded by the Báb in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'.

¹¹⁶.

Francis Joseph (Franz Josef, 1830–1916), Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1869. While in the Holy Land, he failed to take the opportunity to inquire about Bahá'u'lláh Who at that time was a prisoner in 'Akká (Acre). The Aqṣá Mosque, literally, the "Most Distant" Mosque, is referred to in the Qur'án, and has become identified with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

¹¹⁷. Kaiser William I (Wilhelm Friedrich Ludwig, 1797–1888), the seventh king of Prussia, was acclaimed first Emperor of Germany in January 1871 at Versailles in France, following the victory of Germany over France in the Franco-Prussian War.

¹¹⁸. This is a reference to Napoleon III (1808–1873), the Emperor of the French, who was regarded by many historians as the most outstanding monarch of his day in the West.

Bahá'u'lláh addressed two Tablets to Napoleon III, in the second of which He clearly prophesied that

he? Whither are gone the things he possessed? Take warning, and be not of them that are fast asleep. He it was who cast the Tablet of God behind him when We made known unto him what the hosts of tyranny had caused Us to suffer. Wherefore, disgrace assailed him from all sides, and he went down to dust in great loss. Think deeply, O King, concerning him, and concerning them who, like unto thee, have conquered cities and ruled over men. The All-Merciful brought them down from their palaces to their graves. Be warned, be of them who reflect.

We have asked nothing from you. For the sake of God, We, verily, exhort you, and will be patient as We have been patient in that which hath befallen Us at your hands, O concourse of kings!

Hearken ye, O Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein, unto that which the Dove is warbling on the Branch of Eternity: "There is none other God but Me, the Ever-Abiding, the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful." Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance of your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Thus counseleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, whereat all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. Take ye advantage of the Day of God. Verily, to meet Him is better for you than all that whereon the sun shineth, could ye but know it. O concourse of rulers! Give ear unto that which hath been raised from the Dayspring of Grandeur: "Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Lord of Utterance, the All-Knowing." Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

O people of Constantinople!¹¹⁹ Lo, from your midst We hear the baleful hooting of the owl. Hath the drunkenness of passion laid hold upon you, or is it that ye are sunk in heedlessness? O Spot that art situate on the shores of the two seas!¹²⁰ The throne of tyranny hath, verily, been established upon thee, and the flame of hatred hath been kindled within thy bosom, in such wise that the Concourse on high and they who circle around the Exalted Throne have wailed and lamented. We behold in thee the foolish ruling over the wise, and darkness vaunting itself against the light. Thou art indeed filled with manifest pride. Hath thine outward splendor made thee vainglorious? By Him Who is the Lord of mankind! It shall soon perish, and thy daughters

Napoleon's kingdom would be "*thrown into confusion*," that his "*empire shall pass*" from his hands, and that his people would experience great "*commotions*."

Within a year, Napoleon III suffered a resounding defeat, at the hands of Kaiser William I, at the Battle of Sedan in 1870. He went in exile to England, where he died three years later.

¹¹⁹. The word here translated as "*Constantinople*" is, in the original, "Ar-Rúm" or "Rome." This term has generally been used in the Middle East to designate Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire, then the city of Byzantium and its empire, and later the Ottoman Empire.

¹²⁰. This is a reference to Constantinople, now called Istanbul. Located on the Bosphorus, a strait about 31 kilometers long which links the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, it is the largest city and seaport of Turkey.

Constantinople was the capital of the Ottoman Empire from 1453 until 1922. During Bahá'u'lláh's sojourn in this city, the tyrannical Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz occupied the throne. The Ottoman Sultáns were also the Caliphs, the leaders of Sunní Islám. Bahá'u'lláh anticipated the fall of the Caliphate, which was abolished in 1924.

and thy widows and all the kindreds that dwell within thee shall lament. Thus informeth thee the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O banks of the Rhine!¹²¹ We have seen you covered with gore, inasmuch as the swords of retribution were drawn against you; and you shall have another turn. And We hear the lamentations of Berlin, though she be today in conspicuous glory.

Let nothing grieve thee, O Land of Ṭá,¹²² for God hath chosen thee to be the source of the joy of all mankind. He shall, if it be His Will, bless thy throne with one who will rule with justice, who will gather together the flock of God which the wolves have scattered. Such a ruler will, with joy and gladness, turn his face towards, and extend his favors unto, the people of Bahá. He indeed is accounted in the sight of God as a jewel among men. Upon him rest forever the glory of God and the glory of all that dwell in the kingdom of His revelation.

Rejoice with great joy, for God hath made thee “the Dayspring of His light,” inasmuch as within thee was born the Manifestation of His Glory.¹²³ Be thou glad for this name that hath been conferred upon thee — a name through which the Daystar of grace hath shed its splendor, through which both earth and heaven have been illumined.

Erelong will the state of affairs within thee be changed, and the reins of power fall into the hands of the people. Verily, thy Lord is the All-Knowing. His authority embraceth all things. Rest thou assured in the gracious favor of thy Lord. The eye of His loving-kindness shall everlastingly be directed towards thee. The day is approaching when thy agitation will have been transmuted into peace and quiet calm. Thus hath it been decreed in the wondrous Book.

O Land of Ḳhá!¹²⁴ We hear from thee the voice of heroes, raised in glorification of thy Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most Exalted. Blessed the day on which the banners of the divine Names shall be upraised in the kingdom of creation in My Name, the All-Glorious. On that day the faithful shall rejoice in the victory of God, and the disbelievers shall lament.

None must contend with those who wield authority over the people; leave unto them that which is theirs, and direct your attention to men’s hearts.

¹²¹. In one of His Tablets written before the first World War (1914–1918), ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained that Bahá’u’lláh’s reference to having seen the banks of the Rhine “covered with gore” related to the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), and that there was more suffering to come.

In *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi states that the “oppressively severe treaty” that was imposed on Germany following its defeat in the first World War “provoked *‘the lamentations [of Berlin]’* which half a century before, had been ominously prophesied.”

¹²². “Ṭá” is the initial letter of Ṭīhrán, the capital of Írán. Bahá’u’lláh has often chosen to represent certain place names by reference to their initial letter. According to the abjad system of reckoning, the numerical value of Ṭá is nine, which equals the numerical value of the name Bahá.

¹²³. This is a reference to the birth of Bahá’u’lláh in Ṭīhrán on 12 November 1817.

¹²⁴. A reference to the Íránian province of Ḳhurásán and neighboring areas, which include the city of ‘Ishqábád (Ashkhabad).

O Most Mighty Ocean! Sprinkle upon the nations that with which Thou hast been charged by Him Who is the Sovereign of Eternity, and adorn the temples of all the dwellers of the earth with the vesture of His laws through which all hearts will rejoice and all eyes be brightened.

Should anyone acquire one hundred mithqáls of gold, nineteen mithqáls thereof are God's and to be rendered unto Him,¹²⁵ the Fashioner of earth and heaven. Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of so great a bounty. This We have commanded you, though We are well able to dispense with you and with all who are in the heavens and on earth; in it, there are benefits and wisdoms beyond the ken of anyone but God, the Omniscient, the All-Informed. Say: By this means He hath desired to purify what ye possess and to enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can comprehend save those whom God hath willed. He, in truth, is the Beneficent, the Gracious, the Bountiful. O, people! Deal not faithlessly with the Right of God, nor, without His leave, make free with its disposal. Thus hath His commandment been established in the holy Tablets, and in this exalted Book. He who dealeth faithlessly with God shall in justice meet with faithlessness himself; he, however, who acteth in accordance with God's bidding shall receive a blessing from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Gracious, the Bestower, the Generous, the Ancient of Days. He, verily, hath willed for you that which is yet beyond your knowledge, but which shall be known to you when, after this fleeting life, your souls soar heavenwards and the trappings of your earthly joys are folded up. Thus admonisheth you He in Whose possession is the Guarded Tablet.

Various petitions have come before Our throne from the believers, concerning laws from God, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of all worlds. We have, in consequence, revealed this Holy Tablet and arrayed it with the mantle of His Law that haply the people may keep the commandments of their Lord.¹²⁶ Similar requests had been made of Us over several previous years but We had, in Our wisdom, withheld Our Pen until, in recent days, letters arrived from a

¹²⁵. This verse establishes Ḥuqúqu'lláh, the Right of God, the offering of a fixed portion of the value of the believer's possessions. This offering was made to Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God and then, following His Ascension, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of the Covenant. In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided that the Ḥuqúqu'lláh was to be offered *"through the Guardian of the Cause of God."* There now being no Guardian, it is offered through the Universal House of Justice as the Head of the Faith. This fund is used for the promotion of the Faith of God and its interests as well as for various philanthropic purposes. The offering of the Ḥuqúqu'lláh is a spiritual obligation, the fulfillment of which has been left to the conscience of each Bahá'í. While the community is reminded of the requirements of the law of Ḥuqúq, no believer may be approached individually to pay it. A number of items in Questions and Answers further elaborate this law. The payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh is based on the calculation of the value of the individual's possessions. If a person has possessions equal in value to at least nineteen mithqáls of gold (Q&A [8]), it is a spiritual obligation to pay nineteen percent of the total amount, once only, as Ḥuqúqu'lláh (Q&A [89]). Thereafter, whenever one's income, after all expenses have been paid, increases the value of one's possessions by the amount of at least nineteen mithqáls of gold, one is to pay nineteen percent of this increase, and so on for each further increase (Q&A [8], [90]). Certain categories of possessions, such as one's residence, are exempt from the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh (Q&A [8], [42], [95]), and specific provisions are outlined to cover cases of financial loss (Q&A [44], [45]), the failure of investments to yield a profit (Q&A [102]) and for the payment of Ḥuqúq in the event of the person's death (Q&A [9], [69], [80]). Extensive extracts from Tablets, Questions and Answers, and other Writings concerning the spiritual significance of Ḥuqúqu'lláh and the details of its application have been published in a compilation entitled *Ḥuqúqu'lláh*.

number of the friends, and We have therefore responded, through the power of truth, with that which shall quicken the hearts of men.

Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it.

The eye of My loving-kindness weepeth sore over you, inasmuch as ye have failed to recognize the One upon Whom ye have been calling in the daytime and in the night season, at even and at morn. Advance, O people, with snow-white faces and radiant hearts, unto the blest and crimson Spot,¹²⁷ wherein the Sadratu'l-Muntahá¹²⁸ is calling: "Verily, there is none other God beside Me, the Omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting!"

O ye leaders of religion! Who is the man amongst you that can rival Me in vision or insight? Where is he to be found that dareth to claim to be My equal in utterance or wisdom? No, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved.

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Dayspring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed. Could ye but discover the source whence the splendor of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed Seat of glory.

¹²⁶. "For a number of years," Bahá'u'lláh states in one of His Tablets, "*petitions reached the Most Holy Presence from various lands begging for the laws of God, but We held back the Pen ere the appointed time had come.*" Not until twenty years from the birth of His Prophetic Mission in the Sýáh-Çhál of Tīhrán had elapsed did Bahá'u'lláh reveal the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Repository of the laws of His Dispensation. Even after its revelation the Aqdas was withheld by Him for some time before it was sent to the friends in Persia. This divinely purposed delay in the revelation of the basic laws of God for this age, and the subsequent gradual implementation of their provisions, illustrate the principle of progressive revelation which applies even within the ministry of each Prophet.

¹²⁷.

This is a reference to the prison-city of 'Akká. In the Bahá'í Writings the word "crimson" is used in several allegorical and symbolic senses.

¹²⁸. Literally "the furthestmost Lote-Tree," translated by Shoghi Effendi as "*the Tree beyond which there is no passing.*" This is used as a symbol in Islám, for example in the accounts of Muḥammad's Night Journey, to mark the point in the heavens beyond which neither men nor angels can pass in their approach to God, and thus to delimit the bounds of divine knowledge as revealed to mankind. Hence it is often used in the Bahá'í Writings to designate the Manifestation of God Himself.

Say: This, verily, is the heaven in which the Mother Book¹²⁹ is treasured, could ye but comprehend it. He it is Who hath caused the Rock to shout, and the Burning Bush to lift up its voice, upon the Mount rising above the Holy Land, and proclaim: "The Kingdom is God's, the sovereign Lord of all, the All-Powerful, the Loving!"

We have not entered any school, nor read any of your dissertations. 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.

Whoso interpreteth what hath been sent down from the heaven of Revelation, and altereth its evident meaning,¹³⁰ he, verily, is of them that have perverted the Sublime Word of God and is of the lost ones in the Lucid Book.

It hath been enjoined upon you to pare your nails, to bathe yourselves each week in water that covereth your bodies, and to clean yourselves with whatsoever ye have formerly employed. Take heed lest through negligence ye fail to observe that which hath been prescribed unto you by Him Who is the Incomparable, the Gracious. Immerse yourselves in clean water; it is not permissible to bathe yourselves in water that hath already been used. See that ye approach not the public pools of Persian baths;¹³¹ whoso maketh his way toward such baths will smell their

¹²⁹. The term "Mother Book" is generally used to designate the central Book of a religious Dispensation. In the Qur'án and Islámic Ḥadīth, the term is used to describe the Qur'án itself. In the Bábí Dispensation, the Bayán is the Mother Book, and the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is the Mother Book of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. Further, the Guardian in a letter written on his behalf has stated that this concept can also be used as a "collective term indicating the body of the Teachings revealed by Bahá'u'lláh." This term is also used in a broader sense to signify the Divine Repository of Revelation.

¹³⁰. In several of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh affirms the distinction between allegorical verses, which are susceptible to interpretation, and those verses that relate to such subjects as the laws and ordinances, worship and religious observances, whose meanings are evident and which demand compliance on the part of the believers. Bahá'u'lláh designated 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His eldest Son, as His Successor and the Interpreter of His Teachings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His turn appointed His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to succeed Him as interpreter of the holy Writ and Guardian of the Cause. The interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi are considered divinely guided and are binding on the Bahá'ís.

The existence of authoritative interpretations does not preclude the individual from engaging in the study of the Teachings and thereby arriving at a personal interpretation or understanding. A clear distinction is, however, drawn in the Bahá'í Writings between authoritative interpretation and the understanding that each individual arrives at from a study of its Teachings. Individual interpretations based on a person's understanding of the Teachings constitute the fruit of man's rational power and may well contribute to a greater comprehension of the Faith. Such views, nevertheless, lack authority. In presenting their personal ideas, individuals are cautioned not to discard the authority of the revealed words, not to deny or contend with the authoritative interpretation, and not to engage in controversy; rather they should offer their thoughts as a contribution to knowledge, making it clear that their views are merely their own.

¹³¹.

Bahá'u'lláh prohibits the use of the pools found in the traditional public bathhouses of Persia. In these baths, it was the custom for many people to wash themselves in the same pool and for the water to be changed at infrequent intervals. Consequently, the water was discolored, befouled and unhygienic, and had a highly offensive stench.

fetid odor ere he entereth therein. Shun them, O people, and be not of those who ignominiously accept such vileness. In truth, they are as sinks of foulness and contamination, if ye be of them that apprehend. Avoid ye likewise the malodorous pools in the courtyards of Persian homes,¹³² and be ye of the pure and sanctified. Truly, We desire to behold you as manifestations of paradise on earth, that there may be diffused from you such fragrance as shall rejoice the hearts of the favored of God. If the bather, instead of entering the water, wash himself by pouring it upon his body, it shall be better for him and shall absolve him of the need for bodily immersion. The Lord, verily, hath willed, as a bounty from His presence, to make life easier for you that ye may be of those who are truly thankful.

It is forbidden you to wed your fathers' wives.¹³³ We shrink, for very shame, from treating of the subject of boys.¹³⁴ Fear ye the Merciful, O peoples of the world! Commit not that which is forbidden you in Our Holy Tablet, and be not of those who rove distractedly in the wilderness of their desires.

¹³². Most houses in Persia used to have a pool in their courtyard which served as a reservoir for water used for cleaning, washing and other domestic purposes. Since the water in the pool was stagnant and was not usually changed for weeks at a time, it tended to develop a very unpleasant odor.

¹³³. Marriage with one's stepmother is here explicitly prohibited. This prohibition also applies to marrying one's stepfather. Where Bahá'u'lláh has expressed a law between a man and a woman it applies *mutatis mutandis* as between a woman, and a man unless the context should make this impossible.

'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi confirmed that, while stepmothers are the only category of relatives mentioned in the text, this does not mean that all other unions within a family are permissible. Bahá'u'lláh states that it devolves upon the House of Justice to legislate "concerning the legitimacy or otherwise of marrying one's relatives" (Q&A [50]). 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written that the more distant the blood relationship between the couple, the better, since such marriages provide the basis for the physical well-being of humanity and are conducive to fellowship among mankind.

¹³⁴. The word translated here as "boys" has, in this context, in the Arabic original, the implication of pederasty. Shoghi Effendi has interpreted this reference as a prohibition on all homosexual relations.

The Bahá'í teachings on sexual morality center on marriage and the family as the bedrock of the whole structure of human society and are designed to protect and strengthen that divine institution. Bahá'í law thus restricts permissible sexual intercourse to that between a man and the woman to whom he is married.

In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi it is stated:

No matter how devoted and fine the love may be between people of the same sex, to let it find expression in sexual acts is wrong. To say that it is ideal is no excuse. Immorality of every sort is really forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh, and homosexual relationships He looks upon as such, besides being against nature. To be afflicted this way is a great burden to a conscientious soul. But through the advice and help of doctors, through a strong and determined effort, and through prayer, a soul can overcome this handicap.

Bahá'u'lláh makes provision for the Universal House of Justice to determine, according to the degree of the offense, penalties for adultery and sodomy (Q&A [49]).

To none is it permitted to mutter sacred verses before the public gaze as he walketh in the street or marketplace;¹³⁵ nay rather, if he wish to magnify the Lord, it behooveth him to do so in such places as have been erected for this purpose, or in his own home. This is more in keeping with sincerity and godliness. Thus hath the sun of Our commandment shone forth above the horizon of Our utterance. Blessed, then, be those who do Our bidding.

Unto everyone hath been enjoined the writing of a will.¹³⁶ The testator should head this document with the adornment of the Most Great Name,¹³⁷ bear witness therein unto the oneness of God in the Dayspring of His Revelation, and make mention, as he may wish, of that which is praiseworthy, so that it may be a testimony for him in the kingdoms of Revelation and Creation and a treasure with his Lord, the Supreme Protector, the Faithful.

All Feasts have attained their consummation in the two Most Great Festivals, and in the two other Festivals that fall on the twin days¹³⁸ the first of the Most Great Festivals being those days whereon the All-Merciful shed upon the whole of creation the effulgent glory of His most excellent Names and His most exalted Attributes, and the second being that day on which We raised up the One Who announced unto mankind the glad tidings of this Name, through which the dead have been resurrected and all who are in the heavens and on earth have been gathered together. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Ordainer, the Omniscient.

¹³⁵. This is an allusion to the practice of certain clerics and religious leaders of earlier Dispensations who, out of hypocrisy and affectation, and in order to win the praise of their followers, would ostentatiously mutter prayers in public places as a demonstration of their piety. Bahá'u'lláh forbids such behavior and stresses the importance of humility and genuine devotion to God.

¹³⁶. According to the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the individual has a duty to write a will and testament, and is free to dispose of his estate in whatever manner he chooses. Bahá'u'lláh affirms that in drawing up his will *"a person hath full jurisdiction over his property,"* since God has permitted the individual *"to deal with that which He hath bestowed upon him in whatever manner he may desire"* (Q&A [69]). Provisions are set out in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas for the distribution of inheritance in the case of intestacy.

¹³⁷. The Greatest Name of God can take various forms, all based on the word "Bahá." The Bahá'ís in the East have implemented this injunction of the Aqdas by heading their wills with such phrases as "O Thou Glory of the All-Glorious," "In the name of God, the All-Glorious" or "He is the All-Glorious" and the like.

¹³⁸. This passage establishes four great festivals of the Bahá'í year. The two designated by Bahá'u'lláh as *"the two Most Great Festivals"* are, first, the Festival of Ridván, which commemorates Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration of His Prophetic Mission in the Garden of Ridván in Baghdád during twelve days in April/May 1863 and is referred to by Him as *"the King of Festivals"* and, second, the Báb's Declaration, which occurred in May 1844 in Shíráz. The first, ninth and twelfth days of the Festival of Ridván are Holy Days (Q&A [1]), as is the day of the Declaration of the Báb. The *"two other Festivals"* are the anniversaries of the births of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. In the Muslim lunar calendar, these fall on consecutive days, the birth of Bahá'u'lláh on the second day of the month of Muḥarram 1233 A.H. (12 November 1817), and the birth of the Báb on the first day of the same month 1235 A.H. (20 October 1819), respectively. They are thus referred to as the *"Twin Birthdays"* and Bahá'u'lláh states that these two days are accounted as one in the sight of God (Q&A [2]). He states that, should they fall within the month of fasting, the command to fast shall not apply on those days (Q&A [36]). Given that the Bahá'í calendar is a solar calendar, it remains for the Universal House of Justice to determine whether the Twin Holy Birthdays are to be celebrated on a solar or lunar basis.

Happy the one who entereth upon the first day of the month of Bahá,¹³⁹ the day which God hath consecrated to this Great Name. And blessed be he who evidenceth on this day the bounties that God hath bestowed upon him; he, verily, is of those who show forth thanks to God through actions betokening the Lord's munificence which hath encompassed all the worlds. Say: This day, verily, is the crown of all the months and the source thereof, the day on which the breath of life is wafted over all created things. Great is the blessedness of him who greeteth it with radiance and joy. We testify that he is, in truth, among those who are blissful.

Say: The Most Great Festival is, indeed, the King of Festivals.¹⁴⁰ Call ye to mind, O people, the bounty which God hath conferred upon you. Ye were sunk in slumber, and lo! He aroused you by the reviving breezes of His Revelation and made known unto you His manifest and undeviating Path.

Resort ye, in times of sickness, to competent physicians; We have not set aside the use of material means, rather have We confirmed it through this Pen, which God hath made to be the Dawning-place of His shining and glorious Cause.

God had formerly laid upon each one of the believers the duty of offering before Our throne priceless gifts from among his possessions. Now, in token of Our gracious favor, We have absolved them of this obligation.¹⁴¹ He, of a truth, is the Most Generous, the All-Bountiful.

Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn,¹⁴² centering his thoughts on God, occupied with His remembrance, and supplicating His forgiveness, directeth his steps to the Maṣḥriqu'l-Aḍḥkár and, entering therein, seateth himself in silence to listen to the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Say: The Maṣḥriqu'l-Aḍḥkár is each and every building which hath been erected in cities and villages for the celebration of My praise. Such is the name by which it hath been designated before the throne of glory, were ye of those who understand.

¹³⁹. In the Bahá'í calendar, the first month of the year and the first day of each month are given the name "Bahá." The day of Bahá of the month of Bahá is thus the Bahá'í New Year, Naw-Rúz, which was ordained by the Báb as a festival and is here confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh. In addition to the seven Holy Days ordained in these passages of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Báb was also commemorated as a Holy Day in the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh and, as a corollary to this, 'Abdu'l-Bahá added the observance of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, making nine Holy Days in all. Two other anniversaries which are observed, but on which work is not suspended, are the Day of the Covenant and the anniversary of the Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. See the section on the Bahá'í calendar in *The Bahá'í World*, volume XVIII.

¹⁴⁰.

A reference to the Ridván Festival.

¹⁴¹. This passage abrogates a provision of the Bayán which decreed that all objects unparalleled of their kind should, upon the appearance of Him Whom God will make manifest, be rendered unto Him. The Báb explained that, since the Manifestation of God is beyond compare, whatever is peerless in its kind should rightfully be reserved for Him, unless He decrees otherwise.

¹⁴². With reference to attending dawn prayers in the Maṣḥriqu'l-Aḍḥkár, the Bahá'í House of Worship, Bahá'u'lláh has explained that, although the actual time specified in the Book of God is "the hour of dawn," it is acceptable at any time from "the earliest dawn of day, between dawn and sunrise, or even up to two hours after sunrise" (Q&A [15]).

They who recite the verses of the All-Merciful in the most melodious of tones will perceive in them that with which the sovereignty of earth and heaven can never be compared. From them, they will inhale the divine fragrance of My worlds — worlds which today none can discern save those who have been endowed with vision through this sublime, this beauteous Revelation. Say: These verses draw hearts that are pure unto those spiritual worlds that can neither be expressed in words nor intimated by allusion. Blessed be those who hearken.

Assist ye, O My people, My chosen servants who have arisen to make mention of Me among My creatures and to exalt My Word throughout My realm. These, truly, are the stars of the heaven of My loving providence and the lamps of My guidance unto all mankind. But he whose words conflict with that which hath been sent down in My Holy Tablets is not of Me. Beware lest ye follow any impious pretender. These Tablets are embellished with the seal of Him Who causeth the dawn to appear, Who lifteth up His voice between the heavens and the earth.¹⁴³ Lay hold on this Sure Handle and on the Cord of My mighty and unassailable Cause.

The Lord hath granted leave to whosoever desireth it that he be instructed in the divers tongues of the world that he may deliver the Message of the Cause of God throughout the East and throughout the West, that he make mention of Him amidst the kindreds and peoples of the world in such wise that hearts may revive and the moldering bone be quickened.

It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away.¹⁴⁴ Nay, rather it behooveth him to comport himself in a manner worthy of the human station, and not in accordance with the misdeeds of every heedless and wavering soul.

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¹⁴³. Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly affirms the absolute integrity of His Writings as the Word of God. Some of His Tablets also bear the mark of one of His seals. *The Bahá'í World*, volume V, p. 4, contains a photograph of a number of Bahá'u'lláh's seals.

¹⁴⁴. There are many references in the Bahá'í Writings which prohibit the use of wine and other intoxicating drinks and which describe the deleterious effect of such intoxicants on the individual. In one of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh states:

Beware lest ye exchange the Wine of God for your own wine, for it will stupefy your minds, and turn your faces away from the Countenance of God, the All-Glorious, the Peerless, the Inaccessible. Approach it not, for it hath been forbidden unto you by the behest of God, the Exalted, the Almighty.

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that the Aqdas prohibits “both light and strong drinks,” and He states that the reason for prohibiting the use of alcoholic drinks is because “alcohol leadeth the mind astray and causeth the weakening of the body.”

Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, states that this prohibition includes not only the consumption of wine but of “everything that deranges the mind,” and he clarifies that the use of alcohol is permitted only when it constitutes part of a medical treatment which is implemented “under the advice of a competent and conscientious physician, who may have to prescribe it for the cure of some special ailment.”

Adorn your heads with the garlands of trustworthiness and fidelity, your hearts with the attire of the fear of God, your tongues with absolute truthfulness, your bodies with the vesture of courtesy. These are in truth seemly adornings unto the temple of man, if ye be of them that reflect. Cling, O ye people of Bahá, to the cord of servitude unto God, the True One, for thereby your stations shall be made manifest, your names written and preserved, your ranks raised and your memory exalted in the Preserved Tablet. Beware lest the dwellers on earth hinder you from this glorious and exalted station. Thus have We exhorted you in most of Our Epistles and now in this, Our Holy Tablet, above which hath beamed the Daystar of the Laws of the Lord, your God, the Powerful, the All-Wise.

When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.¹⁴⁵

Consider the pettiness of men's minds. They ask for that which injureth them and cast away the thing that profiteth them. They are, indeed, of those that are far astray. We find some men desiring liberty, and priding themselves therein. Such men are in the depths of ignorance.

Liberty must, in the end, lead to sedition, whose flames none can quench. Thus warneth you He Who is the Reckoner, the All-Knowing. Know ye that the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. That which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief maker. Liberty causeth man to overstep the bounds of propriety, and to infringe on the dignity of his station. It debaseth him to the level of extreme depravity and wickedness.

Regard men as a flock of sheep that need a shepherd for their protection. This, verily, is the truth, the certain truth. We approve of liberty in certain circumstances and refuse to sanction it in others. We, verily, are the All-Knowing.

Say: True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty. Happy is the man that hath apprehended the Purpose of God in whatever He hath revealed from the Heaven of His Will that pervadeth all created things. Say: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.

¹⁴⁵. Bahá'u'lláh here alludes to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as His Successor and calls upon the believers to turn towards Him. In the Book of the Covenant, His Will and Testament, Bahá'u'lláh discloses the intention of this verse. He states: *"The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch."* The *"Most Mighty Branch"* is one of the titles conferred by Bahá'u'lláh on 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In the Bayán it had been forbidden you to ask Us questions.¹⁴⁶ The Lord hath now relieved you of this prohibition, that ye may be free to ask what you need to ask, but not such idle questions as those on which the men of former times were wont to dwell. Fear God, and be ye of the righteous! Ask ye that which shall be of profit to you in the Cause of God and His dominion, for the portals of His tender compassion have been opened before all who dwell in heaven and on earth.

The number of months in a year, appointed in the Book of God, is nineteen.¹⁴⁷ Of these, the first hath been adorned with this Name which overshadoweth the whole of creation.¹⁴⁸

The Lord hath decreed that the dead should be interred in coffins¹⁴⁹ made of crystal, of hard, resistant stone, or of wood that is both fine and durable, and that graven rings should be placed upon their fingers. He, verily, is the Supreme Ordainer, the One apprised of all.

The inscription on these rings should read, for men: “Unto God belongeth all that is in the heavens and on the earth and whatsoever is between them, and He, in truth, hath knowledge of

^{146.} The Báb forbade His followers to ask questions of Him Whom God will make manifest (Bahá'u'lláh), unless their questions were submitted in writing and pertained to subjects worthy of His lofty station. See *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*.

Bahá'u'lláh removes this prohibition of the Báb. He invites the believers to ask such questions as they “need to ask,” and He cautions them to refrain from posing “idle questions” of the kind which preoccupied “the men of former times.”

^{147.} The Bahá'í year, in accordance with the Badí' calendar, consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, with the addition of certain intercalary days (four in an ordinary year and five in a leap year) between the eighteenth and nineteenth months in order to adjust the calendar to the solar year. The Báb named the months after certain attributes of God. The Bahá'í New Year, Naw-Rúz, is astronomically fixed, coinciding with the March equinox. For further details, including the names of the days of the week and the months, see the section on the Bahá'í calendar in *The Bahá'í World*, volume XVIII.

^{148.}

In the Persian Bayán, the Báb bestowed the name “Bahá” on the first month of the year.

^{149.} In the Bayán, the Báb prescribed that the deceased should be interred in a coffin made of crystal or polished stone. Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, explained that the significance of this provision was to show respect for the human body which “was once exalted by the immortal soul of man.” In brief, the Bahá'í law for the burial of the dead states that it is forbidden to carry the body for more than one hour's journey from the place of death; that the body should be wrapped in a shroud of silk or cotton, and on its finger should be placed a ring bearing the inscription “*I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate*”; and that the coffin should be of crystal, stone or hard fine wood. A specific Prayer for the Dead is ordained, to be said before interment. As affirmed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Guardian, this law precludes cremation of the dead. The formal prayer and the ring are meant to be used for those who have attained the age of maturity, i.e. 15 years of age (Q&A [70]). With regard to the material from which the coffin is to be made, the spirit of the law is that coffins should be of as durable a material as possible. Hence, the Universal House of Justice has explained that, in addition to the materials specified in the Aqdas, there is no objection to using the hardest wood available or concrete for the casket. For the present, the Bahá'ís are left free to make their own choices in this matter.

all things”; and for women: “Unto God belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them, and He, in truth, is potent over all things.” These are the verses that were revealed aforetime, but lo, the Point of the Bayán¹⁵⁰ now calleth out, exclaiming, “O Best-Beloved of the worlds! Reveal Thou in their stead such words as will waft the fragrance of Thy gracious favors over all mankind. We have announced unto everyone that one single word from Thee excelleth all that hath been sent down in the Bayán. Thou, indeed, hast power to do what pleaseth Thee. Deprive not Thy servants of the overflowing bounties of the ocean of Thy mercy! Thou, in truth, art He Whose grace is infinite.” Behold, We have hearkened to His call, and now fulfill His wish. He, verily, is the Best-Beloved, the Answerer of prayers. If the following verse, which hath at this moment been sent down by God, be engraved upon the burial rings of both men and women, it shall be better for them; We, of a certainty, are the Supreme Ordainer: “I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate.” Thus doth the Lord single out whomsoever He desireth for a bounty from His presence. He is, in very truth, the God of might and power.

The Lord hath decreed, moreover, that the deceased should be enfolded in five sheets of silk or cotton.¹⁵¹ For those whose means are limited, a single sheet of either fabric will suffice. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. It is forbidden you to transport the body of the deceased a greater distance than one hour’s journey from the city;¹⁵² rather should it be interred, with radiance and serenity, in a nearby place.

God hath removed the restrictions on travel that had been imposed in the Bayán.¹⁵³ He, verily, is the Unconstrained; He doeth as He pleaseth and ordaineth whatsoever He willeth.

¹⁵⁰. The “*Point of the Bayán*” is one of the titles by which the Báb referred to Himself.

¹⁵¹. In the Bayán, the Báb specified that the body of the deceased should be wrapped in five sheets of silk or cotton. Bahá’u’lláh confirmed this provision and added the stipulation that for “*those whose means are limited, a single sheet of either fabric will suffice.*”

When asked whether the “*five sheets*” mentioned in the law referred to “*five full-length shrouds*” or “*five cloths which were hitherto customarily used*,” Bahá’u’lláh responded that the intention is the “*use of five cloths*” (Q&A [56]).

Concerning the way in which the body should be wrapped, there is nothing in the Bahá’í Writings to define how the wrapping of the body is to be done, either when “*five cloths*” are used or only “*a single sheet*.” At present, the Bahá’ís are free to use their judgment in the matter.

¹⁵². The intention of this command is to limit the duration of the journey to one hour’s time, irrespective of the means of transport that are chosen to carry the body to the burial site. Bahá’u’lláh affirms that the sooner the burial takes place, “*the more fitting and acceptable will it be*” (Q&A [16]).

The place of death may be taken to encompass the city or town in which the person passes away, and therefore the one hour’s journey may be calculated from the city limits to the place of burial. The spirit of Bahá’u’lláh’s law is for the deceased to be buried near where he or she dies.

¹⁵³. The Báb decreed certain restrictions on travel which were to remain in force until the advent of the Promised One of the Bayán, at which time the believers were instructed to set out, even if on foot, to meet Him, since the attainment of His presence was the fruit and purpose of their very existence.

O peoples of the world! Give ear unto the call of Him Who is the Lord of Names, Who proclaimeth unto you from His habitation in the Most Great Prison: "Verily, no God is there but Me, the Powerful, the Mighty, the All-Subduing, the Most Exalted, the Omniscient, the All-Wise." In truth, there is no God but Him, the Omnipotent Ruler of the worlds. Were it His Will, He would, through but a single word proceeding from His presence, lay hold on all mankind. Beware lest ye hesitate in your acceptance of this Cause — a Cause before which the Concourse on high and the dwellers of the Cities of Names have bowed down. Fear God, and be not of those who are shut out as by a veil. Burn ye away the veils with the fire of My love, and dispel ye the mists of vain imaginings by the power of this Name through which We have subdued the entire creation.

Raise up and exalt the two Houses in the Twin Hallowed Spots, and the other sites wherein the throne of your Lord, the All-Merciful, hath been established.¹⁵⁴ Thus commandeth you the Lord of every understanding heart.

Be watchful lest the concerns and preoccupations of this world prevent you from observing that which hath been enjoined upon you by Him Who is the Mighty, the Faithful. Be ye the embodiments of such steadfastness amidst mankind that ye will not be kept back from God by the doubts of those who disbelieved in Him when He manifested Himself, invested with a mighty sovereignty. Take heed lest ye be prevented by aught that hath been recorded in the Book from hearkening unto this, the Living Book,¹⁵⁵ Who proclaimeth the truth: "Verily, there is no God but Me, the Most Excellent, the All-Praised." Look ye with the eye of equity upon Him Who hath descended from the heaven of Divine will and power, and be not of those who act unjustly.

¹⁵⁴. Bahá'u'lláh identifies the "two Houses" as His House in Baghdád, designated by Him as the "Most Great House," and the House of the Báb in Shíráz, both of which have been ordained by Him as sites of pilgrimage. (See Q&A [29], [32])

Shoghi Effendi explained that "*the other sites wherein the throne of your Lord ... hath been established*" refers to those places where the Person of the Manifestation of God has resided. Bahá'u'lláh states that "*the people of the areas where these are situated may choose to preserve either each house*" wherein He resided, "*or one of them*" (Q&A [32]). Bahá'í institutions have identified, documented, and where possible, acquired and restored a number of the historical sites associated with the Twin Manifestations.

¹⁵⁵. The "Book" is the record of the revealed Word of the Manifestations of God. The "Living Book" is a reference to the Person of the Manifestation.

These words contain an allusion to a statement of the Báb in the Persian Bayán about the "Living Book," which He identifies as Him Whom God will make manifest. In one of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh Himself states: "*The Book of God hath been sent down in the form of this Youth.*"

In this verse of the Aqdas, and again in paragraph [168] of the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh refers to Himself as the "Living Book." He cautions the "followers of every other Faith" against seeking "reasons in their Holy Books" for refuting the utterances of the "Living Book." He admonishes the people not to allow what has been recorded in the "Book" to prevent them from recognizing His Station and from holding fast to what is in this new Revelation.

Call then to mind these words which have streamed forth, in tribute to this Revelation, from the Pen of Him Who was My Herald,¹⁵⁶ and consider what the hands of the oppressors have wrought throughout My days. Truly they are numbered with the lost. He said: "Should ye attain the presence of Him Whom We shall make manifest, beseech ye God, in His bounty, to grant that He might deign to seat Himself upon your couches, for that act in itself would confer upon you matchless and surpassing honor. Should He drink a cup of water in your homes, this would be of greater consequence for you than your proffering unto every soul, nay unto every created thing, the water of its very life. Know this, O ye My servants!"

Such are the words with which My Forerunner hath extolled My Being, could ye but understand. Whoso reflecteth upon these verses, and realizeth what hidden pearls have been enshrined within them, will, by the righteousness of God, perceive the fragrance of the All-Merciful wafting from the direction of this Prison and will, with his whole heart, hasten unto Him with such ardent longing that the hosts of earth and heaven would be powerless to deter him. Say: This is a Revelation around which every proof and testimony doth circle. Thus hath it been sent down by your Lord, the God of Mercy, if ye be of them that judge aright. Say: This is the very soul of all Scriptures which hath been breathed into the Pen of the Most High, causing all created beings to be dumbfounded, save only those who have been enraptured by the gentle breezes of My loving-kindness and the sweet savors of My bounties which have pervaded the whole of creation.

O people of the Bayán! Fear ye the Most Merciful and consider what He hath revealed in another passage. He said: "The Qiblih is indeed He Whom God will make manifest; whenever He moveth, it moveth until He shall come to rest."¹⁵⁷ Thus was it set down by the Supreme Ordainer when He desired to make mention of this Most Great Beauty. Meditate on this, O people, and be not of them that wander distraught in the wilderness of error. If ye reject Him at the bidding of your idle fancies, where then is the Qiblih to which ye will turn, O assemblage of the heedless? Ponder ye this verse, and judge equitably before God, that haply ye may glean the pearls of mysteries from the ocean that surgeth in My Name, the All-Glorious, the Most High.

Let none, in this Day, hold fast to aught save that which hath been manifested in this Revelation. Such is the decree of God, aforetime and hereafter — a decree wherewith the Scriptures of the Messengers of old have been adorned. Such is the admonition of the Lord, aforetime and hereafter — an admonition wherewith the preamble to the Book of Life hath been embellished, did ye but perceive it. Such is the commandment of the Lord, aforetime and hereafter; beware lest ye choose instead the part of ignominy and abasement. Naught shall avail you in this Day but God, nor is there any refuge to flee to save Him, the Omniscient, the All-Wise. Whoso hath known Me hath known the Goal of all desire, and whoso hath turned unto Me hath turned unto the Object of all adoration. Thus hath it been set forth in the Book, and thus hath it been decreed by God, the Lord of all worlds. To read but one of the verses of My Revelation is better than to peruse the Scriptures of both the former and latter generations. This is the Utterance of the All-Merciful, would that ye had ears to hear! Say: This is the essence of knowledge, did ye but understand.

¹⁵⁶. The "*tribute*" that Bahá'u'lláh quotes in this passage is from the Arabic Bayán.

¹⁵⁷. For a discussion of this verse see notes [7] and [8].

And now consider what hath been revealed in yet another passage, that perchance ye may forsake your own concepts and set your faces towards God, the Lord of being. He¹⁵⁸ hath said: "It is unlawful to enter into marriage save with a believer in the Bayán. Should only one party to a marriage embrace this Cause, his or her possessions will become unlawful to the other,¹⁵⁹ until such time as the latter hath converted. This law, however, will only take effect after the exaltation of the Cause of Him Whom We shall manifest in truth, or of that which hath already been made manifest in justice. Ere this, ye are at liberty to enter into wedlock as ye wish, that haply by this means ye may exalt the Cause of God." Thus hath the Nightingale sung with sweet melody upon the celestial bough, in praise of its Lord, the All-Merciful. Well is it with them that hearken?

O people of the Bayán, I adjure you by your Lord, the God of mercy, to look with the eye of fairness upon this utterance which hath been sent down through the power of truth, and not to be of those who see the testimony of God yet reject and deny it. They, in truth, are of those who will assuredly perish. The Point of the Bayán¹⁶⁰ hath explicitly made mention in this verse of the exaltation of My Cause before His own Cause; unto this will testify every just and understanding mind. As ye can readily witness in this day, its exaltation is such as none can deny save those whose eyes are drunken in this mortal life and whom a humiliating chastisement awaiteth in the life to come.

Say: By the righteousness of God! I, verily, am His¹⁶¹ Best-Beloved; and at this moment He listeneth to these verses descending from the Heaven of Revelation and bewaileth the wrongs ye have committed in these days. Fear God, and join not with the aggressor. Say: O people, should ye choose to disbelieve in Him,¹⁶² refrain at least from rising up against Him. By God! Sufficient are the hosts of tyranny that are leagued against Him!

158. The Báb

159. The passage of the Bayán which Bahá'u'lláh here quotes draws the attention of the believers to the imminence of the coming of "Him Whom God will make manifest." Its prohibition of marriage with a non-Bábí and its provision that the property of a husband or wife who embraced the Faith could not lawfully pass to the non-Bábí spouse were explicitly held in abeyance by the Báb, and were subsequently annulled by Bahá'u'lláh before they could come into effect. Bahá'u'lláh, in quoting this law, points to the fact that, in revealing it, the Báb had clearly anticipated the possibility that the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh would rise to prominence before that of the Báb Himself.

In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi points out that the Bayán "should be regarded primarily as a eulogy of the Promised One rather than a code of laws and ordinances designed to be a permanent guide to future generations." "Designedly severe in the rules and regulations it imposed," he continues, "revolutionizing in the principles it instilled, calculated to awaken from their age-long torpor the clergy and the people, and to administer a sudden and fatal blow to obsolete and corrupt institutions, it proclaimed, through its drastic provisions, the advent of the anticipated Day, the Day when 'the Summoner shall summon to a stern business,' when He will 'demolish whatever hath been before Him, even as the Apostle of God demolished the ways of those that preceded Him'"

160. One of the titles of the Báb.

161. The Báb's

162. Bahá'u'lláh

Verily, He¹⁶³ revealed certain laws so that, in this Dispensation, the Pen of the Most High might have no need to move in aught but the glorification of His own transcendent Station and His most effulgent Beauty. Since, however, We have wished to evidence Our bounty unto you, We have, through the power of truth, set forth these laws with clarity and mitigated what We desire you to observe. He, verily, is the Munificent, the Generous.

He¹⁶⁴ hath previously made known unto you that which would be uttered by this Dayspring of Divine wisdom. He said, and He speaketh the truth: “He¹⁶⁵ is the One Who will under all conditions proclaim: ‘Verily, there is none other God besides Me,¹⁶⁶ the One, the Incomparable, the Omniscient, the All-Informed.’” This is a station which God hath assigned exclusively to this sublime, this unique and wondrous Revelation. This is a token of His bounteous favor if ye be of

163. The Báb

164. The Báb

165. Bahá'u'lláh

166. The Bahá'í Writings contain many passages that elucidate the nature of the Manifestation and His relationship to God. Bahá'u'lláh underlines the unique and transcendent nature of the Godhead. He explains that *“since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one True God with His creation”* God ordains that *“in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven.”* This *“mysterious and ethereal Being,”* the Manifestation of God, has a human nature which pertains to *“the world of matter”* and a spiritual nature *“born of the substance of God Himself.”* He is also endowed with a *“double station”*:

The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself ... The second station is the human station, exemplified by the following verses: “I am but a man like you.” “Say, praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?”

Bahá'u'lláh also affirms that, in the spiritual realm, there is an *“essential unity”* between all the Manifestations of God. They all reveal the *“Beauty of God,”* manifest His names and attributes, and give utterance to His Revelation. In this regard, He states:

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: “I am God,” He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world...

While the Manifestations reveal the names and attributes of God and are the means by which humanity has access to the knowledge of God and His Revelation, Shoghi Effendi states that the Manifestations should *“never ... be identified with that invisible Reality, the Essence of Divinity itself.”* In relation to Bahá'u'lláh, the Guardian wrote that the *“human temple that has been the vehicle of so overpowering a Revelation”* is not to be identified with the *“Reality”* of God.

Concerning the uniqueness of Bahá'u'lláh's station and the greatness of His Revelation, Shoghi Effendi affirms that the prophetic statements concerning the *“Day of God,”* found in the Sacred Scriptures of past Dispensations, are fulfilled by the advent of Bahá'u'lláh:

To Israel, He was neither more nor less than the incarnation of the *“Everlasting Father,”* the *“Lord of Hosts”* come down *“with ten thousands of saints”*; to Christendom Christ returned *“in the glory of the Father”*; to

them who comprehend, and a sign of His irresistible decree. This is His Most Great Name, His Most Exalted Word, and the Dayspring of His Most Excellent Titles if ye could understand. Nay more, through Him every Fountainhead, every Dawning-place of Divine guidance is made manifest. Reflect, O people, on that which hath been sent down in truth; ponder thereon, and be not of the transgressors.

Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that, they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God. Beware lest, amidst men, the flame of foolish ignorance overpower you. All things proceed from God, and unto Him, they return. He is the source of all things, and in Him, all things are ended.

Take heed that ye enter no house in the absence of its owner, except with his permission. Comport yourselves with propriety under all conditions, and be not numbered with the wayward.

It hath been enjoined upon you to purify your means of sustenance and other such things through payment of Zakát.¹⁶⁷ Thus hath it been prescribed in this exalted Tablet by Him Who is the Revealer of verses. We shall if it be God's will and purpose, set forth ere long the measure of its assessment. He, verily, expoundeth whatsoever He desireth by virtue of His own knowledge, and He, of a truth, is Omniscient and All-Wise.

Shí'ah Islám the return of the Imám Ḥusayn; to Sunnī Islám the descent of the "Spirit of God" (Jesus Christ); to the Zoroastrians the promised Sháh-Bahrám; to the Hindus the reincarnation of Krishna; to the Buddhists the fifth Buddha.

Bahá'u'lláh describes the station of "Divinity" which He shares with all the Manifestations of God as

...the station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God. Divinity, whenever I mention it, indicateth My complete and absolute self-effacement. This is the station in which I have no control over mine own weal or woe nor over my life nor over my resurrection.

And, regarding His own relationship to God, He testifies:

When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things "verily I am God"; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!

¹⁶⁷. Zakát is referred to in the Qur'án as a regular charity binding upon Muslims. In due course, the concept evolved into a form of alms tax which imposed the obligation to give a fixed portion of certain categories of income, beyond specified limits, for the relief of the poor, for various charitable purposes, and to aid the Faith of God. The limit of exemption varied for different commodities, as did the percentage payable on the portion assessable.

Bahá'u'lláh states that the Bahá'í law of Zakát follows "what hath been revealed in the Qur'án" (Q&A [107]). Since such issues as the limits for exemption, the categories of income concerned, the frequency of payments, and the scale of rates for the various categories of Zakát are not mentioned in the Qur'án, these matters will have to be set forth in the future by the Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi has indicated that pending such legislation the believers should, according to their means and possibilities, make regular contributions to the Bahá'í Fund.

It is unlawful to beg, and it is forbidden to give to him who beggeth.¹⁶⁸ All have been enjoined to earn a living, and as for those who are incapable of doing so, it is incumbent on the Deputies of God and on the wealthy to make adequate provision for them. Keep ye the statutes and commandments of God; nay, guard them as ye would your very eyes, and be not of those who suffer grievous loss.

Ye have been forbidden in the Book of God to engage in contention and conflict, to strike another, or to commit similar acts whereby hearts and souls may be saddened. A fine of nineteen mithqáls of gold had formerly been prescribed by Him Who is the Lord of all mankind for anyone who was the cause of sadness to another;¹⁶⁹ in this Dispensation, however, He hath absolved you thereof and exhorteth you to show forth righteousness and piety. Such is the commandment which He hath enjoined upon you in this resplendent Tablet. Wish not for others what ye wish not for yourselves; fear God, and be not of the prideful. Ye are all created out of water, and unto dust shall ye return. Reflect upon the end that awaiteth you, and walk not in the ways of the oppressor. Give ear unto the verses of God which He Who is the sacred Lote-Tree¹⁷⁰ reciteth unto you. They are assuredly the infallible balance, established by God, the Lord of this world and the next. Through them, the soul of man is caused to wing its flight towards the Dayspring of Revelation, and the heart of every true believer is suffused with light. Such are the laws which God hath enjoined upon you, such His commandments prescribed unto you in His Holy Tablet; obey them with joy and gladness, for this is best for you, did ye but know.

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide.¹⁷¹ 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. Pride not yourselves on much reading of the verses or on a multitude of pious acts by night and day; for were a man to read a single verse with joy and

¹⁶⁸. In a Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expounds the meaning of this verse. He states that *"mendicancy is forbidden and that giving charity to people who take up begging as their profession is also prohibited."* He further points out in that same Tablet: *"The object is to uproot mendicancy altogether. However, if a person is incapable of earning a living, is stricken by dire poverty or becometh helpless, then it is incumbent on the wealthy or the Deputies to provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence ... By 'Deputies' is meant the representatives of the people, that is to say the members of the House of Justice."* The prohibition against giving charity to people who beg does not preclude individuals and Spiritual Assemblies from extending financial assistance to the poor and needy or from providing them with opportunities to acquire such skills as would enable them to earn a livelihood.

¹⁶⁹. Bahá'u'lláh abrogates the law of the Persian Bayán concerning the payment of a fine in reparation for causing sadness to one's neighbor.

¹⁷⁰. The *"sacred Lote-Tree"* is a reference to the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, the *"Tree beyond which there is no passing"*. It is used here symbolically to designate Bahá'u'lláh.

¹⁷¹. Bahá'u'lláh states that the essential *"requisite"* for reciting *"the verses of God"* is the *"eagerness and love"* of the believers to *"read the Word of God"* (Q&A [68]).

With regard to the definition of *"verses of God,"* Bahá'u'lláh states that it refers to *"all that hath been sent down from the Heaven of Divine Utterance."* Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written to one of the believers in the East, has clarified that the term *"verses of God"* does not include the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; he has likewise indicated that this term does not apply to his own writings.

radiance it would be better for him than to read with lassitude all the Holy Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Read ye the sacred verses in such measure that ye be not overcome by languor and despondency. Lay not upon your souls that which will weary them and weigh them down, but rather what will lighten and uplift them, so that they may soar on the wings of the Divine verses towards the Dawning-place of His manifest signs; this will draw you nearer to God, did ye but comprehend.

Teach your children the verses revealed from the heaven of majesty and power, so that, in most melodious tones, they may recite the Tablets of the All-Merciful in the alcoves within the Maṣḥriqu'l-Aḡhkárs. Whoever hath been transported by the rapture born of adoration for My Name, the Most Compassionate will recite the verses of God in such wise as to captivate the hearts of those yet wrapped in slumber. Well is it with him who hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the utterance of his merciful Lord in My Name — a Name through which every lofty and majestic mountain hath been reduced to dust.

Ye have been enjoined to renew the furnishings of your homes after the passing of each nineteen years;¹⁷² thus hath it been ordained by One Who is Omniscient and All-Perceiving. He, verily, is desirous of refinement, both for you yourselves and for all that ye possess; lay not aside the fear of God and be not of the negligent. Whoso findeth that his means are insufficient to this purpose hath been excused by God, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bounteous.

Wash your feet¹⁷³ once every day in summer, and once every three days during winter.

Should anyone wax angry with you, respond to him with gentleness; and should anyone upbraid you, forbear to upbraid him in return, but leave him to himself and put your trust in God, the omnipotent Avenger, the Lord of might and justice.

Ye have been prohibited from making use of pulpits. Whoso wisheth to recite unto you the verses of his Lord, let him sit on a chair placed upon a dais,¹⁷⁴ that he may make mention of God,

¹⁷². Bahá'u'lláh confirms the injunction in the Arabic Bayán regarding the renewal, every nineteen years, of the furnishings of one's home, provided one is able to do so. 'Abdu'l-Bahá relates this ordinance to the promotion of refinement and cleanliness. He explains that the purpose of the law is that one should change those furnishings that become old, lose their luster and provoke repugnance. It does not apply to such things as rare or treasured articles, antiques or jewelry.

¹⁷³. The believers are exhorted in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas to bathe regularly, to wear clean clothes and generally to be the essence of cleanliness and refinement. The Synopsis and Codification, section IV.D.3.y.i.-vii., summarizes the relevant provisions. In relation to the washing of the feet, Bahá'u'lláh states that it is preferable to use warm water; however, washing in cold water is also permissible (Q&A [97]).

¹⁷⁴. These provisions have their antecedent in the Persian Bayán. The Báb forbade the use of pulpits for the delivery of sermons and the reading of the Text. He specified, instead, that to enable all to hear the Word of God clearly, a chair for the speaker should be placed upon a platform.

In comments on this law, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi have made it clear that in the Maṣḥriqu'l-Aḡhkár (where sermons are prohibited and only the words of Holy Scripture may be read) the reader may stand or sit, and if necessary to be better heard, may use a low movable platform, but that no pulpit is permitted. In the case of meetings in places other than the Maṣḥriqu'l-Aḡhkár, it is also permissible for the reader or speaker to sit or stand, and to use a platform. In one of His Tablets, when reiterating the prohibition of the

his Lord, and the Lord of all mankind. It is pleasing to God that ye should seat yourselves on chairs and benches as a mark of honor for the love ye bear for Him and for the Manifestation of His glorious and resplendent Cause.

Gambling¹⁷⁵ and the use of opium have been forbidden unto you. Eschew them both, O people, and be not of those who transgress. Beware of using any substance that induceth sluggishness and torpor¹⁷⁶ in the human temple and inflicteth harm upon the body. We, verily, desire for you naught save what shall profit you, and to this bear witness all created things had ye but ears to hear.

use of pulpits in any location, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stressed that when Bahá'ís deliver their speeches in gatherings, they are to do so in an attitude of utmost humility and self-abnegation.

¹⁷⁵. The activities that are included in this prohibition have not been outlined in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. As both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi have indicated, it is left to the Universal House of Justice to specify the details of this prohibition. In response to questions about whether lotteries, betting on such things as horse races and football games, bingo, and the like, are included under the prohibition of gambling, the Universal House of Justice has indicated that this is a matter that will be considered in detail in the future. In the meantime, the Assemblies and individuals are counseled not to make an issue of these matters and to leave it to the conscience of the individual believers.

The House of Justice has ruled that it is not appropriate for funds for the Faith to be raised through lotteries, raffles, and games of chance.

¹⁷⁶. This prohibition of the use of opium is reiterated by Bahá'u'lláh in the final paragraph of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. In this connection, Shoghi Effendi stated that one of the requirements for "a chaste and holy life" is "total abstinence ... from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs." Heroin, ḥaṣhīsh and other derivatives of cannabis such as marijuana, as well as hallucinogenic agents such as LSD, peyote and similar substances, are regarded as falling under this prohibition.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has written:

As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us from the punishment He inflicteth on the user. According to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, it is forbidden, and its use is utterly condemned. Reason showeth that smoking opium is a kind of insanity, and experience attesteth that the user is completely cut off from the human kingdom. May God protect all against the perpetration of an act so hideous as this, an act which layeth in ruins the very foundation of what it is to be human, and which causeth the user to be dispossessed for ever and ever. For opium fasteneth on the soul so that the user's conscience dieth, his mind is blotted away, his perceptions are eroded. It turneth the living into the dead. It quencheth the natural heat. No greater harm can be conceived than that which opium inflicteth. Fortunate are they who never even speak the name of it; then think how wretched is the user.

O ye lovers of God! In this, the cycle of Almighty God, violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned. It is, however, mandatory that the use of opium be prevented by any means whatsoever, that perchance the human race may be delivered from this most powerful of plagues. And otherwise, woe and misery to whoso falleth short of his duty to his Lord.

In one of His Tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stated concerning opium: "the user, the buyer and the seller are all

Whensoever ye be invited to a banquet or festive occasion, respond with joy and gladness, and whoever fulfilleth his promise will be safe from reproof. This is a Day on which each of God's wise decrees hath been expounded.

Behold, the "mystery of the Great Reversal in the Sign of the Sovereign"¹⁷⁷ hath now been made manifest. Well is it with him whom God hath aided to recognize the "Six" raised up by virtue of this "Upright Alif";¹⁷⁸ he, verily, is of those whose faith is true. How many the outwardly pious who have turned away, and how many the wayward who have drawn nigh, exclaiming: "All praise be to Thee, O Thou the Desire of the worlds!" In truth, it is in the hand of God to give what He willeth to whomsoever He willeth, and to withhold what He pleaseth from whomsoever He may wish. He knoweth the inner secrets of the hearts and the meaning hidden in a mocker's wink. How

deprived of the bounty and grace of God."
In yet another Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written:

Regarding ḥaṣhīsh, you have pointed out that some Persians have become habituated to its use. Gracious God! This is the worst of all intoxicants, and its prohibition is explicitly revealed. Its use causeth the disintegration of thought and the complete torpor of the soul. How could anyone seek the fruit of the infernal tree, and by partaking of it, be led to exemplify the qualities of a monster? How could one use this forbidden drug, and thus deprive himself of the blessings of the All-Merciful?

Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity, but this opium, this foul fruit of the infernal tree, and this wicked ḥaṣhīsh extinguish the mind, freeze the spirit, petrify the soul, waste the body and leave man frustrated and lost.

It should be noted that the above prohibition against taking certain classes of drugs does not forbid their use when prescribed by qualified physicians as part of a medical treatment.

¹⁷⁷. Ṣhaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í (1753–1831), who was the founder of the Ṣhaykhí School and the first of the "twin luminaries that heralded the advent of the Faith of the Báb," prophesied that at the appearance of the Promised One all things would be reversed, the last would be first, the first last. Bahá'u'lláh in one of His Tablets refers to the "symbol and allusion" of the "mystery of the Great Reversal in the Sign of the Sovereign." He states: "Through this reversal He hath caused the exalted to be abased and the abased to be exalted," and He recalls that "in the days of Jesus, it was those who were distinguished for their learning, the men of letters and religion, who denied Him, whilst humble fisherman made haste to gain admittance into the Kingdom" (see also note [172]). For additional information about Ṣhaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í see *The Dawn-Breakers*, chapters 1 and 10.

¹⁷⁸. In his writings, Ṣhaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í placed great emphasis on the Arabic letter "Váv." In *The Dawn-Breakers*, Nabíl states that this letter "symbolized for the Báb the advent of a new cycle of Divine Revelation, and has since been alluded to by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in such passages as 'the mystery of the Great Reversal' and 'the Sign of the Sovereign.'"

The name for the letter "Váv" consists of three letters: Váv, Alif, Váv. According to the abjad reckoning, the numerical value of each of these letters is 6, 1 and 6 respectively. Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf to one of the believers in the East provides an interpretation of this verse of the Aqdas. He states that the "Upright Alif" refers to the advent of the Báb. The first letter with its value of six, which comes before the Alif, is a symbol of earlier Dispensations and Manifestations which predate the Báb, while the third letter, which also has a numerical value of six, stands for Bahá'u'lláh's supreme Revelation which was made manifest after the Alif.

many an embodiment of heedlessness who came unto Us with purity of heart have We established upon the seat of Our acceptance; and how many an exponent of wisdom have We in all justice consigned to the fire. We are, in truth, the One to judge. He it is Who is the manifestation of “God doeth whatsoever He pleaseth,” and abideth upon the throne of “He ordaineth whatsoever He chooseth.”

Blessed is the one who discovereth the fragrance of inner meanings from the traces of this Pen through whose movement the breezes of God are wafted over the entire creation, and through whose stillness the very essence of tranquillity appeareth in the realm of being. Glorified be the All-Merciful, the Revealer of so inestimable a bounty. Say: Because He bore injustice, justice hath appeared on earth, and because He accepted abasement, the majesty of God hath shone forth amidst mankind.

It hath been forbidden you to carry arms unless essential,¹⁷⁹ and permitted you to attire yourselves in silk.¹⁸⁰ The Lord hath relieved you, as a bounty on His part, of the restrictions that formerly applied to clothing and to the trim of the beard.¹⁸¹ He, verily, is the Ordainer, the Omniscient. Let there be naught in your demeanor of which sound and upright minds would disapprove, and make not yourselves the playthings of the ignorant. Well is it with him who hath

¹⁷⁹. Bahá'u'lláh confirms an injunction contained in the Bayán which makes it unlawful to carry arms, unless it is necessary to do so. With regard to circumstances under which the bearing of arms might be “essential” for an individual, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gives permission to a believer for self-protection in a dangerous environment. Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf has also indicated that, in an emergency, when there is no legal force at hand to appeal to, a Bahá'í is justified in defending his life. There are a number of other situations in which weapons are needed and can be legitimately used; for instance, in countries where people hunt for their food and clothing, and in such sports as archery, marksmanship, and fencing.

On the societal level, the principle of collective security enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh (see *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, CXVII) and elaborated by Shoghi Effendi (see the Guardian's letters in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*) does not presuppose the abolition of the use of force, but prescribes “a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice,” and which provides for the existence of an international peacekeeping force that “will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth.” In the Tablet of Bishárát, Bahá'u'lláh expresses the hope that “*weapons of war throughout the world may be converted into instruments of reconstruction and that strife and conflict may be removed from the midst of men.*”

In another Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh stresses the importance of fellowship with the followers of all religions; He also states that “*the law of holy war hath been blotted out from the Book.*”

¹⁸⁰. According to Islámic practice, the wearing of silk by men was generally forbidden, except in times of holy war. This prohibition, which was not based on the verses of the Qur'án, was abrogated by the Báb.

¹⁸¹. Many rules about dress had their origins in the laws and traditional practices of the world's religions. For example, the Shí'ih clergy adopted for themselves a distinctive headdress and robes and, at one time, forbade the people to adopt European attire. Muslim practice, in its desire to emulate the custom of the Prophet, also introduced a number of restrictions with regard to the trim of the moustache and the length of the beard.

Bahá'u'lláh removed such limitations on one's apparel and beard. He leaves such matters to the “discretion” of the individual, and at the same time calls upon the believers not to transgress the bounds of propriety and to exercise moderation in all that pertains to dress.

adorned himself with the vesture of seemly conduct and a praiseworthy character. He is assuredly reckoned with those who aid their Lord through distinctive and outstanding deeds.

Promote ye the development of the cities of God and His countries, and glorify Him therein in the joyous accents of His well-favored ones. In truth, the hearts of men are edified through the power of the tongue, even as houses and cities are built up by the hand and other means. We have assigned to every end a means for its accomplishment; avail yourselves thereof, and place your trust and confidence in God, the Omniscient, the All-Wise.

Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs, and recognized that "He shall not be asked of His doings." Such a recognition hath been made by God the ornament of every belief and its very foundation. Upon it must depend the acceptance of every goodly deed. Fasten your eyes upon it, that haply the whisperings of the rebellious may not cause you to slip.

Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.

Whoso hath not recognized this sublime and fundamental verity, and hath failed to attain this most exalted station, the winds of doubt will agitate him, and the sayings of the infidels will distract his soul. He that hath acknowledged this principle will be endowed with the most perfect constancy. All honor to this all-glorious station, the remembrance of which adorneth every exalted Tablet. Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain unto salvation in both this world and the next. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful. He it is Who hath sent forth the Messengers, and sent down the Books to proclaim "There is none other God but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise."

O Land of Káf and Rá!¹⁸² We, verily, behold thee in a state displeasing unto God, and see proceeding from thee that which is inscrutable to anyone save Him, the Omniscient, the All-Informed; and We perceive that which secretly and stealthily diffuseth from thee.¹⁸³ With Us is the knowledge of all things, inscribed in a lucid Tablet. Sorrow not for that which hath befallen thee. Erelong will God raise up within thee men endued with mighty valor, who will magnify My Name with such constancy that neither will they be deterred by the evil suggestions of the divines nor will they be kept back by the insinuations of the sowers of doubt. With their own eyes will they behold God, and with their own lives will they render Him victorious. These, truly, are of those who are steadfast.

¹⁸². Káf and Rá are the first two consonants of Kirmán, the name of a city and province of Írán.

¹⁸³. This passage is a reference to the intrigues of a group of Azalís, followers of Mírzá Yaḥyá, associated with the city of Kirmán. They include Mullá Ja'far, his son Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Rúḥí and Mírzá Áqá Khán-i-Kirmání (both sons-in-law of Mírzá Yaḥyá), as well as Mírzá Aḥmad-i-Kirmání. They not only sought to undermine the Faith, but involved themselves in political intrigues which culminated in the assassination of Náṣirí'd-Dín Sháh.

O concourse of divines! When My verses were sent down, and My clear tokens were revealed, We found you behind the veils. This, verily, is a strange thing. Ye glory in My Name, yet ye recognized Me not at the time your Lord, the All-Merciful, appeared amongst you with proof and testimony. We have rent the veils asunder. Beware lest ye shut out the people by yet another veil. Pluck asunder the chains of vain imaginings, in the name of the Lord of all men, and be not of the deceitful. Should ye turn unto God and embrace His Cause, spread not disorder within it, and measure not the Book of God with your selfish desires. This, verily, is the counsel of God aforetime and hereafter, and to this God's witnesses and chosen ones, yea, each and every one of Us, do solemnly attest.

Call ye to mind the ṣhaykh whose name was Muḥammad-Ḥasan,¹⁸⁴ who ranked among the most learned divines of his day. When the True One was made manifest, this ṣhaykh, along with others of his calling, rejected Him, while a sifter of wheat and barley¹⁸⁵ accepted Him and turned unto the Lord. Though he was occupied both night and day in setting down what he conceived to be the laws and ordinances of God, yet when He Who is the Unconstrained appeared, not one letter thereof availed him, or he would not have turned away from a Countenance that hath illumined the faces of the well-favored of the Lord. Had ye believed in God when He revealed Himself, the people would not have turned aside from Him, nor would the things ye witness today have befallen Us. Fear God, and be not of the heedless.

Beware lest any name debar you from Him Who is the Possessor of all names, or any word shut you out from this Remembrance of God, this Source of Wisdom amongst you. Turn unto God and seek His protection, O concourse of divines, and make not of yourselves a veil between Me and My creatures. Thus doth your Lord admonish you, and command you to be just, lest your works should come to naught and ye yourselves be oblivious of your plight. Shall he who denieth this Cause be able to vindicate the truth of any cause throughout creation? Nay, by Him Who is the Fashioner of the universe! Yet the people are wrapped in a palpable veil. Say: Through this Cause, the daystar of testimony hath dawned, and the luminary of proof hath shed its radiance upon all that dwell on earth. Fear God, O men of insight, and be not of those who disbelieve in Me. Take heed lest the word "Prophet" withhold you from this Most Great Announcement,¹⁸⁶ or any reference to "Vicegerency" debar you from the sovereignty of Him

184. Ṣhaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan, one of the leading exponents of Shī'ih Islām, rejected the Báb. The author of voluminous writings on Shī'ih jurisprudence, he is reported to have died around 1850.

Nabíl, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, describes the encounter that took place in Najaf between Mullá 'Alí-i-Baṣṭámí, one of the Letters of the Living, and Ṣhaykh Muḥammad-Ḥasan. During the meeting, Mullá 'Alí announced the manifestation of the Báb and extolled the potency of His Revelation. At the instigation of the ṣhaykh, Mullá 'Alí was forthwith pronounced a heretic and expelled from the assembly. He was put on trial, transported to Istanbul, and condemned to hard labor.

185. This is an allusion to Mullá Muḥammad Ja'far Gandum-Pák-Kun, the first person in Iṣfahán to accept the Faith of the Báb. He is mentioned in the Persian Bayán and praised as one who "donned the robe of discipleship." In *The Dawn-Breakers*, Nabíl describes the unreserved acceptance of the Message by the "sifter of wheat" and his zealous advocacy of the new Revelation. He joined the company of the defenders of the Fort of Ṣhaykh Ṭabarsí and perished during that siege.

186. Bahá'u'lláh cautions people "of insight" not to allow their interpretations of the Holy Scriptures to prevent them from recognizing the Manifestation of God. Followers of each religion have tended to allow

Who is the Vicegerent of God,¹⁸⁷ which overshadoweth all the worlds. Every name hath been created by His Word, and every cause is dependent on His irresistible, His mighty and wondrous Cause. Say: This is the Day of God, the Day on which naught shall be mentioned save His own Self, the omnipotent Protector of all worlds. This is the Cause that hath made all your superstitions and idols to tremble.

We, verily, see amongst you him who taketh hold of the Book of God and citeth from it proofs and arguments wherewith to repudiate his Lord, even as the followers of every other Faith sought reasons in their Holy Books for refuting Him Who is the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Say: God, the True One, is My witness that neither the Scriptures of the world, nor all the books and writings in existence, shall, in this Day, avail you aught without this, the Living Book, Who proclaimeth in the midmost heart of creation: "Verily, there is none other God but Me, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

O concourse of divines! Beware lest ye be the cause of strife in the land, even as ye were the cause of the repudiation of the Faith in its early days. Gather the people around this Word that hath made the pebbles to cry out: "The Kingdom is God's, the Dawning-place of all signs!" Thus doth your Lord admonish you, as a bounty on His part; He, of a truth, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.

their devotion to its Founder to cause them to perceive His Revelation as the final Word of God and to deny the possibility of the appearance of any subsequent Prophet. This has been the case of Judaism, Christianity and Islām. Bahá'u'lláh denies the validity of this concept of finality both in relation to past Dispensations and to His own. With regard to Muslims, He wrote in the Kitáb-i-Íqán that the "*people of the Qur'án ... have allowed the words 'Seal of the Prophets' to veil their eyes, 'to obscure their understanding, and deprive them of the grace of all His manifold bounties.*" He affirms that "*this theme hath ... been a sore test unto all mankind,*" and laments the fate of "*those who, clinging unto these words, have disbelieved in Him Who is their true Revealer.*" The Báb refers to this same theme when He warns: "*Let not names shut you out as by a veil from Him Who is their Lord, even the name Prophet, for such a name is but a creation of His utterance.*"

¹⁸⁷. The word here translated "Vicegerency" is, in the original Arabic, "viláyat," which has a range of meanings including "vicegerency," "guardianship," "protectorship" and "successorship." It is used in relation to God Himself, to His Manifestation, or to those who are the appointed Successors of a Manifestation.

In this verse of the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh warns against allowing such concepts to blind one to the "sovereignty" of the new Divine Manifestation, the true "Vicegerent of God."

Call ye to mind Karím,¹⁸⁸ and how, when We summoned him unto God, he waxed disdainful, prompted by his own desires; yet We had sent him that which was a solace to the eye of proof in the world of being and the fulfillment of God's testimony to all the denizens of earth and heaven. As a token of the grace of Him Who is the All-Possessing, the Most High, We bade him embrace the Truth. But he turned away until, as an act of justice from God, angels of wrath laid hold upon him. Unto this We truly were a witness.

Tear the veils asunder in such wise that the inmates of the Kingdom will hear them being rent. This is the command of God, in days gone by and for those to come. Blessed the man that observeth that whereunto he was bidden, and woe betide the negligent.

We, of a certainty, have had no purpose in this earthly realm save to make God manifest and to reveal His sovereignty; sufficient unto Me is God for a witness. We, of a certainty, have had no intent in the Celestial Kingdom but to exalt His Cause and glorify His praise; sufficient unto Me is God for a protector. We, of a certainty, have had no desire in the Dominion on high except to extol God and what hath been sent down by Him; sufficient unto Me is God for a helper.

188. Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad Karím Khán-i-Kirmání (1810–circa 1873) was the self-appointed leader of the Shaykhí community after the death of Siyyid Kázim, who was the appointed successor to Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í. He dedicated himself to the promotion of the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad. The opinions he expressed became the subject of controversy among his supporters and opponents alike.

Regarded as one of the leading savants and prolific authors of his age, he composed numerous books and epistles in the various fields of learning that were cultivated in those times. He actively opposed both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and used his treatises to attack the Báb and His Teachings. In the Kitáb-i-Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh condemns the tone and content of his writings and singles out for criticism one of his works which contains negative allusions to the Báb. Shoghi Effendi describes him as “inordinately ambitious and hypocritical” and describes how he “at the special request of the Sháh had in a treatise viciously attacked the new Faith and its doctrines.”

Happy are ye, O ye the learned ones in Bahá.¹⁸⁹ By the Lord! Ye are the billows of the Most Mighty Ocean, the stars of the firmament of Glory, the standards of triumph waving betwixt earth and heaven. Ye are the manifestations of steadfastness amidst men and the daysprings of Divine Utterance to all that dwell on earth. Well is it with him that turneth unto you, and woe betide the froward. This day, it behooveth whoso hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the Hands of the loving-kindness of the Lord his God, the Merciful, to pulsate even as the throbbing artery in the body of mankind, that through him may be quickened the world and every crumbling bone.

O people of the world! When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.¹⁹⁰

O Pen of the Most High! Move Thou upon the Tablet at the bidding of Thy Lord, the Creator of the Heavens, and tell of the time when He Who is the Dayspring of Divine Unity purposed to direct His steps towards the School of Transcendent Oneness;¹⁹¹ haply the pure in heart may gain

¹⁸⁹. Bahá'u'lláh eulogizes the learned among His followers. In the Book of His Covenant, He wrote: "*Blessed are the rulers and learned among the people of Bahá.*" Referring to this statement, Shoghi Effendi has written:

In this holy cycle the "*learned*" are, on the one hand, the Hands of the Cause of God, and, on the other, the teachers and diffusers of His Teachings who do not rank as Hands, but who have attained an eminent position in the teaching work. As to the "*rulers*," they refer to the members of the Local, National and International Houses of Justice. The duties of each of these souls will be determined in the future. The Hands of the Cause of God were individuals appointed by Bahá'u'lláh and charged with various duties, especially those of protecting and propagating His Faith. In *Memorials of the Faithful*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to other outstanding believers as Hands of the Cause, and in His Will and Testament He included a provision calling upon the Guardian of the Faith to appoint Hands of the Cause at his discretion. Shoghi Effendi first raised posthumously a number of the believers to the rank of Hands of the Cause, and during the latter years of his life appointed a total of 32 believers from all continents to this position. In the period between the passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 and the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, the Hands of the Cause directed the affairs of the Faith in their capacity as Chief Stewards of Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Commonwealth. In November 1964, the Universal House of Justice determined that it could not legislate to make it possible to appoint Hands of the Cause. Instead, by a decision of the House of Justice in 1968, the functions of the Hands of the Cause in relation to protecting and propagating the Faith were extended into the future by the creation of the Continental Boards of Counselors, and in 1973 through the establishment of the International Teaching Center, which has its seat in the Holy Land. The Universal House of Justice appoints the Counselor members of the International Teaching Center and the Continental Counselors. Members of Auxiliary Boards are appointed by the Continental Counselors. All these individuals fall within the definition of the "*learned*" given by Shoghi Effendi in the statement quoted above.

¹⁹⁰.

Bahá'u'lláh invests 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the right of interpreting His holy Writ.

¹⁹¹. In this verse and the ones which immediately follow it, Bahá'u'lláh confronts one of the reasons some of the Bábís rejected His claim to be the Promised One of the Bayán. Their rejection was based on a Tablet addressed by the Báb to "Him Who will be made manifest" on the reverse side of which the Báb had written: "*May the glances of Him Whom God shall make manifest illumine this letter at the primary school.*" This Tablet is published in *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*.

thereby a glimpse, be it as small as a needle's eye, of the mysteries of Thy Lord, the Almighty, the Omniscient, that lie concealed behind the veils. Say: We, indeed, set foot within the School of inner meaning and explanation when all created things were unaware. We saw the words sent down by Him Who is the All-Merciful, and We accepted the verses of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, which He¹⁹² presented unto Us,¹⁹³ and hearkened unto that which He had solemnly affirmed in the Tablet. This we assuredly did behold. And We assented to His wish through Our behest, for truly We are potent to command.

O people of the Bayán!¹⁹⁴ We, verily, set foot within the School of God when ye lay slumbering; and We perused the Tablet while ye were fast asleep. By the one true God! We read the Tablet ere it was revealed, while ye were unaware, and We had perfect knowledge of the Book when ye were yet unborn. These words are to your measure, not to God's. To this testifieth that which is enshrined within His knowledge, if ye be of them that comprehend; and to this the tongue of the Almighty doth bear witness, if ye be of those who understand. I swear by God, were We to lift the veil, ye would be dumbfounded.

Take heed that ye dispute not idly concerning the Almighty and His Cause, for lo! He hath appeared amongst you invested with a Revelation so great as to encompass all things, whether of the past or of the future. Were We to address Our theme by speaking in the language of the inmates of the Kingdom, We would say: "In truth, God created that School ere He created heaven and earth, and We entered it before the letters B and E were joined and knit together."¹⁹⁵ Such is the language of Our servants in Our Kingdom; consider what the tongue of the dwellers of Our exalted Dominion would utter, for We have taught them Our knowledge and have revealed to them whatever had lain hidden in God's wisdom. Imagine then what the Tongue of Might and Grandeur would utter in His All-Glorious Abode!

This is not a Cause which may be made a plaything for your idle fancies, nor is it a field for the foolish and faint of heart. By God, this is the arena of insight and detachment, of vision and

These Bábís maintained that, since Bahá'u'lláh was two years older than the Báb, it was not possible for Him to receive this Tablet "at the primary school."

Bahá'u'lláh here explains that the reference is to events transpiring in the spiritual worlds beyond this plane of existence.

¹⁹². The Báb

¹⁹³. In His Tablet addressed to "Him Who will be made manifest," the Báb characterizes the Bayán as an offering from Him to Bahá'u'lláh. See *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*.

¹⁹⁴. Reference to the followers of the Báb.

¹⁹⁵. Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, has explained the significance of the "letters B and E." They constitute the word "Be," which, he states, "means the creative Power of God Who through His command causes all things to come into being" and "the power of the Manifestation of God, His great spiritual creative force."

The imperative "Be" in the original Arabic is the word "kun," consisting of the two letters "káf" and "nún." They have been translated by Shoghi Effendi in the above manner. This word has been used in the Qur'án as God's bidding calling creation into being.

upliftment, where none may spur on their chargers save the valiant horsemen of the Merciful, who have severed all attachment to the world of being. These, truly, are they that render God victorious on earth and are the dawning-places of His sovereign might amidst mankind.

Beware lest aught that hath been revealed in the Bayán should keep you from your Lord, the Most Compassionate. God is My witness that the Bayán was sent down for no other purpose than to celebrate My praise, did ye but know! In it, the pure in heart will find only the fragrance of My love, only My Name that overshadoweth all that seeth and is seen. Say: Turn ye, O people, unto that which hath proceeded from My Most Exalted Pen. Should ye inhale therefrom the fragrance of God, set not yourselves against Him, nor deny yourselves a portion of His gracious favor and His manifold bestowals. Thus doth your Lord admonish you; He, verily, is the Counselor, the Omniscient.

Whatsoever ye understand not in the Bayán, ask it of God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. Should He so desire, He will expound for you that which is revealed therein, and disclose to you the pearls of Divine knowledge and wisdom that lie concealed within the ocean of its words. He, verily, is supreme over all names; no God is there but Him, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order.¹⁹⁶ Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System — the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.

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.

¹⁹⁶. In the Persian Bayán, the Báb stated: *"Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán."* Shoghi Effendi identifies this "Order" with the System Bahá'u'lláh envisages in the Aqdas, in which He testifies to its revolutionizing effect on the life of humanity and reveals the laws and principles which govern its operation.

The features of the "new World Order" are delineated in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and in the letters of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. The institutions of the present-day Bahá'í Administrative Order, which constitute the "structural basis" of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order, will mature and evolve into the Bahá'í World Commonwealth. In this regard, Shoghi Effendi affirms that the Administrative Order "will, as its component parts, its organic institutions, begin to function with efficiency and vigor, assert its claim and demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind."

For additional information on the evolution of this new World Order, see, for example, the letters of Shoghi Effendi published in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*.

Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth. Say: This is the Most Great Testimony, by which the validity of every proof throughout the ages hath been established, would that ye might be assured thereof. Say: Through it, the poor have been enriched, the learned enlightened, and the seekers enabled to ascend unto the presence of God. Beware lest ye make it a cause of dissension amongst you. Be ye as firmly settled as the immovable mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Mighty, the Loving.

Say: O source of perversion!¹⁹⁷ Abandon thy willful blindness, and speak forth the truth amidst the people. I swear by God that I have wept for thee to see thee following thy selfish passions and renouncing Him Who fashioned thee and brought thee into being. Call to mind the tender mercy of thy Lord, and remember how We nurtured thee by day and by night for service to the Cause.¹⁹⁸ Fear God, and be thou of the truly repentant. Granted that the people were confused about thy station, is it conceivable that thou thyself art similarly confused? Tremble before thy Lord and recall the days when thou didst stand before Our throne, and didst write down the verses that We dictated unto thee — verses sent down by God, the Omnipotent Protector, the Lord of might and power. Beware lest the fire of thy presumptuousness debar thee from attaining to God's Holy Court. Turn unto Him, and fear not because of thy deeds. He, in truth, forgiveth whomsoever He desireth as a bounty on His part; no God is there but Him, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Bounteous. We admonish thee solely for the sake of God. Shouldst thou accept this counsel, thou wilt have acted to thine own behoof; and shouldst thou reject it, thy Lord, verily, can well dispense with thee, and with all those who, in manifest delusion, have followed thee. Behold! God hath laid hold on him who led thee astray.¹⁹⁹ Return unto God,

¹⁹⁷. This is a reference to Mírzá Yaḥyá, known as Šubḥ-i-Azal (Morning of Eternity), a younger half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, who arose against Him and opposed His Cause. Mírzá Yaḥyá was nominated by the Báb to serve as a figurehead for the Bábí community pending the imminent manifestation of the Promised One. At the instigation of Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Iṣfahání, Mírzá Yaḥyá betrayed the trust of the Báb, claimed to be His successor, and intrigued against Bahá'u'lláh, even attempting to have Him murdered. When Bahá'u'lláh formally declared His Mission to him in Adrianople, Mírzá Yaḥyá responded by going to the length of putting forward his own claim to be the recipient of an independent Revelation. His pretensions were eventually rejected by all but a few, who became known as Azalís. He is described by Shoghi Effendi as the "Arch-Breaker of the Covenant of the Báb" (see *God Passes By*, chapter X).

¹⁹⁸. In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi refers to the fact that Bahá'u'lláh, Who was thirteen years older than Mírzá Yaḥyá, had counseled him and watched over his early youth and manhood.

¹⁹⁹. A reference to Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Iṣfahání, who is described by Shoghi Effendi as the "Antichrist of the Bahá'í Revelation." He was a man of corrupt character and great personal ambition who induced Mírzá Yaḥyá to oppose Bahá'u'lláh and to claim prophethood for himself. Although he was an adherent of Mírzá Yaḥyá, Siyyid Muḥammad was exiled with Bahá'u'lláh to 'Akká. He continued to agitate and plot against Bahá'u'lláh. In describing the circumstances of his death, Shoghi Effendi has written in *God Passes By*:

A fresh danger now clearly threatened the life of Bahá'u'lláh. Though He Himself had stringently forbidden His followers, on several occasions, both verbally and in writing, any retaliatory acts against their tormentors, and had even sent back to Beirut an irresponsible Arab convert, who had meditated avenging the wrongs suffered by his beloved Leader, seven of the companions clandestinely sought out and slew three of their persecutors, among whom were Siyyid Muḥammad and Áqá Ján. The consternation that seized an already oppressed community was indescribable. Bahá'u'lláh's indignation knew no bounds. "Were We," He thus voices His emotions, in a Tablet revealed shortly after this

humble, submissive and lowly; verily, He will put away from thee thy sins, for thy Lord, of a certainty, is the Forgiving, the Mighty, the All-Merciful.

This is the Counsel of God; would that thou mightest heed it! This is the Bounty of God; would that thou mightest receive it! This is the Utterance of God; if only thou wouldst apprehend it! This is the Treasure of God; if only thou couldst understand!

This is a Book which hath become the Lamp of the Eternal unto the world, and His straight, undeviating Path amidst the peoples of the earth. Say: This is the Dayspring of Divine knowledge, if ye be of them that understand, and the Dawning-place of God's commandments, if ye be of those who comprehend.

Burden not an animal with more than it can bear. We, truly, have prohibited such treatment through a most binding interdiction in the Book. Be ye the embodiments of justice and fairness amidst all creation.

Should anyone unintentionally take another's life, it is incumbent upon him to render to the family of the deceased an indemnity of one hundred mithqáls of gold. Observe ye that which hath been enjoined upon you in this Tablet, and be not of those who overstep its limits.

O members of parliaments throughout the world! Select ye a single language for the use of all on earth, and adopt ye likewise a common script.²⁰⁰ God, verily, maketh plain for you that which shall profit you and enable you to be independent of others. He, of a truth, is the Most Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. This will be the cause of unity, could ye but comprehend it, and the greatest instrument for promoting harmony and civilization, would that ye might understand! We have appointed two signs for the coming of age of the human race:²⁰¹ the first,

act had been committed, *"to make mention of what befell Us, the heavens would be rent asunder and the mountains would crumble."* *"My captivity,"* He wrote on another occasion, *"cannot harm Me. That which can harm Me is the conduct of those who love Me, who claim to be related to Me, and yet perpetrate what causeth My heart and My pen to groan."*

²⁰⁰. Bahá'u'lláh enjoins the adoption of a universal language and script. His Writings envisage two stages in this process. The first stage is to consist of the selection of an existing language or an invented one which would then be taught in all the schools of the world as an auxiliary to the mother tongues. The governments of the world through their parliaments are called upon to effect this momentous enactment. The second stage, in the distant future, would be the eventual adoption of one single language and common script for all on earth.

²⁰¹. The first sign of the coming of age of humanity referred to in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh is the emergence of a science which is described as that *"divine philosophy"* which will include the discovery of a radical approach to the transmutation of elements. This is an indication of the splendors of the future stupendous expansion of knowledge.

Concerning the *"second"* sign which Bahá'u'lláh indicates to have been revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Shoghi Effendi states that Bahá'u'lláh, "... in His Most Holy Book, has enjoined the selection of a single language and the adoption of a common script for all on earth to use, an injunction which, when carried out, would, as He Himself affirms in that Book, be one of the signs of the *'coming of age of the human race.'*"

which is the most firm foundation, We have set down in other of Our Tablets, while the second hath been revealed in this wondrous Book.

It hath been forbidden you to smoke opium. We, truly, have prohibited this practice through a most binding interdiction in the Book. Should anyone partake thereof, assuredly he is not of Me. Fear God, O ye endued with understanding!



Questions and Answers

Question: Concerning the Most Great Festival.

Answer: The Most Great Festival commenceth late in the afternoon of the thirteenth day of the second month of the year according to the Bayán. On the first, ninth and twelfth days of this Festival, work is forbidden.

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Question: Concerning the Festival of the Twin Birthdays.

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Answer: The Birth of the Abhá Beauty²⁰² was at the hour of dawn on the second day of the month of Muḥarram,²⁰³ the first day of which marketh the Birth of His Herald. These two days are accounted as one in the sight of God.



Question: Concerning the Marriage Verses.

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Answer: For men: “We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.” For women: “We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.”²⁰⁴

Further insight into this process of mankind’s coming of age and proceeding to maturity is provided by the following statement of Bahá’u’lláh:

One of the signs of the maturity of the world is that no one will accept to bear the weight of kingship. Kingship will remain with none willing to bear alone its weight. That day will be the day whereon wisdom will be manifested among mankind.

The coming of age of the human race has been associated by Shoghi Effendi with the unification of the whole of mankind, the establishment of a world commonwealth, and an unprecedented stimulus to “the intellectual, the moral and spiritual life of the entire human race.”

²⁰². Bahá’u’lláh

²⁰³. First month of the Islámic lunar calendar

Question: Should a man go on a journey without specifying a time for his return without indicating, in other words, the expected period of his absence — and should no word be heard of him thereafter, and all trace of him be lost, what course should be followed by his wife?

Answer: Should he have omitted to fix a time for his return despite being aware of the stipulation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in this regard, his wife should wait for one full year, after which she shall be free either to adopt the course that is praiseworthy, or to choose for herself another husband. If, however, he be unaware of this stipulation, she should abide in patience until such time as God shall please to disclose to her his fate. By the course that is praiseworthy in this connection is meant the exercise of patience.

Question: Concerning the holy verse: “When We heard the clamor of the children as yet unborn, We doubled their share and decreased those of the rest.”

Answer: According to the Book of God, the estate of the deceased is divided into 2,520 shares, which number is the lowest common multiple of all integers up to nine, and these shares are then distributed into seven portions, each of which is allocated, as mentioned in the Book, to a particular category of heirs. The children, for example, are allotted nine blocks of 60 shares, comprising 540 shares in all. The meaning of the statement “We doubled their share” is thus that the children receive a further nine blocks of 60 shares, entitling them to a total of 18 blocks all told. The extra shares that they receive are deducted from the portions of the other categories of heirs, so that, although it is revealed, for instance, that the spouse is entitled to “eight parts comprising four hundred and eighty shares,” which is the equivalent of eight blocks of 60 shares, now, by virtue of this rearrangement, one and a half blocks of shares, comprising 90 shares in all, have been subtracted from the spouse’s portion and reallocated to the children, and similarly in the case of the others. The result is that the total amount subtracted is equivalent to the nine extra blocks of shares allotted to the children.

Question: Is it necessary that the brother, in order to qualify for his portion of the inheritance, be descended from both the father and the mother of the deceased, or is it sufficient merely that there be one parent in common?

Answer: If the brother be descended from the father he shall receive his share of the inheritance in the prescribed measure recorded in the Book; but if he be descended from the mother, he shall receive only two-thirds of his entitlement, the remaining third reverting to the House of Justice. This ruling is also applicable to the sister.

Question: Amongst the provisions concerning inheritance it hath been laid down that, should the deceased leave no offspring, their share of the estate is to revert to the House of Justice. In the event of other categories of heirs, such as the father, mother, brother, sister and teacher being similarly absent, do their shares of the inheritance also revert to the House of Justice, or

204. In Arabic, the two verses differ in gender.

are they dealt with in some other fashion?

Answer: The sacred verse sufficeth. He saith, exalted be His Word: "Should the deceased leave no offspring, their share shall revert to the House of Justice" etc. and "Should the deceased leave offspring, but none of the other categories of heirs that have been specified in the Book, they shall receive two-thirds of the inheritance and the remaining third shall revert to the House of Justice" etc. In other words, where there are no offspring, their allotted portion of the inheritance reverteth to the House of Justice; and where there are offspring but the other categories of heirs are lacking, two-thirds of the inheritance pass to the offspring, the remaining third reverting to the House of Justice. This ruling hath both general and specific application, which is to say that whenever any category of this latter class of heirs is absent, two-thirds of their inheritance pass to the offspring and the remaining third to the House of Justice.



Question: Concerning the basic sum on which Ḥuqúqu'lláh is payable.

Answer: The basic sum on which Ḥuqúqu'lláh is payable is nineteen miṭhqáls of gold. In other words, when money to the value of this sum hath been acquired, a payment of Ḥuqúq falleth due. Likewise Ḥuqúq is payable when the value, not the number, of other forms of property reacheth the prescribed amount. Ḥuqúqu'lláh is payable no more than once. A person, for instance, who acquireth a thousand miṭhqáls of gold, and payeth the Ḥuqúq, is not liable to make a further such payment on this sum, but only on what accrueth to it through commerce, business and the like. When this increase, namely the profit realized, reacheth the prescribed sum, one must carry out what God hath decreed. Only when the principal changeth hands is it once more subject to payment of Ḥuqúq, as it was the first time. The Primal Point hath directed that Ḥuqúqu'lláh must be paid on the value of whatsoever one possesseth; yet, in this Most Mighty Dispensation, We have exempted the household furnishings, that is such furnishings as are needed, and the residence itself.



Question: Which is to take precedence: the Ḥuqúqu'lláh, the debts of the deceased or the cost of the funeral and burial?

Answer: The funeral and burial take precedence, then settlement of debts, then payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh. Should the property of the deceased prove insufficient to cover his debts, the remainder of his estate should be distributed among these debts in proportion to their size.



Question: Shaving the head hath been forbidden in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas but enjoined in the Súriy-i-Hajj.

Answer: All are charged with obedience to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; whatsoever is revealed therein is the Law of God amid His servants. The injunction on pilgrims to the sacred House to shave the head hath been lifted.



Question: If intercourse take place between a couple during their year of patience, and they become estranged again thereafter, must they recommence their year of patience, or may the days preceding the intercourse be included in the reckoning of the year? And once divorce hath taken place, is it necessary that a further period of waiting be observed?

Answer: Should affection be renewed between the couple during their year of patience, the marriage tie is valid, and what is commanded in the Book of God must be observed; but once the year of patience hath been completed and that which is decreed by God taketh place, a further period of waiting is not required. Sexual intercourse between husband and wife is forbidden during their year of patience, and whoso committeth this act must seek God's forgiveness, and, as a punishment, render to the House of Justice a fine of nineteen mithqáls of gold.



Question: Should antipathy develop between a couple after the Marriage Verses have been read and the dowry paid, may divorce take place without observance of the year of patience?

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Answer: Divorce may legitimately be sought after the reading of the Marriage Verses and payment of the dowry, but before the consummation of the marriage. In such circumstances there is no need for observance of a year of patience, but recovery of the dowry payment is not permissible.



Question: Is the consent of the parents on both sides prerequisite to marriage, or is that of the parents on one side sufficient? Is this law applicable only to virgins or to others as well?

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Answer: Marriage is conditional upon the consent of the parents of both parties to the marriage, and in this respect it maketh no difference whether the bride be a virgin or otherwise.



Question: The believers have been enjoined to face in the direction of the Qiblih when reciting their Obligatory Prayers; in what direction should they turn when offering other prayers and devotions?—

Answer: Facing in the direction of the Qiblih is a fixed requirement for the recitation of obligatory prayer, but for other prayers and devotions one may follow what the merciful Lord hath revealed in the Qur'án: "Whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God."



Question: Concerning the remembrance of God in the Maṣṣṭiq'u'l-Adhkár "at the hour of dawn."—

Answer: Although the words "at the hour of dawn" are used in the Book of God, it is acceptable

to God at the earliest dawn of day, between dawn and sunrise, or even up to two hours after sunrise.



Question: Is the ordinance that the body of the deceased should be carried no greater distance than one hour's journey applicable to transport by both land and sea?

Answer: This command applieth to distances by sea as well as by land, whether it is an hour by steamship or by rail; the intention is the hour's time, whatever the means of transport. The sooner the burial taketh place, however, the more fitting and acceptable will it be.



Question: What procedure should be followed on the discovery of lost property?

Answer: If such property be found in the town, its discovery is to be announced once by the town crier. If the owner of the property is then found, it should be delivered up to him. Otherwise, the finder of the property should wait one year, and if during this period, the owner cometh to light, the finder should receive from him the crier's fee and restore to him his property; only if the year should pass without the owner's being identified may the finder take possession of the property himself. If the value of the property is less than or equal to the crier's fee, the finder should wait a single day from the time of its discovery, at the end of which, if the owner hath not come to light, he may himself appropriate it; and in the case of property discovered in an uninhabited area, the finder should observe a three days' wait, on the passing of which period, if the identity of the owner remain unknown, he is free to take possession of his find.



Question: With reference to the ablutions: if, for example, a person hath just bathed his entire body, must he still perform his ablutions?

Answer: The commandment regarding ablutions must, in any case, be observed.



Question: Should a person plan to migrate from his country, and his wife be opposed and the disagreement culminate in divorce, and should his preparations for the journey extend until a year hath passed, may this period be counted as the year of patience, or should the day the couple part be regarded as the starting point of that year?—

Answer: The starting point for computation is the day the couple part, and if, therefore, they have separated a year before the husband's departure, and if the fragrance of affection hath not been renewed between the couple, divorce may take place. Otherwise, the year must be counted from the day of his departure, and the conditions set forth in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas observed.



Question: Concerning the age of maturity with respect to religious duties.

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Answer: The age of maturity is fifteen for both men and women.



Question: Concerning the holy verse: "When traveling, if ye should stop and rest in some safe spot, perform ye ... a single prostration in place of each unsaid Obligatory Prayer ..."

Answer: This prostration is to compensate for obligatory prayer omitted in the course of travel, and by reason of insecure circumstances. If, at the time of prayer, the traveler should find himself at rest in a secure place, he should perform that prayer. This provision regarding the compensating prostration applieth both at home and on a journey.



*Question: Concerning the definition of a journey.*²⁰⁵ —

Answer: The definition of a journey is nine hours by the clock. Should the traveler stop in a place, anticipating that he will stay there for no less than one month by the Bayán reckoning, it is incumbent on him to keep the Fast; but if for less than one month, he is exempt from fasting. If he arriveth during the Fast at a place where he is to stay one month according to the Bayán, he should not observe the Fast till three days have elapsed, thereafter keeping it throughout the remainder of its course; but if he come to his home, where he hath heretofore been permanently resident, he must commence his fast upon the first day after his arrival.



Question: Concerning the punishment of the adulterer and adulteress.

Answer: Nine miṭḥqáls are payable for the first offense, eighteen for the second, thirty-six for the third, and so on, each succeeding fine being double the preceding. The weight of one miṭḥqál is equivalent to nineteen naḵhuds in accordance with the specification of the Bayán.



Question: Concerning hunting.

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Answer: He saith, exalted be He: "If ye should hunt with beasts or birds of prey" and so forth. Other means, such as bows and arrows, guns, and similar equipment employed in hunting, are also included. If, however, traps or snares are used, and the game dieth before it can be reached, it is unlawful for consumption.



Question: Concerning the pilgrimage.

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Answer: It is an obligation to make pilgrimage to one of the two sacred Houses; but as to which, it is for the pilgrim to decide.

²⁰⁵. This relates to the minimum duration of a journey which exempts the traveler from fasting.

Question: Concerning the dowry.

Answer: Regarding dowry, the intention of contenting oneself with the lowest level is nineteen mithqáls of silver.

Question: Concerning the sacred verse: "If, however, news should reach her of her husband's death," etc.

Answer: With reference to waiting a "fixed number of months," a period of nine months is intended.

Question: Again inquiry hath been made about the teacher's share of the inheritance.

Answer: Should the teacher have passed away, one-third of his share of the inheritance reverteth to the House of Justice, and the remaining two-thirds pass to the deceased's, and not the teacher's, offspring.

Question: Again inquiry hath been made about the pilgrimage.

Answer: By pilgrimage to the sacred House, which is enjoined upon men, is intended both the Most Great House in Baghdád and the House of the Primal Point in Shíráz; pilgrimage to either of these Houses sufficeth. They may thus make pilgrimage to whichever lieth nearer to the place where they reside.

Question: Concerning the verse: "he who would take into his service a maid may do so with propriety."

Answer: This is solely for service such as is performed by any other class of servants, be they young or old, in exchange for wages; such a maiden is free to choose a husband at whatever time she pleaseth, for it is forbidden either that women should be purchased, or that a man should have more wives than two.

Question: Concerning the sacred verse: "The Lord hath prohibited ... the practice to which ye formerly had recourse when thrice ye had divorced a woman."

Answer: The reference is to the law which previously made it necessary for another man to

marry such a woman before she could again be wedded to her former husband; this practice hath been prohibited in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.



Question: Concerning the restoration and preservation of the two Houses in the Twin Spots, and the other sites wherein the throne hath been established.

Answer: By the two Houses is intended the Most Great House and the House of the Primal Point. As for other sites, the people of the areas where these are situated may choose to preserve either each house wherein the throne hath been established or one of them.



Question: Again inquiry hath been made about the inheritance of the teacher.

Answer: If the teacher is not of the people of Bahá, he doth not inherit. Should there be several teachers, the share is to be divided equally amongst them. If the teacher is deceased, his offspring do not inherit his share, but rather two-thirds of it revert to the children of the owner of the estate, and the remaining one-third to the House of Justice.



Question: Concerning the residence which hath been assigned exclusively to the male offspring.

Answer: If there are several residences, the finest and noblest of these dwellings is the one intended, the remainder being distributed amongst the whole body of the heirs like any other form of property. Any heir, from whichever category of inheritors, who is outside the Faith of God is accounted as nonexistent and doth not inherit.



Question: *Concerning* *Naw-Rúz.*

Answer: The Festival of Naw-Rúz falleth on the day that the sun entereth the sign of Aries,²⁰⁶ even should this occur no more than one minute before sunset.



Question: If the anniversary either of the Twin Birthdays or of the Declaration of the Báb occurreth during the Fast, what is to be done?

Answer: Should the feasts celebrating the Twin Birthdays or the Declaration of the Báb fall within the month of fasting, the command to fast shall not apply on that day.



²⁰⁶. The vernal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere

Question: In the holy ordinances governing inheritance, the residence and personal clothing of the deceased have been allotted to the male offspring. Doth this provision refer only to the father's property, or doth it apply to the mother's as well?

Answer: The used clothing of the mother should be divided in equal shares among the daughters, but the remainder of her estate, including property, jewelry, and unused clothing, is to be distributed, in the manner revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, to all her heirs. If, however, the deceased hath left no daughters, her estate in its entirety must be divided in the manner designated for men in the Holy Text.



Question: Concerning divorce, which must be preceded by a year of patience: if only one of the parties is inclined toward conciliation, what is to be done?

Answer: According to the commandment revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, both parties must be content; unless both are willing, reunion cannot take place.



Question: In connection with the dowry, what if the bridegroom cannot pay this sum in full, but instead were to formally deliver a promissory note to his bride at the time of the wedding ceremony, on the understanding that he will honor it when he is able to do so?

Answer: Permission to adopt this practice hath been granted by the Source of Authority.



Question: If during the year of patience the fragrance of affection be renewed, only to be succeeded by antipathy, and the couple waver between affection and aversion throughout the year, and the year endeth in antipathy, can divorce take place or not?

Answer: In each case at any time antipathy occurreth, the year of patience beginneth on that day, and the year must run its full course.



Question: The residence and personal clothing of the deceased have been assigned to the male, not female, offspring, nor to the other heirs; should the deceased have left no male offspring, what is to be done?

Answer: He saith, exalted be He: "Should the deceased leave no offspring, their share shall revert to the House of Justice ..." In conformity with this sacred verse, the residence and personal clothing of the deceased revert to the House of Justice.



Question: The ordinance of Ḥuqúqu'lláh is revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Is the residence, with the accompanying fixtures and necessary furnishings, included in the property on which

Huqúq is payable, or is it otherwise?

Answer: In the laws revealed in Persian, We have ordained that in this Most Mighty Dispensation the residence and the household furnishings are exempt — that is, such furnishings as are necessary.



Question: Concerning the betrothal of a girl before maturity.

Answer: This practice hath been pronounced unlawful by the Source of Authority, and it is unlawful to announce a marriage earlier than ninety-five days before the wedding.



Question: If a person hath, for example, a hundred túmáns, payeth the Huqúq on this sum, loseth half the sum in unsuccessful transactions and then, through trading, the amount in hand is raised again to the sum on which Huqúq is due — must such a person pay Huqúq or not?

Answer: In such an event, the Huqúq is not payable.



Question: If, after payment of Huqúq, this same sum of one hundred túmáns is lost in its entirety, but subsequently regained through trade and business dealings, must Huqúq be paid a second time or not?

Answer: In this event as well, payment of Huqúq is not required.



Question: With reference to the sacred verse, “God hath prescribed matrimony unto you,” is this prescription obligatory or not?

Answer: It is not obligatory.



Question: Supposing that a man hath wed a certain woman believing her to be a virgin and he hath paid her the dowry, but at the time of consummation it becometh evident that she is not a virgin, are the expenses and the dowry to be repaid or not? And if the marriage had been made conditional upon virginity, doth the unfulfilled condition invalidate that which was conditioned upon it?

Answer: In such a case, the expenses and the dowry may be refunded. The unfulfilled condition invalidateth that which is conditioned upon it. However, to conceal and forgive the matter will, in the sight of God, merit a bounteous reward.



Question: "A feast hath been enjoined upon you ..." Is this obligatory or not?

Answer: It is not obligatory.



Question: Concerning the penalties for adultery, sodomy, and theft, and the degrees thereof.

Answer: The determination of the degrees of these penalties rests with the House of Justice.



Question: Concerning the legitimacy or otherwise of marrying one's relatives.

Answer: These matters likewise rest with the Trustees of the House of Justice.



Question: With reference to ablutions, it hath been revealed, "Let him that findeth no water for ablution repeat five times the words 'In the Name of God, the Most Pure, the Most Pure'": is it permissible to recite this verse in times of bitter cold, or if the hands or face be wounded?

Answer: Warm water may be used in times of bitter cold. If there are wounds on the face or hands, or there be other reasons such as aches and pains for which the use of water would be harmful, one may recite the appointed verse in place of the ablution.



Question: Is the recitation of the verse revealed to replace the Prayer of the Signs obligatory?

Answer: It is not obligatory.



Question: With reference to inheritance, when there are full brothers and full sisters, would half-brothers and half-sisters on the mother's side also receive a share?

Answer: They receive no share.



Question: He saith, exalted be He: "Should the son of the deceased have passed away in the days of his father and have left children, they will inherit their father's share ..." What is to be done if the daughter hath died during the lifetime of her father?

Answer: Her share of the inheritance should be distributed among the seven categories of heirs according to the ordinance of the Book.



Question: If the deceased be a woman, to whom is the "wife's" share of the inheritance allotted?

—

Answer: The "wife's" share of the inheritance is allotted to the husband.



Question: Concerning the shrouding of the body of the deceased which is decreed to comprise five sheets: does the five refer to five cloths which were hitherto customarily used or to five full-length shrouds wrapped one around the other?

—

Answer: The use of five cloths is intended.



Question: Concerning disparities between certain revealed verses.

Answer: Many Tablets were revealed and dispatched in their original form without being checked and reviewed. Consequently, as bidden, they were again read out in the Holy Presence, and brought into conformity with the grammatical conventions of the people in order to forestall the cavils of opponents of the Cause. Another reason for this practice is that the new style inaugurated by the Herald, may the souls of all else but Him be offered up for His sake, was seen to be marked by substantial latitude in adherence to the rules of grammar; sacred verses therefore, were then revealed in a style which is for the most part in conformity with current usage for ease of understanding and concision of expression.



Question: Concerning the blessed verse, "When traveling, if ye should stop and rest in some safe spot, perform ye ... a single prostration in place of each unsaid Obligatory Prayer": is this compensation for the Obligatory Prayer missed by reason of insecure circumstances, or is obligatory prayer completely suspended during travel, and doth the prostration take its place?

Answer: If, when the hour of obligatory prayer arriveth, there be no security, one should, upon arrival in safe surroundings, perform a prostration in place of each Obligatory Prayer that was missed, and after the final prostration, sit cross-legged and read the designated verse. If there be a safe place, obligatory prayer is not suspended during travel.



Question: If, after a traveler hath stopped and rested it is the time for obligatory prayer, should he perform the prayer, or make the prostration in its stead?

—

Answer: Except in insecure circumstances, omission of the Obligatory Prayer is not permissible.



Question: If, due to missed Obligatory Prayers, a number of prostrations are required, must the verse be repeated after each compensating prostration or not?

—
_Answer: It is sufficient to recite the designated verse after the last prostration. The several prostrations do not require separate repetitions of the verse.



Question: If an Obligatory Prayer be omitted at home, is it to be compensated for by a prostration or not?

—
_Answer: In answer to previous questions it was written: "This provision regarding the compensating prostration applieth both at home and on a journey."



Question: If, for another purpose, one hath performed ablutions, and the time of obligatory prayer arriveth, are these ablutions sufficient or must they be renewed?

—
_Answer: These same ablutions are sufficient, and there is no need for them to be renewed.



_Question: In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas obligatory prayer hath been enjoined, consisting of nine rak'ahs, to be performed at noon, in the morning and the evening, but the Tablet of Obligatory Prayers²⁰⁷ appeareth to differ from this.

_Answer: That which hath been revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas concerneth a different Obligatory Prayer. Some years ago, a number of the ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas including that Obligatory Prayer were, for reasons of wisdom, recorded separately and sent away together with other sacred writings, for the purposes of preservation and protection. Later, these three Obligatory Prayers were revealed.



Question: In determining time, is it permissible to rely on clocks and watches?

—
_Answer: It is permissible to rely on clocks and watches.



Question: In the Tablet of Obligatory Prayers, three prayers are revealed; is the performance of all three required or not?

—
_Answer: It is enjoined to offer one of these three prayers; whichever is performed sufficeth.



²⁰⁷. The Tablet containing the three Obligatory Prayers now in use

Question: Are ablutions for the morning prayer still valid for the noonday prayer? And similarly, are ablutions carried out at noon still valid in the evening?

—
_Answer: Ablutions are connected with the Obligatory Prayer for which they are performed, and must be renewed for each prayer.



Question: Concerning the long Obligatory Prayer, it is required to stand up and “turn unto God.” This seemeth to indicate that it is not necessary to face the Qiblih; is this so or not?

—
_Answer: The Qiblih is intended.



Question: Concerning the sacred verse: “Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide.”

—
_Answer: The intention is all that hath been sent down from the Heaven of Divine Utterance. The prime requisite is the eagerness and love of sanctified souls to read the Word of God. To read one verse, or even one word, in a spirit of joy and radiance, is preferable to the perusal of many Books.



Question: May a person, in drawing up his will, assign some portion of his property — beyond that which is devoted to payment of Ḥuqúqu’lláh and the settlement of debts — to works of charity, or is he entitled to do no more than allocate a certain sum to cover funeral and burial expenses, so that the rest of his estate will be distributed in the manner fixed by God among the designated categories of heirs?

Answer: A person hath full jurisdiction over his property. If he is able to discharge the Ḥuqúqu’lláh, and is free of debt, then all that is recorded in his will, and any declaration or avowal it containeth, shall be acceptable. God, verily, hath permitted him to deal with that which He hath bestowed upon him in whatever manner he may desire.



Question: Is the use of the burial ring enjoined exclusively for adults, or is it for minors as well?—

Answer: It is for adults only. The Prayer for the Dead is likewise for adults.



_Question: Should a person wish to fast at a time other than in the month of ‘Alá,’ is this permissible or not; and if he hath vowed or pledged himself to such a fast, is this valid and acceptable?—

_Answer: The ordinance of fasting is such as hath already been revealed. Should someone pledge himself, however, to offer up a fast to God, seeking in this way the fulfillment of a wish, or

to realize some other aim, this is permissible, now as heretofore. Howbeit, it is God's wish, exalted be His glory, that vows and pledges be directed to such objectives as will profit mankind.



Question: Again a question hath been asked concerning the residence and personal clothing: are these to revert, in the absence of male offspring, to the House of Justice, or are they to be distributed like the rest of the estate?

—
Answer: Two-thirds of the residence and personal clothing pass to the female offspring, and one-third to the House of Justice, which God hath made to be the treasury of the people.



Question: If, upon completion of the year of patience, the husband refuseth to allow divorce, what course should be adopted by the wife?

—
Answer: When the period is ended, divorce is effected. However, it is necessary that there be witnesses to the beginning and end of this period, so that they can be called upon to give testimony should the need arise.



Question: Concerning the definition of old age.—

Answer: To the Arabs, it denoteth the furthest extremity of old age, but for the people of Bahá, it is from the age of seventy.



Question: Concerning the limit of fasting for someone traveling on foot.—

Answer: The limit is set at two hours. If this is exceeded, it is permissible to break the Fast.



Question: Concerning observance of the Fast by people engaged in hard labor during the month of fasting.

—
Answer: Such people are excused from fasting; however, in order to show respect to the law of God and for the exalted station of the Fast, it is most commendable and fitting to eat with frugality and in private.



Question: Do ablutions performed for the Obligatory Prayer suffice for the ninety-five repetitions of the Greatest Name?—

Answer: It is unnecessary to renew the ablutions.



Question: Concerning clothes and jewelry which a husband may have purchased for his wife: are these to be distributed, after his death, amongst his heirs, or are they specially for the wife?

—

Answer: Aside from used clothing, whatever there may be, jewelry or otherwise, belongeth to the husband, except what is proven to have been gifts to the wife.



Question: Concerning the criterion of justness when proving some matter dependent on the testimony of two just witnesses.

—

Answer: The criterion of justness is a good reputation among the people. The testimony of all God's servants, of whatever faith or creed, is acceptable before His Throne.



Question: If the deceased hath not settled his obligation to Ḥuqúqu'lláh, nor paid his other debts, are these to be discharged by proportionate deductions from the residence, personal clothing and the rest of the estate, or are the residence and personal clothing set aside for the male offspring, and consequently the debts must be settled from the rest of the estate? And if the rest of the estate is insufficient for this purpose, how should the debts be settled?—

Answer: Outstanding debts and payments of Ḥuqúq should be settled from the remainder of the estate, but if this is insufficient for the purpose, the shortfall should be met from his residence and personal clothing.



Question: Should the third Obligatory Prayer be offered while seated or standing?—

Answer: It is preferable and more fitting to stand in an attitude of humble reverence.



Question: Concerning the first Obligatory Prayer it hath been ordained, "one should perform it at whatever time one findeth oneself in a state of humbleness and longing adoration": is it to be performed once in twenty-four hours, or more frequently?—

Answer: Once in twenty-four hours is sufficient; this is that which hath been uttered by the Tongue of Divine Command.



Question: Concerning the definition of “morning,” “noon” and “evening.”__

Answer: These are sunrise, noon and sunset. The allowable times for Obligatory Prayers are from morning till noon, from noon till sunset, and from sunset till two hours thereafter. Authority is in the hand of God, the Bearer of the Two Names.



Question: Is it permissible for a believer to marry an unbeliever?__

Answer: Both taking and giving in marriage are permissible; thus did the Lord decree when He ascended the throne of bounteousness and grace.



Question: Concerning the Prayer for the Dead: should it precede or follow the interment? And is facing the Qiblah required?

Answer: Recital of this prayer should precede interment; and as regards the Qiblah: “Whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God.”²⁰⁸



Question: At noon, which is the time for two of the Obligatory Prayers — the short midday prayer, and the prayer to be offered in the morning, noon, and evening — is it necessary in this case to perform two ablutions or would one suffice?

Answer: The renewal of ablutions is unnecessary.



Question: Concerning the dowry for village dwellers which is to be of silver: is it the bride or bridegroom who is intended or both of them? And what is to be done if one is a city dweller and the other a village dweller?__

Answer: The dowry is determined by the dwelling place of the bridegroom; if he be a city dweller, the dowry is of gold, and if he be a village dweller, it is of silver.



Question: What is the criterion for determining if one is a city dweller or a village dweller? If a city dweller taketh up residence in a village, or a village dweller in a city, intending to settle permanently, what ruling is applicable? Is the place of birth the deciding factor?__

Answer: The criterion is permanent residence and, depending on where this is, the injunction in the Book must be observed accordingly.

²⁰⁸. Qur’án 2:115

Question: In the holy Tablets, it hath been revealed that when someone acquireth the equivalent of nineteen mithqáls of gold, he should pay the Right of God on that sum. Might it be explained how much of this nineteen should be paid?

_Answer: Nineteen out of one hundred is established by the ordinance of God. Computation should be made on this basis. It may then be ascertained what amount is due on nineteen.

Question: When one's wealth exceeds nineteen, is it necessary for it to increase by a further nineteen before Ḥuqúq is due again, or would it be due on any increase?_

Answer: Any amount added to nineteen is exempt from Ḥuqúq until it reacheth a further nineteen.

Question: Concerning pure water, and the point at which it is considered used._

Answer: Small quantities of water, such as one cupful, or even two or three, must be considered used after a single washing of the face and hands. But a kurr²⁰⁹ or more of water remaineth unchanged after one or two washings of the face, and there is no objection to its use unless it is altered in one of the three ways,²¹⁰ for example, its color is changed, in which case it should be looked upon as used.

Question: In a treatise in Persian on various questions, the age of maturity hath been set at fifteen; is marriage likewise conditional upon the reaching of maturity, or is it permissible before that time?_

Answer: Since the consent of both parties is required in the Book of God, and since, before maturity, their consent or lack of it cannot be ascertained, marriage is therefore conditional upon reaching the age of maturity, and is not permissible before that time.

Question: Concerning fasting and obligatory prayer by the sick._

Answer: In truth, I say that obligatory prayer and fasting occupy an exalted station in the sight of God. It is, however, in a state of health that their virtue can be realized. In time of ill health, it is not permissible to observe these obligations; such hath been the bidding of the Lord, exalted be His glory, at all times. Blessed be such men and women as pay heed, and observe His precepts.

²⁰⁹. This refers to a volume of approximately one-half of a cubic meter

²¹⁰. Color, taste and smell

All praise be unto God, He who hath sent down the verses and is the Revealer of undoubted proofs!



Question: Concerning mosques, chapels and temples.____

Answer: Whatever hath been constructed for the worship of the one true God, such as mosques, chapels and temples, must not be used for any purpose other than the commemoration of His Name. This is an ordinance of God, and he who violateth it is verily of those who have transgressed. No harm attacheth to the builder, for he hath performed his deed for the sake of God, and hath received and will continue to receive his just reward.



Question: Regarding the appointments of a place of business, which are needed for carrying on one's work or profession: are they subject to the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh, or are they covered by the same ruling as the household furnishings?

—

Answer: They are covered by the same ruling as the household furnishings.



Question: Concerning the exchange of property held in trust for cash or other forms of property, to guard against depreciation or loss.____

Answer: Regarding the written question on the exchange of property held in trust to guard against depreciation and loss, such exchange is permissible on condition that the substitute will be equivalent in value. Thy Lord, verily, is the Expounder, the Omniscient, and He, truly, is the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.



Question: Concerning the washing of the feet in winter and summer.____

Answer: It is the same in both cases; warm water is preferable, but there can be no objection to cold.



Question: A further question on divorce.____

Answer: Since God, exalted be His glory, doth not favor divorce, nothing was revealed on this issue. However, from the beginning of the separation until the end of one year, two people or more must remain informed as witnesses; if, by the end, there is no reconciliation, divorce taketh place. This must be recorded in the registry by the religious judicial officer of the city appointed by the Trustees of the House of Justice. Observance of this procedure is essential lest those that are possessed of an understanding heart be saddened.

Question:

Concerning

consultation.____

Answer: If consultation among the first group of people assembled endeth in disagreement, new people should be added, after which persons to the number of the Greatest Name, or fewer or more, shall be chosen by lot. Whereupon the consultation shall be renewed, and the outcome, whatever it is, shall be obeyed. If, however, there is still disagreement, the same procedure should be repeated once more, and the decision of the majority shall prevail. He, verily, guideth whomsoever He pleaseth to the right way.

_Question:

Concerning

inheritance.____

Answer: Regarding inheritance, that which the Primal Point hath ordained — may the souls of all else but Him be offered up for His sake — is well pleasing. The existing heirs should receive their allotted shares of the inheritance, while a statement of the remainder must be submitted to the Court of the Most High. In His hand is the source of authority; He ordaineth as He pleaseth. In this regard, a law was revealed in the Land of Mystery,²¹¹ temporarily awarding the missing heirs' inheritance to the existing heirs until such time as the House of Justice shall be established, when the decree concerning this will be promulgated. The inheritance, however, of those who emigrated in the same year as the Ancient Beauty, hath been awarded to their heirs, and this is a bounty of God bestowed upon them.

Question: Concerning the law on treasure trove.

_Answer: Should a treasure be found, one-third thereof is the right of the discoverer, and the other two-thirds should be expended by the men of the House of Justice for the welfare of all people. This shall be done after the establishment of the House of Justice, and until that time it shall be committed to the keeping of trustworthy persons in each locality and territory. He, in truth, is the Ruler, the Ordainer, the Omniscient, the All-Informed.

Question: Concerning *Huqúq* on real estate which yieldeth no profit.____

Answer: The ordinance of God is that real estate which hath ceased to yield income, that is, from which no profit accrueth, is not liable to payment of Ḥuqúq. He, verily, is the Ruler, the Munificent.

Question: Concerning the holy verse: "In regions where the days and nights grow long, let times of prayer be gauged by clocks ..."

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Answer: The intention is those territories that are remote. In these climes, however, the difference in length is but a few hours, and therefore this ruling doth not apply.



In the Tablet to Abá Badí, this holy verse hath been revealed: "Verily, We have enjoined on every son to serve his father." Such is the decree which We have set forth in the Book.



And in another Tablet, these exalted words have been revealed: O Muḥammad! The Ancient of Days hath turned His countenance towards thee, making mention of thee, and exhorting the people of God to educate their children. Should a father neglect this most weighty commandment laid down in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas by the Pen of the Eternal King, he shall forfeit rights of fatherhood, and be accounted guilty before God. Well is it with him who imprinteth on his heart the admonitions of the Lord, and steadfastly cleaveth unto them. God, in truth, enjoineth on His servants what shall assist and profit them, and enable them to draw nigh unto Him. He is the Ordainer, the Everlasting.



He is God, exalted be He, the Lord of majesty and power! The Prophets and Chosen Ones have all been commissioned by the One True God, magnified be His glory, to nurture the trees of human existence with the living waters of uprightness and understanding, that there may appear from them that which God hath deposited within their inmost selves. As may be readily observed, each tree yieldeth a certain fruit, and a barren tree is but fit for fire. The purpose of these Educators, in all they said and taught, was to preserve man's exalted station. Well is it with him who in the Day of God hath laid fast hold upon His precepts and hath not deviated from His true and fundamental Law. The fruits that best befit the tree of human life are trustworthiness and godliness, truthfulness and sincerity; but greater than all, after recognition of the unity of God, praised and glorified be He, is regard for the rights that are due to one's parents. This teaching hath been mentioned in all the Books of God and reaffirmed by the Most Exalted Pen. Consider that which the Merciful Lord hath revealed in the Qur'án, exalted are His words: "Worship ye God, join with Him no peer or likeness; and show forth kindliness and charity towards your parents ..." Observe how loving-kindness to one's parents hath been linked to recognition of the one true God! Happy they who are endued with true wisdom and understanding, who see and perceive, who read and understand, and who observe that which God hath revealed in the Holy Books of old, and in this incomparable and wondrous Tablet.



In one of the Tablets, He, exalted be His words, hath revealed: And in the matter of Zakát, We have likewise decreed that you should follow what hath been revealed in the Qur'án.