

IMAGINATION AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE SOUL

Understanding is Limited by Imagination

1. Things which are understood by men cannot be outside their capacity for understanding, so that it is impossible for the heart of man to comprehend the nature of the Majesty of God. Our imagination can only picture that which it is able to create.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 24

2. Accordingly all these attributes, names, praises and eulogies apply to the Places of Manifestation; and all that we imagine and suppose beside them is mere imagination, for we have no means of comprehending that which is invisible and inaccessible. This is why it is said: “All that you have distinguished through the illusion of your imagination in your subtle mental images is but a creation like unto yourself, and returns to you.”¹ It is clear that if we wish to imagine the Reality of Divinity, this imagination is the surrounded, and we are the surrounding one; and it is sure that the one who surrounds is greater than the surrounded. From this it is certain and evident that if we imagine a Divine Reality outside of the Holy Manifestations, it is pure imagination, for there is no way to approach the Reality of Divinity which is not cut off to us, and all that we imagine is mere supposition.

Therefore, reflect that different peoples of the world are revolving around imaginations and are worshipers of the idols of thoughts and conjectures. They are not aware of this; they consider their imaginations to be the Reality which is withdrawn from all comprehension and purified from all descriptions. They regard themselves as the people of Unity, and the others as worshipers of idols; but idols at least have a mineral existence, while the idols of thoughts and the imaginations of man are but fancies; they have not even mineral existence. “Take heed ye who are endued with discernment.”²

Know that the attributes of perfection, the splendor of the divine bounties, and the lights of inspiration are visible and evident in all the Holy Manifestations; but the glorious Word of God, Christ, and the Greatest Name, Bahá’u’lláh, are manifestations and evidences which are beyond imagination, for They possess all the perfections of the former Manifestations; and more than that, They possess some perfections which make the other Manifestations dependent upon Them. So all the Prophets of Israel were centers of inspiration; Christ also was a receiver of inspiration, but what a difference between the inspiration of the Word of God and the revelations of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Elijah!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 149-150

The Essence and Workings of Creator are Beyond Man’s Imagination

3. I have clearly perceived, and I am wholly persuaded, that Thou hast from everlasting been immeasurably exalted above the mention of all beings, and wilt continue unto everlasting to remain far above the conception of Thy creatures. None can befittingly praise Thee except Thine own Self and such as are like unto Thee. Thou hast, verily, been at all times, and wilt

¹ From a hadith.

² Qur’án 59: 2.

everlastingly continue to remain, immensely exalted beyond and above all comparison and likeness, above all imagination of parity or resemblance. Having, thus, recognized Thee as One Who is incomparable, and Whose nature none can possess, it becometh incontrovertibly evident that whosoever may praise Thee, his praise can befit only such as are of his own nature, and are subject to his own limitations, and it can in no wise adequately describe the sublimity of Thy sovereignty, nor scale the heights of Thy majesty and holiness. How sweet, therefore, is the praise Thou givest to Thine own Self, and the description Thou givest of Thine own Being!

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 297-298

4. Every praise which any tongue or pen can recount, every imagination which any heart can devise, is debarred from the station which Thy most exalted Pen hath ordained, how much more must it fall short of the heights which Thou hast Thyself immensely exalted above the conception and the description of any creature.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 194

5. He is God, exalted is He, the Lord of wisdom and utterance.

Praise be unto God, incomparable in majesty, power and beauty, peerless in glory, might and grandeur; too high is He for human imaginations to comprehend Him or for any peer or equal to be ascribed unto Him. He hath clearly set forth His straight Path in words and utterances of highest eloquence. Verily He is the All-Possessing, the Most Exalted. When He purposed to call the new creation into being, He sent forth the Manifest and Luminous Point from the horizon of His Will; it passed through every sign and manifested itself in every form until it reached the zenith, as bidden by God, the Lord of all men.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 101

6. Know thou, moreover, that He it is Who hath, by His own behest, created all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. How can, then, the thing that hath been created at His bidding prevail against Him? High is God exalted above what ye imagine about Him, ye people of malice! If this Cause be of God, no man can prevail against it; and if it be not of God, the divines amongst you, and they that follow their corrupt desires and such as have rebelled against Him will surely suffice to overpower it.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 220

7. Magnified be Thy name, O my God! Now that Thou hast caused me to apprehend this truth, I beseech Thee by Thy Name which no scroll can bear, which no heart can imagine and no tongue can utter--a Name which will remain concealed so long as Thine own Essence is hidden, and will be glorified so long as Thine own Being is extolled--to unfurl, ere the present year draw to a close, the ensigns of Thine undisputed ascendancy and triumph, that the whole creation may be enriched by Thy wealth, and may be exalted through the ennobling influence of Thy transcendent sovereignty, and that all may arise and promote Thy Cause.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 94

8. THE glory of glories and the most resplendent light rest upon Thee, O my God. Thy majesty is so transcendent that no human imagination can reach it and Thy consummate power is so sublime that the birds of men's hearts and minds can never attain its heights. All beings acknowledge their powerlessness to praise Thee as beseemeth Thy station. Immeasurably exalted

art Thou. No one can glorify Thy Being, or fathom the evidences of Thy bounty as it exists in Thine inmost Essence, since Thou alone knowest Thyself as Thou art in Thyself.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 194

9. Some souls imagine that there is a cessation to the bounties of God, as if at one time the divine bestowals are poured out, at another time withheld from mankind and ceasing. If we carefully reflect upon this matter, we find that such a statement is in fact a denial of Divinity, for the reality of Divinity is evidenced by virtue of its outpourings or bestowals. The cessation of the bestowals of God at any time would be equivalent to the cessation of the sovereignty of God. The sun is the sun because of its ray and heat; it is the sun because of its bestowal; but if at any time its effulgence, splendor and radiance should cease to emanate, it would no longer be the sun. Consequently, it is inconceivable that the bounties of Divinity should cease, for the attributes of Divinity are everexistent. God has ever been divine; He hath ever exercised His sovereignty and still possesses everlasting divinity and sovereignty. He is like the sun, which has ever had its splendor, heat and radiance and will continue to possess these bounties and attributes. If at any time its splendor and heat should cease, it would no longer be pronounced the sun. Therefore, the sound reasoning mind concludes that the bounties of the Holy Spirit are continuous and that holy souls are ever the recipients of these divine emanations. The potency of the Holy Spirit is everlasting, not temporary; for the sanctity of the Holy Spirit is its power and efficacy manifest in the spirits it quickens. We pray that all of us may become recipients of its bestowals, that we may be illumined by the lights of heaven, edified through the teachings of God and imbued with the virtues of divine character, as mirrors reflecting the light of the sun. Unless the mirror reflects the sunlight, it is only dark, inanimate matter. Likewise, the hearts and spirits of mankind, when deprived and without their portion of the bounties of the Holy Spirit, linger in the abyss of darkness and ignorance.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 313

10. All superior kingdoms are incomprehensible to the inferior; how therefore could it be possible that the creature, man, should understand the almighty Creator of all?

That which we imagine, is not the Reality of God; He, the Unknowable, the Unthinkable, is far beyond the highest conception of man.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 24-25

11. Then how could it be possible for a contingent reality, that is, man, to understand the nature of that pre-existent Essence, the Divine Being? The difference in station between man and the Divine Reality is thousands upon thousands of times greater than the difference between vegetable and animal. And that which a human being would conjure up in his mind is but the fanciful image of his human condition, it doth not encompass God’s reality but rather is encompassed by it. That is, man graspeth his own illusory conceptions, but the Reality of Divinity can never be grasped: It, Itself, encompasseth all created things, and all created things are in Its grasp. That Divinity which man doth imagine for himself existeth only in his mind, not in truth. Man, however, existeth both in his mind and in truth; thus man is greater than that fanciful reality which he is able to imagine.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections...* *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 47

12. Briefly, the superior reality does not descend nor abase itself to inferior states; then how could it be that the Universal Reality of God, which is freed from all descriptions and qualifications, notwithstanding Its absolute sanctity and purity, should resolve Itself into the forms of the realities of the creatures, which are the source of imperfections? This is a pure imagination which one cannot conceive.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 295-296

13. The Essence of the Divine Entity and the Unseen of the unseen is holy above imagination and is beyond thought. Consciousness doth not reach It. Within the capacity of comprehension of a produced (or created) reality that Ancient Reality cannot be contained. It is a different world; from it there is no information; arrival thereat is impossible; attainment thereto is prohibited and inaccessible. This much is known: It exists and Its existence is certain and proven--but the condition is unknown.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 23

Human Understanding of God is Created in Imagination

14. This people, all of them, have pictured a god in the realm of the mind, and worship that image which they have made for themselves. And yet that image is comprehended, the human mind being the comprehender thereof, and certainly the comprehender is greater than that which lieth within its grasp; for imagination is but the branch, while mind is the root; and certainly the root is greater than the branch. Consider then, how all the peoples of the world are bowing the knee to a fancy of their own contriving, how they have created a creator within their own minds, and they call it the Fashioner of all that is--whereas in truth it is but an illusion. Thus are the people worshipping only an error of perception.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 53-54

15. To sum it up, there are many such proofs, establishing the existence of that Universal Reality. And since that Reality is pre-existent, It is untouched by the conditions that govern phenomena; for whatever entity is subject to circumstances and the play of events is contingent, not pre-existent. Know then: that divinity which other communions and peoples have conjured up, falleth within the scope of their imagination, and not beyond it, whereas the reality of the Godhead is beyond all conceiving.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Selections... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 49-50

16. Every man of perception who hath scaled the noble heights of detachment, and every man of eloquence who hath attained the most sublime station, beareth witness that Thou art God, the Incomparable, and that Thou hast assigned no associate unto Thyself in the kingdom of creation, nor is there anyone to compare with Thee in the realm of invention. Men of wisdom, who had but a notion of the revelation of Thy glory, conceived a likeness of Thee according to their own understanding, and men of erudition, who had gained but a glimpse of the manifold evidences of Thy loving-kindness and glory, have contrived peers for Thee in conformity with their own imaginations.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 207

17. This people, all of them, have pictured a god in the realm of the mind, and worship that image which they have made for themselves. And yet that image is comprehended, the human mind being the comprehender thereof, and certainly the comprehender is greater than that which lieth within its grasp; for imagination is but the branch, while mind is the root; and certainly the root is greater than the branch. Consider then, how all the peoples of the world are bowing the knee to a fancy of their own contriving, how they have created a creator within their own minds, and they call it the Fashioner of all that is--whereas in truth it is but an illusion. Thus are the people worshipping only an error of perception.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Selections... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 53-54

18. All the people have formed a god in the world of thought, and that form of their own imagination they worship; when the fact is that the imagined form is finite and the human mind is infinite³. Surely the infinite is greater than the finite, for imagination is accidental (or non-essential) while the mind is essential; surely the essential is greater than the accidental.

Therefore consider: All the sects and peoples worship their own thought; they create a god in their own minds and acknowledge him to be the creator of all things, when that form is a superstition--thus people adore and worship imagination (or illusion).

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 22

19. Some worship the product of their own imagination: they make for themselves an imaginary God and adore this, when the creation of their finite minds cannot be the Infinite Mighty Maker of all things visible and invisible! Others worship the sun or trees, also stones! In past ages there were those who adored the sea, the clouds, and even clay!

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Paris Talks*, p. 145

20. What is the reality of Divinity, or what do we understand by God?

When we consider the world of existence, we find that the essential reality underlying any given phenomenon is unknown. Phenomenal, or created, things are known to us only by their attributes. Man discerns only manifestations, or attributes, of objects, while the identity, or reality, of them remains hidden. For example, we call this object a flower. What do we understand by this name and title? We understand that the qualities appertaining to this organism are perceptible to us, but the intrinsic elemental reality, or identity, of it remains unknown. Its external appearance and manifest attributes are knowable; but the inner being, the underlying reality or intrinsic identity, is still beyond the ken and perception of our human powers. Inasmuch as the realities of material phenomena are impenetrable and unknowable and are only apprehended through their properties or qualities, how much more this is true concerning the reality of Divinity, that holy essential reality which transcends the plane and grasp of mind and man? That which comes within human grasp is finite, and in relation to it we are infinite because we can grasp it. Assuredly, the finite is lesser than the infinite; the infinite is ever greater. If the reality of Divinity could be contained within the grasp of human mind, it would after all be possessed of an intellectual existence only--a mere intellectual concept without extraneous existence, an image or likeness which had come within the comprehension of finite intellect. The mind of man would be transcendental thereto. How could it be possible that an image which has only intellectual existence is the reality of Divinity, which is infinite? Therefore, the reality of

³ Infinite in regard to imagination, for without the mind there would be no imagination.

Divinity in its identity is beyond the range of human intellection because the human mind, the human intellect, the human thought are limited, whereas the reality of Divinity is unlimited. How can the limited grasp the unlimited and transcend it? Impossible. The unlimited always comprehends the limited. The limited can never comprehend, surround nor take in the unlimited. Therefore, every concept of Divinity which has come within the intellection of a human being is finite, or limited, and is a pure product of imagination, whereas the reality of Divinity is holy and sacred above and beyond all such concepts.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 421-422

21. Also the difference of conditions in the world of beings is an obstacle to comprehension. For example, this mineral belongs to the mineral kingdom; however far it may rise, it can never comprehend the power of growth. The plants, the trees, whatever progress they may make, cannot conceive of the power of sight or the powers of the other senses; and the animal cannot imagine the condition of man--that is to say, his spiritual powers. Difference of condition is an obstacle to knowledge; the inferior degree cannot comprehend the superior degree. How then can the phenomenal reality comprehend the Preexistent Reality? Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and the knowledge of His attributes, and not of His Reality. This knowledge of the attributes is also proportioned to the capacity and power of man; it is not absolute. Philosophy consists in comprehending the reality of things as they exist, according to the capacity and the power of man. For the phenomenal reality can comprehend the Preexistent attributes only to the extent of the human capacity. The mystery of Divinity is sanctified and purified from the comprehension of the beings, for all that comes to the imagination is that which man understands, and the power of the understanding of man does not embrace the Reality of the Divine Essence. All that man is able to understand are the attributes of Divinity, the radiance of which appears and is visible in the world and within men’s souls.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 221

22. Question.--What connection has the Reality of Divinity with the Lordly Rising-places and the Divine Dawning-points?

Answer.--Know that the Reality of Divinity or the substance of the Essence of Oneness is pure sanctity and absolute holiness--that is to say, it is sanctified and exempt from all praise. The whole of the supreme attributes of the degrees of existence, in reference to this plane, are only imaginations. It is invisible, incomprehensible, inaccessible, a pure essence which cannot be described, for the Divine Essence surrounds all things. Verily, that which surrounds is greater than the surrounded, and the surrounded cannot contain that by which it is surrounded, nor comprehend its reality. However far mind may progress, though it may reach to the final degree of comprehension, the limit of understanding, it beholds the divine signs and attributes in the world of creation and not in the world of God. For the essence and the attributes of the Lord of Unity are in the heights of sanctity, and for the minds and understandings there is no way to approach that position. “The way is closed, and seeking is forbidden.”

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 146

Imagination Connected to Material Existence

23. Furthermore, these events have deeper reasons. Their object and purpose is to teach man certain lessons. We are living in a day of reliance upon material conditions. Men imagine that the great size and strength of a ship, the perfection of machinery or the skill of a navigator

will ensure safety, but these disasters sometimes take place that men may know that God is the real Protector. If it be the will of God to protect man, a little ship may escape destruction, whereas the greatest and most perfectly constructed vessel with the best and most skillful navigator may not survive a danger such as was present on the ocean. The purpose is that the people of the world may turn to God, the One Protector; that human souls may rely upon His preservation and know that He is the real safety. These events happen in order that man's faith may be increased and strengthened. Therefore, although we feel sad and disheartened, we must supplicate God to turn our hearts to the Kingdom and pray for these departed souls with faith in His infinite mercy so that, although they have been deprived of this earthly life, they may enjoy a new existence in the supreme mansions of the Heavenly Father.

Let no one imagine that these words imply that man should not be thorough and careful in his undertakings. God has endowed man with intelligence so that he may safeguard and protect himself. Therefore, he must provide and surround himself with all that scientific skill can produce. He must be deliberate, thoughtful and thorough in his purposes, build the best ship and provide the most experienced captain; yet, withal, let him rely upon God and consider God as the one Keeper. If God protects, nothing can imperil man's safety; and if it be not His will to safeguard, no amount of preparation and precaution will avail.

‘**Abdu'l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 48

The Manifestations and Imagination

24. As for the Báb--may my soul be His sacrifice!--at a youthful age, that is to say, when He had reached the twenty-fifth year of His blessed life, He stood forth to proclaim His Cause.⁴ It was universally admitted by the Shi'is that He had never studied in any school and had not acquired knowledge from any teacher; all the people of Shiraz bear witness to this. Nevertheless, He suddenly appeared before the people, endowed with the most complete erudition. Although He was but a merchant, He confounded all the ulama of Persia.⁵ All alone, in a way which is beyond imagination, He upheld the Cause among the Persians, who are renowned for their religious fanaticism. This illustrious Soul arose with such power that He shook the supports of the religion, of the morals, the conditions, the habits and the customs of Persia, and instituted new rules, new laws and a new religion. Though the great personages of the State, nearly all the clergy, and the public men arose to destroy and annihilate Him, He alone withstood them and moved the whole of Persia.

‘**Abdu'l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 25

25. We beseech God that He may graciously vouchsafe His grace unto all men, and enable them to attain the knowledge of Him and of themselves. By My life! Whoso hath known Him shall soar in the immensity of His love, and shall be detached from the world and all that is therein. Nothing on earth shall deflect him from his course, how much less they who, prompted by their vain imaginations, speak those things which God hath forbidden.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 205

⁴ The Báb is here designated by his title Hadrat-i-Ala, His Supreme Highness; but for the convenience of the reader we shall continue to designate Him by the name under which He is known throughout Europe--i.e., the Báb.

⁵ Doctors of the religion of Islam.

26. 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." 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!

Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Áqdas*, p. 84

27. Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that, in view of certain words the meaning of which he cannot comprehend, the portal of God's infinite guidance can ever be closed in the face of men? Can he ever conceive for these Divine Luminaries, these resplendent Lights either a beginning or an end? What outpouring flood can compare with the stream of His all-embracing grace, and what blessing can excel the evidences of so great and pervasive a mercy? There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 68-69

28. As to the words--"Immediately after the oppression of those days"--they refer to the time when men shall become oppressed and afflicted, the time when the lingering traces of the Sun of Truth and the fruit of the Tree of knowledge and wisdom will have vanished from the midst of men, when the reins of mankind will have fallen into the grasp of the foolish and ignorant, when the portals of divine unity and understanding--the essential and highest purpose in creation--will have been closed, when certain knowledge will have given way to idle fancy, and corruption will have usurped the station of righteousness. Such a condition as this is witnessed in this day when the reins of every community have fallen into the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire. On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His holy Word a dead letter. Such is the sway of their desires, that the lamp of conscience and reason hath been quenched in their hearts, and this although the fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun hath been made manifest. And yet, in spite of all these manifold revelations of divine knowledge, which have encompassed the world, they still vainly imagine the door of knowledge to be closed, and the showers of mercy to be stilled. Clinging unto idle fancy, they have strayed far from the Urvatu'l-Vuthqa of divine knowledge. Their hearts seem not to be inclined to knowledge and the door thereof, neither think they of its manifestations, inasmuch as in idle fancy they have found the door that leadeth unto earthly

riches, whereas in the manifestation of the Revealer of knowledge they find naught but the call to self-sacrifice.

Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 29-30

29. Dost thou imagine, O Minister of the Shah in the City (Constantinople), that I hold within My grasp the ultimate destiny of the Cause of God? Thinkest thou that My imprisonment, or the shame I have been made to suffer, or even My death and utter annihilation, can deflect its course? Wretched is what thou hast imagined in thine heart! Thou art indeed of them that walk after the vain imaginings which their hearts devise. No God is there but Him. Powerful is He to manifest His Cause, and to exalt His testimony, and to establish whatsoever is His Will, and to elevate it to so eminent a position that neither thine own hands, nor the hands of them that have turned away from Him, can ever touch or harm it.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 219-220

30. Happy art thou who hast turned thy face towards My countenance, inasmuch as thou hast rent the veils asunder, hast shattered the idols and recognized thine eternal Lord. The people of the Qur'án have risen up against Us without any clear proof or evidence, tormenting Us at every moment with a fresh torment. They idly imagine that tribulations can frustrate Our Purpose. Vain indeed is that which they have imagined. Verily, thy Lord is the One Who ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 15

31. Know thou of a certainty that whenever thou makest mention of Him Whom God shall make manifest, only then art thou making mention of God. In like manner shouldst thou hearken unto the verses of the Bayan and acknowledge its truth, only then would the revealed verses of God profit thee. Otherwise what benefit canst thou derive therefrom? For wert thou to prostrate thyself in adoration from the beginning of life till the end and to spend thy days for the sake of God's remembrance, but disbelieve in the Exponent of His Revelation for the age, dost thou imagine that thy deeds would confer any benefit upon thee?

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 80

32. Likewise is the Revelation of Him Whom God shall make manifest. Among those to whom it will never occur that they might merit the displeasure of God, and whose pious deeds will be exemplary unto everyone, there will be many who will become the personification of the nethermost fire itself, when they fail to embrace His Cause; while among the lowly servants whom no one would imagine to be of any merit, how great the number who will be honoured with true faith and on whom the Fountainhead of generosity will bestow the robe of authority. For whatever is created in the Faith of God is created through the potency of His Word.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, pp. 83-84

33. PONDER likewise the Dispensation of the Apostle of God which lasted twelve hundred and seventy years⁶ till the dawn of the manifestation of the Bayan. He directed everyone to await the advent of the Promised Qa'im. All deeds which in the Islamic Dispensation began with

⁶ From the Declaration of Muhammad; this occurred ten years before the Hijrah which marks the starting point of the Muslim calendar.

Muhammad should find their consummation through the appearance of the Qa'im. God hath made Him manifest invested with the proof wherewith the Apostle of God was invested, so that none of the believers in the Qur'an might entertain doubts about the validity of His Cause, for it is set down in the Qur'an that none but God is capable of revealing verses. During the period of 1270 years no one among the followers of the Qur'an ever witnessed a person appearing with conclusive proofs. Now the Ever-Living Lord hath made manifest and invested with supreme testimony this long-awaited Promised One from a place no one could imagine and from a person whose knowledge was deemed of no account. His age is no more than twenty-five years, yet His glory is such as none of the learned among the people of Islam can rival; inasmuch as man's glory lieth in his knowledge. Behold the learned who are honoured by virtue of their ability to understand the Holy Writings, and God hath exalted them to such a degree that in referring to them He saith: 'None knoweth the meaning thereof except God and them that are well-grounded in knowledge.'⁷ How strange then that this twenty-five-year-old untutored one should be singled out to reveal His verses in so astounding a manner. If the Muslim divines have cause for pride in understanding the meaning of the Holy Writings, His glory is in revealing the Writings, that none of them may hesitate to believe in His Words. So great is the celestial might and power which God hath revealed in Him that if it were His will and no break should intervene He could, within the space of five days and nights, reveal the equivalent of the Qur'an which was sent down in twenty-three years. Ponder thou and reflect. Hath anyone like unto Him ever appeared in former times, or is this characteristic strictly confined unto Him?

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, pp. 118-119

34. ...Thou hadst written that in the sacred books of the followers of Zoroaster it is written that in the latter days, in three separate Dispensations, the sun must needs be brought to a standstill. In the first Dispensation, it is predicted, the sun will remain motionless for ten days; in the second for twice that time; in the third for no less than one whole month. The interpretation of this prophecy is this: the first Dispensation to which it refers is the Muhammadan Dispensation during which the Sun of Truth stood still for ten days. Each day is reckoned as one century. The Muhammadan Dispensation must have, therefore, lasted no less than one thousand years, which is precisely the period that has elapsed from the setting of the Star of the Imamate to the advent of the Dispensation proclaimed by the Báb. The second Dispensation referred to in this prophecy is the one inaugurated by the Báb Himself, which began in the year 1260 A.H. and was brought to a close in the year 1280 A.H. As to the third Dispensation--the Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh--inasmuch as the Sun of Truth when attaining that station shineth in the plenitude of its meridian splendor its duration hath been fixed for a period of one whole month, which is the maximum time taken by the sun to pass through a sign of the Zodiac. From this thou canst imagine the magnitude of the Bahá'í cycle--a cycle that must extend over a period of at least five hundred thousand years.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Buddha, Krisna, Zoroaster*, pp. 16-17

35. Know thou that the people, even unto this day, have failed to unravel the hidden secrets of the Book. They imagine that Christ was excluded from His heaven in the days when He walked the earth, that He fell from the heights of His sublimity, and afterwards mounted to those upper reaches of the sky, to the heaven which doth not exist at all, for it is but space. And they

⁷ Qur'an 3: 5.

are waiting for Him to come down from there again, riding upon a cloud, and they imagine that there are clouds in that infinite space and that He will ride thereon and by that means He will descend. Whereas the truth is that a cloud is but vapour that riseth out of the earth, and it doth not come down from heaven. Rather, the cloud referred to in the Gospel is the human body, so called because the body is as a veil to man, which, even as a cloud, preventeth him from beholding the Sun of Truth that shineth from the horizon of Christ.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections...* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 168

36. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used often to say that the difference between a prophet and an ordinary person is that the latter looks only to the present. He does not try to imagine the future victories and thereby forget the present trivial obstructions. The prophet, however, having a deep insight in the future condition of things sees his ultimate victory and does not get disheartened even though he sees a whole-sale massacre of his followers.

Shoghi Effendi: *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 13

Imagination and Attributes of God

37. Without doubt each being is the center of the shining forth of the glory of God--that is to say, the perfections of God appear from it and are resplendent in it. It is like the sun, which is resplendent in the desert, upon the sea, in the trees, in the fruits and blossoms, and in all earthly things. The world, indeed each existing being, proclaims to us one of the names of God, but the reality of man is the collective reality, the general reality, and is the center where the glory of all the perfections of God shine forth--that is to say, for each name, each attribute, each perfection which we affirm of God there exists a sign in man. If it were otherwise, man could not imagine these perfections and could not understand them. So we say that God is the seer, and the eye is the sign of His vision; if this sight were not in man, how could we imagine the vision of God? For the blind (that is, one born blind) cannot imagine sight; and the deaf (that is, one deaf from birth) cannot imagine hearing; and the dead cannot realize life. Consequently, the Divinity of God, which is the sum of all perfections, reflects itself in the reality of man--that is to say, the Essence of Oneness is the gathering of all perfections, and from this unity He casts a reflection upon the human reality. Man, then, is the perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth and is the center of radiation: the Sun of Truth shines in this mirror. The reflection of the divine perfections appears in the reality of man, so he is the representative of God, the messenger of God. If man did not exist, the universe would be without result, for the object of existence is the appearance of the perfections of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 195-196

Imagination and the Holy Spirit

38. Question.--What is the Holy Spirit?

Answer.--The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations; for the focus of the rays of the Sun of Reality was Christ, and from this glorious focus, which is the Reality of Christ, the Bounty of God reflected upon the other mirrors which were the reality of the Apostles. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles signifies that the glorious divine bounties reflected and appeared in their reality. Moreover, entrance and exit, descent and ascent, are characteristics of bodies and not of spirits--that is to say, sensible

realities enter and come forth, but intellectual subtleties and mental realities, such as intelligence, love, knowledge, imagination and thought, do not enter, nor come forth, nor descend, but rather they have direct connection.

For example, knowledge, which is a state attained to by the intelligence, is an intellectual condition; and entering and coming out of the mind are imaginary conditions; but the mind is connected with the acquisition of knowledge, like images reflected in a mirror.

Therefore, as it is evident and clear that the intellectual realities do not enter and descend, and it is absolutely impossible that the Holy Spirit should ascend and descend, enter, come out or penetrate, it can only be that the Holy Spirit appears in splendor, as the sun appears in the mirror.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 108

39. O bondswoman of God! The human spirit possesseth wondrous powers, but it should be reinforced by the Holy Spirit. What thou hearest other than this is pure imagination. If, however, it be assisted by the bounty of the Holy Spirit, then will its strength be a thing to marvel at. Then will that human spirit uncover realities, and unravel mysteries. Turn thy heart fully to the Holy Spirit, and invite others to do the same; then shall ye witness wonderful results.

O handmaid of God! The stars in the sky do not exert any spiritual influence on this world of dust; but all the members and parts of the universe are very strongly linked together in that limitless space, and this connection produceth a reciprocity of material effects. Outside the bounty of the Holy Spirit, whatsoever thou hearest as to the effect of trances, or the mediums’ trumpets, conveying the singing voices of the dead, is imagination pure and simple. As to the bounty of the Holy Spirit, however, relate whatsoever thou wilt--it cannot be overstated; believe, therefore, whatsoever thou hearest of this. But the persons referred to, the trumpet-people, are entirely shut out from this bounty and receive no portion thereof; their way is an illusion.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Selections... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 160-161

Imagination and Intelligence

40. This is the signification of the Three Persons of the Trinity. If it were otherwise, the foundations of the Religion of God would rest upon an illogical proposition which the mind could never conceive, and how can the mind be forced to believe a thing which it cannot conceive? A thing cannot be grasped by the intelligence except when it is clothed in an intelligible form; otherwise, it is but an effort of the imagination.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 115

People Imagine God Unaware of Actions

41. Say: Observe equity in your judgment, ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man’s station. He Who is the Eternal Truth knoweth well what the breasts of men conceal. His long forbearance hath emboldened His creatures, for not until the appointed time is come will He rend any veil asunder. His surpassing mercy hath restrained the fury of His wrath, and caused most people to imagine that the one true God is unaware of the things they have privily committed. By Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed! The mirror of His knowledge reflecteth, with complete distinctness, precision and fidelity, the doings of all men. Say: Praise be to Thee, O

Concealer of the sins of the weak and helpless! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou that forgivest the heedless ones that trespass against Thee!

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 204

Members of Lower Kingdom Cannot Imagine Higher

42. Although the mineral, vegetable, animal and man all have actual being, yet the mineral has no knowledge of the vegetable. It cannot apprehend it. It cannot imagine nor understand it.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 22

43. The animal cannot understand the roundness of the earth, nor its motion in space, nor the central position of the sun, nor can it imagine such a thing as the all-pervading ether.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 23

44. The power of the understanding differs in degree in the various kingdoms of creation. The mineral, vegetable, and animal realms are each incapable of understanding any creation beyond their own. The mineral cannot imagine the growing power of the plant. The tree cannot understand the power of movement in the animal, neither can it comprehend what it would mean to possess sight, hearing or the sense of smell. These all belong to the physical creation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 24

Nature of Man and Imagination

45. Thou hast asked Me whether man, as apart from the Prophets of God and His chosen ones, will retain, after his physical death, the self-same individuality, personality, consciousness, and understanding that characterize his life in this world. If this should be the case, how is it, thou hast observed, that whereas such slight injuries to his mental faculties as fainting and severe illness deprive him of his understanding and consciousness, his death, which must involve the decomposition of his body and the dissolution of its elements, is powerless to destroy that understanding and extinguish that consciousness? How can any one imagine that man’s consciousness and personality will be maintained, when the very instruments necessary to their existence and function will have completely disintegrated?

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 153

46. Let no one imagine that by Our assertion that all created things are the signs of the revelation of God is meant that--God forbid--all men, be they good or evil, pious or infidel, are equal in the sight of God. Nor doth it imply that the Divine Being--magnified be His name and exalted be His glory--is, under any circumstances, comparable unto men, or can, in any way, be associated with His creatures. Such an error hath been committed by certain foolish ones who, after having ascended into the heavens of their idle fancies, have interpreted Divine Unity to mean that all created things are the signs of God, and that, consequently, there is no distinction whatsoever between them. Some have even outstripped them by maintaining that these signs are peers and partners of God Himself. Gracious God! He, verily, is one and indivisible; one in His essence, one in His attributes. Everything besides Him is as nothing when brought face to face with the resplendent revelation of but one of His names, with no more than the faintest intimation of His glory--how much less when confronted with His own Self!

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 187

47. Know that people belong to two categories--that is to say, they constitute two parties. One party deny the spirit and say that man also is a species of animal; for they say: Do we not see that animals and men share the same powers and senses? These simple, single elements which fill space are endlessly combined, and from each of these combinations one of the beings is produced. Among these beings is the possessor of spirit,⁸ of the powers and of the senses. The more perfect the combination, the nobler is the being. The combination of the elements in the

⁸ Man.

body of man is more perfect than the composition of any other being; it is mingled in absolute equilibrium; therefore, it is more noble and more perfect. "It is not," they say, "that he has a special power and spirit which the other animals lack: animals possess sensitive bodies, but man in some powers has more sensation, although, in what concerns the outer senses, such as hearing, sight, taste, smell, touch and even in some interior powers like memory, the animal is more richly endowed than man." "The animal, too," they say, "has intelligence and perception." All that they concede is that man's intelligence is greater.

This is what the philosophers of the present state; this is their saying, this is their supposition, and thus their imagination decrees. So with powerful arguments and proofs they make the descent of man go back to the animal, and say that there was once a time when man was an animal, that then the species changed and progressed little by little until it reached the present status of man.

But the theologians say: No, this is not so. Though man has powers and outer senses in common with the animal, yet an extraordinary power exists in him of which the animal is bereft. The sciences, arts, inventions, trades and discoveries of realities are the results of this spiritual power. This is a power which encompasses all things, comprehends their realities, discovers all the hidden mysteries of beings, and through this knowledge controls them. It even perceives things which do not exist outwardly--that is to say, intellectual realities which are not sensible, and which have no outward existence because they are invisible; so it comprehends the mind, the spirit, the qualities, the characters, the love and sorrow of man, which are intellectual realities. Moreover, these existing sciences, arts, laws and endless inventions of man at one time were invisible, mysterious and hidden secrets; it is only the all-encompassing human power which has discovered and brought them out from the plane of the invisible to the plane of the visible. So telegraphy, photography, phonography and all such inventions and wonderful arts were at one time hidden mysteries. The human reality discovered and brought them out from the plane of the invisible to the plane of the visible. There was even a time when the qualities of this iron which you see--indeed of all the minerals--were hidden mysteries; men discovered this mineral, and wrought it in this industrial form. It is the same with all the other discoveries and inventions of man, which are innumerable.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pp. 185-186

48. Thus it is clear that if there were not in man a power different from any of those of the animals, the latter would be superior to man in inventions and the comprehension of realities. Therefore, it is evident that man has a gift which the animal does not possess. Now, the animal perceives sensible things but does not perceive intellectual realities. For example, that which is within the range of its vision the animal sees, but that which is beyond the range of sight it is not possible for it to perceive, and it cannot imagine it. So it is not possible for the animal to understand that the earth has the form of a globe. But man from known things proves unknown things and discovers unknown truths. For example, man sees the curve of the horizon, and from this he infers the roundness of the earth. The Pole Star at Akka, for instance, is at 33--that is to say, it is 33 above the horizon. When a man goes toward the North Pole, the Pole Star rises one degree above the horizon for each degree of distance that he travels--that is to say, the altitude of the Pole Star will be 34, then 40, then 50, then 60, then 70. If he reaches the North Pole the altitude of the Pole Star will be 90 or have attained the zenith--that is to say, will be directly overhead. This Pole Star and its ascension are sensible things. The further one goes toward the Pole, the higher the Pole Star rises; from these two known truths an unknown thing has been

discovered--that is, that the horizon is curved, meaning that the horizon of each degree of the earth is a different horizon from that of another degree. Man perceives this and proves from it an invisible thing which is the roundness of the earth. This it is impossible for the animal to perceive. In the same way, it cannot understand that the sun is the center and that the earth revolves around it. The animal is the captive of the senses and bound by them; all that is beyond the senses, the things that they do not control, the animal can never understand, although in the outer senses it is greater than man. Hence it is proved and verified that in man there is a power of discovery by which he is distinguished from the animals, and this is the spirit of man.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 187-188

Imagine Perfections

49. Know that the conditions of existence are limited to the conditions of servitude, of prophethood and of Deity, but the divine and the contingent perfections are unlimited. When you reflect deeply, you discover that also outwardly the perfections of existence are also unlimited, for you cannot find a being so perfect that you cannot imagine a superior one. For example, you cannot see a ruby in the mineral kingdom, a rose in the vegetable kingdom, or a nightingale in the animal kingdom, without imagining that there might be better specimens. As the divine bounties are endless, so human perfections are endless. If it were possible to reach a limit of perfection, then one of the realities of the beings might reach the condition of being independent of God, and the contingent might attain to the condition of the absolute. But for every being there is a point which it cannot overpass--that is to say, he who is in the condition of servitude, however far he may progress in gaining limitless perfections, will never reach the condition of Deity. It is the same with the other beings. A mineral, however far it may progress in the mineral kingdom, cannot gain the vegetable power. Also in a flower, however far it may progress in the vegetable kingdom, no power of the senses will appear. So this silver mineral cannot gain hearing or sight; it can only improve in its own condition and become a perfect mineral, but it cannot acquire the power of growth, or the power of sensation, or attain to life; it can only progress in its own condition.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 230

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

Hence, as the perfections of humanity are endless, man can also make progress in perfections after leaving this world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 237

Science, Religion, and Imagination

51. The third principle or teaching of Bahá’u’lláh is the oneness of religion and science. Any religious belief which is not conformable with scientific proof and investigation is superstition, for true science is reason and reality, and religion is essentially reality and pure

reason; therefore, the two must correspond. Religious teaching which is at variance with science and reason is human invention and imagination unworthy of acceptance, for the antithesis and opposite of knowledge is superstition born of the ignorance of man. If we say religion is opposed to science, we lack knowledge of either true science or true religion, for both are founded upon the premises and conclusions of reason, and both must bear its test.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 107

52. Among other principles of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings was the harmony of science and religion. Religion must stand the analysis of reason. It must agree with scientific fact and proof so that science will sanction religion and religion fortify science. Both are indissolubly welded and joined in reality. If statements and teachings of religion are found to be unreasonable and contrary to science, they are outcomes of superstition and imagination. Innumerable doctrines and beliefs of this character have arisen in the past ages. Consider the superstitions and mythology of the Romans, Greeks and Egyptians; all were contrary to religion and science. It is now evident that the beliefs of these nations were superstitions, but in those times they held to them most tenaciously. For example, one of the many Egyptian idols was to those people an authenticated miracle, whereas in reality it was a piece of stone. As science could not sanction the miraculous origin and nature of a piece of rock, the belief in it must have been superstition. It is now evident that it was superstition. Therefore, we must cast aside such beliefs and investigate reality. That which is found to be real and conformable to reason must be accepted, and whatever science and reason cannot support must be rejected as imitation and not reality. Then differences of belief will disappear. All will become as one family, one people, and the same susceptibility to the divine bounty and education will be witnessed among mankind.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 175-176

53. Fourth, religion must reconcile and be in harmony with science and reason. If the religious beliefs of mankind are contrary to science and opposed to reason, they are none other than superstitions and without divine authority, for the Lord God has endowed man with the faculty of reason in order that through its exercise he may arrive at the verities of existence. Reason is the discoverer of the realities of things, and that which conflicts with its conclusions is the product of human fancy and imagination.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 316

54. Third, religion must be conducive to love of all, the cause of fellowship, unity and light. If it be the cause of enmity, bloodshed and hatred, its nonbeing is better than its being, its nonexistence better than its existence. Religion and science conform and agree. If a question of religion violates reason and does not agree with science, it is imagination and not worthy of credence.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 170

55. Question.--What is the truth of the story of Adam, and His eating of the fruit of the tree?
Answer.--In the Bible it is written that God put Adam in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and take care of it, and said to Him: “Eat of every tree of the garden except the tree of good and evil, for if You eat of that, You will die.”⁹ Then it is said that God caused Adam to sleep, and He took

⁹ cf. Genesis 2: 16-17.

one of His ribs and created woman in order that she might be His companion. After that it is said the serpent induced the woman to eat of the tree, saying: "God has forbidden you to eat of the tree in order that your eyes may not be opened, and that you may not know good from evil."¹⁰ Then Eve ate from the tree and gave unto Adam, Who also ate; their eyes were opened, they found themselves naked, and they hid their bodies with leaves. In consequence of this act they received the reproaches of God. God said to Adam: "Hast Thou eaten of the forbidden tree?" Adam answered: "Eve tempted Me, and I did eat." God then reproved Eve; Eve said: "The serpent tempted me, and I did eat." For this the serpent was cursed, and enmity was put between the serpent and Eve, and between their descendants. And God said: "The man is become like unto Us, knowing good and evil, and perhaps He will eat of the tree of life and live forever." So God guarded the tree of life.¹¹

If we take this story in its apparent meaning, according to the interpretation of the masses, it is indeed extraordinary. The intelligence cannot accept it, affirm it, or imagine it; for such arrangements, such details, such speeches and reproaches are far from being those of an intelligent man, how much less of the Divinity--that Divinity Who has organized this infinite universe in the most perfect form, and its innumerable inhabitants with absolute system, strength and perfection.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 122-123

56. Furthermore, the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh announce that religion must be in conformity with science and reason; otherwise, it is superstition; for science and reason are realities, and religion itself is the Divine Reality unto which true science and reason must conform. God has bestowed the gift of mind upon man in order that he may weigh every fact or truth presented to him and adjudge whether it be reasonable. That which conforms to his reason he may accept as true, while that which reason and science cannot sanction may be discarded as imagination and superstition, as a phantom and not reality. Inasmuch as the blind imitations or dogmatic interpretations current among men do not coincide with the postulates of reason, and the mind and scientific investigation cannot acquiesce thereto, many souls in the human world today shun and deny religion. That is to say, imitations, when weighed in the scales of reason, will not conform to its standard and requirement. Therefore, these souls deny religion and become irreligious, whereas if the reality of the divine religions becomes manifest to them and the foundation of the heavenly teachings is revealed coinciding with facts and evident truths, reconciling with scientific knowledge and reasonable proof, all may acknowledge them, and irreligion will cease to exist. In this way all mankind may be brought to the foundation of religion, for reality is true reason and science, while all that is not conformable thereto is mere superstition.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 373-374

57. Among the bounties of God is revelation. Hence revelation is progressive and continuous. It never ceases. It is necessary that the reality of Divinity with all its perfections and attributes should become resplendent in the human world. The reality of Divinity is like an endless ocean. Revelation may be likened to the rain. Can you imagine the cessation of rain? Ever on the face of the earth somewhere rain is pouring down. Briefly, the world of existence is

¹⁰ cf. Genesis 3: 5.

¹¹ cf. Genesis 3: 11-15, 22.

progressive. It is subject to development and growth. Consider how great has been the progress in this radiant century. Civilization has unfolded. Nations have developed. Industrialism and jurisprudence have expanded. Sciences, inventions and discoveries have increased. All of these show that the world of existence is continuously progressing and developing; and therefore, assuredly, the virtues characterizing the maturity of man must, likewise, expand and grow.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 378

Bahá’í Faith and Imagination

58. Let them not, however, imagine that the carrying out of the Seven Year Plan, coinciding as it does with the termination of the first century of the Bahá’í era, signifies either the termination of, or even an interruption in, the work which the unerring Hand of the Almighty is directing them to perform. The opening of the second century of the Bahá’í era must needs disclose greater vistas, usher in further stages, and witness the initiation of plans more far-reaching than any as yet conceived. The Plan on which is now focused the attention, the aspirations, and the resources of the entire community of the American believers should be viewed as a mere beginning, as a trial of strength, a stepping-stone to a crusade of still greater magnitude, if the duties and responsibilities with which the Author of the Divine Plan has invested them are to be honorably and entirely fulfilled.

Shoghi Effendi: *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 12

59. To a lesser degree this principle must of necessity apply to the country which has vindicated its right to be regarded as the cradle of the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh. So great a function, so noble a role, can be regarded as no less inferior to the part played by those immortal souls who, through their sublime renunciation and unparalleled deeds, have been responsible for the birth of the Faith itself. Let not, therefore, those who are to participate so predominantly in the birth of that world civilization, which is the direct offspring of their Faith, imagine for a moment that for some mysterious purpose or by any reason of inherent excellence or special merit Bahá’u’lláh has chosen to confer upon their country and people so great and lasting a distinction. It is precisely by reason of the patent evils which, notwithstanding its other admittedly great characteristics and achievements, an excessive and binding materialism has unfortunately engendered within it that the Author of their Faith and the Center of His Covenant have singled it out to become the standard-bearer of the New World Order envisaged in their writings. It is by such means as this that Bahá’u’lláh can best demonstrate to a heedless generation His almighty power to raise up from the very midst of a people, immersed in a sea of materialism, a prey to one of the most virulent and long-standing forms of racial prejudice, and notorious for its political corruption, lawlessness and laxity in moral standards, men and women who, as time goes by, will increasingly exemplify those essential virtues of self-renunciation, of moral rectitude, of chastity, of indiscriminating fellowship, of holy discipline, and of spiritual insight that will fit them for the preponderating share they will have in calling into being that World Order and that World Civilization of which their country, no less than the entire human race, stands in desperate need. Theirs will be the duty and privilege, in their capacity first as the establishers of one of the most powerful pillars sustaining the edifice of the Universal House of Justice, and then as the champion-builders of that New World Order of which that House is to be the nucleus and forerunner, to inculcate, demonstrate, and apply those twin and sorely needed principles of Divine justice and order--principles to which the political corruption and the moral

license, increasingly staining the society to which they belong, offer so sad and striking a contrast.

Shoghi Effendi: *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 19-20

60. As a further testimony to the greatness of the Revelation identified with Bahá'u'lláh may be cited the following extracts from a Tablet addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to an eminent Zoroastrian follower of the Faith: "Thou hadst written that in the sacred books of the followers of Zoroaster it is written that in the latter days, in three separate Dispensations, the sun must needs be brought to a standstill. In the first Dispensation, it is predicted, the sun will remain motionless for ten days; in the second for twice that time; in the third for no less than one whole month. The interpretation of this prophecy is this: the first Dispensation to which it refers is the Muhammadan Dispensation during which the Sun of Truth stood still for ten days. Each day is reckoned as one century. The Muhammadan Dispensation must have, therefore, lasted no less than one thousand years, which is precisely the period that has elapsed from the setting of the Star of the Imamate to the advent of the Dispensation proclaimed by the Báb. The second Dispensation referred to in this prophecy is the one inaugurated by the Báb Himself, which began in the year 1260 A.H. and was brought to a close in the year 1280 A.H. As to the third Dispensation--the Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh--inasmuch as the Sun of Truth when attaining that station shineth in the plenitude of its meridian splendor its duration hath been fixed for a period of one whole month, which is the maximum time taken by the sun to pass through a sign of the Zodiac. From this thou canst imagine the magnitude of the Bahá'í cycle--a cycle that must extend over a period of at least five hundred thousand years."

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 101-102

The Celestial Reality (Kingdom) and Imagination

61. By the righteousness of God, my Well-Beloved! I have never aspired after worldly leadership. My sole purpose hath been to hand down unto men that which I was bidden to deliver by God, the Gracious, the Incomparable, that it may detach them from all that pertaineth to this world, and cause them to attain such heights as neither the ungodly can conceive, nor the froward imagine.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 108

62. That celestial reality, the third reality of the microcosm, delivers man from the material world. Its power causes man to escape from nature's world. Escaping, he will find an illuminating reality, transcending the limited reality of man and causing him to attain to the infinitude of God, abstracting him from the world of superstitions and imaginations, and submerging him in the sea of the rays of the Sun of Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 51

63. You question about eternal life and the entrance into the Kingdom. The outer expression used for the Kingdom is heaven; but this is a comparison and similitude, not a reality or fact, for the Kingdom is not a material place; it is sanctified from time and place. It is a spiritual world, a divine world, and the center of the Sovereignty of God; it is freed from body and that which is corporeal, and it is purified and sanctified from the imaginations of the human world. To be limited to place is a property of bodies and not of spirits. Place and time surround

the body, not the mind and spirit. Observe that the body of man is confined to a small place; it covers only two spans of earth. But the spirit and mind of man travel to all countries and regions--even through the limitless space of the heavens--surround all that exists, and make discoveries in the exalted spheres and infinite distances. This is because the spirit has no place; it is placeless; and for the spirit the earth and the heaven are as one since it makes discoveries in both. But the body is limited to a place and does not know that which is beyond it.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 241

Imagination and the Material Universe

64. The divine sovereignty is an ancient sovereignty, not an accidental sovereignty.

If we imagine this world of existence has a beginning, we can say the divine sovereignty is accidental--that is, there was a time when it did not exist. A king without a kingdom is impossible. He cannot be without a country, without subjects, without an army, without dominion, or he would be without kingship. All these exigencies or requirements of sovereignty must exist for a king. When they do exist, we can apply the word sovereignty to him. Otherwise, his sovereignty is imperfect, incomplete. If none of these conditions exists, sovereignty does not exist.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 218-219

65. To be brief: Our purpose is to show that the divine sovereignty, the Kingdom of God, is an ancient sovereignty, that it is not an accidental sovereignty, just as a kingdom presupposes the existence of subjects, of an army, of a country; for otherwise the state of dominion, authority and kingdom cannot be conceived of. Therefore, if we should imagine that the creation is accidental, we would be forced to admit that the Creator is accidental, whereas the divine bounty is ever flowing, and the rays of the Sun of Truth are continuously shining. No cessation is possible to the divine bounty, just as no cessation is possible to the rays of the sun. This is clear and obvious.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 463

Poor Use of Imagination

66. The light hath a center and if one desire to seek it otherwise but from the center, he can never attain to it. In this solar system the source of light is the sun and every light is acquired from it; even the lamps of the night are ignited through the sun, for if there were no sun the trees would not grow nor the mines develop, so that the oil be extracted from those trees and mines, and the lamps of the night be lit by it. Is it possible that one attain to the light in this globular sphere without the mediation of the sun? No, by the life of God! To suppose it, is pure imagination. But the truth is this: The main source of the lights is the sun and the rays are shed from it upon all the regions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’i World Faith*, p. 396

Imagination Contrary to Facts

67. It is only a man without intelligence who, after considering these things, can imagine that the great scheme of creation should suddenly cease to progress, that evolution should come to such an inadequate end!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 94

Science and Imagination

68. Notwithstanding this, some of the sagacious men declare: We have attained to the superlative degree of knowledge; we have penetrated the laboratory of nature, studying sciences and arts; we have attained the highest station of knowledge in the human world; we have investigated the facts as they are and have arrived at the conclusion that nothing is rightly acceptable except the tangible, which alone is a reality worthy of credence; all that is not tangible is imagination and nonsense.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 360-361

Imagination from Descriptions

69. Thousands of Mashriqu’l-Adhkárs, dawning points of praise and mention of God for all religionists will be built in the East and in the West, but this, being the first one erected in the Occident, has great importance. In the future there will be many here and elsewhere--in Asia, Europe, even in Africa, New Zealand and Australia--but this edifice in Chicago is of especial significance. It has the same importance as the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in Ishqabad, Caucasus, Russia, the first one built there. In Persia there are many; some are houses which have been utilized for the purpose, others are homes entirely devoted to the divine Cause, and in some places temporary structures have been erected. In all the cities of Persia there are Mashriqu’l-Adhkárs, but the great dawning point was founded in Ishqabad. It possesses superlative importance because it was the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár built. All the Bahá’í friends agreed and contributed their utmost assistance and effort. The Afnan devoted his wealth, gave all he had to it. From such a mighty and combined effort a beautiful edifice arose. Notwithstanding their contributions to that building, they have assisted the fund here in Chicago as well. The Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in Ishqabad is almost completed. It is centrally located, nine avenues leading into it, nine gardens, nine fountains; all the arrangement and construction is according to the principle and proportion of the number nine. It is like a beautiful bouquet. Imagine a very lofty, imposing edifice surrounded completely by gardens of variegated flowers, with nine avenues leading through them, nine fountains and pools of water. Such is its matchless, beautiful design. Now they are building a hospital, a school for orphans, a home for cripples, a hospice and a large dispensary. God willing, when it is fully completed, it will be a paradise.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 71

Difficulties in Using Imagination

70. On the 23rd of May of this auspicious year the Bahá’í world will celebrate the centennial anniversary of the founding of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. It will commemorate at once the hundredth anniversary of the inception of the Bábi Dispensation, of the inauguration of the Bahá’í Era, of the commencement of the Bahá’í Cycle, and of the birth of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The weight of the potentialities with which this Faith, possessing no peer or equal in the world’s

spiritual history, and marking the culmination of a universal prophetic cycle, has been endowed, staggers our imagination. The brightness of the millennial glory which it must shed in the fullness of time dazzles our eyes. The magnitude of the shadow which its Author will continue to cast on successive Prophets destined to be raised up after Him eludes our calculation.

Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, p. 11

71. O Nasir! The excellence of this Day is immensely exalted above the comprehension of men, however extensive their knowledge, however profound their understanding. How much more must it transcend the imaginations of them that have strayed from its light, and been shut out from its glory! Shouldst thou rend asunder the grievous veil that blindeth thy vision, thou wouldst behold such a bounty as naught, from the beginning that hath no beginning till the end that hath no end, can either resemble or equal. What language should He Who is the Mouthpiece of God choose to speak, so that they who are shut out as by a veil from Him can recognize His glory? The righteous, inmates of the Kingdom on high, shall drink deep from the Wine of Holiness, in My name, the all-glorious. None other besides them will share such benefits.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 108

72. Tell, O Ali, the loved ones of God that equity is the most fundamental among human virtues. The evaluation of all things must needs depend upon it. Ponder a while on the woes and afflictions which this Prisoner hath sustained. I have, all the days of My life, been at the mercy of Mine enemies, and have suffered each day, in the path of the love of God, a fresh tribulation. I have patiently endured until the fame of the Cause of God was spread abroad on the earth. If any one should now arise and, prompted by the vain imaginations his heart hath devised, endeavor, openly or in secret, to sow the seeds of dissension amongst men--can such a man be said to have acted with equity? No, by Him Whose might extendeth over all things! By My life! Mine heart groaneth and mine eyes weep sore for the Cause of God and for them that understand not what they say and imagine what they cannot comprehend.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 203

Truth and Imagination

73. The first teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the duty incumbent upon all to investigate reality. What does it mean to investigate reality? It means that man must forget all hearsay and examine truth himself, for he does not know whether statements he hears are in accordance with reality or not. Wherever he finds truth or reality, he must hold to it, forsaking, discarding all else; for outside of reality there is naught but superstition and imagination. For example, during the days of Jesus Christ the Jews were expecting the appearance of the Messiah, praying and beseeching God day and night that the Promised One might appear. Why did they reject Him when He did appear? They denied Him absolutely, refused to believe in Him. There was no abuse and persecution which they did not heap upon Him. They reviled Him with curses, placed a crown of thorns upon His head, led Him through the streets in scorn and derision and finally crucified Him. Why did they do this? Because they did not investigate the truth or reality of Christ and were not able to recognize Him as the Messiah of God. Had they investigated sincerely for themselves, they would surely have believed in Him, respected Him and bowed before Him in reverence. They would have considered His manifestation the greatest bestowal upon mankind. They would have accepted Him as the very Savior of man; but, alas, they were veiled, they held

to imitations of ancestral beliefs and hearsay and did not investigate the truth of Christ. They were submerged in the sea of superstitions and were, therefore, deprived of witnessing that glorious bounty; they were withheld from the fragrances or breaths of the Holy Spirit and suffered in themselves the greatest debasement and degradation.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 62

74. Let us thank God who has drawn us together this evening. It gives me great joy, for I see that you are seekers after truth. You are not held in bondage by the chains of prejudice, and your greatest longing is to know the truth. Truth may be likened to the sun! The sun is the luminous body that disperses all shadows; in the same way does truth scatter the shadows of our imagination. As the sun gives life to the body of humanity so does truth give life to their souls. Truth is a sun that rises from different points on the horizon.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Paris Talks*, pp. 127-128

75. Man must cut himself free from all prejudice and from the result of his own imagination, so that he may be able to search for truth unhindered. Truth is one in all religions, and by means of it the unity of the world can be realized.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Paris Talks*, p. 129

76. This is sufficiently clear, that, [whether] right or wrong according to the imagination of the people, this community have accepted as true and adopted the religion for which they are notorious, and that on this account they have foregone what they had, seeking after what is with God. And this same renunciation of life in the way of love for the Merciful [God] is a faithful witness and an eloquent attest unto that whereunto they lay claim. Hath it [ever] been beheld that a reasonable man renounced his life without proof or evidence [of the truth of that for which he died]? And if it be said, ‘This people are mad,’ this [too] is very improbable, for it is not [a thing] confined to one or two persons, but rather have a great multitude of every class, inebriated with the Kawthar of divine wisdom, hastened with heart and soul to the place of martyrdom in the way of the Friend. If these persons, who for God have foregone all save Him, and who have poured forth life and wealth in His way, can be belied, then by what proof and evidence shall the truth of that which others assert concerning that wherein they are be established in the presence of the King?

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *A Traveler’s Narrative*, pp. 65-66

77. Beware, O My loved ones, lest ye despise the merits of My learned servants whom God hath graciously chosen to be the exponents of His Name ‘the Fashioner’ amidst mankind. Exert your utmost endeavour that ye may develop such crafts and undertakings that everyone, whether young or old, may benefit therefrom. We are quit of those ignorant ones who fondly imagine that Wisdom is to give vent to one’s idle imaginings and to repudiate God, the Lord of all men; even as We hear some of the heedless voicing such assertions today.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 150-151

78. If five people meet together to seek for truth, they must begin by cutting themselves free from all their own special conditions and renouncing all preconceived ideas. In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. The fact that we

imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is necessary if we would reach truth, for truth is one.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Paris Talks*, p. 136

Imagination Related to Truth Produces an Effect

79. Similarly in the world of being there exist forces unseen of the eye, such as the force of ether previously mentioned, that cannot be sensed, that cannot be seen. However, from the effects it produceth, that is from its waves and vibrations, light, heat, electricity appear and are made evident. In like manner is the power of growth, of feeling, of understanding, of thought, of memory, of imagination and of discernment; all these inner faculties are unseen of the eye and cannot be sensed, yet all are evident by the effects they produce.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Tablet to August Forel*, pp. 19-20

Imagination Cooperates With Other Faculties

80. For instance, as we have observed, co-operation among the constituent parts of the human body is clearly established, and these parts and members render services unto all the component parts of the body. For instance, the hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the mind, the imagination all help the various parts and members of the human body, but all these interactions are linked by an unseen, all-embracing power, that causeth these interactions to be produced with perfect regularity. This is the inner faculty of man, that is his spirit and his mind, both of which are invisible.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Tablet to August Forel*, pp. 22-23

Faith Can Fire the Imagination

81. Intercede, O noble and well-favoured scion of a heavenly Father, for me no less than for the toiling masses of Thy ardent lovers, who have sworn undying allegiance to Thy memory, whose souls have been nourished by the energies of Thy love, whose conduct has been moulded by the inspiring example of Thy life, and whose imaginations are fired by the imperishable evidences of Thy lively faith, Thy unshakable constancy, Thy invincible heroism, Thy great renunciation.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 196; *Bahiyyih Khanum*, pp. 44-45

Ideals Can Fire the Imagination

82. The world is moving on. Its events are unfolding ominously and with bewildering rapidity. The whirlwind of its passions is swift and alarmingly violent. The New World is being insensibly drawn into its vortex. The potential storm centers of the earth are already casting their shadows upon its shores. Dangers, undreamt of and unpredictable, threaten it both from within and from without. Its governments and peoples are being gradually enmeshed in the coils of the world’s recurrent crises and fierce controversies. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are, with every acceleration in the march of science, steadily shrinking into mere channels. The Great Republic of the West finds itself particularly and increasingly involved. Distant rumblings echo menacingly in the ebullitions of its people. On its flanks are ranged the potential storm centers of

the European continent and of the Far East. On its southern horizon there looms what might conceivably develop into another center of agitation and danger. The world is contracting into a neighborhood. America, willingly or unwillingly, must face and grapple with this new situation. For purposes of national security, let alone any humanitarian motive, she must assume the obligations imposed by this newly created neighborhood. Paradoxical as it may seem, her only hope of extricating herself from the perils gathering around her is to become entangled in that very web of international association which the Hand of an inscrutable Providence is weaving. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s counsel to a highly placed official in its government comes to mind, with peculiar appropriateness and force: You can best serve your country if you strive, in your capacity as a citizen of the world, to assist in the eventual application of the principle of federalism, underlying the government of your own country, to the relationships now existing between the peoples and nations of the world. The ideals that fired the imagination of America’s tragically unappreciated President, whose high endeavors, however much nullified by a visionless generation, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, through His own pen, acclaimed as signaling the dawn of the Most Great Peace, though now lying in the dust, bitterly reproach a heedless generation for having so cruelly abandoned them.

Shoghi Effendi: *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 87-88

83. The quality and magnitude of the work already achieved by these stalwart champions of God’s New World Order are inexpressibly exhilarating and infinitely meritorious. The immensity of the task still to be performed staggers our fancy and inflames our imagination. The potentialities with which these tasks are endowed elude our shrewdest calculations. The promise they enshrine is too dazzling to contemplate. What else can we do but bow our heads in thanksgiving and reverence, steel our hearts in preparation for the strenuous days ahead, and intensify a hundredfold our resolution to carry on the task to which our hands are set at present.

Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to America*, p. 48

84. For Bahá’u’lláh, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He, as well as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth. Not only have they revealed all the directions required for the practical realization of those ideals which the Prophets of God have visualized, and which from time immemorial have inflamed the imagination of seers and poets in every age. They have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 19-20

Scripture Can Fire the Imagination

85. It was this Book which the Bábis universally regarded, during almost the entire ministry of the Báb, as the Qur'án of the people of the Bayan; whose first and most challenging chapter was revealed in the presence of Mulla Husayn, on the night of its Author's Declaration; some of whose pages were borne, by that same disciple, to Bahá'u'lláh, as the first fruits of a Revelation which instantly won His enthusiastic allegiance; whose entire text was translated into Persian by the brilliant and gifted Tahirih; whose passages inflamed the hostility of Husayn Khan and precipitated the initial outbreak of persecution in Shiraz; a single page of which had captured the imagination and entranced the soul of Hujjat; and whose contents had set afire the intrepid defenders of the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsi and the heroes of Nayriz and Zanjan.

Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, pp. 23-24

Believers Can Fire the Imagination

86. A scion of the highly reputed family of Haji Mulla Salih-i-Baraqani, whose members occupied an enviable position in the Persian ecclesiastical hierarchy; the namesake of the illustrious Fatimih; designated as Zarrin-Taj (Crown of Gold) and Zakiyyih (Virtuous) by her family and kindred; born in the same year as Bahá'u'lláh; regarded from childhood, by her fellow-townsmen, as a prodigy, alike in her intelligence and beauty; highly esteemed even by some of the most haughty and learned ulamas of her country, prior to her conversion, for the brilliancy and novelty of the views she propounded; acclaimed as Qurrat-i-'Ayni (solace of my eyes) by her admiring teacher, Siyyid Kazim; entitled Tahirih (the Pure One) by the "Tongue of Power and Glory;" and the only woman enrolled by the Báb as one of the Letters of the Living; she had, through a dream, referred to earlier in these pages, established her first contact with a Faith which she continued to propagate to her last breath, and in its hour of greatest peril, with all the ardor of her unsubduable spirit. Undeterred by the vehement protests of her father; contemptuous of the anathemas of her uncle; unmoved by the earnest solicitations of her husband and her brothers; undaunted by the measures which, first in Karbila and subsequently in Baghdad, and later in Qasvin, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities had taken to curtail her activities, with eager energy she urged the Bábi Cause. Through her eloquent pleadings, her fearless denunciations, her dissertations, poems and translations, her commentaries and correspondence, she persisted in firing the imagination and in enlisting the allegiance of Arabs and Persians alike to the new Revelation, in condemning the perversity of her generation, and in advocating a revolutionary transformation in the habits and manners of her people.

Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, pp. 72-73

87. I have in two recent, successive messages, cabled to your Assembly, giving expression, as far as it lay in my power, to the feelings of overpowering gratitude which the response of so many pioneers to the call of teaching has evoked in my heart. I have moreover felt impelled to convey my congratulations to the members of your Assembly who, through their resource, unity and singlemindedness, have lent so needed and timely an impetus to the mighty work associated with the second year of the Seven Year Plan. There can be no doubt whatever that what the American believers, no less than their elected National representatives, have accomplished, the long and assiduous care of the former and the potent methods employed by the latter, have witnessed to the uprising of a new spirit on which the defamers of the Cause may well pause to

reflect, and from which its lovers cannot but derive deep joy and solace. I again wish to thank with all my soul those whose acts have stirred the imagination of friend and foe alike.

Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to America*, p. 19

88. Whenever the friends feel that they are small in number, and the effort required, truly colossal, they should remember what the British Bahá'ís accomplished during the Six Year Plan; and how, after the long and exhaustive years of the war and all its restrictions, they succeeded, at the point of utter exhaustion, one might say, in achieving every single goal gloriously. The Australian and New Zealand friends, who have not been subjected to such rigors during the last decade, who are a young and fresh nation, so to speak, can surely accomplish as much, and one would imagine more, than their British brethren, who labored under such great handicaps.

Shoghi Effendi: *Letters to Aust. and New Zealand*, p. 91

Some Things Are Difficult to Imagine

89. Who can doubt that such a consummation--the coming of age of the human race--must signalize, in its turn, the inauguration of a world civilization such as no mortal eye hath ever beheld or human mind conceived? Who is it that can imagine the lofty standard which such a civilization, as it unfolds itself, is destined to attain? Who can measure the heights to which human intelligence, liberated from its shackles, will soar? Who can visualize the realms which the human spirit, vitalized by the outpouring light of Bahá'u'lláh, shining in the plenitude of its glory, will discover?

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 206

90. First and foremost, one should use every possible means to purge one's heart and motives, otherwise, engaging in any form of enterprise would be futile. It is also essential to abstain from hypocrisy and blind imitation, inasmuch as their foul odour is soon detected by every man of understanding and wisdom. Moreover, the friends must observe the specific times for the remembrance of God, meditation, devotion and prayer, as it is highly unlikely, nay impossible, for any enterprise to prosper and develop when deprived of divine bestowals and confirmation. One can hardly imagine what a great influence genuine love, truthfulness and purity of motives exert on the souls of men. But these traits cannot be acquired by any believer unless he makes a daily effort to gain them...

Shoghi Effendi: *Living the Life*, pp. 1-2; *Guidelines for Teaching*, p. 301

91. As already intimated, I have read and re-read most carefully the final draft of the By-Laws drawn up by that highly-talented, much-loved servant of Bahá'u'lláh, Mountfort Mills, and feel I have nothing substantial to add to this first and very creditable attempt at codifying the principles of general Bahá'í administration. I heartily and unhesitatingly commend it to the earnest perusal of, and its loyal adoption by, every National Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly, whether constituted in the East or in the West. I would ask you particularly to send copies of the text of this document of fundamental importance accompanied by copies of the Declaration of Trust and the text of the Indenture of Trust, to every existing National Spiritual Assembly, with my insistent request to study the provisions, comprehend its implications, and endeavor to incorporate it, to the extent that their own circumstances permit, within the framework of their own national activities. You can but faintly imagine how comforting a stimulant and how helpful

a guide its publication and circulation will be to those patient and toiling workers in Eastern lands, and particularly Persia, who in the midst of uncertainties and almost insuperable obstacles are straining every nerve in order to establish the world order ushered in by Bahá'u'lláh. You can hardly realize how substantially it will contribute to pave the way for the elaboration of the beginnings of the constitution of the worldwide Bahá'í Community that will form the permanent basis upon which the blest and sanctified edifice of the first International House of Justice will securely rest and flourish.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 142-143

Some Things Are Impossible to Imagine

92. The Prophets, unlike us, are pre-existent. The soul of Christ existed in the spiritual world before His birth in this world. We cannot imagine what that world is like, so words are inadequate to picture His state of being.

Shoghi Effendi: *High Endeavors*, p. 71

93. It was such a joy to hear from you. You, as well as the other German believers, are often in my thoughts and prayers. I will continue to pray for the realization of your highest hopes. Do not despair, may be assured that a glorious future awaits you all, more brilliant than any you can imagine.

Shoghi Effendi: *Light of Divine Guidance Vol.1*, p. 97; *Light of Divine Guidance Vol.2*, p. 48

94. As I lift up my gaze beyond the strains and stresses which a struggling Faith must necessarily experience, and view the wider scene which the indomitable will of the American Bahá'í community is steadily unfolding, I can not but marvel at the range which the driving force of their ceaseless labors has acquired and the heights which the sublimity of their faith has attained. The outposts of a Faith, already persecuted in both Europe and Asia, are in the American continent steadily advancing, the visible symbols of its undoubted sovereignty are receiving fresh luster every day and its manifold institutions are driving their roots deeper and deeper into its soil. Blest and honored as none among its sister communities has been in recent years, preserved through the inscrutable dispensations of Divine Providence for a destiny which no mind can as yet imagine, such a community cannot for a moment afford to be content with or rest on the laurels it has so deservedly won. It must go on, continually go on, exploring fresh fields, scaling nobler heights, laying firmer foundations, shedding added splendor and achieving added renown in the service and for the glory of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The seven year plan which it has sponsored and with which its destiny is so closely interwoven, must at all costs be prosecuted with increasing force and added consecration. All should arise and participate. Upon the measure of such a participation will no doubt depend the welfare and progress of those distant communities which are now battling for their emancipation. To such a priceless privilege the inheritors of the shining grace of Bahá'u'lláh cannot surely be indifferent. The American believers must gird up the loins of endeavor and step into the arena of service with such heroism as shall astound the entire Bahá'í world. Let them be assured that my prayers will continue to be offered on their behalf.

Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to America*, pp. 10-11

95. Putting on the armor of His love, firmly buckling on the shield of His mighty Covenant, mounted on the steed of steadfastness, holding aloft the lance of the Word of the Lord of Hosts, and with unquestioning reliance on His promises as the best provision for their journey, let them set their faces towards those fields that still remain unexplored and direct their steps to those goals that are as yet unattained, assured that He Who has led them to achieve such triumphs, and to store up such prizes in His Kingdom, will continue to assist them in enriching their spiritual birthright to a degree that no finite mind can imagine or human heart perceive.

Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to the Bahá'í World*, p. 102

96. Prompt and effective measures must, no matter how great the sacrifice involved, be taken to ensure that, ere the termination of the first two years of the Plan, these two paramount objectives, which constitute the opening phase of the Plan, will have been fully attained. The entire community must arise, as it has never risen before, to meet the challenge of the present hour. The time fixed for the achievement of the initial victories of the Plan is admittedly brief. The prizes to be won in distant fields, under the most trying circumstances, by the members of a community so youthful, so circumscribed in number and resources, are so precious that none of them can as yet even dimly imagine their transcendent glory. On the homefront, as well as in the far-off islands of the Pacific Ocean, in both the teaching and administrative fields, the Canadian Bahá'í Community must labour incessantly in anticipation of the fulfilment of the inspiring prophecies made by the Centre of the Covenant Who, repeatedly and in unmistakable language, promised to this community a glorious future, and predicted both the material and spiritual advancement of the nation of which it forms a part.

Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to Canada*, pp. 41-42

97. The Plan on which the British Bahá'í community has embarked, unique in its significance, unprecedented in its scope, so vast in its potentialities, so meritorious in its objectives, so challenging in its features, will, if consummated, at the appointed time, open a further vista, before the eyes of its victorious prosecutors, of such transcendent glory as none of them can as yet even dimly imagine. The path leading to the discovery of this brilliant yet at present distant goal, at which a triumphant community will be enabled to catch a glimpse of its ultimate destiny, revealed in the plenitude of its splendour, is long, steep and thorny. The prizes to be won by those who must tread this path, in the years immediately ahead, are not to be easily secured. The challenge will be prolonged and severe. The opportunities they now have to scale loftier heights of heroism, and achieve still mightier victories during the interval separating the Great and Most Great Jubilees, will if missed never again recur.

Shoghi Effendi: *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 313

98. He deeply appreciates your sincere, well-expressed reference, to the tribute he has written to the dearly beloved Greatest Holy Leaf. You cannot imagine to what an extent our dear Guardian has, in this loss, been deprived for ever of the sustaining influence and kindness that this Most Exalted Leaf used to shower daily upon him. In this beautiful Tribute we can trace the life of this beautiful soul, witness with anguish all the sufferings and deprivations that she has endured. Now we should, all of us, try in turn to follow her saintly path and direct all our energy to serve the Cause, which has been so dear to her.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahiyih Khanum*, p. 91; *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 431

Some Things Should Not Be Imagined

99. Were anyone to imagine or expect that a Cause, comprising within its orbit so vast a portion of the globe, so turbulent in its history, so challenging in its claims, so diversified in the elements it has assimilated into its administrative structure, should, at all times, be immune to any divergence of opinion, or any defection on the part of its multitudinous followers, it would be sheer delusion, wholly unreasonable and unwarranted, even in the face of the unprecedented evidence of the miraculous power which its rise and progress have so powerfully exhibited. That such a secession, however, whether effected by those who apostatize their faith or preach heretical doctrines, should have failed, after the lapse of a century, to split in twain the entire body of the adherents of the Faith, or to create a grave, a permanent and irremediable breach in its organic structure, is a fact too eloquent for even a casual observer of the internal processes of its administrative order to either deny or ignore.

Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to America*, p. 50

100. The Movement is in need of young people, who have been spiritually awakened, to arise and stem the tide of a material civilization that has brought mankind to the verge of ruin. Should the forces, now playing havoc with society, be let loose, should we neglect our duty to check them and bring them under our control, no man dare imagine what the future will bring.

It is upon the young people that the greatest suffering will fall. They should, therefore, mobilize their ranks, and, with one accord, arise and consummate their task and establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Shoghi Effendi: *Youth*, p. 423

101. Can one, God forbid, assume that because some of the divine laws resemble the practices of the Days of Ignorance, the customs of a people abhorred by all nations, it follows that there is a defect in these laws? Or can one, God forbid, imagine that the Omnipotent Lord was moved to comply with the opinions of the heathen? The divine wisdom takes many forms. Would it have been impossible for Muhammad to reveal a Law which bore no resemblance whatever to any practice current in the Days of Ignorance? Rather, the purpose of His consummate wisdom was to free the people from the chains of fanaticism which had bound them hand and foot, and to forestall those very objections which today confuse the mind and trouble the conscience of the simple and helpless.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 28-29

Imagination Cannot Always Be Aroused

102. These imperative calls of Bahá'í duty the American believers can immediately if only partially answer. Their present status, their circumscribed resources, debar them, however great their eagerness, from responding completely and decisively to the full implications of this threefold obligation. They can, neither individually nor through their concerted efforts, impose directly their will upon those into whose hands the immediate destinies of their persecuted brethren are placed. Nor are they as yet capable of launching a campaign of such magnitude as could capture the imagination and arouse the conscience of mankind, and thereby insure the immediate and full redress of those grievances from which their helpless coreligionists in both the East and the West are suffering. They cannot moreover hope to wield at the present time in

the councils of nations an influence commensurate with the stupendous claims advanced, or adequate to the greatness of the Cause proclaimed, by the Author of their Faith. Nor can they assume a position or exercise such responsibilities as would enable them by their acts and decisions to reverse the process which is urging so tragically the decline of human society and its institutions.

Shoghi Effendi: *Messages to America*, pp. 26-27

What Is Imagined Does Not Always Occur

103. Now in these years [A.H. one thousand two hundred and] sixty-six and sixty-seven throughout all Persia fire fell on the households of the Bábis, and each one of them, in whatever hamlet he might be, was, on the slightest suspicion arising, put to the sword. More than four thousand souls were slain, and a great multitude of women and children, left without protector or helper, distracted and confounded, were trodden down and destroyed. And all these occurrences were brought about solely by the arbitrary decision and command of Mirza Taqi Khan, who imagined that by the enactment of a crushing punishment this sect would be dispersed and disappear in such wise that all sign and knowledge of them would be cut off. Ere long had passed the contrary of his imagination appeared, and it became certain that [the Bábis] were increasing. The flame rose higher and the contagion became swifter: the affair waxed grave and the report thereof reached other climes. At first it was confined to Persia: later it spread to the rest of the world. Quaking and affliction resulted in constancy and stability, and grievous pains and punishment caused acceptance and attraction. The very events produced an impression; impression led to investigation; and investigation resulted in increase. Through the ill-considered policy of the Minister this edifice became fortified and strengthened, and these foundations firm and solid. Previously the matter used to be regarded as commonplace: subsequently it acquired a grave importance in men's eyes. Many persons from all parts of the world set out for Persia, and began to seek with their whole hearts. For it hath been proved by experience in the world that in the case of such matters of conscience laceration causeth healing; censure produceth increased diligence; prohibition induceth eagerness; and intimidation createth avidity. The root is hidden in the very heart, while the branch is apparent and evident. When one branch is cut off other branches grow. Thus it is observed that when such matters occur in other countries they become extinct spontaneously through lack of attention and exiguity of interest. For up to the present moment of movements pertaining to religion many have appeared in the countries of Europe, but, noninterference and absence of bigotry having deprived them of importance, in a little while they became effaced and dispelled.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *A Traveler's Narrative*, pp. 28-29

Courage and Imagination

104. "The truth of the matter," is the answer which Abbas-Quli Khan-i-Larijani, whose bullet was responsible for the death of Mulla Husayn, is reported to have given to a query addressed to him by Prince Ahmad Mirza in the presence of several witnesses, "is that any one who had not seen Karbila would, if he had seen Tabarsi, not only have comprehended what there took place, but would have ceased to consider it; and had he seen Mulla Husayn of Bushruih, he would have been convinced that the Chief of Martyrs (Imam Husayn) had returned to earth; and had he witnessed my deeds, he would assuredly have said: `This is Shimr come back with

sword and lance...’ In truth, I know not what had been shown to these people, or what they had seen, that they came forth to battle with such alacrity and joy.... The imagination of man cannot conceive the vehemence of their courage and valor.”

Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, p. 81

Equality of Women and Men

105. It has been objected by some that woman is not equally capable with man and that she is deficient by creation. This is pure imagination. The difference in capability between man and woman is due entirely to opportunity and education. Heretofore woman has been denied the right and privilege of equal development. If equal opportunity be granted her, there is no doubt she would be the peer of man.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 135

Racism /Nationalism and Imagination

106. Consider the prejudice of patriotism. This is one globe, one land, one country. God did not divide it into national boundaries. He created all the continents without national divisions. Why should we make such division ourselves? These are but imaginary lines and boundaries. Europe is a continent; it is not naturally divided; man has drawn the lines and established the limits of kingdoms and empires. Man declares a river to be a boundary line between two countries, calling this side French and the other side German, whereas the river was created for both and is a natural artery for all. Is it not imagination and ignorance which impels man to violate the divine intention and make the very bounties of God the cause of war, bloodshed and destruction? Therefore, all prejudices between man and man are falsehoods and violations of the will of God. God desires unity and love; He commands harmony and fellowship. Enmity is human disobedience; God Himself is love.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 299-300

107. Strive with heart and soul in order to bring about union and harmony among the white and the black and prove thereby the unity of the Bahá’í world wherein distinction of colour findeth no place, but where hearts only are considered. Praise be to God, the hearts of the friends are united and linked together, whether they be from the east or the west, from north or from south, whether they be German, French, Japanese, American, and whether they pertain to the white, the black, the red, the yellow or the brown race. Variations of colour, of land and of race are of no importance in the Bahá’í Faith; on the contrary, Bahá’í unity overcometh them all and doeth away with all these fancies and imaginations.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 112-113

108. As to racial prejudice, the corrosion of which, for well-nigh a century, has bitten into the fiber, and attacked the whole social structure of American society, it should be regarded as constituting the most vital and challenging issue confronting the Bahá’í community at the present stage of its evolution. The ceaseless exertions which this issue of paramount importance calls for, the sacrifices it must impose, the care and vigilance it demands, the moral courage and fortitude it requires, the tact and sympathy it necessitates, invest this problem, which the American believers are still far from having satisfactorily resolved, with an urgency and

importance that cannot be overestimated. White and Negro, high and low, young and old, whether newly converted to the Faith or not, all who stand identified with it must participate in, and lend their assistance, each according to his or her capacity, experience, and opportunities, to the common task of fulfilling the instructions, realizing the hopes, and following the example, of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Whether colored or noncolored, neither race has the right, or can conscientiously claim, to be regarded as absolved from such an obligation, as having realized such hopes, or having faithfully followed such an example. A long and thorny road, beset with pitfalls, still remains untraveled, both by the white and the Negro exponents of the redeeming Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. On the distance they cover, and the manner in which they travel that road, must depend, to an extent which few among them can imagine, the operation of those intangible influences which are indispensable to the spiritual triumph of the American believers and the material success of their newly launched enterprise.

Shoghi Effendi: *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 33-34

Empathetic Use of Imagination

109. I can well imagine the degree of uneasiness, nay of affliction, that must have agitated the mind and soul of every loving and loyal servant of the Beloved during these long months of suspense and distressing silence. But I assure you such remarkable solicitude as you have shown for the protection of His Cause, such tenacity of faith and unceasing activity as you have displayed for its promotion, cannot but in the end be abundantly rewarded by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who from His station above is the sure witness of all that you have endured and suffered for Him.

Shoghi Effendi: *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 28; *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 66

110. He very deeply appreciates your assembly’s assurance of its abiding loyalty to him and to the Master’s Will and Testament. As you can well imagine this disaffection of the Master’s Family has been a very sad and heavy blow to him; but, although for many years he shielded them with his silence, in the end he was forced to speak out in order to protect the Faith. For a hundred years our beloved Cause has suffered from these internal afflictions, and the way the believers, generation after generation, have met this test with steadfast faith, loyalty and devotion, is one of the signs that this is the Cause of God, divinely protected through the Covenants of Bahá’u’lláh and the Master.

Shoghi Effendi: *Light of Divine Guidance Vol. I*, p. 149

Incorrect Use of Imagination Can Be Changed

111. Blessed art thou for having utterly abolished the idol of self and of vain imagination, and for having rent asunder the veil of idle fancy, through the power of the might of thy Lord, the Supreme Protector, the Almighty, the one Beloved.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 291

Idle Imagination Intervenes Between Individual and Recognition of Manifestation

112. Ponder a while. What is it that prompted, in every Dispensation, the peoples of the earth to shun the Manifestation of the All-Merciful? What could have impelled them to turn

away from Him and to challenge His authority? Were men to meditate on these words which have flowed from the Pen of the Divine Ordainer, they would, one and all, hasten to embrace the truth of this God-given, and ever-enduring Revelation, and would testify to that which He Himself hath solemnly affirmed. It is the veil of idle imaginations which, in the days of the Manifestations of the Unity of God and the Day Springs of His everlasting glory, hath intervened, and will continue to intervene, between them and the rest of mankind. For in those days, He Who is the Eternal Truth manifesteth Himself in conformity with that which He Himself hath purposed, and not according to the desires and expectations of men. Even as He hath revealed: “So oft, then, as an Apostle cometh to you with that which your souls desire not, do ye swell with pride, and treat some as impostors, and slay others.”

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 82

113. There can be no doubt whatever that had these Apostles appeared, in bygone ages and cycles, in accordance with the vain imaginations which the hearts of men had devised, no one would have repudiated the truth of these sanctified Beings. Though such men have been, night and day, remembering the one true God, and have been devoutly engaged in the exercise of their devotions, yet they failed in the end to recognize, and partake of the grace of, the Day Springs of the signs of God and the Manifestations of His irrefutable evidences. To this the Scriptures bear witness. Thou hast, no doubt, heard about it.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 82-83

114. O My servants! Deprive not yourselves of the unfading and resplendent Light that shineth within the Lamp of Divine glory. Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts. Feed it with the oil of Divine guidance, and protect it within the shelter of your constancy. Guard it within the globe of trust and detachment from all else but God, so that the evil whisperings of the ungodly may not extinguish its light. O My servants! My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God’s irrevocable and hidden Tablets. If no one be willing to direct his steps towards its shores, if every one should fail to arise and find Him, can such a failure be said to have robbed this ocean of its power or to have lessened, to any degree, its treasures? How vain, how contemptible, are the imaginations which your hearts have devised, and are still devising! O My servants! The one true God is My witness! This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you. Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 325-326

115. Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! I implore Thee by Them Who are the Tabernacles of Thy Divine holiness, Who are the Manifestations of Thy transcendent unity and the Day-Springs of Thine inspiration and revelation, to grant that Thy servants may not be kept back from this Divine Law which, at Thy will and according to Thy pleasure, hath branched out from Thy most great Ocean. Do Thou, then, ordain for them that which Thou didst ordain for Thy chosen ones and for the righteous among Thy creatures, whose constancy in Thy Cause the

tempests of trials have failed to shake, and whom the tumults of tests have been powerless to hinder from magnifying Thy most exalted Word--the Word through Which the heavens of men's idle fancies and vain imaginations have been split asunder. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the All-Knowing.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 27

116. Thou beholdest, O my God, what hath befallen Thy dear ones in Thy days. Thy glory beareth me witness! The voice of the lamentation of Thy chosen ones hath been lifted up throughout Thy realm. Some were ensnared by the infidels in Thy land, and were hindered by them from having near access to Thee and from attaining the court of Thy glory. Others were able to approach Thee, but were kept back from beholding Thy face. Still others were permitted, in their eagerness to look upon Thee, to enter the precincts of Thy court, but they allowed the veils of the imaginations of Thy creatures and the wrongs inflicted by the oppressors among Thy people to come in between them and Thee.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 145-146

Do Not Labor Based On Vain Imaginations of Others

117. O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. Suffer not your labors to be wasted through the vain imaginations which certain hearts have devised. Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll. With the utmost unity, and in a spirit of perfect fellowship, exert yourselves, that ye may be enabled to achieve that which beseemeth this Day of God. Verily I say, strife and dissension, and whatsoever the mind of man abhorreth are entirely unworthy of his station. Center your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded. Should the greatness of this Day be revealed in its fullness, every man would forsake a myriad lives in his longing to partake, though it be for one moment, of its great glory--how much more this world and its corruptible treasures!

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 196-197

118. Say: Follow, O people, what hath been prescribed unto you in Our Tablets, and walk not after the imaginations which the sowers of mischief have devised, they that commit wickedness and impute it to God, the Most Holy, the All-Glorious, the Most Exalted. Say: We have accepted to be tried by ills and troubles, that ye may sanctify yourselves from all earthly defilements. Why, then, refuse ye to ponder Our purpose in your hearts? By the righteousness of God! Whoso will reflect upon the tribulations We have suffered, his soul will assuredly melt away with sorrow. Thy Lord Himself beareth witness to the truth of My words. We have sustained the weight of all calamities to sanctify you from all earthly corruption, and ye are yet indifferent.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 307

Act on Knowledge, Not Imaginations

119. We have forbidden men to walk after the imaginations of their hearts, that they may be enabled to recognize Him Who is the sovereign Source and Object of all knowledge, and may acknowledge whatsoever He may be pleased to reveal. Witness how they have entangled themselves with their idle fancies and vain imaginations. By My life! They are themselves the victims of what their own hearts have devised, and yet they perceive it not. Vain and profitless is the talk of their lips, and yet they understand not.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 204-205

120. Tell, O Ali, the loved ones of God that equity is the most fundamental among human virtues. The evaluation of all things must needs depend upon it. Ponder a while on the woes and afflictions which this Prisoner hath sustained. I have, all the days of My life, been at the mercy of Mine enemies, and have suffered each day, in the path of the love of God, a fresh tribulation. I have patiently endured until the fame of the Cause of God was spread abroad on the earth. If any one should now arise and, prompted by the vain imaginations his heart hath devised, endeavor, openly or in secret, to sow the seeds of dissension amongst men--can such a man be said to have acted with equity? No, by Him Whose might extendeth over all things! By My life! Mine heart groaneth and mine eyes weep sore for the Cause of God and for them that understand not what they say and imagine what they cannot comprehend.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 203

Follow Commandments of God, Not Imaginations

121. God hath committed into your hands the reins of the government of the people, that ye may rule with justice over them, safeguard the rights of the down-trodden, and punish the wrong-doers. If ye neglect the duty prescribed unto you by God in His Book, your names shall be numbered with those of the unjust in His sight. Grievous, indeed, will be your error. Cleave ye to that which your imaginations have devised, and cast behind your backs the commandments of God, the Most Exalted, the Inaccessible, the All-Compelling, the Almighty? Cast away the things ye possess, and cling to that which God hath bidden you observe. Seek ye His grace, for he that seeketh it treadeth His straight Path....

Bahá'u'lláh: *Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11; *Gleanings*, pp. 247-248; *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 24

Do Not Sully Cause With Corrupt Imaginations

122. Say: Have mercy on yourselves and on your fellowmen, and suffer not the Cause of God--a Cause which is immeasurably exalted above the inmost essence of sanctity--to be sullied with the stain of your idle fancies, your unseemly and corrupt imaginations.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 299

Check Products of Imagination With God's Teachings

123. Do thou beseech God to enable thee to remain steadfast in this path, and to aid thee to guide the peoples of the world to Him Who is the manifest and sovereign Ruler, Who hath revealed Himself in a distinct attire, Who giveth utterance to a Divine and specific Message.

This is the essence of faith and certitude. 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. To this hath the All-Merciful borne witness in His Tablets. He, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 338

124. Hold Thou the hand of this seeker who hath set his face towards Thee, O my Lord, and draw him out of the depths of his vain imaginations, that the light of certainty may shine brightly above the horizon of his heart in the days whereon the sun of the knowledge of Thy creatures hath been darkened through the shining of the Day-Star of Thy glory; the days whereon the moon of the world's wisdom hath been eclipsed through the appearance of Thy hidden knowledge, and the manifestation of Thy well-guarded secret, and the revelation of Thine enshrined mystery; the days whereon the stars of men's doings have fallen through the rising of the orb of Thy unity and the shedding of the radiance of Thy transcendent oneness.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 53-54

125. Do Thou ordain, moreover, for every one who hath turned towards Thee what will make him steadfast in Thy Cause, in such wise that neither the vain imaginations of the infidels among Thy creatures, nor the idle talk of the froward amidst Thy servants will have the power to shut him out from Thee. Thou, verily, art the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 70

126. All-praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God! I know not how to sing Thy praise, how to describe Thy glory, how to call upon Thy Name. If I call upon Thee by Thy Name, the All-Possessing, I am compelled to recognize that He Who holdeth in His hand the immediate destinies of all created things is but a vassal dependent upon Thee, and is the creation of but a word proceeding from Thy mouth. And if I proclaim Thee by the name of Him Who is the All-Compelling, I readily discover that He is but a suppliant fallen upon the dust, awe-stricken by Thy dreadful might, Thy sovereignty and power. And if I attempt to describe Thee by glorifying the oneness of Thy Being, I soon realize that such a conception is but a notion which mine own fancy hath woven, and that Thou hast ever been immeasurably exalted above the vain imaginations which the hearts of men have devised.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 123

127. I beg of Thee, O my God, by Thy power, and Thy might, and Thy sovereignty, which have embraced all who are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth, to make known unto Thy servants this luminous Way and this straight Path, that they may acknowledge Thy unity and Thy oneness, with a certainty which the vain imaginations of the doubters will not impair, nor the idle fancies of the wayward obscure. Illumine, O my Lord, the eyes of Thy servants, and brighten their hearts with the splendors of the light of Thy knowledge, that they may apprehend the greatness of this most sublime station, and recognize this most luminous Horizon, that haply the clamor of men may fail to deter them from turning their gaze towards the effulgent light of Thy unity, and to hinder them from setting their faces toward the Horizon of detachment.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 275

128. O Haydar-'Ali!¹² Upon thee be the praise of God and His glory. Say: Honesty, virtue, wisdom and a saintly character redound to the exaltation of man, while dishonesty, imposture, ignorance and hypocrisy lead to his abasement. By My life! Man's distinction lieth not in ornaments or wealth, but rather in virtuous behaviour and true understanding. Most of the people in Persia are steeped in deception and idle fancy. How great the difference between the condition of these people and the station of such valiant souls as have passed beyond the sea of names and pitched their tents upon the shores of the ocean of detachment. Indeed none but a few of the existing generation hath yet earned the merit of hearkening unto the warblings of the doves of the all-highest Paradise. 'Few of My servants are truly thankful.'¹³ People for the most part delight in superstitions. They regard a single drop of the sea of delusion as preferable to an ocean of certitude. By holding fast unto names they deprive themselves of the inner reality and by clinging to vain imaginings they are kept back from the Dayspring of heavenly signs. God grant you may be graciously aided under all conditions to shatter the idols of superstition and to tear away the veils of the imaginations of men. Authority lieth in the grasp of God, the Fountainhead of revelation and inspiration and the Lord of the Day of Resurrection.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 57-58

Some Worship the Idols of Their Imaginations

129. 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 worshippers of the idol which their imaginations have carved, and who call it Inner Reality, such men are in truth accounted among the heathen."

Bahá'u'lláh: *Áqdás: Notes*, pp. 194-195

Pray For Protection From Vain Imaginations

130. Let him then repeat the Greatest Name thrice, and kneel with his forehead to the ground, and say:

Praise be unto Thee, O our God, that Thou hast sent down unto us that which draweth us nigh unto Thee, and supplieth us with every good thing sent down by Thee in Thy Books and Thy Scriptures. Protect us, we beseech Thee, O my Lord, from the hosts of idle fancies and vain imaginations. Thou, in truth, art the Mighty, the All-Knowing.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Áqdás: Other Sections*, pp. 97-98

Lives Have Been Sacrificed By Vain Imaginations

131. Say: O ye lovers of the One true God! Strive, that ye may truly recognize and know Him, and observe befittingly His precepts. This is a Revelation, under which, if a man shed for its sake one drop of blood, myriads of oceans will be his recompense. Take heed, O friends, that

¹² Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, outstanding Persian Bahá'í teacher and author. He spent nine years in prison and exile in Khartum, travelled extensively in Iran, and passed away in 1920 in the Holy Land. Western pilgrims knew him as the Angel of Mount Carmel.

¹³ Qur'án 34: 12.

ye forfeit not so inestimable a benefit, or disregard its transcendent station. Consider the multitude of lives that have been, and are still being, sacrificed in a world deluded by a mere phantom which the vain imaginations of its peoples have conceived. Render thanks unto God, inasmuch as ye have attained unto your heart's Desire, and been united to Him Who is the Promise of all nations. Guard ye, with the aid of the one true God--exalted be His glory--the integrity of the station which ye have attained, and cleave to that which shall promote His Cause. He, verily, enjoineeth on you what is right and conducive to the exaltation of man's station. Glorified be the All-Merciful, the Revealer of this wondrous Tablet.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 5-6

Vain Imaginations Cannot Obscure Benefit of Tribulation

132. Say: Tribulation is a horizon unto My Revelation. The day star of grace shineth above it, and sheddeth a light which neither the clouds of men's idle fancy nor the vain imaginations of the aggressor can obscure.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 42

133. This is the day which God hath announced through the tongue of His Apostle. Reflect, that thou mayest apprehend what the All-Merciful hath sent down in the Qur'án and in this inscribed Tablet. This is the day whereon He Who is the Dayspring of Revelation hath come with clear tokens which none can number. This is the day whereon every man endued with perception hath discovered the fragrance of the breeze of the All-Merciful in the world of creation, and every man of insight hath hastened unto the living waters of the mercy of His Lord, the King of Kings. O heedless one! The tale of the Sacrifice (Ishmael) hath been retold, and he who was to be offered up hath directed his steps towards the place of sacrifice, and returned not, by reason of that which thy hand hath wrought, O perverse hater! Didst thou imagine that martyrdom could abase this Cause? Nay, by Him Whom God hath made to be the Repository of His Revelation, if thou be of them that comprehend. Woe betide thee, O thou who hast joined partners with God, and woe betide them that have taken thee as their leader, without a clear token or a perspicuous Book.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Sone of the Wolf*, pp. 101-102

134. O My servants! Let not your vain hopes and idle fancies sap the foundations of your belief in the All-Glorious God, inasmuch as such imaginings have been wholly unprofitable unto men, and failed to direct their steps unto the straight Path. Think ye, O My servants, that the Hand of My all-encompassing, My overshadowing, and transcendent sovereignty is chained up, that the flow of Mine ancient, My ceaseless, and all-pervasive mercy is checked, or that the clouds of My sublime and unsurpassed favors have ceased to rain their gifts upon men? Can ye imagine that the wondrous works that have proclaimed My divine and resistless power are withdrawn, or that the potency of My will and purpose hath been deterred from directing the destinies of mankind? If it be not so, wherefore, then, have ye striven to prevent the deathless Beauty of My sacred and gracious Countenance from being unveiled to men's eyes? Why have ye struggled to hinder the Manifestation of the Almighty and All-Glorious Being from shedding the radiance of His Revelation upon the earth? Were ye to be fair in your judgment, ye would readily recognize how the realities of all created things are inebriated with the joy of this new

and wondrous Revelation, how all the atoms of the earth have been illuminated through the brightness of its glory. Vain and wretched is that which ye have imagined and still imagine!

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 324-325

135. The reality underlying this question is that the evil spirit, Satan or whatever is interpreted as evil, refers to the lower nature in man. This baser nature is symbolized in various ways. In man there are two expressions: One is the expression of nature; the other, the expression of the spiritual realm. The world of nature is defective. Look at it clearly, casting aside all superstition and imagination. If you should leave a man uneducated and barbarous in the wilds of Africa, would there be any doubt about his remaining ignorant? God has never created an evil spirit; all such ideas and nomenclature are symbols expressing the mere human or earthly nature of man. It is an essential condition of the soil of earth that thorns, weeds and fruitless trees may grow from it. Relatively speaking, this is evil; it is simply the lower state and baser product of nature.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 294-295

136. There are some who imagine that an innate sense of human dignity will prevent man from committing evil actions and insure his spiritual and material perfection. That is, that an individual who is characterized with natural intelligence, high resolve, and a driving zeal, will, without any consideration for the severe punishments consequent on evil acts, or for the great rewards of righteousness, instinctively refrain from inflicting harm on his fellow men and will hunger and thirst to do good. And yet, if we ponder the lessons of history it will become evident that this very sense of honor and dignity is itself one of the bounties deriving from the instructions of the Prophets of God. We also observe in infants the signs of aggression and lawlessness, and that if a child is deprived of a teacher's instructions his undesirable qualities increase from one moment to the next. It is therefore clear that the emergence of this natural sense of human dignity and honor is the result of education. Secondly, even if we grant for the sake of the argument that instinctive intelligence and an innate moral quality would prevent wrongdoing, it is obvious that individuals so characterized are as rare as the philosopher's stone. An assumption of this sort cannot be validated by mere words, it must be supported by the facts. Let us see what power in creation impels the masses toward righteous aims and deeds!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 97-98

137. Thus, man is shown to be the sum of all creation, the superior of all created beings, the goal to which countless ages of existence have progressed.

At the best, man spends four-score years and ten in this world--a short time indeed!

Does a man cease to exist when he leaves the body? If his life comes to an end, then all the previous evolution is useless, all has been for nothing! Can one imagine that Creation has no greater aim than this?

The soul is eternal, immortal.

Materialists say, 'Where is the soul? What is it? We cannot see it, neither can we touch it'.

This is how we must answer them: However much the mineral may progress, it cannot comprehend the vegetable world. Now, that lack of comprehension does not prove the non-existence of the plant!

To however great a degree the plant may have evolved, it is unable to understand the animal world; this ignorance is no proof that the animal does not exist!

The animal, be he never so highly developed, cannot imagine the intelligence of man, neither can he realize the nature of his soul. But, again, this does not prove that man is without intellect, or without soul. It only demonstrates this, that one form of existence is incapable of comprehending a form superior to itself.

This flower may be unconscious of such a being as man, but the fact of its ignorance does not prevent the existence of humanity.

In the same way, if materialists do not believe in the existence of the soul, their unbelief does not prove that there is no such realm as the world of spirit. The very existence of man's intelligence proves his immortality; moreover, darkness proves the presence of light, for without light there would be no shadow. Poverty proves the existence of riches, for, without riches, how could we measure poverty? Ignorance proves that knowledge exists, for without knowledge how could there be ignorance?

Therefore the idea of mortality presupposes the existence of immortality--for if there were no Life Eternal, there would be no way of measuring the life of this world!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 92-93

138. Fifty years ago Bahá'u'lláh sent Epistles to all the kings and nations of the world, at a time when there was no mention of international peace. One of these Epistles was sent by Him to the president of the American democracy. In these communications He summoned all to international peace and the oneness of the human world. He summoned mankind to the fundamentals of the teachings of all the Prophets. Some of the European kings were arrogant. Among them was Napoleon III. Bahá'u'lláh wrote a second Epistle to him, which was published thirty years ago. The context is this: "O Napoleon! Thou hast become haughty indeed. Thou hast become proud. Thou hast forgotten God. Thou dost imagine that this majesty is permanent for thee, that this dominion is abiding for thee. A letter have we sent unto thee for acceptance with thy greatest love; but, instead, thou hast shown arrogance. Therefore, God shall uproot the edifice of thy sovereignty; thy country shall flee away from thee. Thou shalt find humiliation hastening after thee because thou didst not arise for that which was enjoined upon thee, whereas that which was a duty incumbent upon thee was the cause of life to the world. The punishment of God shall soon be dealt out to thee."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 223

139. Among those to whom Bahá'u'lláh wrote was the Sultan of Turkey. In it He arraigned him, saying, "Verily, thou didst incarcerate and make Me a prisoner. Dost thou imagine that imprisonment is a loss to Me, that imprisonment is a humiliation for Me? This imprisonment is a glory for Me because it is in the pathway of God. I have not committed a crime. It is for the sake of God that I have received this ordeal. Therefore, I am very happy; I am exceedingly joyous. But thou must wait; God will send thee a punishment; thou shalt receive retribution. Ere long thou shalt observe how ordeals shall descend upon thee like rain, and thou shalt become nonexistent." And even so it was.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 224

140. Reduce not the ordinances of God to fanciful imaginations of your own; rather observe all the things which God hath created at His behest with the eye of the spirit, even as ye see things with the eyes of your bodies.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 146

141. It is for this reason that at the beginning of every Dispensation a vast multitude, who fondly imagine that their deeds are for God, become drowned and ungodly, and perceive this not, except such as He guideth at His behest.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 95

142. From the first day that I cautioned thee not to wax proud before God until the present time, four years have elapsed, and during this space naught have I witnessed, either from thee or from thy soldiers, except dire oppression and disdainful arrogance. Methinks thou dost imagine that I wish to gain some paltry substance from this earthly life. Nay, by the righteousness of My Lord! In the estimation of them that have fixed their eyes upon the merciful Lord, the riches of the world and its trappings are worth as much as the eye of a dead body, nay even less. Far from His glory be what they associate with Him!... I seek patience only in God. Verily He is the best protector and the best helper. No refuge do I seek save God. Verily He is the guardian and the best supporter...

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, pp. 20-21

143. This morning the city is enveloped in fog and mist. How beautiful is a city brilliant with sunshine. Just as these mists and vapors conceal the phenomenal sun, so human imaginations obscure the Sun of Truth. Consider the radiant glory of the great solar center of our planetary system: how wonderful the sight, how its splendor illumines vision until clouds and mists veil it from the eye. In the same way, the Sun of Truth becomes veiled and hidden by the superstitions and imaginations of human minds. When the sun rises, no matter from what dawning point on the horizon it appears--northeast, east, southeast--the haze and mists disperse, and we have clear vision of its glory mounting to the zenith. Similarly, the nations have been directed to the dawning points of the Sun of Reality, each to a particular rising place from which the light of religion has become manifest; but after a time the dawning point has become the object of worship instead of the Sun itself, which is ever one Sun and stationary in the heavens of the divine Will. Differences have arisen because of this, causing clouds and darkness to overshadow again the glorious luminary of Reality. When the mists and darkness of superstition and prejudice are dispersed, all will see the Sun aright and alike. Then will all nations become as one in its radiance.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 78-79

Imagination Impacts Understanding

144. In the same way, the words I speak to you here tonight may produce no effect whatever. Some hearts may be affected, then soon forget; others owing to superstitious ideas and imaginations may even fail to hear and understand; but the blessed souls who are attentive to my exhortation and admonition, listening with the ear of acceptance, allowing my words to penetrate effectively, will advance day by day toward full fruition, yea even to the Supreme Concourse. Consider how the parable makes attainment dependent upon capacity. Unless capacity is developed, the summons of the Kingdom cannot reach the ear, the light of the Sun of Truth will not be observed, and the fragrances of the rose garden of inner significance will be lost. Let us endeavor to attain capacity, susceptibility and worthiness that we may hear the call of the glad tidings of the Kingdom, become revived by the breaths of the Holy Spirit, hoist the standard of

the oneness of humanity, establish human brotherhood, and under the protection of divine grace attain the everlasting and eternal life.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 149

145. Alas that humanity is completely submerged in imitations and unrealities, notwithstanding that the truth of divine religion has ever remained the same. Superstitions have obscured the fundamental reality, the world is darkened, and the light of religion is not apparent. This darkness is conducive to differences and dissensions; rites and dogmas are many and various; therefore, discord has arisen among the religious systems, whereas religion is for the unification of mankind. True religion is the source of love and agreement amongst men, the cause of the development of praiseworthy qualities, but the people are holding to the counterfeit and imitation, negligent of the reality which unifies, so they are bereft and deprived of the radiance of religion. They follow superstitions inherited from their fathers and ancestors. To such an extent has this prevailed that they have taken away the heavenly light of divine truth and sit in the darkness of imitations and imaginations. That which was meant to be conducive to life has become the cause of death; that which should have been an evidence of knowledge is now a proof of ignorance; that which was a factor in the sublimity of human nature has proved to be its degradation. Therefore, the realm of the religionist has gradually narrowed and darkened, and the sphere of the materialist has widened and advanced; for the religionist has held to imitation and counterfeit, neglecting and discarding holiness and the sacred reality of religion. When the sun sets, it is the time for bats to fly. They come forth because they are creatures of the night. When the lights of religion become darkened, the materialists appear. They are the bats of night. The decline of religion is their time of activity; they seek the shadows when the world is darkened and clouds have spread over it.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 179-180

146. The fourth teaching of Bahá’u’lláh is the agreement of religion and science. God has endowed man with intelligence and reason whereby he is required to determine the verity of questions and propositions. If religious beliefs and opinions are found contrary to the standards of science, they are mere superstitions and imaginations; for the antithesis of knowledge is ignorance, and the child of ignorance is superstition. Unquestionably there must be agreement between true religion and science. If a question be found contrary to reason, faith and belief in it are impossible, and there is no outcome but wavering and vacillation.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 181

Revealed Truth Can be Clouded by Imagination

147. Second, the oneness of the world of humanity shall be realized, accepted and established. When we reflect upon this blessed principle, it will become evident and manifest that it is the healing remedy for all human conditions. All mankind are the servants of the glorious God, our Creator. He has created all. Assuredly He must have loved them equally; otherwise, He would not have created them. He protects all. Assuredly He loves His creatures; otherwise, He would not protect them. He provides for all, proving His love for all without distinction or preference. He manifests His perfect goodness and loving-kindness toward all. He does not punish us for our sins and shortcomings, and we are all immersed in the ocean of His infinite mercy. Inasmuch as God is clement and loving to His children, lenient and merciful

toward our shortcomings, why should we be unkind and unforgiving toward each other? As He loves humanity without distinction or preference, why should we not love all? Can we conceive of a plan and policy superior to the divine purpose? Manifestly, we cannot. Therefore, we must strive to do the will of the glorious Lord and emulate His policy of loving all mankind. The wisdom and policy of God are reality and truth, whereas human policy is accidental and limited to our finite understanding. The policy of God is infinite. We must emulate His example. If a soul be ailing and infirm, we must produce remedies; if ignorant, we must provide education; if defective, we must train and perfect that which is lacking; if immature and undeveloped, we must supply the means of attainment to maturity. No soul should be hated, none neglected; nay, rather, their very imperfections should demand greater kindness and tender compassion. Therefore, if we follow the example of the Lord of divinity, we will love all mankind from our hearts, and the means of the unity of the world of humanity will become as evident and manifest to us as the light of the sun. And from our example the light of the love of God will be enkindled among men. For God is love, and all phenomena find source and emanation in that divine current of creation. The love of God haloes all created things. Were it not for the love of God, no animate being would exist. This is clear, manifest vision and truth unless a man is veiled by superstitions and a captive to imaginations, differentiating mankind according to his own estimate, loving some and hating others. Such an attitude is most unworthy and ignoble.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 314-315

148. The purpose of these quotations is to show that Bahá’u’lláh’s great endeavor in the East was to unify mankind, to cause them to agree and become reconciled, thereby manifesting the oneness of the world of humanity, preparing the way for international peace and establishing the foundations of happiness and welfare. But the nations have not hearkened to His summons and message. The Persian and Turkish governments arose against His Cause, and the result is that both these governments have been disintegrated and broken. Had they been attentive to His commands and received His admonitions, they would have been protected. They would have enjoyed happiness and prosperity. They would have been bound together in ties of fellowship and brotherhood, availing themselves of the wonderful bounties of love and unity and dwelling in the delectable paradise of the divine Kingdom. But, alas, the commands and guidance of the Blessed One have been neglected and ignored. Day by day they have followed their own devices and imaginations, until now this fire of war is raging most furiously.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 399

149. Therefore, reflect that different peoples of the world are revolving around imaginations and are worshipers of the idols of thoughts and conjectures. They are not aware of this; they consider their imaginations to be the Reality which is withdrawn from all comprehension and purified from all descriptions. They regard themselves as the people of Unity, and the others as worshipers of idols; but idols at least have a mineral existence, while the idols of thoughts and the imaginations of man are but fancies; they have not even mineral existence. “Take heed ye who are endued with discernment.”¹⁴

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 149

Imaginations Can Result From Superstitions

¹⁴ Qur’án 59:2.

150. It is essential that scholars and the spiritually learned should undertake in all sincerity and purity of intent and for the sake of God alone, to counsel and exhort the masses and clarify their vision with that collyrium which is knowledge. For today the people out of the depths of their superstition, imagine that any individual who believes in God and His signs, and in the Prophets and Divine Revelations and laws, and is a devout and God-fearing person, must of necessity remain idle and spend his days in sloth, so as to be considered in the sight of God as one who has forsaken the world and its vanities, set his heart on the life to come, and isolated himself from human beings in order to draw nearer to God. Since this theme will be developed elsewhere in the present text, We shall leave it for the moment.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 39-40

Assumptions Can Impact Imaginations

151. With words such as these they assault the minds of the helpless masses and disturb the hearts of the already bewildered poor, who know nothing of the true state of affairs and the real basis for all such talk, and remain completely unaware of the fact that a thousand selfish purposes are concealed behind the supposedly religious eloquence of certain individuals. They imagine that speakers of this type are motivated by virtuous zeal, when the truth is that such individuals keep up a great hue and cry because they see their own personal ruin in the welfare of the masses, and believe that if the people’s eyes are opened, their own light will go out. Only the keenest insight will detect the fact that if the hearts of these individuals were really impelled by righteousness and the fear of God, the fragrance of it would, like musk, be spreading everywhere. Nothing in the world can ever be supported by words alone.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 57-58

Following Vain Imaginations Lowers Station

152. O people of God! In this day everyone should fix his eyes upon the horizon of these blessed words: ‘Alone and unaided He doeth whatsoever He pleaseth.’ Whoso attaineth this station hath verily attained the light of the essential unity of God and is enlightened thereby, while all others are reckoned in the Book of God among the followers of idle fancy and vain imagination. Incline your ears to the Voice of this Wronged One and safeguard the integrity of your stations. It is highly necessary and imperative that everyone should observe this matter.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 96

God Can Guard From Inappropriate Use of Imagination

153. My God, my Master, my Highest Hope, and the Goal of my desire! Thou seest and hearest the sighing of this wronged One, from this darksome well which the vain imaginations of Thine adversaries have built, and from this blind pit which the idle fancies of the wicked among Thy creatures have digged. By Thy Beauty, O Thou Whose glory is uncovered to the face of men! I am not impatient in the troubles that touch me in my love for Thee, neither in the adversities which I suffer in Thy path. Nay, I have, by Thy power, chosen them for mine own self, and I glory in them amongst such of Thy creatures as enjoy near access to Thee, and those of Thy servants that are wholly devoted to Thy Self.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 278

154. I beseech Thee, O God of bounty and King of all created things, to guard Thy servants from the imaginations which their hearts may devise. Raise them up, then, to such heights that their footsteps may slip not in the face of the evidences of Thy handiwork, which the manifold exigencies of Thy wisdom have ordained, and whose secrets Thou hast hid from the face of Thy people and Thy creatures. Withhold them not, O my Lord, from the ocean of Thy knowledge, neither do Thou deprive them of what Thou didst destine for such of Thy chosen ones as have near access to Thee, and those of Thy trusted ones as are wholly devoted to Thy Self. Supply them, then, from Thy sea of certainty with what will calm the agitation of their hearts. Turn, O Lord my God, the darkness of their fancies into the brightness of certitude, and cause them to arise, and to walk steadfastly in Thy straight Path, that haply Thy Book may not hinder them from recognizing Him Who is its Revealer, and Thy names from acknowledging the One Who is their Creator, and their Provider, and their Origin, and their King, and their Begetter, and their Destroyer, and their Glorifier, and their Abaser, and their Governor, and the Sovereign Protector of their Bearers.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 283-284

155. I entreat Thee, therefore, O my God, by Thy Name through which Thou hast guided Thy lovers to the living waters of Thy grace and Thy favors, and attracted them that long for Thee to the Paradise of Thy nearness and Thy presence, to open the eyes of Thy people that they may recognize in this Revelation the manifestation of Thy transcendent unity, and the dawning of the lights of Thy countenance and Thy beauty. Cleanse them, then, O my God, from all idle fancies and vain imaginations, that they may inhale the fragrances of sanctity from the robe of Thy Revelation and Thy commandment, that haply they may cease to inflict upon me what will deprive their souls of the fragrances of the manifold tokens of Thy mercy, that are wafted in the days of Him Who is the Manifestation of Thyself, and the Day-Spring of Thy Cause, and that they may not perpetrate what will call down Thy wrath and anger.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 307-308

156. Praise be unto Thee, O our God, that Thou hast sent down unto us that which draweth us nigh unto Thee, and supplieth us with every good thing sent down by Thee in Thy Books and Thy Scriptures. Protect us, we beseech Thee, O my Lord, from the hosts of idle fancies and vain imaginations. Thou, in truth, art the Mighty, the All-Knowing.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 323

Overcoming Incorrect Imaginations

157. Blessed are they that have soared on the wings of detachment and attained the station which, as ordained by God, overshadoweth the entire creation, whom neither the vain imaginations of the learned, nor the multitude of the hosts of the earth have succeeded in deflecting from His Cause. Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe? Thus hath His bounty been sent down unto men, His testimony fulfilled,

and His proof shone forth above the Horizon of mercy. Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: “Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!”

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 34-35

Incorrect Imagination Can Be Associated With Ignorance

158. Those who are uninformed of the world of reality, who do not comprehend existing things, who are without perception of the inner truth of creation, who do not penetrate the real mysteries of material and spiritual phenomena and who possess only a superficial idea of universal life and being are but embodiments of pure ignorance. They believe only that which they have heard from their fathers and ancestors. Of themselves they have no hearing, no sight, no reason, no intellect; they rely solely upon tradition. Such persons imagine that the dominion of God is an accidental dominion, or Kingdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 462

Imagination Can Be Associated With Learning

159. The commotion had assumed such proportions that the Shah, unable any longer to ignore the situation, delegated the trusted Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi, surnamed Vahid, one of the most erudite, eloquent and influential of his subjects--a man who had committed to memory no less than thirty thousand traditions--to investigate and report to him the true situation. Broad-minded, highly imaginative, zealous by nature, intimately associated with the court, he, in the course of three interviews, was completely won over by the arguments and personality of the Báb.

Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, p. 11

Take Action In Spite of Imagination of Being Incapable

160. The efforts of the friends are, of course, needed to accomplish the objectives of the Six Year Teaching Plan, and they should be encouraged to do their part, even though they may imagine themselves incapable of discharging such duties!

Shoghi Effendi: *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 443

Complete Annihilation At Death Is Imaginary

161. Through his ignorance man fears death, but the death he shrinks from is imaginary and absolutely unreal; it is only human imagination.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 88

Astrology and Imagination

162. With regard to the spiritual influence of stars, though this influence of stars in the human world may appear strange, still, if you reflect deeply upon this subject, you will not be so much surprised at it. My meaning is not, however, that the decrees which the astrologers of former times inferred from the movements of the stars corresponded to occurrences; for the

decrees of those former astrologers were forms of imagination which were originated by Egyptian, Assyrian and Chaldean priests; nay, rather, they were due to the fancies of Hindus, to the myths of the Greeks, Romans and other star worshipers. But I mean that this limitless universe is like the human body, all the members of which are connected and linked with one another with the greatest strength. How much the organs, the members and the parts of the body of man are intermingled and connected for mutual aid and help, and how much they influence one another! In the same way, the parts of this infinite universe have their members and elements connected with one another, and influence one another spiritually and materially.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 245-246

Reincarnation and Imagination

163. This is the presentation of the subject by those who believe in reincarnation and transmigration. We have condensed it; if we entered into the details, it would take much time. This summary is sufficient. No logical arguments and proofs of this question are brought forward; they are only suppositions and inferences from conjectures, and not conclusive arguments. Proofs must be asked for from the believers in reincarnation, and not conjectures, suppositions and imaginations.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 283

164. If we say that this reincarnation is for acquiring perfections so that matter may become refined and delicate, and that the light of the spirit may be manifest in it with the greatest perfection, this also is mere imagination. For, even supposing we believe in this argument, still change of nature is impossible through renewal and return. The essence of imperfection, by returning, does not become the reality of perfection; complete darkness, by returning, does not become the source of light; the essence of weakness is not transformed into power and might by returning, and an earthly nature does not become a heavenly reality. The tree of Zaqqum,¹⁵ no matter how frequently it may come back, will not bring forth sweet fruit, and the good tree, no matter how often it may return, will not bear a bitter fruit. Therefore, it is evident that returning and coming back to the material world does not become the cause of perfection. This theory has no proofs nor evidences; it is simply an idea. No, in reality the cause of acquiring perfections is the bounty of God.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 285

Compiled by: W. Huitt, Valdosta, GA
Last revised: April 2005

¹⁵ The infernal tree mentioned in the Qur’án.