

THOUGHT AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE SOUL

The Reality of Man Is His Thought and He Becomes What He Thinks About

1. The reality of man is his thought, not his material body. The thought force and the animal force are partners. Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings.

If a man's thought is constantly aspiring towards heavenly subjects then does he become saintly; if on the other hand his thought does not soar, but is directed downwards to centre itself upon the things of this world, he grows more and more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal.

Thoughts may be divided into two classes:

(1st) Thought that belongs to the world of thought alone.

(2nd) Thought that expresses itself in action.

Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds. A philosopher's thought may, however, in the world of progress and evolution, translate itself into the actions of other people, even when they themselves are unable or unwilling to show forth their grand ideals in their own lives. To this class the majority of philosophers belong, their teachings being high above their actions. This is the difference between philosophers who are Spiritual Teachers, and those who are mere philosophers: the Spiritual Teacher is the first to follow His own teaching; He brings down into the world of action His spiritual conceptions and ideals. His Divine thoughts are made manifest to the world. His thought is Himself, from which He is inseparable. When we find a philosopher emphasizing the importance and grandeur of justice, and then encouraging a rapacious monarch in his oppression and tyranny, we quickly realize that he belongs to the first class: for he thinks heavenly thoughts and does not practise the corresponding heavenly virtues.

This state is impossible with Spiritual Philosophers, for they ever express their high and noble thoughts in actions.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 17-19

Thought Is An Inherent Property Of The Soul

2. Now regarding the question whether the faculties of the mind and the human soul are one and the same. These faculties are but the inherent properties of the soul, such as the power of imagination, of thought, of understanding; powers that are the essential requisites of the reality of man, even as the solar ray is the inherent property of the sun. The temple of man is like unto a mirror, his soul is as the sun, and his mental faculties even as the rays that emanate from that source of light. The ray may cease to fall upon the mirror, but it can in no wise be dissociated from the sun.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablet to August Forel*, pp. 24-25

The Animal (As A Part Of Nature) Cannot Conceive Of The Power Of Thought

3. Just as the animal is more noble than the vegetable and mineral, so man is superior to the animal. The animal is bereft of ideality--that is to say, it is a captive of the world of nature

and not in touch with that which lies within and beyond nature; it is without spiritual susceptibilities, deprived of the attractions of consciousness, unconscious of the world of God and incapable of deviating from the law of nature. It is different with man. Man is possessed of the emanations of consciousness; he has perception, ideality and is capable of discovering the mysteries of the universe. All the industries, inventions and facilities surrounding our daily life were at one time hidden secrets of nature, but the reality of man penetrated them and made them subject to his purposes. According to nature's laws they should have remained latent and hidden; but man, having transcended those laws, discovered these mysteries and brought them out of the plane of the invisible into the realm of the known and visible. How wonderful is the spirit of man! One of the mysteries of natural phenomena is electricity. Man has discovered this illimitable power and made it captive to his uses. How many of nature's secrets have been penetrated and revealed! Columbus, while in Spain, discovered America. Man has accurately determined that the sun is stationary while the earth revolves about it. The animal cannot do this. Man perceives the mirage to be an illusion. This is beyond the power of the animal. The animal can only know through sense impressions and cannot grasp intellectual realities. The animal cannot conceive of the power of thought. This is an abstract intellectual matter and not limited to the senses. The animal is incapable of knowing that the earth is round. In brief, abstract intellectual phenomena are human powers. All creation below the kingdom of man is the captive of nature; it cannot deviate in the slightest degree from nature's laws. But man wrests the sword of dominion from nature's hand and uses it upon nature's head. For example, it is a natural exigency that man should be a dweller upon the earth, but the power of the human spirit transcends this limitation, and he soars aloft in airplanes. This is contrary to the law and requirement of nature. He sails at high speed upon the ocean and dives beneath its surface in submarines. He imprisons the human voice in a phonograph and communicates in the twinkling of an eye from East to West. These are things we know to be contrary to the limitations of natural law. Man transcends nature, while the mineral, vegetable and animal are helplessly subject to it. This can be done only through the power of the spirit, because the spirit is the reality.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 240-241

Thought Is An Inner Faculty That Is Evident By The Effect Produced

4. 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

Thought Cannot Be Stopped

5. Now this is beyond the power of man, that he should be able by interference or objection to change the heart and conscience, or meddle with the convictions of anyone. For in the realm of conscience naught but the ray of God's light can command, and on the throne of the heart none but the pervading power of the King of Kings should rule. Thus it is that one can arrest and suspend [the action of] every faculty except thought and reflection; for a man cannot even by his own volition withhold himself from reflection or thought, nor keep back his musings and imaginings.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *A Traveler's Narrative*, pp. 39-40

Man's Spirit Is Greater Than The Faculty Of Thought

6. When you wish to reflect upon or consider a matter, you consult something within you. You say, shall I do it, or shall I not do it? Is it better to make this journey or abandon it? Whom do you consult? Who is within you deciding this question? Surely there is a distinct power, an intelligent ego. Were it not distinct from your ego, you would not be consulting it. It is greater than the faculty of thought. It is your spirit which teaches you, which advises and decides upon matters. Who is it that interrogates? Who is it that answers? There is no doubt that it is the spirit and that there is no change or transformation in it, for it is not a composition of elements, and anything that is not composed of elements is eternal. Change and transformation are peculiarities of composition. There is no change and transformation in the spirit. In proof of this, the body may become weakened in its members. It may be dismembered, or one of its members may be incapacitated. The whole body may be paralyzed; and yet the mind, the spirit, remains ever the same. The mind decides; the thought is perfect; and yet the hand is withered, the feet have become useless, the spinal column is paralyzed, and there is no muscular movement at all, but the spirit is in the same status. Dismember a healthy man; the spirit is not dismembered. Amputate his feet; his spirit is there. He may become lame; the spirit is not affected. The spirit is ever the same; no change or transformation can you perceive, and because there is no change or transformation, it is everlasting and permanent.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 242-243

7. This great power must evidently be differentiated from the physical body or temple in which it is manifested. Observe and understand how this human body changes; nevertheless, the spirit of man remains ever in the same condition. For instance, the body sometimes grows weak, it becomes strong or stout, sometimes it grows smaller or may be dismembered, but there is no effect upon the spirit. The eye may become blind, the foot may be amputated, but no imperfection afflicts the spirit. This is proof that the spirit of man is distinct from his body. Defects in the body or its members do not imply defects in the spirit. This leads to the accurate conclusion that if the whole body should be subjected to a radical change, the spirit will survive that change; that even if the body of man is destroyed and becomes nonexistent, the spirit of man remains unaffected. For the spirit of man is everlasting. Sometimes the body sleeps, the eyes do not see, the ears do not hear, the members cease to act, every function is as inactive as death; nevertheless, the spirit sees, hears and soars on high. For it is possessed of these faculties which operate without the instrumentality of the body. In the world of thought it sees without eyes, hears without ears and travels without the motion of foot. Without physical force it exercises

every function. This makes it evident that during sleep the spirit is alive though the body is as dead. In the world of dreams the body becomes absolutely passive, but the spirit still functions actively, possessed of all susceptibilities. This leads to the conclusion that the life of the spirit is neither conditional nor dependent upon the life of the body. At most it can be said that the body is a mere garment utilized by the spirit. If that garment be destroyed, the wearer is not affected but is, in fact, protected.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 259

Thought And Intellectual Realities Do Not Ascend And Descend

8. 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

The Body Does Not Conduct The Process of Intellection Or Thought Radiation

9. It is an evident fact that the body does not conduct the process of intellection or thought radiation. It is only the medium of the grossest sensations. This human body is purely animal in type and, like the animal, it is subject only to the grosser sensibilities. It is utterly bereft of ideation or intellection, utterly incapable of the processes of reason. The animal perceives what its eye sees and judges what the ear hears. It perceives according to its animal senses, the scent of the nostril, the taste of the tongue. It comprehends not beyond its sense perceptions. The animal is confined to its feelings and sensibilities, a prisoner of the senses. Beyond these, in the finer higher processes of reasoning, the animal cannot go. For instance, the animal cannot conceive of the earth whereon it stands as a spherical object because the spherical shape of the earth is a matter of conscious reasoning. It is not a matter of sense perception. An animal in Europe could not foresee and plan the discovery of America as Columbus did. It could not take the globe map of the earth and scan the various continents, saying, “This is the eastern hemisphere; there must be another, the western hemisphere.” No animal could know these things for the reason that they are referable to intellection. The animal cannot become aware of the fact that the earth is revolving and the sun stationary. Only processes of reasoning can come to this conclusion. The outward eye sees the sun as revolving. It mistakes the stars and the planets as

moving about the earth. But reason decides their orbit, knows that the earth is moving and the other worlds fixed, knows that the sun is the solar center and ever occupies the same place, proves that it is the earth which revolves around it. Such conclusions are entirely intellectual, not according to the senses.

Hence, we know that in the human organism there is a center of intellection, a power of intellectual operation which is the discoverer of the realities of things. This power can unravel the mysteries of phenomena. It can comprehend that which is knowable, not alone the sensible. All the inventions are its products. For all of these have been the mysteries of nature. There was a time when the energy of electricity was a mystery of nature, but that collective reality which is manifest in man discovered this mystery of nature, this latent force. Having discovered it, man brought it into the plane of visibility. All the sciences which we now utilize are the products of that wondrous reality. But the animal is deprived of its operations. The arts we now enjoy are the expressions of that marvelous reality. The animal is bereft of them because these conscious realities are peculiar to the human spirit. All the traces are the outcoming of the perfections which comprehend realities. The animal is bereft of these.

Such evidences prove conclusively that man is possessed of two realities, as it were: a reality connected with the senses which is shared in common with the animal, and another reality which is conscious and ideal in character. This latter is the collective reality and the discoverer of mysteries. That which discovers the realities of things undoubtedly is not of the elemental substances. It is distinct from them. For mortality and disintegration are the properties inherent in compositions and are referable to things which are subject to sense perceptions, but the collective reality in man, not being so subject, is the discoverer of things. Therefore, it is real, eternal and does not have to undergo changes and transformations.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 417-418

Thought is of Two Kinds

10. Question.--Some people believe that they achieve spiritual discoveries--that is to say, that they converse with spirits. What kind of communion is this?

Answer.--Spiritual discoveries are of two kinds: one kind is of the imagination and is only the assertion of a few people; the other kind resembles inspiration, and this is real--such are the revelations of Isaiah, of Jeremiah and of St. John, which are real.

Reflect that man’s power of thought consists of two kinds. One kind is true, when it agrees with a determined truth. Such conceptions find realization in the exterior world; such are accurate opinions, correct theories, scientific discoveries and inventions.

The other kind of conceptions is made up of vain thoughts and useless ideas which yield neither fruit nor result, and which have no reality. No, they surge like the waves of the sea of imaginations, and they pass away like idle dreams.

In the same way, there are two sorts of spiritual discoveries. One is the revelations of the Prophets, and the spiritual discoveries of the elect. The visions of the Prophets are not dreams; no, they are spiritual discoveries and have reality. They say, for example, “I saw a person in a certain form, and I said such a thing, and he gave such an answer.” This vision is in the world of wakefulness, and not in that of sleep. Nay, it is a spiritual discovery which is expressed as if it were the appearance of a vision.

The other kind of spiritual discoveries is made up of pure imaginations, but these imaginations become embodied in such a way that many simple-hearted people believe that they

have a reality. That which proves it clearly is that from this controlling of spirits no result or fruit has ever been produced. No, they are but narratives and stories.

Know that the reality of man embraces the realities of things, and discovers the verities, properties and secrets of things. So all these arts, wonders, sciences and knowledge have been discovered by the human reality. At one time these sciences, knowledge, wonders and arts were hidden and concealed secrets; then gradually the human reality discovered them and brought them from the realm of the invisible to the plane of the visible. Therefore, it is evident that the reality of man embraces things. Thus it is in Europe and discovers America; it is on the earth, and it makes discoveries in the heavens. It is the revealer of the secrets of things, and it is the knower of the realities of that which exists. These discoveries corresponding to the reality are similar to revelation, which is spiritual comprehension, divine inspiration and the association of human spirits. For instance, the Prophet says, "I saw, I said, I heard such a thing." It is, therefore, evident that the spirit has great perception without the intermediary of any of the five senses, such as the eyes or ears. Among spiritual souls there are spiritual understandings, discoveries, a communion which is purified from imagination and fancy, an association which is sanctified from time and place. So it is written in the Gospel that, on Mount Tabor, Moses and Elias came to Christ, and it is evident that this was not a material meeting. It was a spiritual condition which is expressed as a physical meeting.

The other sort of converse, presence and communications of spirits is but imagination and fancy, which only appears to have reality.

The mind and the thought of man sometimes discover truths, and from this thought and discovery signs and results are produced. This thought has a foundation. But many things come to the mind of man which are like the waves of the sea of imaginations; they have no fruit, and no result comes from them. In the same way, man sees in the world of sleep a vision which becomes exactly realized; at another time, he sees a dream which has absolutely no result.

What we mean is that this state, which we call the converse and communications of spirits, is of two kinds: one is simply imaginary, and the other is like the visions which are mentioned in the Holy Book, such as the revelations of St. John and Isaiah and the meeting of Christ with Moses and Elias. These are real, and produce wonderful effects in the minds and thoughts of men, and cause their hearts to be attracted.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 251-253

God Is Aware of Our Thoughts

11. O REBELLIOUS ONES!

My forbearance hath emboldened you and My long-suffering hath made you negligent, in such wise that ye have spurred on the fiery charger of passion into perilous ways that lead unto destruction. Have ye thought Me heedless or that I was unaware?

Bahá’u’lláh: *Persian Hidden Words*, p. 65

12. The essence of these words is this: Were We to bring thee to a reckoning, thou wouldst prove thyself empty-handed; We in truth know all things. Hadst thou uttered ‘yea’ on hearing the Words of God, thou wouldst have been seen to have been worshipping God from the beginning that hath no beginning until the present day, never to have disobeyed Him, not even for the twinkling of an eye. Yet, neither the upright deeds thou hast wrought during all thy life, nor the exertions thou didst make to banish every thought from thy heart save that of the good-pleasure

of God, none of these did in truth profit thee, not even to the extent of a grain of mustard seed, inasmuch as thou didst veil thyself from God and tarried behind at the time of His manifestation.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, pp. 31-32

Knowledge of God Is Beyond The Power of Man's Thought

13. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. None can withstand the power of Thy sovereign might. From everlasting Thou wert alone, with none to equal Thee, and wilt unto everlasting remain far above all thought and every description of Thee. Have mercy, then, upon Thy servants by Thy grace and bounty, and suffer them not to be kept back from the shores of the ocean of Thy nearness. If Thou abandonest them, who is there to befriend them; and if Thou puttest them far from Thee, who is he that can favor them? They have none other Lord beside Thee, none to adore except Thyself. Deal Thou generously with them by Thy bountiful grace.

Thou, in truth, art the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 73

14. Lauded be Thy name, O my God! I testify that no thought of Thee, howsoever wondrous, can ever ascend into the heaven of Thy knowledge, and no praise of Thee, no matter how transcendent, can soar up to the atmosphere of Thy wisdom. From eternity Thou hast been removed far above the reach and the ken of the comprehension of Thy servants, and immeasurably exalted above the strivings of Thy bondslaves to express Thy mystery. What power can the shadowy creature claim to possess when face to face with Him Who is the Uncreated?

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 149

15. Exalted, immeasurably exalted art Thou, O my Beloved, above the strivings of any of Thy creatures, however learned, to know Thee; exalted, immensely exalted art Thou above every human attempt, no matter how searching, to describe Thee! For the highest thought of men, however deep their contemplation, can never hope to outsoar the limitations imposed upon Thy creation, nor ascend beyond the state of the contingent world, nor break the bounds irrevocably set for it by Thee. How can, then, a thing that hath been created by Thy will that overruleth the whole of creation, a thing that is itself a part of the contingent world, have the power to soar into the holy atmosphere of Thy knowledge, or reach unto the seat of Thy transcendent power?

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 327-328

16. 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 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

Ponder The Limitlessness Of God And The Limits Of Man

17. THE VALLEY OF TRUE POVERTY AND ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS

This station is the dying from self and the living in God, the being poor in self and rich in the Desired One. Poverty as here referred to signifieth being poor in the things of the created world, rich in the things of God’s world. For when the true lover and devoted friend reacheth to the presence of the Beloved, the sparkling beauty of the Loved One and the fire of the lover’s heart will kindle a blaze and burn away all veils and wrappings. Yea, all he hath, from heart to skin, will be set aflame, so that nothing will remain save the Friend.

When the qualities of the Ancient of Days stood revealed,

Then the qualities of earthly things did Moses burn away.¹

He who hath attained this station is sanctified from all that pertaineth to the world. Wherefore, if those who have come to the sea of His presence are found to possess none of the limited things of this perishable world, whether it be outer wealth or personal opinions, it mattereth not. For whatever the creatures have is limited by their own limits, and whatever the True One hath is sanctified therefrom; this utterance must be deeply pondered that its purport may be clear.

“Verily the righteous shall drink of a winecup tempered at the camphor fountain.”² If the interpretation of “camphor” become known, the true intention will be evident. This state is that poverty of which it is said, “Poverty is My glory.”³ And of inward and outward poverty there is many a stage and many a meaning which I have not thought pertinent to mention here; hence I have reserved these for another time, dependent on what God may desire and fate may seal.

¹ Jalalu’-d-Din Rumi (1207-1273 A.D.); *The Mathnavi*. Jalalu’-d-Din, called Mawlana (“our Master”), is the greatest of all Persian Sufi poets, and founder of the Mawlawi “whirling” dervish order.

² Qur’án 76:5.

³ Muhammad.

This is the plane whereon the vestiges of all things (Kullu Shay') are destroyed in the traveler, and on the horizon of eternity the Divine Face riseth out of the darkness, and the meaning of "All on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord...."⁴ is made manifest.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*, pp. 36-37

God Declares Unto Man What Is His Thought

18. O Shaykh! Reflect upon these words addressed by Him Who is the Desire of the world to Amos. He saith: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, for, lo, He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of Hosts, is His name." He saith that He maketh the morning darkness. By this is meant that if, at the time of the Manifestation of Him Who conversed on Sinai anyone were to regard himself as the true morn, he will, through the might and power of God, be turned into darkness. He truly is the false dawn, though believing himself to be the true one. Woe unto him, and woe unto such as follow him without a clear token from God, the Lord of the worlds.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 145

The Purpose Of God's Manifestations Is To Train Man's Thinking

19. Why do these holy Manifestations of God appear? What is the wisdom and purpose of Their coming? What is the outcome of Their mission? It is evident that human personality appears in two aspects: the image or likeness of God, and the aspect of Satan. The human reality stands between these two: the divine and the satanic. It is manifest that beyond this material body, man is endowed with another reality, which is the world of exemplars constituting the heavenly body of man. In speaking, man says, "I saw," "I spoke," "I went." Who is this I? It is obvious that this I is different from this body. It is clear that when man is thinking, it is as though he were consulting with some other person. With whom is he consulting? It is evident that it is another reality, or one aside from this body, with whom he enters into consultation when he thinks, "Shall I do this work or not?" "What will be the result of my doing this?" Or when he questions the other reality, "What is the objection to this work if I do it?" And then that reality in man communicates its opinion to him concerning the point at issue. Therefore, that reality in man is clearly and obviously other than his body--an ego with which man enters into consultation and whose opinion man seeks.

Often a man makes up his mind positively about a matter; for instance, he determines to undertake a journey. Then he thinks it over--that is, he consults his inner reality--and finally concludes that he will give up his journey. What has happened? Why did he abandon his original purpose? It is evident that he has consulted his inner reality, which expresses to him the disadvantages of such a journey; therefore, he defers to that reality and changes his original intention.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 463-464

20. Then it is plain and evident that man needs an educator, and this educator must be unquestionably and indubitably perfect in all respects and distinguished above all men.

⁴ Qur'án 55:26, 27.

Otherwise, if he should be like the rest of humanity, he could not be their educator, more particularly because he must be at the same time their material and human as well as their spiritual educator--that is to say, he must teach men to organize and carry out physical matters, and to form a social order in order to establish cooperation and mutual aid in living so that material affairs may be organized and regulated for any circumstances that may occur. In the same way he must establish human education--that is to say, he must educate intelligence and thought in such a way that they may attain complete development, so that knowledge and science may increase, and the reality of things, the mysteries of beings and the properties of existence may be discovered; that, day by day, instructions, inventions and institutions may be improved; and from things perceptible to the senses conclusions as to intellectual things may be deduced.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 8-9

21. In the Name of God the Clement, the Merciful

Praise and thanksgiving be unto Providence that out of all the realities in existence He has chosen the reality of man and has honored it with intellect and wisdom, the two most luminous lights in either world. Through the agency of this great endowment, He has in every epoch cast on the mirror of creation new and wonderful configurations. If we look objectively upon the world of being, it will become apparent that from age to age, the temple of existence has continually been embellished with a fresh grace, and distinguished with an ever-varying splendor, deriving from wisdom and the power of thought.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 1

22. Afterward the life-giving spring ends in fruitful summer. The word of God is exalted, the Law of God is promulgated; all things reach perfection. The heavenly table is spread, the holy breezes perfume the East and the West, the teachings of God conquer the world, men become educated, praiseworthy results are produced, universal progress appears in the world of humanity, and the divine bounties surround all things. The Sun of Reality rises from the horizon of the Kingdom with the greatest power and heat. When it reaches the meridian, it will begin to decline and descend, and the spiritual summer will be followed by autumn, when growth and development are arrested. Breezes change into blighting winds, and the unwholesome season dissipates the beauty and freshness of the gardens, plains and bowers--that is to say, attraction and goodwill do not remain, divine qualities are changed, the radiance of hearts is dimmed, the spirituality of souls is altered, virtues are replaced by vices, and holiness and purity disappear. Only the name of the Religion of God remains, and the exoteric forms of the divine teachings. The foundations of the Religion of God are destroyed and annihilated, and nothing but forms and customs exist. Divisions appear, firmness is changed into instability, and spirits become dead; hearts languish, souls become inert, and winter arrives--that is to say, the coldness of ignorance envelops the world, and the darkness of human error prevails. After this come indifference, disobedience, inconsiderateness, indolence, baseness, animal instincts and the coldness and insensibility of stones. It is like the season of winter when the terrestrial globe, deprived of the effect of the heat of the sun, becomes desolate and dreary. When the world of intelligence and thought has reached to this state, there remain only continual death and perpetual nonexistence.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 74-75

All Of The Manifestation’s Thoughts Are Taught By God

23. Call Thou to remembrance Thine arrival in the City (Constantinople), how the Ministers of the Sultan thought Thee to be unacquainted with their laws and regulations, and believed Thee to be one of the ignorant. Say: Yes, by My Lord! I am ignorant of all things except what God hath, through His bountiful favor, been pleased to teach Me. To this We assuredly testify, and unhesitatingly confess it.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 122-123

24. Another proof and evidence of the truth of this Revelation, which amongst all other proofs shineth as the sun, is the constancy of the eternal Beauty in proclaiming the Faith of God. Though young and tender of age, and though the Cause He revealed was contrary to the desire of all the peoples of earth, both high and low, rich and poor, exalted and abased, king and subject, yet He arose and steadfastly proclaimed it. All have known and heard this. He was afraid of no one; He was regardless of consequences. Could such a thing be made manifest except through the power of a divine Revelation, and the potency of God's invincible Will? By the righteousness of God! Were any one to entertain so great a Revelation in his heart, the thought of such a declaration would alone confound him! Were the hearts of all men to be crowded into his heart, he would still hesitate to venture upon so awful an enterprise. He could achieve it only by the permission of God, only if the channel of his heart were to be linked with the Source of divine grace, and his soul be assured of the unfailing sustenance of the Almighty. To what, We wonder, do they ascribe so great a daring? Do they accuse Him of folly as they accused the Prophets of old? Or do they maintain that His motive was none other than leadership and the acquisition of earthly riches?

Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 230-231

25. When the above-mentioned Siyyid [Siyyid Yahya of Darab] arrived at Shiraz he interviewed the Báb three times. In the first and second conferences questioning and answering took place; in the third conference he requested a commentary on the Surih called Kawthar,⁵ and when the Báb, without thought or reflection, wrote an elaborate commentary on the Kawthar in his presence, the above-mentioned Siyyid was charmed and enraptured with Him, and straightway, without consideration for the future or anxiety about the results of this affection, hastened to Burujird to his father Siyyid Ja'far, known as Kashfi, and acquainted him with the matter. And, although he was wise and prudent and was wont to have regard to the requirements of the time, he wrote without fear or care a detailed account of his observations to Mirzá Lutf-'Ali the chamberlain in order that the latter might submit it to the notice of the late king, while he himself journeyed to all parts of Persia, and in every town and station summoned the people from the pulpit-tops in such wise that other learned doctors decided that he must be mad, accounting it a sure case of bewitchment.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *A Traveler's Narrative*, pp. 7-8

Rank of Manifestation and Servants

26. The highest station, the supreme sphere, the noblest, most sublime position in creation, whether visible or invisible, whether alpha or omega, is that of the Prophets of God, notwithstanding the fact that for the most part they have to outward seeming been possessed of

⁵ Qur'án 108.

nothing but their own poverty. In the same way, ineffable glory is set apart for the Holy Ones and those who are nearest to the Threshold of God, although such as these have never for a moment concerned themselves with material gain. Then comes the station of those just kings whose fame as protectors of the people and dispensers of Divine justice has filled the world, whose name as powerful champions of the people's rights has echoed through creation. These give no thought to amassing enormous fortunes for themselves; they believe, rather, that their own wealth lies in enriching their subjects. To them, if every individual citizen has affluence and ease, the royal coffers are full. They take no pride in gold and silver, but rather in their enlightenment and their determination to achieve the universal good.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 20

Purpose of Religion is to Change Thought and Action

27. “...The inestimable value of religion is that when a man is vitally connected with it, through a real and living belief in it and in the Prophet who brought it, he receives a strength greater than his own which helps him to develop his good characteristics and overcome his bad ones. The whole purpose of religion is to change not only our thoughts but our acts; when we believe in God and His Prophet and His teachings, we find we are growing even though we perhaps thought ourselves incapable of growth and change.”

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 508

28. ‘Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá’u’lláh. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men’s hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world....’”

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Baha’u’llah*, p. 41

The Teachings Are Like A Wonderful New World Of Thought

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

Shoghi Effendi: *The Importance of Deepening*, p. 225; *Bahá'í Education*, p. 306

We Should Accept The Commands Of The Manifestation

30. In short, the meaning of "He doeth whatsoever He willeth" is that if the Manifestation says something, or gives a command, or performs an action, and believers do not understand its wisdom, they still ought not to oppose it by a single thought, seeking to know why He spoke so, or why He did such a thing. The other souls who are under the shadow of the supreme Manifestations are submissive to the commandments of the Law of God, and are not to deviate as much as a hairsbreadth from it; they must conform their acts and words to the Law of God. If they do deviate from it, they will be held responsible and reprov'd in the presence of God. It is certain that they have no share in the permission "He doeth whatsoever He willeth," for this condition is peculiar to the supreme Manifestations.

So Christ--may my spirit be sacrificed to Him!--was the manifestation of these words, "He doeth whatsoever He willeth," but the disciples were not partakers of this condition; for as they were under the shadow of Christ, they could not deviate from His command and will.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 174

Most People Initially Reject God's Manifestation (And His Thoughts)

31. GRACIOUS God! Within the domains of Islam there are at present seven powerful sovereigns ruling the world. None of them hath been informed of His [the Báb's] Manifestation, and if informed, none hath believed in Him. Who knoweth, they may leave this world below full of desire, and without having realized that the thing for which they were waiting had come to pass. This is what happened to the monarchs that held fast unto the Gospel. They awaited the coming of the Prophet of God [Muhammad], and when He did appear, they failed to recognize Him. Behold how great are the sums which these sovereigns expend without even the slightest thought of appointing an official charged with the task of acquainting them in their own realms with the Manifestation of God! They would thereby have fulfilled the purpose for which they have been created. All their desires have been and are still fixed upon leaving behind them traces of their names.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 117

32. Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Look Thou upon this wronged one, who hath been sorely afflicted by the oppressors among Thy creatures and the infidels among Thine enemies, though he himself hath refused to breathe a single breath but by Thy leave and at Thy bidding. I

lay asleep on my couch, O my God, when lo, the gentle winds of Thy grace and Thy loving-kindness passed over me, and wakened me through the power of Thy sovereignty and Thy gifts, and bade me arise before Thy servants, and speak forth Thy praise, and glorify Thy word. Thereupon most of Thy people reviled me. I swear by Thy glory, O my God! I never thought that they would show forth such deeds, aware as I am that Thou hast Thyself announced this Revelation unto them in the Scrolls of Thy commandment and the Tablets of Thy decree, and hast covenanted with them concerning this youth in every word sent down by Thee unto Thy creatures and Thy people.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 306

33. According to the Jews, Jesus the Christ fulfilled none of these conditions, for their eyes were holden and they could not see.

He came from Nazareth, no unknown place. He carried no sword in His hand, nor even a stick. He did not sit upon the Throne of David, He was a poor man. He reformed the Law of Moses, and broke the Sabbath Day. He did not conquer the East and the West, but was Himself subject to the Roman Law. He did not exalt the Jews, but taught equality and brotherhood, and rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees. He brought in no reign of peace, for during His lifetime injustice and cruelty reached such a height that even He Himself fell a victim to it, and died a shameful death upon the cross.

Thus the Jews thought and spoke, for they did not understand the Scriptures nor the glorious truths that were contained in them. The letter they knew by heart, but of the life-giving spirit they understood not a word.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 55

People Forget God's Teachings

34. Then again the rumour of the Light of Reality and the breathing of the Holy Spirit became known. The cloud of Bounty showered, the Light of Guidance shone upon the earth. The world put on a new garment, the people became a new people, the oneness of humanity was proclaimed. The great unity of thought transformed humanity and created a new world. Again, after a time, all this was forgotten by the people. The teachings of God no longer influenced their lives. His prophecies and commandments became fainter and were finally obliterated from their hearts, and tyranny and thoughtlessness once more prevailed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, pp. 44-45

Thought Needs to be Developed

35. "Bahá'u'lláh has stated quite clearly in His Writings the essential requisites for our spiritual growth, and these are stressed again and again by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Talks and Tablets. One can summarise them briefly in this way:

1. The recital each day of one of the Obligatory Prayers with pure-hearted devotion.
2. The regular reading of the Sacred Scriptures, specifically at least each morning and evening, with reverence, attention and thought.
3. Prayerful meditation on the teachings, so that we may understand them more deeply, fulfil them more faithfully, and convey them more accurately to others.

4. Striving every day to bring our behaviour more into accordance with the high standards that are set forth in the Teachings.
5. Teaching the Cause of God.
6. Selfless service in the work of the Cause and in the carrying on of our trade or profession.”

Universal House of Justice, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 541

36. As to your question about the spiritual children of people who enter the Cause with some old ideas still clinging to them: Everyone should study the Faith for himself, and just because a person’s Bahá’í teacher has some concept not strictly Bahá’í, it does not stand to reason that the new believer must be saddled with it; old believers, as well as new, should constantly endeavour to grow more fully into the Bahá’í pattern of thought and of life. Each soul receives the gift of faith for himself, and from then on is a Bahá’í in his own right, independent of his teacher.

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 78, 568

37. “You must not be sad. This affliction will make you spiritually stronger. Do not be sad. Cheer up! Praise be to God, you are dear to Me, I will tell you a story:

‘A certain ruler wished to appoint one of his subjects to a high office: so, in order to train him, the ruler cast him into prison and caused him to suffer much. The man was surprised at this, for he expected great favours. The ruler had him taken from prison and beaten with sticks. This greatly astonished the man, for he thought the ruler loved him. After this he was hanged on the gallows until he was nearly dead. After he recovered he asked the ruler, ‘If you love me, why did you do these things?’ The ruler replied: ‘I wish to make you prime minister. By having gone through these ordeals you are better fitted for that office. I wish you to know how it is yourself. When you are obliged to punish, you will know how it feels to endure these things. I love you so I wish you to become perfect.’ “Even so with you. After this ordeal you will reach maturity. God sometimes causes us to suffer much and to have many misfortunes that we may become strong in His Cause. You will soon recover and be spiritually stronger than ever before. You will work for God and carry the Message to many of your people.”

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Lights of Guidance*, pp. 602-603

Attraction To Manifestation Changes Thought

38. Qurratu’l-’Ayn was a Persian woman without fame and importance--unknown, like all other Persian women. When she saw Baha’u’llah, she changed completely, visibly, and looked within another world. The reins of volition were taken out of her hands by heavenly attraction. She was so overcome that physical susceptibilities ceased. Her husband, her sons and her family arose in the greatest hostility against Bahá’u’lláh. She became so attracted to the divine threshold that she forsook everything and went forth to the plain of Badasht, no fear in her heart, dauntless, intrepid, openly proclaiming the message of light which had come to her. The Persian government stood against her. They made every effort to quiet her, they imprisoned her in the governor’s house, but she continued to speak. Then she was taken and killed. To her very last breath she spoke with fervid eloquence and so became famous for her complete attraction in the path of God. If she had not seen Bahá’u’lláh, no such effect would have been produced. She had

read and heard the teachings of scriptures all her life, but the action and enkindlement were missing. All women in Persia are enveloped in veils in public. So completely covered are they that even the hand is not visible. This rigid veiling is unspeakable. Qurratu'l-'Ayn tore off her veils and went forth fearlessly. She was like a lioness. Her action caused a great turmoil throughout the land of Persia. So excessive and compulsory is the requirement for veiling in the East that the people in the West have no idea of the excitement and indignation produced by the appearance of an unveiled woman. Qurratu'l-'Ayn lost all thought of herself and was unconscious of fear in her attraction to God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 251

We Must Seek To Pattern Ourselves, In Act And Thought, Along The Lines Laid Down By Bahá’u’lláh

39. “When a person becomes a Bahá’í, he gives up the past only in the sense that he is a part of this new and living Faith of God, and must seek to pattern himself, in act and thought, along the lines laid down by Bahá’u’lláh. The fact that he is by origin a Jew or a Christian, a black man or a white man, is not important anymore, but, as you say, lends color and charm to the Bahá’í community in that it demonstrates unity in diversity.”

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 68

The Holy Spirit Will Assist Thought

40. The Holy Spirit is the Light from the Sun of Truth bringing, by its infinite power, life and illumination to all mankind, flooding all souls with Divine Radiance, conveying the blessings of God’s Mercy to the whole world. The earth, without the medium of the warmth and light of the rays of the sun, could receive no benefits from the sun.

Likewise the Holy Spirit is the very cause of the life of man; without the Holy Spirit he would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge by which his great influence over the rest of creation is gained. The illumination of the Holy Spirit gives to man the power of thought, and enables him to make discoveries by which he bends the laws of nature to his will.

The Holy Spirit it is which, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man and enables him to attain Eternal Life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 58-59

41. By the power of the Holy Spirit, working through his soul, man is able to perceive the Divine reality of things. All great works of art and science are witnesses to this power of the Spirit.

The same Spirit gives Eternal Life.

Those alone who are baptized by the Divine Spirit will be enabled to bring all peoples into the bond of unity. It is by the power of the Spirit that the Eastern World of spiritual thought can intermingle with the Western realm of action, so that the world of matter may become Divine.

It follows that all who work for the Supreme Design are soldiers in the army of the Spirit.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 85

42. I now assure thee, O servant of God, that, if thy mind become empty and pure from every mention and thought and thy heart attracted wholly to the Kingdom of God, forget all else besides God and come in communion with the Spirit of God, then the Holy Spirit will assist thee with a power which will enable thee to penetrate all things, and a Dazzling Spark which enlightens all sides, a Brilliant Flame in the zenith of the heavens, will teach thee that which thou dost not know of the facts of the universe and of the divine doctrine.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 369

Education Trains Thought

43. The intrinsic difference between the ignorant man and the astute philosopher is that the former has not been lifted out of his natural condition, while the latter has undergone systematic training and education in schools and colleges until his mind has awakened and unfolded to higher realms of thought and perception; otherwise, both are human and natural.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 309

44. Not all, however, will be able to engage in these advanced studies. Therefore, such children must be sent to industrial schools where they can also acquire technical skills, and once the child becomes proficient in such a skill, then let consideration be given to the child’s own preference and inclinations. If a child hath a liking for commerce, then let him choose commerce; if industry, then industry; if for higher education, then the advancement of knowledge; if for some other of the responsibilities of humankind, then that. Let him be placed in the field for which he hath an inclination, a desire, and a talent.

But the indispensable basis of all is that he should develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration. If a person be unlettered, and yet clothed with divine excellence, and alive in the breaths of the Spirit, that individual will contribute to the welfare of society, and his inability to read and write will do him no harm. And if a person be versed in the arts and every branch of knowledge, and not live a religious life, and not take on the characteristics of God, and not be directed by a pure intent, and be engrossed in the life of the flesh--then he is harm personified, and nothing will come of all his learning and intellectual accomplishments but scandal and torment.

If, however, an individual hath spiritual characteristics, and virtues that shine out, and his purpose in life be spiritual and his inclinations be directed toward God, and he also study other branches of knowledge--then we have light upon light:⁶ his outer being luminous, his private character radiant, his heart sound, his thought elevated, his understanding swift, his rank noble.

Blessed is he who attaineth this exalted station.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Education*, p. 282

⁶ Qur’án 24:35.

We Should Think On Reality For Ourselves, Not Imitate What We Have Been Taught

45. Therefore, the divine bounties--whether phenomenal and accidental or spiritual and ideal--are perpetual. But the people of religion are of two kinds: Some worship the sun, and some adore the dawning points from which the sun rises... Consider the people and nations of the earth today and observe this same tenacious allegiance to ancestral belief. He whose father was a Zoroastrian is a Zoroastrian. He whose father was a Buddhist remains a Buddhist. The son of a Muslim continues a Muslim, and so on throughout. Why is this? Because they are slaves and captives of mere imitation. They have not investigated the reality of religion and arrived at its fundamentals and conclusions. The Jew, for instance, has not proved the validity of Moses by investigating reality. He is a Jew because his father was a Jew. He imitates the forms and belief of his fathers and ancestors. There is no thought or mention of reality. And so it is with the other peoples of religion. This is the purpose of our statement that they worship the dawning point rather than the Sun of Reality itself.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 273-274

We Should Reflect On The Transitory Nature Of This World

46. Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful, ye cannot, if ye be of them who judge fairly. The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty. What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Ere long, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead.

Bahá’u’lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Áqdas*, K40

We Should Focus Our Thoughts on Spiritual Realities

47. We ask God to sanctify the hearts of certain of the doctors from rancor and hatred that they may regard things with eyes which closure overcometh not; and to raise them unto a station where the world and the lordship thereof shall not turn them aside from looking toward the Supreme Horizon, and where [anxiety for] gaining a livelihood and [providing] household goods shall not divert them from [the thought of] that day whereon the mountains shall be made like carpets.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *A Traveler’s Narrative*, pp. 81-82

We Must Sometimes Think Symbolically About Spiritual Reality

48. 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."⁷ Then it is said that God caused Adam to sleep, and He took 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."⁸ 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 reprovved 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.⁹

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.

We must reflect a little: if the literal meaning of this story were attributed to a wise man, certainly all would logically deny that this arrangement, this invention, could have emanated from an intelligent being. Therefore, this story of Adam and Eve who ate from the tree, and their expulsion from Paradise, must be thought of simply as a symbol. It contains divine mysteries and universal meanings, and it is capable of marvelous explanations. Only those who are initiated into mysteries, and those who are near the Court of the All-Powerful, are aware of these secrets. Hence these verses of the Bible have numerous meanings.

We will explain one of them, and we will say: Adam signifies the heavenly spirit of Adam, and Eve His human soul. For in some passages in the Holy Books where women are mentioned, they represent the soul of man. The tree of good and evil signifies the human world; for the spiritual and divine world is purely good and absolutely luminous, but in the human world light and darkness, good and evil, exist as opposite conditions.

The meaning of the serpent is attachment to the human world. This attachment of the spirit to the human world led the soul and spirit of Adam from the world of freedom to the world of bondage and caused Him to turn from the Kingdom of Unity to the human world. When the soul and spirit of Adam entered the human world, He came out from the paradise of freedom and fell into the world of bondage. From the height of purity and absolute goodness, He entered into the world of good and evil.

⁷ Cf. Gen. 2:16-17.

⁸ Cf. Gen. 3:5.

⁹ Cf. Gen. 3:11-15,22.

The tree of life is the highest degree of the world of existence: the position of the Word of God, and the supreme Manifestation. Therefore, that position has been preserved; and, at the appearance of the most noble supreme Manifestation, it became apparent and clear. For the position of Adam, with regard to the appearance and manifestation of the divine perfections, was in the embryonic condition; the position of Christ was the condition of maturity and the age of reason; and the rising of the Greatest Luminary¹⁰ was the condition of the perfection of the essence and of the qualities. This is why in the supreme Paradise the tree of life is the expression for the center of absolutely pure sanctity--that is to say, of the divine supreme Manifestation. From the days of Adam until the days of Christ, They spoke little of eternal life and the heavenly universal perfections. This tree of life was the position of the Reality of Christ; through His manifestation it was planted and adorned with everlasting fruits.

Now consider how far this meaning conforms to the reality. For the spirit and the soul of Adam, when they were attached to the human world, passed from the world of freedom into the world of bondage, and His descendants continued in bondage. This attachment of the soul and spirit to the human world, which is sin, was inherited by the descendants of Adam, and is the serpent which is always in the midst of, and at enmity with, the spirits and the descendants of Adam. That enmity continues and endures. For attachment to the world has become the cause of the bondage of spirits, and this bondage is identical with sin, which has been transmitted from Adam to His posterity. It is because of this attachment that men have been deprived of essential spirituality and exalted position.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 122-124

God Wants Us To Reflect Upon His Purpose

49. Ponder a while upon the verses concerning the Divine Presence, which have been sent down in the Qur’án by Him Who is the Lord of the kingdom of names, perchance thou mayest discover the Straight Path, and be made an instrument for the guidance of His creatures. Such a one as thou must needs in this day arise to serve this Cause. The abasement of this Wronged One as well as thy glory shall both pass away. Strive thou, that haply thou mayest achieve a deed the fragrance of which shall never fade from the earth.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 115

50. Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that the teachings of the present day emanating from mere human sources and authority are the cause of difficulty and disagreement amongst mankind, the very destroyers of humanity, whereas the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found the realization of every desire and aspiration, the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, the stimulus and illumination of mentality, the impulse for advancement and uplift, the basis of unity for all nations, the fountain source of love amongst mankind, the center of agreement, the means of peace and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 440

We Should Reflect On God’s Cause

¹⁰ Bahá’u’lláh.

51. And if anyone should reflect on the appearance of this Tree, he will undoubtedly testify to the loftiness of the Cause of God. For if one from whose life only twenty-four years have passed, and who is devoid of those sciences wherein all are learned, now reciteth verses after such fashion without thought or hesitation, writes a thousand verses of prayer in the course of five hours without pause of the pen, and produceth commentaries and learned treatises on such lofty themes as the true understanding of God and of the oneness of His Being, in a manner which doctors and philosophers confess surpasseth their power of understanding, then there is no doubt that all that hath been manifested is divinely inspired. Notwithstanding their life-long diligent study, what pains do these divines take when writing a single line in Arabic! Yet after such efforts the result is but words which are unworthy of mention. All these things are for a proof unto the people; otherwise the religion of God is too mighty and glorious for anyone to comprehend through aught but itself; rather by it all else is understood.

The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 109

We Should Think Of How To Serve God

52. Extensive travel in October, to the north, south, east and west, accompanied by that candle of the love of God, Mrs. Maxwell, would be highly acceptable. My hope is that she may entirely recover; this beloved handmaid of God is like a flame of fire and thinks day and night of nothing save service to God. For the present, travel throughout the northern states, and in the winter season hasten to the states in the south. Your service should consist of eloquent speeches delivered in gatherings wherein ye may promulgate the divine teachings. If possible, undertake at some time a voyage to the Hawaiian Islands.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, P.: 107

53. For her there was never a night of peaceful sleep, for her no day when she found rest, and always, like a moth, would her comely person circle about the bright candle of the Faith. The words of her mouth were ever to glorify the Abhá Beauty, her only thought and her high purpose were to proclaim the Cause of God and to protect His Law, while the dearest wish of her glowing heart was to waft far and wide the sweet breathings of the Lord.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahíyyih Khánum*, pp. 75-76

We Should Consume Every Wayward Thought With The Mention of God

54. That seeker should, also, regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of them that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit. At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and, with all his soul, persevere in the quest of his Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him. He should succor the dispossessed, and never withhold his favor from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance. He should not hesitate to offer up his life for his Beloved, nor allow the censure of the people to turn him away from the Truth. He should not

wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil. With all his heart he should avoid fellowship with evil-doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner attained, at the hour of death, to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the Concourse on high! And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire!

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 265-266

55. Look at me: I am so feeble, yet I have had the strength given me to come amongst you: a poor servant of God, who has been enabled to give you this message! I shall not be with you long! One must never consider one's own feebleness, it is the strength of the Holy Spirit of Love, which gives the power to teach. The thought of our own weakness could only bring despair. We must look higher than all earthly thoughts; detach ourselves from every material idea, crave for the things of the spirit; fix our eyes on the everlasting bountiful Mercy of the Almighty, who will fill our souls with the gladness of joyful service to His command 'Love One Another'.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 39

Think Of How To Improve Man's Character

56. It is incumbent upon thee to turn wholly unto the Kingdom of God, to enter entirely into this wonderful Cause, and to make thy thought, remembrance and effort confined to the education of thy character, the enlightenment through the light of Abhá, and to guide the people to the source of the mercy of thy Lord, the Clement, the Merciful.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 361

57. There is nothing so heart-breaking and terrible as an outburst of human savagery! I charge you all that each one of you concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. Thoughts of war bring destruction to all harmony, well-being, restfulness and content.

Thoughts of love are constructive of brotherhood, peace, friendship, and happiness.

When soldiers of the world draw their swords to kill, soldiers of God clasp each other's hands! So may all the savagery of man disappear by the Mercy of God, working through the pure in heart and the sincere of soul. Do not think the peace of the world an ideal impossible to attain!

Nothing is impossible to the Divine Benevolence of God.

If you desire with all your heart, friendship with every race on earth, your thought, spiritual and positive, will spread; it will become the desire of others, growing stronger and stronger, until it reaches the minds of all men.

Do not despair! Work steadily. Sincerity and love will conquer hate. How many seemingly impossible events are coming to pass in these days! Set your faces steadily towards the Light of the World. Show love to all; 'Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of Man'. Take courage! God never forsakes His children who strive and work and pray! Let your hearts be filled with the strenuous desire that tranquillity and harmony may encircle all this warring world.

So will success crown your efforts, and with the universal brotherhood will come the Kingdom of God in peace and goodwill.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 29-30

Some Thoughts Are Right For The Times

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

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’i World Faith*, p. 415

Some Thoughts Are Not Right For The Times

59. The Spiritual Assemblies which are organized for the sake of teaching the truth, whether Assemblies for men, Assemblies for women or mixed Assemblies are all accepted and are conducive to the spreading of the fragrances of God. This is essential. Likewise the public meetings in which one day during the week the believers gather to be engaged in the commemoration of God, to read Communes and deliver effective speeches is acceptable and beloved. But now is not the time--it is utterly impossible to establish the House of Justice which is mentioned in the Book of Aqdas, nay rather it is impracticable and not to be thought of, that is for the time when the Cause is proclaimed and the Commands have become effective. Therefore now is not the time for the House of Justice, which must be established by general election. Its mention is not permissible and its realization impossible.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’i World Faith*, p. 411

Some Thoughts Conflict With Current Beliefs

60. O thou handmaid of God! It is recorded in eastern histories that Socrates journeyed to Palestine and Syria and there, from men learned in the things of God, acquired certain spiritual truths; that when he returned to Greece, he promulgated two beliefs: one, the unity of God, and the other, the immortality of the soul after its separation from the body; that these concepts, so foreign to their thought, raised a great commotion among the Greeks, until in the end they gave him poison and killed him.

And this is authentic; for the Greeks believed in many gods, and Socrates established the fact that God is one, which obviously was in conflict with Greek beliefs.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 55

Thoughts Are Of Two Kinds: Imagination and Inspiration

61. Question--Some people believe that they achieve spiritual discoveries--that is to say, that they converse with spirits. What kind of communion is this?

Answer--Spiritual discoveries are of two kinds: one kind is of the imagination and is only the assertion of a few people; the other kind resembles inspiration, and this is real--such are the revelations of Isaiah, of Jeremiah and of St. John, which are real.

Reflect that man's power of thought consists of two kinds. One kind is true, when it agrees with a determined truth. Such conceptions find realization in the exterior world; such are accurate opinions, correct theories, scientific discoveries and inventions.

The other kind of conceptions is made up of vain thoughts and useless ideas which yield neither fruit nor result, and which have no reality. No, they surge like the waves of the sea of imaginations, and they pass away like idle dreams.

In the same way, there are two sorts of spiritual discoveries. One is the revelations of the Prophets, and the spiritual discoveries of the elect. The visions of the Prophets are not dreams; no, they are spiritual discoveries and have reality. They say, for example, "I saw a person in a certain form, and I said such a thing, and he gave such an answer." This vision is in the world of wakefulness, and not in that of sleep. Nay, it is a spiritual discovery which is expressed as if it were the appearance of a vision.

The other kind of spiritual discoveries is made up of pure imaginations, but these imaginations become embodied in such a way that many simple-hearted people believe that they have a reality. That which proves it clearly is that from this controlling of spirits no result or fruit has ever been produced. No, they are but narratives and stories.

Know that the reality of man embraces the realities of things, and discovers the verities, properties and secrets of things. So all these arts, wonders, sciences and knowledge have been discovered by the human reality. At one time these sciences, knowledge, wonders and arts were hidden and concealed secrets; then gradually the human reality discovered them and brought them from the realm of the invisible to the plane of the visible. Therefore, it is evident that the reality of man embraces things. Thus it is in Europe and discovers America; it is on the earth, and it makes discoveries in the heavens. It is the revealer of the secrets of things, and it is the knower of the realities of that which exists. These discoveries corresponding to the reality are similar to revelation, which is spiritual comprehension, divine inspiration and the association of human spirits. For instance, the Prophet says, "I saw, I said, I heard such a thing." It is, therefore, evident that the spirit has great perception without the intermediary of any of the five senses, such as the eyes or ears. Among spiritual souls there are spiritual understandings, discoveries, a communion which is purified from imagination and fancy, an association which is sanctified from time and place. So it is written in the Gospel that, on Mount Tabor, Moses and Elias came to Christ, and it is evident that this was not a material meeting. It was a spiritual condition which is expressed as a physical meeting.

The other sort of converse, presence and communications of spirits is but imagination and fancy, which only appears to have reality.

The mind and the thought of man sometimes discover truths, and from this thought and discovery signs and results are produced. This thought has a foundation. But many things come to the mind of man which are like the waves of the sea of imaginations; they have no fruit, and no result comes from them. In the same way, man sees in the world of sleep a vision which becomes exactly realized; at another time, he sees a dream which has absolutely no result.

What we mean is that this state, which we call the converse and communications of spirits, is of two kinds: one is simply imaginary, and the other is like the visions which are mentioned in the Holy Book, such as the revelations of St. John and Isaiah and the meeting of Christ with Moses and Elias. These are real, and produce wonderful effects in the minds and thoughts of men, and cause their hearts to be attracted.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 251-253

Some Of Our Thoughts Are Correct

62. To resume: As for that group who maintains that in effecting these necessary reforms we must proceed with deliberation, exercise patience and gain the objectives one at a time, just what do they mean by this? If by deliberation they are referring to that circumspection which the science of government requires, their thought is timely and appropriate. It is certain that momentous undertakings cannot be brought to a successful conclusion in haste; that in such cases haste would only make waste.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 107

Some Of Our Thoughts Are Mistaken

63. That is to say, the embryo passes through different states and traverses numerous degrees, until it reaches the form in which it manifests the words “Praise be to God, the best of Creators,” and until the signs of reason and maturity appear. And in the same way, man’s existence on this earth, from the beginning until it reaches this state, form and condition, necessarily lasts a long time, and goes through many degrees until it reaches this condition. But from the beginning of man’s existence he is a distinct species. In the same way, the embryo of man in the womb of the mother was at first in a strange form; then this body passes from shape to shape, from state to state, from form to form, until it appears in utmost beauty and perfection. But even when in the womb of the mother and in this strange form, entirely different from his present form and figure, he is the embryo of the superior species, and not of the animal; his species and essence undergo no change. Now, admitting that the traces of organs which have disappeared actually exist, this is not a proof of the impermanence and the nonoriginality of the species. At the most it proves that the form, and fashion, and the organs of man have progressed. Man was always a distinct species, a man, not an animal. So, if the embryo of man in the womb of the mother passes from one form to another so that the second form in no way resembles the first, is this a proof that the species has changed? that it was at first an animal, and that its organs progressed and developed until it became a man? No, indeed! How puerile and unfounded is this idea and this thought! For the proof of the originality of the human species, and of the permanency of the nature of man, is clear and evident.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 183-184

64. The Supper of the Lord which His Highness the Spirit ate with the apostles was a heavenly supper and not one of material bread and water, for material objects have no connection with spiritual objects. As at that time material food was also present, therefore the leaders of the religion of Christ thought that it was material food which was changed into spiritual food.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’i World Faith*, p. 390

65. It is thus that you see even in the kingdom of this world--that is to say, in the realm of souls and countries--that the glory and the grandeur of Christ appeared in this earth after His ascension. When in the world of the body He was subject to the contempt and jeers of the weakest nation of the world, the Jews, who thought it fitting to set a crown of thorns upon His sacred head. But after His ascension the bejeweled crowns of all the kings were humbled and bowed before the crown of thorns.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 117

66. Some men’s lives are solely occupied with the things of this world; their minds are so circumscribed by exterior manners and traditional interests that they are blind to any other realm of existence, to the spiritual significance of all things! They think and dream of earthly fame, of material progress. Sensuous delights and comfortable surroundings bound their horizon, their highest ambitions centre in successes of worldly conditions and circumstances! They curb not their lower propensities; they eat, drink, and sleep! Like the animal, they have no thought beyond their own physical well-being. It is true that these necessities must be despatched. Life is a load which must be carried on while we are on earth, but the cares of the lower things of life should not be allowed to monopolize all the thoughts and aspirations of a human being. The heart’s ambitions should ascend to a more glorious goal, mental activity should rise to higher levels! Men should hold in their souls the vision of celestial perfection, and there prepare a dwelling-place for the inexhaustible bounty of the Divine Spirit.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Paris Talks*, pp. 98-99

67. The second criterion is that of the intellect. The ancient philosophers in particular considered the intellect to be the most important agency of judgment. Among the wise men of Greece, Rome, Persia and Egypt the criterion of true proof was reason. They held that every matter submitted to the reasoning faculty could be proved true or false and must be accepted or rejected accordingly. But in the estimation of the people of insight this criterion is likewise defective and unreliable, for these same philosophers who held to reason or intellect as the standard of human judgment have differed widely among themselves upon every subject of investigation. The statements of the Greek philosophers are contradictory to the conclusions of the Persian sages. Even among the Greek philosophers themselves there is continual variance and lack of agreement upon any given subject. Great difference of thought also prevailed between the wise men of Greece and Rome. Therefore, if the criterion of reason or intellect constituted a correct and infallible standard of judgment, those who tested and applied it should have arrived at the same conclusions. As they differ and are contradictory in conclusions, it is an evidence that the method and standard of test must have been faulty and insufficient.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 254

68. Observe how darkness has overspread the world. In every corner of the earth there is strife, discord and warfare of some kind. Mankind is submerged in the sea of materialism and occupied with the affairs of this world. They have no thought beyond earthly possessions and manifest no desire save the passions of this fleeting, mortal existence. Their utmost purpose is the attainment of material livelihood, physical comforts and worldly enjoyments such as constitute the happiness of the animal world rather than the world of man.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 335

69. God is the Father of all. He educates, provides for and loves all; for they are His servants and His creation. Surely the Creator loves His creatures. It would be impossible to find an artist who does not love his own production. Have you ever seen a man who did not love his own actions? Even though they be bad actions, he loves them. How ignorant, therefore, the thought that God, Who created man, educated and nurtured him, surrounded him with all blessings, made the sun and all phenomenal existence for his benefit, bestowed upon him tenderness and kindness and then did not love him. This is palpable ignorance, for no matter to what religion a man belongs, even though he be an atheist or materialist, nevertheless, God nurtures him, bestows His kindness and sheds upon him His light. How then can we believe God is wrathful and unloving? How can we even imagine this, when as a matter of fact we are witnesses of the tenderness and mercy of God upon every hand? All about us we behold manifestations of the love of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 267

70. Consequently, just as the reality of Divinity never had a beginning--that is, God has ever been a Creator, God has ever been a Provider, God has ever been a Quickener, God has ever been a Bestower--so there never has been a time when the attributes of God have not had expression. The sun is the sun because of its rays, because of its heat. Were we to conceive of a time when there was a sun without heat and light, it would imply that there had been no sun at all and that it became the sun afterward. So, likewise, if we say there was a time when God had no creation or created beings, a time when there were no recipients of His bounties and that His names and attributes had not been manifested, this would be equivalent to a complete denial of Divinity, for it would mean that Divinity is accidental. To explain it still more clearly, if we think that fifty thousand years ago or one hundred thousand years ago there was no creation, that there were then no worlds, no human beings, no animals, this thought of ours would mean that previous to that period there was no Divinity. If we should say that there was a time when there was a king but there were no subjects, no army, no country for him to rule over, it would really be asserting that there was a time when no king existed and that the king is accidental. It is, therefore, evident that inasmuch as the reality of Divinity is without a beginning, creation is also without a beginning. This is as clear as the sun. When we contemplate this vast machinery of omnipresent power, perceive this illimitable space and its innumerable worlds, it will become evident to us that the lifetime of this infinite creation is more than six thousand years; nay, it is very, very ancient.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 462-463

71. Now we come to Muhammad. Americans and Europeans have heard a number of stories about the Prophet which they have thought to be true, although the narrators were either ignorant or antagonistic: most of them were clergy; others were ignorant Muslims who repeated unfounded traditions about Muhammad which they ignorantly believed to be to His praise.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 18

72. It is evident that the bread of which the disciples ate and were filled was the heavenly bounty; for in verse 33 of the same chapter it is said: “For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” It is clear that the body of Christ did not descend from heaven, but it came from the womb of Mary; and that which descended from the

heaven of God was the spirit of Christ. As the Jews thought that Christ spoke of His body, they made objections, for it is said in the 42nd verse of the same chapter: “And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?”

Reflect how clear it is that what Christ meant by the heavenly bread was His spirit, His bounties, His perfections and His teachings; for it is said in the 63rd verse: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.”

Therefore, it is evident that the spirit of Christ is a heavenly grace which descends from heaven; whosoever receives light from that spirit in abundance--that is to say, the heavenly teachings--finds everlasting life. That is why it is said in the 35th verse: “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”

Notice that “coming to Him” He expresses as eating, and “belief in Him” as drinking. Then it is evident and established that the celestial food is the divine bounties, the spiritual splendors, the heavenly teachings, the universal meaning of Christ. To eat is to draw near to Him, and to drink is to believe in Him. For Christ had an elemental body and a celestial form. The elemental body was crucified, but the heavenly form is living and eternal, and the cause of everlasting life; the first was the human nature, and the second is the divine nature. It is thought by some that the Eucharist is the reality of Christ, and that the Divinity and the Holy Spirit descend into and exist in it. Now when once the Eucharist is taken, after a few moments it is simply disintegrated and entirely transformed. Therefore, how can such a thought be conceived? God forbid! certainly it is an absolute fantasy.

To conclude: through the manifestation of Christ, the divine teachings, which are an eternal bounty, were spread abroad, the light of guidance shone forth, and the spirit of life was conferred on man. Whoever found guidance became living; whoever remained lost was seized by enduring death. This bread which came down from heaven was the divine body of Christ, His spiritual elements, which the disciples ate, and through which they gained eternal life.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 97-99

73. O honoured lady! In accordance with the divine teachings in this glorious dispensation we should not belittle anyone and call him ignorant, saying: ‘You know not, but I know’. Rather, we should look upon others with respect, and when attempting to explain and demonstrate, we should speak as if we are investigating the truth, saying: ‘Here these things are before us. Let us investigate to determine where and in what form the truth can be found.’ The teacher should not consider himself as learned and others ignorant. Such a thought breedeth pride, and pride is not conducive to influence. The teacher should not see in himself any superiority; he should speak with the utmost kindness, lowliness and humility, for such speech exerteth influence and educateth the souls.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 30

74. After some months a royal edict was promulgated appointing Adrianople in the district of Roumelia as their place of abode and residence. To that city the Bábis, accompanied by [Turkish] officers, proceeded all together, and there they made their home and habitation. According to statements heard from sundry travelers and from certain great and learned men of that city, they behaved and conducted themselves there also in such wise that the inhabitants of the district and the government officials used to eulogize them, and all used to show them

respect and deference. In short, since Bahá'u'lláh was wont to hold intercourse with the doctors, scholars, magnates, and nobles [thereby] obtaining fame and celebrity throughout Roumelia, the materials of comfort were gathered together, neither fear nor dread remained, they reposed on the couch of ease, and passed their time in quietude, when one Siyyid Muhammad by name, of Isfahan, one of the followers [of the Báb], laid the foundations of intimacy and familiarity with Mirza Yahya, and [thereby] became the cause of vexation and trouble. In other words, he commenced a secret intrigue and fell to tempting Mirza Yahya, saying, "The fame of this sect hath risen high in the world, and their name hath become noble: neither dread nor danger remaineth, nor is there any fear or [need for] caution before you. Cease, then, to follow, that thou mayest be followed by the world; and come out from amongst adherents, that thou mayest become celebrated throughout the horizons." Mirza Yahya, too, through lack of reflection and thought as to consequences, and want of experience, became enamored of his words and befooled by his conduct. This one was [like] the sucking child, and that one became as the much-prized breast. At all events, how much soever some of the chiefs of the sect wrote admonitions and pointed out to him the path of discretion saying, "For many a year hast thou been nurtured in thy brother's arms and hast reposed on the pillow of ease and gladness; what thoughts are these which are the results of madness? Be not beguiled by this empty name,¹¹ which, out of regard for certain considerations and as a matter of expediency, was bestowed [upon thee]; neither seek to be censured by the community. Thy rank and worth depend on a word, and thine exaltation and elevation were for a protection and a consideration," yet still, the more they admonished him, the less did it affect him; and how much soever they would direct him, he continued to account opposition as identical with advantage. Afterwards, too, the fire of greed and avarice was kindled, and although there was no sort of need, their circumstances being easy in the extreme, they fell to thinking of salary and stipend, and certain of the women dependent on Mirza Yahya went to the [governor's] palace and craved assistance and charity. So when Bahá'u'lláh beheld such conduct and behavior on his part He dismissed and drove away both [him and Siyyid Muhammad] from Himself.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *A Traveler's Narrative*, pp. 55-56

75. The Sacred Books are full of allusions to this new dispensation. In the "Book of Íqán", Bahá'u'lláh gives the keynote and explains some of the outstanding passages hoping that the friends will continue to study the Sacred Books by themselves, and unfold the mysteries found therein.

The people, failing to comprehend the meaning of the symbols and the truth of the Sacred Verses, thought them to be myths and unrealizable dreams. It is the duty of the friends who have been endowed by Bahá'u'lláh with the power of discernment to study these Sacred Books, ponder upon their passages and teach the disheartened people of the earth the treasures of knowledge they enclose.

Shoghi Effendi: *The Importance of Deepening*, p. 212

¹¹ Mirza Yahya's title was Subh-i-Azal, the Morning of Eternity. Bahá'u'lláh, in this connection, cites Amos 4:12-13, which says that God "maketh the morning darkness." Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf" (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1953), p. 146. See Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By" (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p.114, for other titles of Mirza Yahya.

We Sometimes Worship The Creations of Our Thoughts

76. Thank God that thou hast found thy way to the Radiant Kingdom, torn asunder the veil of superstition and learned the reality of the mysteries.

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 infinite.¹² 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).

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.

All the philosophers and the doctors know that It is, but they were perplexed in the comprehension of Its existence and were at last discouraged, and in great despair they left this world. For the comprehension of the condition and mysteries of that Reality of realities and Mystery of mysteries there is need for another power and another sense. That power and sense is not possessed by mankind, therefore they have not found any information. For example: If a man possess the power of hearing, the power of tasting, the power of smelling and the power of feeling but no power of seeing, he cannot see. Hence, through the powers and senses present in man the realization of the Unseen Reality, which is pure and holy above the reach of doubts, is impossible. Other powers are needed and other senses required. If those powers and senses are obtained, then information can be had; otherwise, not.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, pp. 22-23

77. After this event there was wrought by a certain Bábi a great error and a grave presumption and crime, which has blackened the page of the history of this sect and given it an ill name throughout the civilized world. Of this event the marrow is this, that during the time when the Báb was residing in Adhirbayjan a youth, Sadiq by name, became affected with the utmost devotion to the Báb, night and day was busy in serving Him, and became bereft of thought and reason. Now when that which befell the Báb in Tabriz took place, this servant, actuated by his own fond fancies, fell into thoughts of seeking blood-revenge. And since he knew naught of the details of the events, the absolute autocracy of the Amir-Nizam, his unbridled power, and sole authority; nor [was aware] that this sentence had been promulgated absolutely without the cognizance of the Royal Court, and that the Prime Minister had presumptuously issued the order on his own sole responsibility; since, on the contrary, he supposed that agreeably to ordinary custom and usage the attendants of the court had had a share in, and a knowledge of this sentence, therefore, [impelled by] folly, frenzy, and his evil star, nay, by sheer madness, he rose up from Tabriz and came straight to Tihran, one other person being his accomplice. Then, since the Royal Train had its abode in Shimiran, he thither directed his

¹² Infinite in regard to imagination, for without the mind there would be no imagination.

steps. God is our refuge! By him was wrought a deed so presumptuous that the tongue is unable to declare and the pen loath to describe it. Yet to God be praise and thankfulness that this madman had charged his pistol with shot, imagining this to be preferable and superior to all projectiles.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *A Traveler’s Narrative*, pp. 29-30

78. That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quenches the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of those that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit. At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him. He should succour the dispossessed, and never withhold his favour from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance. He should not hesitate to offer up his life for his Beloved, nor allow the censure of the people to turn him away from the Truth. He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil. With all his heart should the seeker avoid fellowship with evil doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul’s ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire. Our purpose in revealing these convincing and weighty utterances is to impress upon the seeker that he should regard all else beside God as transient, and count all things save Him, Who is the Object of all adoration, as utter nothingness.

Bahá’u’lláh: *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, pp. 193-195

Rise Above Restricted Thought

79. Thy letter has been received. The contents were indicative of spiritual susceptibilities. I pray God that thou mayest rise above worldly attachments and restricted thought to the realm of the Kingdom; that thou mayest become enlightened and spiritual, be completely released from the darkness of the material world, like unto the bud and rose mayest diffuse fragrances in the Heavenly Rose-Garden, be confirmed by the breath of the Holy Spirit and assisted by the Hosts of the Supreme Concourse. By deeds and words awaken thou the unaware souls and confer upon them the spirit of Life.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 41

Two Schools Of Thought Regarding Differences In Capacity

80. As to the differences among human beings and the superiority or inferiority of some individuals to others, the materialists are of two schools of thought: one group is of the opinion that these differences and the superior qualities of some individuals are inborn, and are, as they would put it, an exigency of nature. According to them, it is obvious that differences within the species are inherent. For example, there are, in nature, different kinds of trees; animals, too, are

varied in their nature; even minerals vary naturally among themselves, and you have here a quarry filled with stones, there a mine of rubies, translucent and richly red; here a shell with pearl enclosed, there only a bit a clay.

The other school of traditional philosophers holdeth to the view that the differences among individuals and the varying levels of intellects and talents derive from education: for with training, a crooked branch can grow straight, and a barren tree of the desert can be domesticated, it can be grafted and made to bear fruit, which may be bitter, but with time turneth sweet. At first, its fruit may be small; but it will grow large and full of flavour, a delight to the taste.

The strongest proof adduced by the second group is this, that the tribes of Africa are, generally speaking, ignorant and wild, while the civilized peoples of America are, in general, possessed of wisdom and understanding, which proveth that the difference between these two peoples is due to education and experience. Such are the stated views of the philosophers.

The Manifestations of God, on the other hand, affirm that differences are demonstrably and indisputably innate, and that “We have caused some of you to excel others”¹³ is a proven and inescapable fact. It is certain that human beings are, by their very nature, different one from the other. Observe a small group of children, born of the same parents, attending the same school, receiving the same education, living on the same diet: some, becoming well educated, will achieve a high degree of advancement; some will reach a middle level; and some will not prove educable at all. It is therefore clear that the disparity among individuals is due to differences of degree which are innate.

But the Manifestations also consider that training and education demonstrably exert a tremendous influence. If, for example, a child is deprived of schooling he will certainly remain ignorant, and his knowledge will be limited to what he is able to find out for himself; but if he is brought to a qualified teacher to study the sciences and arts, he will learn of the discoveries made by thousands of other human beings. Thus education is a guide to those who have gone astray; it maketh the blind to see; it bestoweth judgement on the foolish, and a yield of greatness on the unproductive; it causeth the mute to speak, and turneth the false dawn into the true morning’s light; through it the tiny seed will become a towering palm, and the runaway slave, a reigning king.

Thus is it certain that education exerteth an influence, and for this reason the Manifestation of God, the Well-Springs of His mercy, are raised up in the world, that through the breaths of holiness They may educate the human race, and make of the sucking child a strong and valiant man. Through Them will the outcasts of the earth become the cherished companions of Heaven, and the portionless receive their due.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Education*, pp. 257-259

Reform In The World Of Humanity Is First Accomplished In Thought

81. In this new year new fruits must be forthcoming, for that is the provision and intention of spiritual reformation. The renewal of the leaf is fruitless. From the reformation of bark or branch no fruit will come forth. The renewal of verdure produces nothing. If there be no renewal of fruit from the tree, of what avail is the reformation of bark, blossom, branch and trunk? For a fruitless tree is of no special value. Similarly, of what avail is the reformation of physical conditions unless they are concomitant with spiritual reformations? For the essential reality is the

¹³ Qur’án 17:22.

spirit, the foundation is the spirit, the life of man is due to the spirit; the happiness, the animus, the radiance, the glory of man--all are due to the spirit; and if in the spirit no reformation takes place, there will be no result to human existence.

Therefore, we must strive with life and heart that the material and physical world may be reformed, human perception become keener, the merciful effulgence manifest and the radiance of reality shine. Then the star of love shall appear and the world of humanity become illumined. The purpose is that the world of existence is dependent for its progress upon reformation; otherwise, it will be as dead. Consider: If a new springtime failed to appear, what would be the effect upon this globe, the earth? Undoubtedly it would become desolate and life extinct. The earth has need of an annual coming of spring. It is necessary that a new bounty should be forthcoming. If it comes not, life would be effaced. In the same way the world of spirit needs new life, the world of mind necessitates new animus and development, the world of souls a new bounty, the world of morality a reformation, the world of divine effulgence ever new bestowals. Were it not for this replenishment, the life of the world would become effaced and extinguished. If this room is not ventilated and the air freshened, respiration will cease after a length of time. If no rain falls, all life organisms will perish. If new light does not come, the darkness of death will envelop the earth. If a new springtime does not arrive, life upon this globe will be obliterated.

Therefore, thoughts must be lofty and ideals uplifted in order that the world of humanity may become assisted in new conditions of reform. When this reformation affects every degree, then will come the very Day of the Lord of which all the prophets have spoken. That is the Day wherein the whole world will be regenerated. Consider: Are the laws of past ages applicable to present human conditions? Evidently they are not. For example, the laws of former centuries sanctioned despotic forms of government. Are the laws of despotic control fitted for present-day conditions? How could they be applied to solve the questions surrounding modern nations? Similarly, we ask: Would the status of ancient thought, the crudeness of arts and crafts, the insufficiency of scientific attainment serve us today? Would the agricultural methods of the ancients suffice in the twentieth century? Transportation in the former ages was restricted to conveyance by animals. How would it provide for human needs today? If modes of transportation had not been reformed, the teeming millions now upon the earth would die of starvation. Without the railway and the fast-going steamship, the world of the present day would be as dead. How could great cities such as New York and London subsist if dependent upon ancient means of conveyance? It is also true of other things which have been reformed in proportion to the needs of the present time. Had they not been reformed, man could not find subsistence.

If these material tendencies are in such need of reformation, how much greater the need in the world of the human spirit, the world of human thought, perception, virtues and bounties! Is it possible that that need has remained stationary while the world has been advancing in every other condition and direction? It is impossible.

Therefore, we must invoke and supplicate God and strive with the utmost effort in order that the world of human existence in all its degrees may receive a mighty impulse, complete human happiness be attained and the resuscitation of all spirits and emanations be realized through the boundless favor of the mercy of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 279-280

82. And all this newness hath its source in the fresh outpourings of wondrous grace and favour from the Lord of the Kingdom, which have renewed the world. The people, therefore,

must be set completely free from their old patterns of thought, that all their attention may be focused upon these new principles, for these are the light of this time and the very spirit of this age.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 253

Changes In Thought And Conditions Require Changes In Law

83. To recapitulate: our meaning is that the change and modification of conditions, and the altered requirements of different centuries and times, are the cause of the abrogation of laws. For a time comes when these laws are no longer suitably adapted to conditions. Consider how very different are the requirements of the first centuries, of the Middle Ages, and of modern times. Is it possible that the laws of the first centuries could be enforced at present? It is evident that it would be impossible and impracticable. In the same manner, after the lapse of a few centuries, the requirements of the present time will not be the same as those of the future, and certainly there will be change and alteration. In Europe the laws are unceasingly altered and modified; in bygone years, how many laws existed in the organizations and systems of Europe, which are now abrogated! These changes and alterations are due to the variation and mutation of thought, conditions and customs. If it were not so, the prosperity of the world of humanity would be wrecked.

For example, there is in the Pentateuch a law that if anyone break the Sabbath, he shall be put to death. Moreover, there are ten sentences of death in the Pentateuch. Would it be possible to keep these laws in our time? It is clear that it would be absolutely impossible. Consequently, there are changes and modifications in the laws, and these are a sufficient proof of the supreme wisdom of God.

This subject needs deep thought. Then the cause of these changes will be evident and apparent.

Blessed are those who reflect!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 95-96

Thought Alone Will Not Bring Peace

84. I might add that he does not believe any radiations of thought or healing, from any group, is going to bring peace. Prayer, no doubt, will help the world, but what it needs is to accept Bahá’u’lláh’s system so as to build up the World Order on a new foundation, a divine foundation!...

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 433

Actions Are To Be Preferred To Thoughts

85. People make much profession of goodness, multiplying fine words because they wish to be thought greater and better than their fellows, seeking fame in the eyes of the world. Those who do most good use fewest words concerning their actions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 17

86. An Indian said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

‘My aim in life is to transmit as far as in me lies the message of Krishna to the world.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: The Message of Krishna is the message of love. All God’s prophets have brought the message of love. None has ever thought that war and hate are good. Every one agrees in saying that love and kindness are best.

Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words--these alone are without effect. In order that love may manifest its power there must be an object, an instrument, a motive.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 35

There Should Be Continuity Of Thought And Action

87. “It is not necessary, however, that the term of committee appointments expire at Ridvan. It may be advisable, in order to provide continuity, to begin the committee year in June or July. Furthermore, the fact that, generally speaking, there are few radical changes in committee personnel should also make for continuity of thought and action.”

Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 166

We Must Carry The Thought Through To The End

88. He feels that many of the perplexities that arise in your mind could be dissipated if you always conceived of the teachings as one great whole with many facets. Truth may, in covering different subjects, appear to be contradictory, and yet it is all one if you carry the thought through to the end. For instance the statement on life after death and the condition of believers and non-believers; you might say that a wonderful believer is like a diamond blazing in the sun, an unawakened soul like one in a dark room. But we must couple this concept with the other part of the teachings, that God’s Mercy exceeds His Justice, and that soul can progress in the world beyond; the unilluminated soul can become brilliant.... He hopes you will ... rest assured inwardly that for these things which sometimes seem difficult to understand there is usually a quite simple and reasonable explanation.

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, pp. 477, 605

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

Shoghi Effendi: *The Importance of Deepening*, p. 228

90. As regards your question about Masonry, the Bahá’ís, the Guardian feels very strongly, must learn at the present time to think internationally and not locally. Although each believer realizes that he is a member of one great spiritual family, a member of the New World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, he does not often carry this thought through to its logical conclusion: which is that if the Bahá’ís all over the world each belong to some different kind of society or church or political party, the unity of the Faith will be destroyed, because inevitably they will become involved in doctrines and policies that are in some way against our Teachings, and often against another group of people in another part of the world, or another race, or another religious block.

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 422

Publication of High Thoughts Is The Dynamic Power In The Arteries of Life

91. It is therefore urgent that beneficial articles and books be written, clearly and definitely establishing what the present-day requirements of the people are, and what will conduce to the happiness and advancement of society. These should be published and spread throughout the nation, so that at least the leaders among the people should become, to some degree, awakened, and arise to exert themselves along those lines which will lead to their abiding honor. The publication of high thoughts is the dynamic power in the arteries of life; it is the very soul of the world. Thoughts are a boundless sea, and the effects and varying conditions of existence are as the separate forms and individual limits of the waves; not until the sea boils up will the waves rise and scatter their pearls of knowledge on the shore of life.

Thou, Brother, art thy thought alone,
The rest is only thew and bone.¹⁴

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 109-110

In Past Cycles Interchange of Thought Was Wellnigh Impossible

92. O honoured lady! In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were wellnigh impossible. Consequently intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one. And for everyone it is now easy to travel to any land, to associate and exchange views with its peoples, and to become familiar, through publications, with the conditions, the religious beliefs and the thoughts of all men. In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century--the century of light--hath been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world’s darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour. The fifth candle is the unity of nations--a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and

¹⁴ Qur’án 17:31; 110.

converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 31-32; cited in **Shoghi Effendi**: *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 38-39

Love of God Consumes All Other Thoughts

93. God, create in the hearts of Thy beloved the fire of Thy love, that it may consume the thought of everything save Thee.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Bahá’í Prayers* (UK), p. 61

94. I testify, O my Lord, that He hath surrendered His life in Thy path, and hath wished for Himself nothing but tribulation in the love He beareth to Thee. He hath endured all manner of vexations that He may manifest Thy sovereignty unto Thy servants, and exalt Thy word amidst Thy creatures. As the adversities deepened, and the troubles sent down by Thee compassed Him on every side, He became so impassioned by His thought of Thee, that the hosts of all them that had disbelieved in Thee and repudiated Thy signs ceased to affright Him.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 71

95. How sweet is the thought of Thee in times of adversity and trial, and how delightful to glorify Thee when compassed about with the fierce winds of Thy decree! Thou knowest full well, O my God, that I endure patiently whatsoever toucheth me in Thy path. Nay, I perceive that all the members and limbs of my body long for tribulation, that I may manifest Thy Cause, O Thou Who art the Lord of all names! The waters of Thy love have preserved me in the kingdom of Thy creation, and the fire of my remembrance of Thee hath set me ablaze before all that are in heaven and on earth. Great is my blessedness, and great the blessedness of this fire whose flame crieth out: “No God is there save Thee, Who art the Object of my heart’s adoration, and the Source and Center of my soul!”

Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 186-187

The Person Who Is Thoughtless Of Others Is Inferior To The Animal

96. The man who thinks only of himself and is thoughtless of others is undoubtedly inferior to the animal because the animal is not possessed of the reasoning faculty. The animal is excused; but in man there is reason, the faculty of justice, the faculty of mercifulness. Possessing all these faculties he must not leave them unused. He who is so hard-hearted as to think only of his own comfort, such an one will not be called man.

Man is he who forgets his own interests for the sake of others. His own comfort he forfeits for the well-being of all. Nay, rather, his own life must he be willing to forfeit for the life of mankind. Such a man is the honor of the world of humanity. Such a man is the glory of the world of mankind. Such a man is the one who wins eternal bliss. Such a man is near to the threshold of God. Such a man is the very manifestation of eternal happiness. Otherwise, men are like animals, exhibiting the same proclivities and propensities as the world of animals. What distinction is there? What prerogatives, what perfections? None whatever! Animals are better even--thinking only of themselves and negligent of the needs of others.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 42

Be Unified In Thought

97. O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138

98. Inasmuch as great differences and divergences of denominational belief had arisen throughout the past, every man with a new idea attributing it to God, Bahá'u'lláh desired that there should not be any ground or reason for disagreement among the Bahá'ís. Therefore, with His own pen He wrote the Book of His Covenant, addressing His relations and all people of the world, saying, "Verily, I have appointed One Who is the Center of My Covenant. All must obey Him; all must turn to Him; He is the Expounder of My Book, and He is informed of My purpose. All must turn to Him. Whatsoever He says is correct, for, verily, He knoweth the texts of My Book. Other than He, no one doth know My Book." The purpose of this statement is that there should never be discord and divergence among the Bahá'ís but that they should always be unified and agreed. In His prayers Bahá'u'lláh also said, "O God! Whosoever violates My Covenant, O God, humiliate him. Verily, whosoever violates My Covenant, O God, erase and efface him." In all His Tablets, among which is the Tablet of the Branch, He has mentioned and explained the attributes and qualities of the Personage to Whom He referred in the Book of His Covenant. He has fully expounded the function and potency of that Personage, so that no one shall say, "I understand this from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh," for He has appointed the Center, or Expounder, of the Book. He said, "Verily, He is the appointed one; other than He, there is none," intending that no sects or prejudices should be formed, and preventing every man here and there with a new thought from creating dissension and variance. It is as though a king should appoint a governor-general. Whosoever obeys him, obeys the king. Whosoever violates and disobeys him, violates the king. Therefore, whosoever obeys the Center of the Covenant appointed by Bahá'u'lláh has obeyed Bahá'u'lláh, and whosoever disobeys Him has disobeyed Bahá'u'lláh. It has nothing to do with Him ('Abdu'l-Bahá) at all--precisely as the governor-general appointed by the king--whosoever obeys the governor-general obeys the king; whosoever disobeys the governor-general disobeys the king.

Therefore, you must read the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh. You must read the Tablet of the Branch and regard that which He has so clearly stated. Beware! Beware! lest anyone should speak from the authority of his own thoughts or create a new thing out of himself. Beware! Beware! According to the explicit Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh you should care nothing at all for

such a person. Bahá'u'lláh shuns such souls. I have expounded these things for you, for the conservation and protection of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, in order that you may be informed, lest any souls shall deceive you and lest any souls shall cause suspicion among you. You must love all people, and yet if any souls put you in doubt, you must know that Bahá'u'lláh is severed from them. Whosoever works for unity and fellowship is a servant of Bahá'u'lláh, and Bahá'u'lláh is his assistant and helper. I ask God that He may cause you to be the very means of agreement and unity, that He may make you radiant, merciful, heavenly children of the divine Kingdom; that you may advance day by day; that you may become as bright as these lamps, bestowing light upon all humanity. Salutations and farewell!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 322-324

99. The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be nonexistent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught...

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 87

Diversity of Thought Should Be The Cause Of Unity, Not Disunity

100. Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellow-men, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred and strife in your hearts.

Rather, search diligently for the truth and make all men your friends.

Every edifice is made of many different stones, yet each depends on the other to such an extent that if one were displaced the whole building would suffer; if one is faulty the structure is imperfect.

Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity, He has made a design for the uniting of all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of universal unity. This is the work of the Divine Bounty, and we must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us. Leave all thought of self, and strive only to be obedient and submissive to the Will of God. In this way only shall we become citizens of the Kingdom of God, and attain unto life everlasting.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 54

101. In like manner, the Holy Manifestations of God are the centers of the light of reality, of the source of mysteries, and of the bounties of love. They are resplendent in the world of hearts and thoughts, and shower eternal graces upon the world of spirits; They give spiritual life and are shining with the light of realities and meanings. The enlightenment of the world of thought comes from these centers of light and sources of mysteries. Without the bounty of the splendor and the instructions of these Holy Beings the world of souls and thoughts would be opaque darkness. Without the irrefutable teachings of those sources of mysteries the human world would become the pasture of animal appetites and qualities, the existence of everything would be unreal, and there would be no true life. That is why it is said in the Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word,” meaning that it became the cause of all life.¹⁵

¹⁵ John 1:1.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 162-163

102. Consider the flowers of a garden. Though differing in kind, color, form, and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 103

103. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and colour! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men. Verily, it is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and the binder and regulator in the world of humanity.

Praise be to God, today the splendour of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations, and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony. Oh! What a great number of meetings are held adorned with souls from various races and diverse sects! Anyone attending these will be struck with amazement, and might suppose that these souls are all of one land, one nationality, one community, one thought, one belief and one opinion; whereas, in fact, one is an American, the other an African, one cometh from Asia and another from Europe, one is a native of India, another is from Turkestan, one is an Arab, another a Tajik, another a Persian and yet another a Greek. Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity, love and freedom; they have one voice, one thought and one purpose. Verily, this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God! If all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement as to unite the members of different races and to raise up from the heart of the world a voice that shall dispel war and strife, uproot dissension and disputation, usher in the era of universal peace and establish unity and concord amongst men.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 291-292

104. And now as I look into the future, I hope to see the friends at all times, in every land, and of every shade of thought and character, voluntarily and joyously rallying round their local and in particular their national centers of activity, upholding and promoting their interests with complete unanimity and contentment, with perfect understanding, genuine enthusiasm, and sustained vigor. This indeed is the one joy and yearning of my life, for it is the fountainhead

from which all future blessings will flow, the broad foundation upon which the security of the Divine Edifice must ultimately rest. May we not hope that now at last the dawn of a brighter day is breaking upon our beloved Cause?

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 67

Have No Thought Of Sedition

105. Afterwards they summoned this Servant to Constantinople. We reached that city along with a number of poor unfortunates, and after Our arrival did not hold intercourse with a single soul, for We had naught to say [unto them], and there was no wish save that it should be clearly demonstrated by proof to all that this Servant had no thought of sedition and had never associated with the seditious. And, by Him in praise of Whose spirit the tongues of all things speak, to turn in any direction was difficult in consideration of certain circumstances; but these things were done for the protection of lives. Verily My Lord knoweth what is in My soul, and verily He is witness unto what I say. The just king is the shadow of God in the earth; all should take refuge under the shadow of his justice and rest in the shade of his favor. This is not the place for personalities, or censures [directed] specially against some apart from others; for the shadow tells of him who casteth the shadow. God (glorious is His mention) hath called Himself the Lord of the worlds for that He hath nurtured and doth nurture all; exalted is His favor which hath preceded contingent beings and His mercy which hath preceded the worlds.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *A Traveler's Narrative*, p. 65

Thought Is Disrupted In The Valley Of Love

106. Now is the traveler unaware of himself, and of aught besides himself. He seeth neither ignorance nor knowledge, neither doubt nor certitude; he knoweth not the morn of guidance from the night of error. He fleeth both from unbelief and faith, and deadly poison is a balm to him. Wherefore Attar¹⁶ saith:

For the infidel, error--for the faithful, faith;

For Attar's heart, an atom of Thy pain. The steed of this Valley is pain; and if there be no pain this journey will never end. In this station the lover hath no thought save the Beloved, and seeketh no refuge save the Friend.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*, p. 8

Give Praise For Responsive Thought

107. Although, materially speaking, thou art destitute of physical sight, yet, praise be to God, spiritual insight is thy possession. Thy heart seeth and thy spirit heareth. Bodily sight is subject to a thousand maladies and ultimately and assuredly will be obscured. Thus no importance may be attached to it. But the sight of the heart is illumined, it discerns and discovers the Divine Kingdom and is everlasting and eternal. Praise be to God, therefore, that the sight of thy heart is illumined, and the hearing of thy thought responsive.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 31

¹⁶ Faridu'd-Din Attar (ca. 1150-1230 A.D.), the great Persian Sufi poet.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Is Warmed Thinking Of Believers

108. O thou enraptured handmaid of the Lord! When the believers, men and women, pass in thought before my eyes, I feel myself warmed at the fire of God’s love, and I pray that the Almighty will succour those holy souls with His invisible hosts. Praised be the Lord that the prophecies of all His Manifestations have now been clearly fulfilled, in this greatest of all days, this holy and blessed age.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections ... ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 182

God Makes Possible What Cannot Be Thought

109. What a privilege it is for us to meet here in freedom. How happy for us that God has so decided that we may work together for the coming of the Kingdom!

Are you pleased to receive such a guest, freed from his prison to bring the glorious Message to you? He who never could have thought such a meeting possible! Now by the Grace of God, by His wonderful Power, I, who was condemned to perpetual imprisonment in a far off town of the East, am here in Paris talking with you!

Henceforward we shall always be together, heart and soul and spirit, pressing forward in the work till all men are gathered together under the tent of the Kingdom, singing the songs of peace.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 40-41

Prejudices Of Religion, Race or Nation Are Necessary Only In Man's Thought

110. The fifth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

Prejudices of Religion, Race or Sect destroy the foundation of Humanity.

All the divisions in the world, hatred, war and bloodshed, are caused by one or other of these prejudices.

The whole world must be looked upon as one single country, all the nations as one nation, all men as belonging to one race. Religions, races, and nations are all divisions of man's making only, and are necessary only in his thought; before God there are neither Persians, Arabs, French nor English; God is God for all, and to Him all creation is one. We must obey God, and strive to follow Him by leaving all our prejudices and bringing about peace on earth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 131

Religion Is To Work With The World Of Thought

111. The ninth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

That Religion should not concern itself with Political Questions.

Religion is concerned with things of the spirit, politics with things of the world. Religion has to work with the world of thought, whilst the field of politics lies with the world of external conditions.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 132-133

The Rich Must Take Thought For Those Suffering From Lack Of Life's Necessities

112. A financier with colossal wealth should not exist whilst near him is a poor man in dire necessity. When we see poverty allowed to reach a condition of starvation it is a sure sign that somewhere we shall find tyranny. Men must bestir themselves in this matter, and no longer delay in altering conditions which bring the misery of grinding poverty to a very large number of the people. The rich must give of their abundance, they must soften their hearts and cultivate a compassionate intelligence, taking thought for those sad ones who are suffering from lack of the very necessities of life.

There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 153-154

Suppress Every Critical Thought And Harsh Word

113. When we see the condition the world is in today, we must surely forget these utterly insignificant internal disturbances, and rush, unitedly, to the rescue of humanity. You should urge your fellow-Bahá'ís to take this point of view, and to support you in a strong effort to suppress every critical thought and every harsh word, in order to let the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh flow into the entire community, and unite it in His love and in His service.

Shoghi Effendi: *Living the Life*, p. 23; *Lights of Guidance*, p. 92

Bahá'u'lláh's Purpose Is Not To Suppress Diversity Of Thought

114. Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity such as 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has explained:

“Consider the flowers of a garden. Though differing in kind, color, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruit, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas and convictions of the children of men.”

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 41-42

Words Concerning Unity And Harmonious Co-operation Should Be Carefully And Thoughtfully Remembered

115. I need not tell you how grievously he deplores the fact that there are so many negative forces prevailing in Bahá'í gatherings and particularly in such an important meeting as the Convention. The oft-repeated words of the Master concerning unity and harmonious co-operation among the friends should be carefully and thoughtfully remembered now more than ever. Nothing is more contrary to the spirit of the Cause than discord and strife, which are the inevitable outcome of selfishness and greed. Pure detachment and selfless service, these should be the sole motives of every true believer. And unless each and every one of the friends succeeds in translating such qualities into living action, no hope of further progress can be entertained. It is now that unity of thought and action is most needed. It is now, when the Cause is entering a new phase of development, when its Administration is being gradually consolidated amid the welter and chaos of a tottering civilization, that the friends should present a united front to those forces of internal dissension, which, if not completely wiped out, will bring our work to inevitable destruction.

Shoghi Effendi: *Living the Life*, p. 6

Concentrate Thought On The Future

116. When I arrived in Paris some time ago for the first time, I looked around me with much interest, and in my mind I likened this beautiful city to a large garden.

With loving care and much thought I examined the soil, and found it to be very good and full of possibility for steadfast faith and firm belief, for a seed of God's love has been cast into the ground.

Clouds of Heavenly Mercy showered their rain upon it, and the Sun of Truth fell warmly upon the young seeds, and today one can see in your midst the birth of belief. The seed cast into the ground has begun to spring up, and day by day you will see it grow. The bounties of the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh shall indeed bring forth a wondrous harvest!

Behold! I bring you glad and joyful tidings! Paris will become a garden of roses! All kinds of beautiful flowers will spring up and flourish in this garden, and the fame of their fragrance and beauty will be spread in all lands. When I think of Paris in the future, I seem to see her bathed in the light of the Holy Spirit! Verily, the day is dawning when Paris will receive her illumination, and the Goodness and Mercy of God will be visible to every living creature.

Do not allow your minds to dwell on the present, but with eyes of faith look into the future, for in truth the Spirit of God is working in your midst.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 168-169

Americans Enjoy Liberty Of Thought

117. Praise be to God! The standard of liberty is held aloft in this land. You enjoy political liberty; you enjoy liberty of thought and speech, religious liberty, racial and personal liberty. Surely this is worthy of appreciation and thanksgiving. In this connection let me mention the freedom, hospitality and universal welcome extended to me during my recent travels throughout America. I wish also to reciprocate fully and completely the warm greeting and friendly attitude of the reverend doctor, pastor of this church, whose loving and quickened susceptibilities especially command acknowledgment. Surely men who are leaders of thought must conform to the example of his kindness and goodwill. Liberalism is essential in this day--justness and equity toward all nations and people. Human attitudes must not be limited; for God is unlimited, and whosoever is the servant of the threshold of God must, likewise, be free from limitations. The world of existence is an emanation of the merciful attribute of God. God has shone forth upon the phenomena of being through His effulgence of mercy, and He is clement and kind to all His creation. Therefore, the world of humanity must ever be the recipient of bounties from His majesty, the eternal Lord, even as Christ has declared, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." For His bounties, like the light and heat of the sun in the material heavens, descend alike upon all mankind. Consequently, man must learn the lesson of kindness and beneficence from God Himself. Just as God is kind to all humanity, man also must be kind to his fellow creatures. If his attitude is just and loving toward his fellowmen, toward all creation, then indeed is he worthy of being pronounced the image and likeness of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 390

America In Thoughts Of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

118. I have been in America nine months and have traveled to all the large cities, speaking before various assemblages, proclaiming to them the oneness of the world of humanity, summoning all to union, harmony and oneness. I have indeed received the greatest kindness from the American people. I look upon them as a noble nation, capable of every perfection. Tomorrow I am going away to Europe, and now I bid farewell to you all, seeking for you the divine mercy, the eternal glory and everlasting life; and I pray that you may attain the highest station of humanity. I am greatly pleased with this meeting. My happiness is great. I shall never forget you. You shall always live in my thought. I shall always pray and supplicate before the Kingdom of God and seek heavenly blessings for you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 468

People of Thought and Experience May Be Prejudiced

119. “It is indeed strange that the cultured class, the people of thought and experience, are often more filled with prejudice than just plain ordinary souls who have not enjoyed such advantages. They are so afraid of seeming in any way ‘different’ from their fellows, and of course to be a Bahá’í is to be different!”

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 530

Consider Thoughts of Institutions and Believers When Planning Activities

120. “We call now upon National Spiritual Assemblies to consider the implications of this emerging trend for their respective communities, and to take well-conceived measures to involve the thought and actions of Local Spiritual Assemblies and individuals in the devising and implementing of plans, within the constraints of existing circumstances and available resources. Progress in the development field will largely depend on natural stirrings at the grassroots, and it should receive its driving force from those sources rather than from an imposition of plans and programs from the top.”

Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, pp. 546-547

Atmosphere of Schools

121. The Bahá’ís must realize that they belong to a world-wide Order, and not an American civilization. They must try and introduce the Bahá’í atmosphere of life and thought into their Summer Schools, rather than making the Summer School an episode and a pleasant vacation period, during which they learn a little more about the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi: *Centres of Bahá’í Learning*, p. 36; *Lights of Guidance*, p. 561

Have No Thought of Yourselves

122. Be ye valiant and fearless! Day by day add to your spiritual victories. Be ye not disturbed by the constant assaults of the enemies. Attack ye like unto the roaring lions. Have no thought of yourselves, for the invisible armies of the Kingdom are fighting on your side. Enter ye the battlefield with the Confirmations of the Holy Spirit. Know ye of a certainty that the powers

of the Kingdom of Abhá are with you. The hosts of the heaven of Truth are with you. The cool breezes of the Paradise of Abhá are wafting over your heated brows. Not for a moment are ye alone. Not for a second are ye left to yourselves. The Beauty of Abhá is with you. The Glorious God is with you. The King of Kings is with you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Power of Divine Assistance*, pp. 213-214

123. “O ye My soldiers of the Kingdom! Be ye valiant and fearless! Day by day add to your spiritual victories. Be ye not disturbed by the constant assaults of the enemies. Attack ye like unto the roaring lions. Have no thought of yourselves, for the invisible armies of the Kingdom are fighting on your side. Enter ye the battlefield with the confirmations of the Holy Spirit. Know ye of a certainty that the powers of the Kingdom of Abhá are with you. The hosts of the heaven of Truth are with you. The cool breezes of the Paradise of Abhá are wafting over your heated brows. Not for a moment are ye alone. Not for a second are ye left to yourselves. The beauty of Abhá is with you. The Glorious God is with you. The King of Kings is with you.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 571

The Thought Of The Teacher Should Be At Peace

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

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 54

Purify and Sanctify The Heart From Every Thought

125. Now praise be to God that Chicago and its environs from the beginning of the diffusion of the fragrances of God have been a strong heart. Therefore, through divine bounty and providence it has become confirmed in certain great matters.

First: The call of the Kingdom was in the very beginning raised from Chicago. This is indeed a great privilege, for in future centuries and cycles, it will be as an axis around which the honor of Chicago will revolve.

Second: A number of souls with the utmost firmness and steadfastness arose in that blessed spot in the promotion of the Word of God and even to the present moment, having purified and sanctified the heart from every thought, they are occupied with the promulgation of the teachings of God. Hence the call of praise is raised uninterruptedly from the Supreme Concourse.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 77-78

Be On Guard Against Others Thoughts

126. O ye beloved ones, guard the Cause of God! Let no sweetness of tongue beguile you--nay, rather consider the motive of every soul, and ponder the thought he cherisheth. Be ye straightway mindful and on your guard. Avoid him, yet be not aggressive! Refrain from censure and from slander, and leave him in the Hand of God. Upon you rest the Glory of Glories.

Equality of Women and Men

127. The status of woman in former times was exceedingly deplorable, for it was the belief of the Orient that it was best for woman to be ignorant. It was considered preferable that she should not know reading or writing in order that she might not be informed of the events in the world. Woman was considered to be created for rearing children and attending to the duties of the household. If she pursued educational courses, it was deemed contrary to chastity; hence women were made prisoners of the household. The houses did not even have windows opening upon the outside world. Bahá’u’lláh destroyed these ideas and proclaimed the equality of man and woman. He made woman respected by commanding that all women be educated, that there be no difference in the education of the two sexes and that man and woman share the same rights. In the estimation of God there is no distinction of sex. One whose thought is pure, whose education is superior, whose scientific attainments are greater, whose deeds of philanthropy excel, be that one man or woman, white or coloured, is entitled to full rights and recognition; there is no differentiation whatsoever.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Lights of Guidance*, pp. 615-616

Thoughts While Pioneering

128....The principle is that pioneers entering the pioneer field should realize that they are going there to represent the Cause, in fact, to be the Cause. Their minds and their hearts should be centered in their new tasks and in their new environment. They should not be thinking of when they can return home, or when they can go somewhere else. Only when the Faith is firmly established should they give any thought to moving, and then, only in consultation with the National Assembly.

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 579

Physical Ailment Can Impact Thought

129. Notwithstanding this, between eminent doctors and illustrious scholars and those learned persons who were followers of the Báb opposition, discussion, and strife did so increase that in some provinces they desired [to resort to] mutual imprecation; and for the governors of the provinces, too, a means of acquiring gain was produced, so that great tumult and disturbance arose. And since the malady of the gout had violently attacked the king’s foot and occupied his world-ordering thought, the good judgment of the Chief Minister, the famous Haji Mirza Aqasi, became the pivot of the conduct of affairs, and his incapacity and lack of resource became apparent as the sun. For every hour he formed a new opinion and gave a new order: at one moment he would seek to support the decision of the doctors, accounting the eradication and suppression of the Bábis as necessary: at another time he would charge the doctors with aggressiveness, regarding undue interference as contrary to justice: at another time he would become a mystic and say, “All these voices are from the King,”¹⁷ or repeat with his tongue,

¹⁷ The Mathnavi.

“Moses is at war with Moses,”¹⁸ or recite, “This is nought but Thy trial.”¹⁹ In short this changeable minister, by reason of his mismanagement of important matters and failure to control and order the affairs of the community, so acted that disturbance and clamor arose from all quarters and directions: the most notable and influential of the doctors ordered the common folk to molest the followers of the Báb, and a general onslaught took place....

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *A Traveler’s Narrative*, pp. 15-16

The Use of Alcohol and Drugs Causes the Disintegration of Thought

130. In yet another Tablet, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written:

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

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

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

Áqdás: *Notes*, p. 239; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Chaste and Holy Life*, p. 55

131. Intellect and the faculty of comprehension are God’s gifts whereby man is distinguished from other animals. Will a wise man want to lose this Light in the darkness of intoxication? No, by God! This will not satisfy him! He will, rather, do that which will develop his powers of intelligence and understanding, and not increase his negligence, heedlessness and decline. This is an explicit text in the perspicuous Book, wherein God hath set forth every goodly virtue, and exposed every reprehensible act.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Prohibition of Intoxication*, p. 247

Theosophical Society Composed of People of Intellect and Thought

132. Since my arrival in Paris, I have been told of the Theosophical Society, and I know that it is composed of honoured and respected men. You are men of intellect and thought, men with spiritual ideals, and it is a great pleasure for me to be among you.

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.

¹⁸ The Mathnavi.

¹⁹ Qur’án 7:154

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

Prevailing Thoughts Of People Can Be Obstacles To Growth Of Cause

133. I am deeply conscious of the manifold and unavoidable difficulties that confront you in your labors for the administration of the affairs of the Cause. Vast distances; personal professional preoccupations; insufficient number of capable and experienced teachers, unhampered by the necessity of earning their means of livelihood; the inadequacy of the means at your disposal, financial and otherwise; the prevailing tendencies in the general thought, sentiment, and manners of the people in whose midst you work--all these, though insuperable obstacles at present, will, if we stand steadfast and faithful, be one by one removed, and pave the way for the ultimate ascendancy of the Cause and the fruition and triumph of our labors.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 72

We Should Be Comforted By Thought That If We Arise To Play Our Part We Will Be Aided

134. It would be impossible at this stage to ignore the indispensability or to overestimate the unique significance of the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly--the pivot round which revolve the activities of the believers throughout the American continent. Supreme is their position, grave their responsibilities, manifold and arduous their duties. How great the privilege, how delicate the task of the assembled delegates whose function it is to elect such national representatives as would by their record of service ennoble and enrich the annals of the Cause! If we but turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Bahá’í Assemblies, as enumerated in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets, we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of His grace and power. Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience. May the incoming National Spiritual Assembly--the privileged and chosen servants of the Cause--immortalize their term of stewardship by deeds of loving service, deeds that will redound to the honor, the glory and the power of the Most Great Name.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 87-88

Administrative Machinery Should Serve As Medium For Exchange Of Thought

135. The administrative machinery of the Cause having now sufficiently evolved, its aim and object fairly well grasped and understood, and its method and working made more familiar to every believer, I feel the time is ripe when it should be fully and consciously utilized to further the purpose for which it has been created. It should, I strongly feel, be made to serve a twofold purpose. On one hand, it should aim at a steady and gradual expansion of the Movement along lines that are at once broad, sound and universal; and on the other it should insure the internal consolidation of the work already achieved. It should both provide the impulse whereby the dynamic forces latent in the Faith can unfold, crystallize, and shape the lives and conduct of

men, and serve as a medium for the interchange of thought and the coordination of activities among the divers elements that constitute the Bahá'í community.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 109

We Should Rejoice At The Thought Of Those Who Have Ascended

136. And now that she has gone for ever we should rejoice at the thought that she is still living in our hearts and is animating our soul with a devotion, a courage, and a hope of which we are in such a dire need in these days of sufferings and hardships.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahíyyih Khánum*, p. 71

137. And now that she has gone for ever and is in direct communion with God we should rejoice at the thought that from the Realm Above she is watching over us all and is sending us her blessings.

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahíyyih Khánum*, p. 72

Thinking Of The Martyrs Should Inspire Our Thought

138. Who knows but that triumphs, unsurpassed in splendour, are not in store for the mass of Bahá'u'lláh's toiling followers? Surely, we stand too near the colossal edifice His hand has reared to be able, at the present stage of the evolution of His Revelation, to claim to be able even to conceive the full measure of its promised glory. Its past history, stained by the blood of countless martyrs, may well inspire us with the thought that, whatever may yet befall this Cause, however formidable the forces that may still assail it, however numerous the reverses it will inevitably suffer, its onward march can never be stayed, and that it will continue to advance until the very last promise, enshrined within the words of Bahá'u'lláh, shall have been completely redeemed.

Shoghi Effendi: *Opposition*, p. 143

We Need Not Think Of Past Apprehensions

139. I have been acquainted by the perusal of your latest communications with the nature of the doubts that have been publicly expressed, by one who is wholly misinformed as to the true precepts of the Cause, regarding the validity of institutions that stand inextricably interwoven with the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Not that I for a moment view such faint misgivings in the light of an open challenge to the structure that embodies the Faith, nor is it because I question in the least the unyielding tenacity of the faith of the American believers, if I venture to dwell upon what seems to me appropriate observations at the present stage of the evolution of our beloved Cause. I am indeed inclined to welcome these expressed apprehensions inasmuch as they afford me an opportunity to familiarize the elected representatives of the believers with the origin and the character of the institutions which stand at the very basis of the World Order ushered in by Bahá'u'lláh. We should feel truly thankful for such futile attempts to undermine our beloved Faith--attempts that protrude their ugly face from time to time, seem for a while able to create a breach in the ranks of the faithful, recede finally into the obscurity of oblivion, and are thought of no more. Such incidents we should regard as the interpositions of Providence, designed to

fortify our faith, to clarify our vision, and to deepen our understanding of the essentials of His Divine Revelation.

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 3

Realization of Existence And Continuity Is Beneficial To Human Thought

140. The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, fear and abjection. It has been conducive to the dispersion and weakening of human thought whereas the realization of existence and continuity has upraised man to sublimity of ideals, established the foundations of human progress and stimulated the development of heavenly virtues; therefore it behoves man to abandon thoughts of non-existence and death, which are absolutely imaginary and see himself ever living, everlasting in the divine purpose of his creation. He must turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul, so that day by day and hour by hour he may advance upward and higher to spiritual perception of the continuity of the human reality. If he dwells on the thought of non-existence he will become utterly incompetent; with weakened will-power his ambition for progress will be lessened and the acquisition of human virtues will cease.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 237

Put Aside All Thought Of Suicide And Death

141. In reply to your letter of 1st May 1979, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to share with you the following excerpt from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary to a believer who asked about suicide.

“Suicide is forbidden in the Cause. God Who is the Author of all life can alone take it away, and dispose of it in the way He deems best. Whoever commits suicide endangers his soul, and will suffer spiritually as a result in the other Worlds Beyond.”

The House of Justice admonishes you to put all thought of suicide and death out of your mind and concentrate on prayer and effort to serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 204

Establish Relations With Those Whose Only Thought Is To Do Good

142. Ye should strive to widen the circle of those with whom ye enjoy friendly relations, and to establish the closest contact with those benevolent souls whose only thought is to do good, who are labouring in the cause of universal peace, and who cherish no desire but to witness the unification of the world of humanity. Ye should seek out the company of such people as these, that ye may imbue them with an awareness of the heavenly Kingdom, for albeit their motives are of the finest, yet they do not realize that all the powers of the earth are impotent either to establish universal peace or to promote the oneness of the human world. Nothing short of the power of the Word of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit can ever succeed.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Prominent People*, p. 265

Stay In Contact With Leaders Of Thought

143. He feels that the believers should make every effort, in the proper way and with discretion, to keep in contact with important people.... We should make every effort to ensure that leaders of thought in public life are not merely familiar with the name Bahá'í, but if possible stand in a cordial relationship to some members of our Community, if not to the body of the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi: *Prominent People*, p. 267

144. You mentioned in your letter your intention to make contact with the representatives of movements which are akin to the Cause in the principles they advocate. Shoghi Effendi trusts that in all such communications and activities you would maintain the prestige and superiority of the Cause. We should never compromise our principles for some temporary benefits we are apt to reap. It is very important to bring the Cause to the attention of such leaders of thought and for this purpose we have to get in touch with them, but our aim should be to draw them to the Cause rather than follow their footsteps.

Shoghi Effendi: *Prominent People*, p. 277

145. I entirely agree with you that non-interference in politics does not imply non-association on the part of the friends with the outside world. I hope you will impress the friends with the necessity of maintaining close, but not too intimate, relationships with the authorities, the foreign representatives, and the leaders of public thought in the capital. They should be on their guard, however, lest too close an association should lead, imperceptibly, to compromise on the principles which we cherish and uphold. They must mix with all classes of society without associating themselves with their policies and schemes.

Shoghi Effendi: *Prominent People*, pp. 277-278

146. Concerning the transition from the present system of national sovereignty to a system of the world government, the House of Justice fully agrees with your view that the Bahá'ís must now do all in their power to promote this transition. This requires several related activities, all of which are goals of the present Seven Year Plan. One is the establishment as rapidly as possible of firmly grounded efficiently functioning Local Spiritual Assemblies in every part of the world, so that seekers everywhere will have a point of reference to which they can turn for guidance and for the Teachings of the Faith. A second is the deepening of the believers, of all ages, in their understanding of and obedience to the Teachings. A third is the proclamation of the Faith to all strata of society, and in particular to those in authority and to leaders of thought so that those who hold the direction of peoples in their hands will learn accurately about the nature and tenets of the Faith and will grow to respect it and implement its principles. A fourth is the promotion of Bahá'í scholarship, so that an increasing number of believers will be able to analyse the problems of mankind in every field and to show how the Teachings solve them. A fifth is the development of relations between the Bahá'í International Community and the United Nations both directly with the highest U.N. institutions and at a grass-roots level in areas of rural development, education, etc.

Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, pp. 436-437

There Is A Steady Deterioration In Human Activity And Thought

147. Might not this process of steady deterioration which is insidiously invading so many departments of human activity and thought be regarded as a necessary accompaniment to the rise of this almighty Arm of Bahá'u'lláh? Might we not look upon the momentous happenings which, in the course of the past twenty years, have so deeply agitated every continent of the earth, as ominous signs simultaneously proclaiming the agonies of a disintegrating civilization and the birthpangs of that World Order--that Ark of human salvation--that must needs arise upon its ruins?

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 155

There Are Simultaneous Processes Of Disturbing Thought And Forces Of Harmony

148. And yet while the shadows are continually deepening, might we not claim that gleams of hope, flashing intermittently on the international horizon, appear at times to relieve the darkness that encircles humanity? Would it be untrue to maintain that in a world of unsettled faith and disturbed thought, a world of steadily mounting armaments, of unquenchable hatreds and rivalries, the progress, however fitful, of the forces working in harmony with the spirit of the age can already be discerned? Though the great outcry raised by post-war nationalism is growing louder and more insistent every day, the League of Nations is as yet in its embryonic state, and the storm clouds that are gathering may for a time totally eclipse its powers and obliterate its machinery, yet the direction in which the institution itself is operating is most significant. The voices that have been raised ever since its inception, the efforts that have been exerted, the work that has already been accomplished, foreshadow the triumphs which this presently constituted institution, or any other body that may supersede it, is destined to achieve.

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 191

The Forces Of A World Catastrophe Can Alone Precipitate A New Phase Of Human Thought

149. Great and far-reaching as have been those changes in the past, they cannot appear, when viewed in their proper perspective, except as subsidiary adjustments prelude that transformation of unparalleled majesty and scope which humanity is in this age bound to undergo. That the forces of a world catastrophe can alone precipitate such a new phase of human thought is, alas, becoming increasingly apparent. That nothing short of the fire of a severe ordeal, unparalleled in its intensity, can fuse and weld the discordant entities that constitute the elements of present-day civilization, into the integral components of the world commonwealth of the future, is a truth which future events will increasingly demonstrate.

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 46; *Lights of Guidance*, p. 133

150. The inexorable march of recent events has carried humanity so near to the goal foreshadowed by Bahá'u'lláh that no responsible follower of His Faith, viewing on all sides the distressing evidences of the world's travail, can remain unmoved at the thought of its approaching deliverance.

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 29

We May Turn In Thought To The Manifestation, The Master, Or The Guardian When Praying

151. We cannot know God directly, but only through His Prophets. We can pray to Him, realizing that through His Prophets we know Him, or we can address our prayer in thought to Bahá'u'lláh, not as God, but as the Door to our knowing God.

We find God only through the Intermediary of His Prophet. We see the Perfection of God in His Prophets. Time and space are physical things; God the Creator is not in a 'place' as we conceive of place in physical terms. God is the Infinite Essence, the Creator. We cannot picture Him or His state; if we did, we would be His equals, not His Creatures. God is never flesh, but mirrored in the attributes of His Prophets, we see His Divine characteristics and perfections.

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 458, 506

152. In regard to your question: we must not be rigid about praying; there is not a set of rules governing it; the main thing is we must start out with the right concept of God, the Manifestation, the Master, the Guardian--we can turn, in thought, to any one of them when we pray. For instance you can ask Bahá'u'lláh for something, or, thinking of Him, ask God for it. The same is true of the Master or the Guardian. You can turn in thought to either of them and then ask their intercession, or pray direct to God. As long as you don't confuse their stations, and make them all equal, it does not matter much how you orient your thoughts.

Shoghi Effendi: *Prayer, Meditation, ...*, p. 242; *Lights of Guidance*, p. 457

153. As regards your question: Bahá'u'lláh is, of course, not God and not the Creator; but through Him we can know God, and because of this position of Divine Intermediary, in a sense, He (or the other Prophets) is all we can ever know of that Infinite Essence which is God. Therefore, we address ourselves in prayer and thought to Him, or through Him to that Infinite Essence behind and beyond Him.

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 472

Prayer May Be In The Form of Thought And Attitude

154. If one friend feels love for another, he will wish to say so. Though he knows that the friend is aware that he loves him, he will still wish to say so.... God knows the wishes of all hearts. But the impulse to prayer is a natural one, springing from man's love to God.

Prayer need not be in words, but rather in thought and attitude. But if this love and this desire are lacking, it is useless to try to force them. Words without love mean nothing. If a person talks to you as an unpleasant duty, with no love or pleasure in his meeting with you, do you wish to converse with him?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Prayer, Meditation, ...*, p. 236

Government Should Not Interfere With Thought And Conscience

155. For the divine shadow is the refuge of all the dwellers upon earth and the asylum of all mankind; it is not limited to one party. In particular, the true nature and real doctrine of this sect have [now] become evident and well known: all their writings and tracts have repeatedly and frequently fallen into [our] hands, and are to be found preserved in the possession of the government. If they be perused, the actual truth and inward verity will become clear and apparent. These pages are entirely taken up with prohibitions of sedition, [recommendations of] upright conduct amongst mankind, obedience, submission, loyalty, conformity, and acquisition of laudable qualities, and encouragements to become endowed with praiseworthy accomplishments and characteristics. They have absolutely no reference to political questions, nor do they treat of that which could cause disturbance or sedition. Under these circumstances a just government can [find] no excuse, and possesses no pretext [for further persecuting this sect] except [a claim to the right of] interference in thought and conscience, which are the private possessions of the heart and soul.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *A Traveler’s Narrative*, pp. 86-87

156. In the middle ages, whereof the beginning was the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, and the end the capture of Constantinople at the hands of [the followers of] Islam, fierce intolerance and molestation of far and near arose in [all] the countries of Europe by reason of the paramount influence of religious leaders. The matter came to such a pass that the edifice of humanity seemed tottering to its fall, and the peace and comfort of chief and vassal, king and subject, became hidden behind the veil of annihilation. Night and day all parties were slaves to apprehension and disquietude: civilization was utterly destroyed: the control and order of countries was neglected: the principles and essentials of the happiness of the human race were in abeyance: the supports of kingly authority were shaken: but the influence and power of the heads of religion and of the monks were in all parts complete. But when they removed these differences, persecution, and bigotries out of their midst, and proclaimed the equal rights of all subjects and the liberty of men’s consciences, the lights of glory and power arose and shone from the horizons of that kingdom in such wise that those countries made progress in every direction; and whereas the mightiest monarchy of Europe had been servile to and abased before the smallest government of Asia, now the great states of Asia are unable to oppose the small states of Europe. These are effectual and sufficient proofs that the conscience of man is sacred and to be respected; and that liberty thereof produces widening of ideas, amendment of morals, improvement of conduct, disclosure of the secrets of creation, and manifestation of the hidden verities of the contingent world. Moreover, if interrogation of conscience, which is one of the private possessions of the heart and the soul, take place in this world, what further recompense remains for man in the court of divine justice at the day of general resurrection? Convictions and ideas are within the scope of the comprehension of the King of kings, not of kings; and soul and conscience are between the fingers of control of the Lord of hearts, not of [His] servants. So in the world of existence two persons unanimous in all grades [of thought] and all beliefs cannot be found. ‘The ways unto God are as the number of the breaths of [His] creatures’ is a mysterious truth, and ‘To every [people] We have appointed a [separate] rite’²⁰ is one of the subtleties of the Qur’án. If this vast energy and precious time which have been expended in persecuting other

²⁰ Qur’án 22:35.

religions, and whereby no sort of result or effect has been obtained, had been spent in strengthening the basis of the monarchy, fortifying the imperial throne, making prosperous the realms of the sovereign, and quickening the subjects of the king, ere now the royal dominions would have become prosperous, the seed-plot of the people would have been watered by the bounty of princely justice, and the splendor of the kingdom of Persia would be evident and apparent as the true dawn throughout the horizons of the world.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *A Traveler’s Narrative*, pp. 90-91

Be Sincerely Obedient, In Both Thought And Word, To The Laws Duly Enacted By The Government

157. They finally exhort them to be sincerely obedient, in both thought and word, to the laws duly enacted by the government of the realm, and to distance themselves from the methods, concepts and ill-grounded arguments of extreme traditionalists and modernists alike; to accord honour, veneration and respect to--and endorse the efforts of--exponents of the arts and sciences, and to esteem and revere those who are possessed of extensive knowledge and scholarly erudition; to uphold the right of freedom of conscience; and to abstain from criticizing and disparaging the manners, customs and beliefs of other individuals, peoples and nations.

Shoghi Effendi: *Trustworthiness*, p. 348

Well Thought Out Plans Need Support Of Believers

158. Above all, the duty of deepening the spiritual life of your newly-enrolled co-workers is paramount, for the fate of the entire community depends upon the individual believers. Without the whole-hearted support of each and every one of the friends, every measure adopted, no matter how well thought out, is fore-doomed to failure. It is the individual believers who must maintain the Local Assemblies, and the centres already won at the cost of such great sacrifice. It is they who must, afire with the love of Bahá’u’lláh, go forth to further broaden the base of administrative activity by forming new Assemblies and implanting the standard of Bahá’u’lláh in new localities; who must arise in response to the call to travel to the remote outposts of the Faith and push back the frontiers; and who must, through your wise and loving guidance, become your collaborators in carrying out your God-given mission.

Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 71

Have A Thought Of Love And Affection When You Visit The Ailing And Afflicted

159. We should all visit the sick. When they are in sorrow and suffering, it is a real help and benefit to have a friend come. Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill. In the East it is the custom to call upon the patient often and meet him individually. The people in the East show the utmost kindness and compassion to the sick and suffering. This has greater effect than the remedy itself. You must always have this thought of love and affection when you visit the ailing and afflicted.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 279

Young People Should Be So Deepened Regarding Marriage That The Very Thought Of Divorce Will Be Abhorrent To Them

160. From the point of view of the Spiritual Assembly, however, the matter is somewhat different. The Spiritual Assembly should always be concerned that the believers in its community are being deepened in their understanding of the Bahá'í concept of marriage, especially the young people, so that the very thought of divorce will be abhorrent to them. When an application for divorce is made to a Spiritual Assembly, its first thought and action should be to reconcile the couple and to ensure that they know the Bahá'í teachings on the matter. God willing, the Assembly will be successful and no year of waiting need be started. However, if the Assembly finds that it is unable to persuade the party concerned to withdraw the application for divorce, it must conclude that, from its point of view, there appears to be an irreconcilable antipathy, and it has no alternative to setting the date for the beginning of the year of waiting. During the year the couple have the responsibility of attempting to reconcile their difference, and the Assembly has the duty to help them and encourage them. But if the year of waiting comes to an end without reconciliation the Bahá'í divorce must be granted as at the date of the granting of the civil divorce if this has not already taken place.

Universal House of Justice: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 392

Examples of Sound Thought and Good Thinking

161. Saints are men who have freed themselves from the world of matter and who have overcome sin. They live in the world but are not of it, their thoughts being continually in the world of the spirit. Their lives are spent in holiness, and their deeds show forth love, justice and godliness. They are illumined from on high; they are as bright and shining lamps in the dark places of the earth. These are the saints of God. The apostles, who were the disciples of Jesus Christ, were just as other men are; they, like their fellows, were attracted by the things of the world, and each thought only of his own advantage. They knew little of justice, nor were the Divine perfections found in their midst. But when they followed Christ and believed in Him, their ignorance gave place to understanding, cruelty was changed to justice, falsehood to truth, darkness into light. They had been worldly, they became spiritual and divine. They had been children of darkness, they became sons of God, they became saints! Strive therefore to follow in their steps, leaving all worldly things behind, and striving to attain to the Spiritual Kingdom.

Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world, and beacons of light to disclose the mysteries of the Kingdom to those with understanding hearts.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 60-61

162. Haji Mírzá Hasan, the Afnán

Among the most eminent of those who left their homeland to join Bahá'u'lláh was Mírzá Hasan, the great Afnán, who during the latter days won the honor of emigrating and of receiving the favor and companionship of his Lord. The Afnán, related to the Báb, was specifically named by the Supreme Pen as an offshoot of the Holy Tree. When still a small child, he received his portion of bounty from the Báb, and showed forth an extraordinary attachment to that dazzling Beauty. Not yet adolescent, he frequented the society of the learned, and began to study sciences and arts. He reflected day and night on the most abstruse of spiritual questions, and gazed in wonderment at the mighty signs of God as written in the Book of Life. He became thoroughly versed even in such material sciences as mathematics, geometry, and geography; in brief, he was

well grounded in many fields, thoroughly conversant with the thought of ancient and modern times....

Although he first became a believer in the days of the Báb, it was during the days of Bahá'u'lláh that he caught fire. Then his love of God burned away every obstructing veil and idle thought. He did all he could to spread the Faith of God, becoming known far and wide for his ardent love of Bahá'u'lláh.

I am lost, O Love, possessed and dazed,
Love's fool am I, in all the earth.
They call me first among the crazed,
Though I once came first for wit and worth...
'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 21, 22

163. Nabil-i-Akbar

A sign of guidance, he was, an emblem of the fear of God. For this Faith, he laid down his life, and in dying, triumphed. He passed by the world and its rewards; he closed his eyes to rank and wealth; he loosed himself from all such chains and fetters, and put every worldly thought aside. Of wide learning, at once a mujtahid, a philosopher, a mystic, and gifted with intuitive sight, he was also an accomplished man of letters and an orator without a peer. He had a great and universal mind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Memorials of the Faithful*, pp. 4-5

164. Mirza Mahmud was a youth when he arrived in Baghdád from Kashan. Aqa Rida became a believer in Baghdad. The spiritual condition of the two was indescribable. There was in Baghdád a company of seven leading believers who lived in a single, small room, because they were destitute. They could hardly keep body and soul together, but they were so spiritual, so blissful, that they thought themselves in Heaven. Sometimes they would chant prayers all night long, until the day broke. Days, they would go out to work, and by nightfall one would have earned ten paras, another perhaps twenty paras, others forty or fifty. These sums would be spent for the evening meal. On a certain day one of them made twenty paras, while the rest had nothing at all. The one with the money bought some dates, and shared them with the others; that was dinner, for seven people. They were perfectly content with their frugal life, supremely happy.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 40

165. Shah-Muhammad-Amin

Once he made his way into the home of the Darling of mankind, he was emptied of every thought, released from every concern, and became the recipient of boundless favor and grace. He passed some days in Iraq and was directed to return to Persia. There he remained for a time, frequenting the believers; and his pure breathings stirred each one of them anew, so that each one yearned over the Faith, and became more restless, more impatient than before.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 46

166. After the Daystar of the Supreme Concourse had set, Siyyid Manshadi remained loyal to the Covenant, a sharp sword confronting the violators. They tried every ruse, every deceit, all their subtlest expedients; it is beyond imagining how they showered favors on him and what honors they paid him, what feasts they prepared, what pleasures they offered, all this to make a

breach in his faith. Yet every day he grew stronger than before, continued to be staunch and true, kept free from every unseemly thought, and shunned whatever went contrary to the Covenant of God. When they finally despaired of shaking his resolve, they harassed him in every possible way, and plotted his financial ruin. He remained, however, the quintessence of constancy and trust....

Siyyid Manshadi was the essence of virtue and intellect. His qualities and attainments were such as to amaze the most accomplished minds. He had no thought except of God, no hope but to win the good pleasure of God. He was the embodiment of “Make all my song one single praise of Thee; forever keep me faithful in Thy service.”

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Memorials of the Faithful*, pp. 55-57

167. Mirza Muhammad-Quli

Jinab-i-Mirza Muhammad-Quli²¹ was a loyal brother of the Blessed Beauty. This great man was known even from his childhood for nobility of soul. He was newly born when his distinguished father passed away, and thus it came about that from the beginning to the end of his days, he spent his life in the sheltering arms of Bahá’u’lláh. He was detached from every selfish thought, averse to every mention except to whatever concerned the Holy Cause. He was reared in Persia under the care of Bahá’u’lláh, and in Iraq as well, especially favored by Him. In the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, it was he who would pass around the tea; and he waited upon his Brother at all times, by day and night. He was always silent. He always held fast to the Covenant of “Am I not your Lord?” He was encompassed by loving-kindness and bounty; day and night he had access to the presence of Bahá’u’lláh; he was invariably patient and forbearing, until in the end he reached the very heights of Divine favor and acceptance.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 70

168. Haji Mirza Muhammad-Taqi, the Afán

During his days in Yazd he was, outwardly, engaged in commercial pursuits, but actually teaching the Faith. His only aim was to exalt the Word of God, his only wish, to spread the Divine sweet savors, his only thought, to come nearer and ever nearer to the mansions of the Lord. There was no remembrance on his lips but the verses of God. He was an embodiment of the good pleasure of Bahá’u’lláh; a dawning-point of the grace of the Greatest Name. Many and many a time, Bahá’u’lláh expressed to those about Him, His extreme satisfaction with the Afan; and consequently, everyone was certain that he would in future initiate some highly important task.

‘**Abdu’l-Bahá**: *Memorials of the Faithful*, pp. 127-128

²¹ Cf. Qur’án 11:101; 11:100; 76:5; 76:22; 17:20.

Let Your Mind Rest In The Thought Of The Infinite Love, Mercy And Forgiveness Of Bahá'u'lláh

169. As regards your seeing a psychiatrist: There is no objection to your trying this form of treatment if your physician recommends it, and any intelligent doctor would never be prejudiced against the Faith through the difficulties incurred by a patient due to illness.

There is no object in over-taxing your will power and strength by forcing yourself to do things for the Cause. You should let your mind rest in the thought of the infinite love, mercy and forgiveness of Bahá'u'lláh, and cease to fret about whether you are or are not doing your share until you fully recover your health--and evidently you already are on the road to recovery!

Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 283

A Closing Thought

170. And in closing, dearly-beloved friends, what more appropriate thought with which to conclude my fervent plea than these pregnant words fallen from the lips of Bahá'u'lláh: "O My friends! I bear witness that the Divine Bounty has been vouchsafed unto you, His Argument has been made manifest, His Proof has been revealed, and His Guidance has shone forth upon you. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of renunciation can reveal."

Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 155-156

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