

SPONTANEOUS TALKS

by

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At his Sunday Morning Classes
Answering Some of his 95 Questions

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The Baha'i Concept of God

The Baha'i concept of God is that of a Supreme Being - of course, the language of man is inadequate to describe this great reality that we call God. All that we can speak concerning God is of the Manifestations of God's attributes; but as to the inner nature of God, Rumi, the mystic poet of Persia, 800 years ago, said: "How can you, O Philosopher, dare fathom this fathomless ocean? This is a Path that none could travel by meditation or contemplation. Man can no more fathom the essence of that divine Reality than a slip of straw could sink to the depths of the sea."

This shows the impossibility for the mind of man to comprehend the Invisible Essence, as for a wisp of straw to reach the bottom of the sea. Well, then, how are we to recognize and to know God?

The answer is that man can know God only through the Manifestations of His Names and Attributes in this visible world. For example you find the skies and the seas and of the earth, and the passing of the seasons, - phenomena manifesting forth life's various phases. Life finally ends in what seems to be a state of death; and then again, when the first season of the new year comes around, you see life anew emerging from what appeared to be extinction, manifesting itself anew as does nature pregnant with blossoms, beauty, and delicious fruits.

This enables man to realize there is a Supreme Power in nature of which we shall ever remain ignorant, but without which these manifestations, and these changes and chances, which are ever recurrent, would never reappear. This leads great artists, the greatest thinkers and philosophers, to berate a man of religion who, despite the panorama of wonders spread before the eyes of man, still believes that the greatest power of God, regardless of man's limitations, is only manifest in man. Thus, one believes that the greatest majesty and the fullness of God's glories, nay, all the attributes of power and might from the Invisible Essence is made manifest through man.

The poet says: It is enough to pass through the world of nature, and with every step discover phenomena vibrant with the spirit--with the presence of that Supreme Being. That is what the man of science, the student of nature would say--he who would call it great folly to dwell upon the teachings of a Faith which teaches that only through a particular individual called a Prophet, the greatness and the glory of God and the essential meaning of the Divinity--and its highest attributes--could be attained.

Now, let us see what Baha'u'llah teaches about this. Men of science, the poet or philosophers call the search for God in nature and in all the departments of the world of phenomena, in all its phases - its changes and transformations--the highest and the most rewarding enterprise.

In the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the fullest and deepest truth in search for God, which even convinces the doubting nature worshipper and skeptical philosopher is that what the people of religions call the historical God is the same as God in Nature. For the highest expression of Divine Attributes is found in man, the most perfect embodiment of Divine Attributes reflected in the World of Creation. We can, therefore, demonstrate that God in Nature is the same as God in History, but it is God in History Who has always trained men to establish

great civilizations and to perform great achievements. It is He who has founded the Seven Great Religions of the world which have blessed men with the most productive and fruitful knowledge of that Supreme Being whose worshippers recognize him as God in History.

To explain further, we should remember that from God in History, who inspired the founders of great civilizations and endowed men with great gifts, emanate the inspiration which caused men to produce great paintings and masterpieces of art and to achieve the discovery of the mysteries of the world of nature. In other words, it is proven by history that even the knowledge that the worshippers of God in nature - poets, scientists, philosophers -- attain, concerning God, was revealed through the Manifestations and the Prophets whom we look upon as the channels through which the highest wisdom and knowledge of God is made available to man; and that it is through them that a climate of peace and civilized life was furnished in which scientists, philosophers, and the poets - worshippers of God in Nature - could produce their work. God's prophets provided the leisure and the opportunity, under a state of law and of order, without which men could not have discovered the mysteries of nature and finally achieved the discovery of atomic power, a discovery which has revolutionized human life. Those Divine Teachers have enabled man to fly in the air, to communicate without wires; to navigate the bottom of the seas. They have today invented missiles which could hit a target, unattended by a human operator, 2000 miles away and perhaps more.

Despite all these, we say to the worshippers of God in nature, they could not have solved these mysteries had it not been for the atmosphere of civilized life created by the Prophets - the Manifestations of God in history - who have spoken to Man through these Seven Great Religions of the World, who foretold the Advent of Baha'u'llah.

With these proofs we convince every man of science that - unless he is too proud, he must believe such things could be made possible by a Man alone, either in the desert of Egypt or by another born in a manger, or still by an Arab who could not read or write - a camel-driver, ridiculed by his people as a crazy poet. It is very difficult for a man to experiment in the world of nature in search of her laws to credit such world dispensations to men of this type, but logic which traces silk to the cocoon, or the sweet honey to the bees, can in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah trace all great human achievements to the influence of Divine Religion.

For instance, in the world of nature all planes are not alike. There are lower ones, higher ones, and middle ones. But, taken by and large, the first is the mineral plane and then the vegetable, the animal, and the human plane. The highest expression of the Creative Energy in the mineral plane is the crystallization of the glass which causes this substance to reflect light and even generate fire when exposed to the rays of the sun. Our further search in the world of nature brings us to a higher one, the vegetable kingdom. In it the materiality of the mineral plane is found and in addition another phenomenon which philosophers call "virtue augmentative". This power of increase turns a handful of grain into a harvest. This is the highest expression of creative energy -- in that plane. Another is the animal plane, in which both the mineral and the vegetable properties are found, but an additional phenomenon in the animal plane is the power of instinct which was absent on the preceding planes.

It is instinct which sends the squirrel to search for nuts and for holes to store them in against the rigor of winter. And it is the same phenomenon that once the snow of winter covers the fields sends the squirrel to recover the nuts from their hiding place. The power of instinct differs from the power of reason, for although on its face it generates action which resembles the act of reason, it is in reality fortuitous and not due to conscious acts which lead from preliminaries to a conclusion.

But in the kingdom of man reason is king. It performs conscious acts. Man in his infancy and early childhood shares instinct with the animal, but in his progress towards maturity man knows what he is doing. For example, when he is laying a foundation he knows he is going to build a house, a house for which he also provides rocks, timbers and cement, and sees that the process of building leads to a conclusion. This, therefore, establishes the fact that man is the highest pinnacle in God's creation and his powers transcend all the wonders in the phenomenal world. In him all the preceding kingdoms are represented, but reason in him is a special aspect of his creation. There is, however, one difficulty, and that is that all men are not alike nor do all manifest the same powers. The seeker in the world of nature who finds God will therefore have to set out and renew his search in order to find the highest and most powerful Man.

Average men including empire builders, teachers, and discoverers are all found to be working with tools in order to produce result; and, even as history shows, the results are not beneficial or enduring. The world's conquerors left no results which after their own disappearance, did not succumb to the impact of time. As for men of knowledge, the knowledge they attained was through the medium of schools and teachers and the wealth they acquired was the result of forced charges imposed on unwilling taxpayers, but our seeker was fortunate to find a class of men shining as scintillating stars on the horizon of history. Men who manifested the deepest wisdom and knowledge without the aid of human teachers; who built divine edifices without earthly material; marked epochs in which humanity attained the highest bounty as a result of their beneficent deeds. They had no thought of themselves, but their aim was to clothe men in the raiment of God and cause them to manifest divine attributes in dealing with one another. Where did their power come from? All the material which they used in building up their world, all the wealth of wisdom which gives permanence to their edifices of human glory, came from God, the Creator of men, who chose them to be the bearers of His Message for the uplift of man and the harbingers of glad tidings to the afflicted humanity of their times. We, who believe in Baha'u'llah, consider each of them the divine leader in history, and their work endures for many a day. For, to a true seeker of God in nature, the most powerful manifestations of God in nature find their apotheosis in these prophetic Lords in fulfillment of those prophecies revealed in the Seven Great Religions of the World. God has today manifested Himself in the fullness of His transcendent glory - in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

How Can God be Known and Worshipped?

By Dr. Ali-Kuli Khan, 15 Apr 56

We believe that God could only be worshipped in the fullness of His Glory, and as man is the highest form of God's creation, through man God could more fully be known and worshipped than through any other created being. But man is a very general term. The true way of speaking of man is to speak of humanity. For, the individual man is always imperfect, but the collective man is potentially endowed with that perfection which God, Who created man in His own image, conferred upon collective man, i.e., humanity. How are we to find the collective man, knowing, as I said, the individual man is limited? Through him would we not achieve only a limited measure of the Divine Presence to worship? Then how are we going to find man, the unlimited - man who was created after the image and likeness of God? It would be a long, tedious, and aimless search for any one of us, even granted we were equipped with the wherewithal, to go anywhere and to meet man in every part of the world, and try to find the perfect God in him to worship. But, we have stated formerly that God never imposes on man a duty, an obligation, without giving him the power to fulfill that obligation.

Consequently, in this case, God has made it easy for man to find the collective, all-perfect man, and that collective and all-perfect man is no other than the man that God has chosen, down through the ages in every Prophetic Dispensation, to be His Messenger; to be His Prophet; to be endowed with the attributes of God's Power and Glory, and Beauty; as highly endowed as it is necessary to meet the expectations of those who come and seek guidance.

For example, in the Mosaic Dispensation, it was Moses to whom the people went for guidance, the gift of which God had bestowed upon Him. The perfection of God, as revealed in Moses, became manifest, in a degree commensurate with what was requisite for strengthening the people of Israel in the knowledge of God. Moses did not go beyond that.

Then there came Jesus, who revealed a higher measure of God's power, reflected in His attributes, as a gift from God and adequate to enlighten the Jews as well as the Gentiles.

Another Prophet, Buddha, arose among the people of India with a message from God. He was a man endowed with the divine light and attributes needed to attract the people of that country to His Message, and impose upon them the obligation to worship God. But Buddha's mission was concerned only with the people of that country and of East Asia.

Zoroaster, the Prophet of ancient Persia, came, I believe, 3,000 years ago. God had chosen and inspired Him with the gift of His Names and Attributes in order to enlighten, guide and prepare the people of that country and race - the Aryan Race - for the worship of God.

So, it is this process continued down through the ages. Each Prophet manifested the names and attributes and powers conferred on Him by God whereby He enlightened the people of His own age, and His own part of the world. But if we take up the case of every Prophet and His relationship to His people, and the measure of guidance revealed by Him which attracted the worship and submission of a particular people, there was only a section of the people of the world that achieved, or rather, found the right path to the worship of God, and therefore God was not worshipped by any of them in the perfection of His glory. It is due to this fact that every Prophet who appeared first prophesied concerning the coming of a Prophet who would follow Him, and then prophesied concerning the universal Manifestation who would appear at the time of the end of the cycles.

The object of all these Prophets was to implant into the minds and hearts of their people, the state of alertness and expectation for the Advent of the One promised who would establish the universal reign of God upon this earth. His mission would not be directed to enlighten one particular nation or race, but all the nations and all the races. Consequently, the highest measure of worship that men are capable of at present, expressive of their search for and devotion to the Almighty God, is made possible by that Universal Manifestation who was to come at the end of the cycles. In that day alone, God could be worshipped in the fullness of His Glory by men who would truly love their neighbors as themselves. Has this term "neighbor" assumed a boundless, nay, universal application in the days of any of the previous Manifestations? No. It has embraced only a certain class of people with whom the Prophet and His disciples came into contact. It has not brought universal humanity within the range of its application.

Moses strengthened the need for unity and for group inter-relationship among His followers. But Joshua, who led the hosts after Moses, commanded them to annihilate the Canaanites who were barring the way to the land of promise. Of course, many might say Moses' successor was ruthless for having given that order. But they don't realize that such an order was prompted by special reasons. The Faith was young, and the Israelites, released after 500 years of bondage, were in a very primitive state, and yet it was the plan of God to restore them to the land of promise so that the Tree of Spiritual Life symbolized by Jesus, would rise and flourish within the soil of that primitive people; and if that people were to perish, God's plan would not have been consummated. Wherefore, Joshua's act was that of a wise surgeon who cuts off a contaminated limb of the body in order to save the whole body from destruction.

So we return to the chief goal, namely, that the worship of the true God by all men, which had not been achieved in the days of any of the preceding Manifestations, is being attained today by the Manifestation of Baha'u'llah, whose advent was foretold by the Prophets of the past who spoke of the dawn of a New Greater Cycle; and thus the unification of all men today will prove the Scriptural Prophecy that in that day God will be all in all.

What is the Wisdom of Prayer?

Prayer is the Pillar of Faith.

What is the meaning of prayer? Why is prayer so great and so important?

This is such a great question. Prayer is really the chief support of the Temple of Faith.

Prayer is the link which binds the individual to collective man, binds men first together, and then links them to their Maker. Of course, there are different prescriptions concerning the manner of praying, and what to pray for, so that is another matter. I think we all of us know naturally we can pray for things that would be a blessing to the body, or that would be of blessing for this earth for the attainment of things - that is, for the material comfort of men here on this earth. Or praying for material, physical health, which is very important to the body to be in a state of safety and health, so that it may be adequate as an instrument for the expression of man's relationship to his Maker; to his Creator. But the highest form of prayer is the prayer such as was offered by Jesus at the time of His crucifixion, namely, "Thy will be done, not ours."

We have often stated and I think it should be repeated, if only for refreshing our minds, in the following homely illustrations, namely: a drop of water has existence, but if you place it on the table, and come back after a while, it is no more. Nothing can be lost in the economy of the universe. There is no other place outside this universe more sacred than this earth. This earth is as sacred as any part of the heavens could be. People draw a line between earthly things and heavenly things, not realizing that the earth, as well as any other place or condition in the world is comprised in the same universe that is created by God, and that Universe is all-comprehensive. There is nothing outside it. The human soul is not like water poured into a glass so that when the glass is broken, it is thrown out, and you can pour it out of the glass or into a glass. It is neither poured in, nor is it poured out, because the pouring into, and the pouring out of, are both attributes of that which is material, whereas the soul is an eternal spiritual reality. It is not material. The soul's relation to the body of man is through radiation, not impregnation or permeation. Radiation means the sun shining on the mirror you hold in your hand, and when the mirror is broken to pieces, nothing has happened to the sun rays. If you weigh the disk of the body of the sun before it reflects in this mirror, and weigh it again after this mirror has been broken, there would be no difference. The weight of the sun would remain the same. In the same way, the departure of the soul from the body (if you could call it departure) is not going at all to amount to any sort of exhaustion or decrease, because these words are attributes of matter, whereas the soul is not of the realm of matter, but it is radiation from the all-radiant glory of the countenance of the Almighty God.

However, the point we want to make here is that prayer establishes the relationship between man and his God. In what sense? Speaking of that drop again, if you left the drop by itself, it would evaporate into its potential existence; but if you take hold of the drop and throw it into the ocean, it will become eternal, inexhaustible. Through prayer, we can join the drop of our being to the ocean of divine glory and divine power, and then whether a prayer is answered or not, is another matter that depends entirely on the will of God. It is true that for any of our needs, whenever we pray, God assists us. He is all-merciful, compassionate. He rarely refuses anyone, be anyone believers or unbelievers, in

the same sense that the rain, which is one of the bounties of God, not only falls on good soil, but it even falls upon the sterile, brackish soil. But to pray i.e. acknowledge and realize that we are nothing without God, and with Him we are all powerful, if anything could be powerful in the realm of creation; - we can achieve that goal through prayer and supplication, the highest form of which is as Christ said, "Thy will be done, not ours."

We do not know what is good for us, and so the condition, or state in which we pray, in this holy tradition is, simply, that which Baha'u'llah quotes in many of His tablets: "PRAYER IS PRAYER ONLY WHEN OFFERED WITH A TRANQUIL HEART." This tranquility of the heart is a condition of peace, or conviction, which comes alone through complete devotion to the Manifestation of God, and His commands. Nothing is greater, as an attainment, than that tranquility of the heart, so that no matter what happens, it is always the will of God, and as you say, God is in His kingdom, and so He knows what is to be done. Of course there are many people who think that such a belief would be what they call fatalism.

Fatalism means that God has decreed everything, and that there is no reason for man to struggle at all. It would be like saying to a man that his sustenance is guaranteed by God and he interprets this to mean that there is no use of making any effort of looking for a job, because God has guaranteed that certain provisions would reach him. That is fatalism - a different story altogether - because the command of God in His heavenly books is that there must both be effort on the part of man and reliance upon God on his part; and these are two poles of the axis around which revolves the safety and happiness of men. This means I have to do my part in search of a living, or in search, let us say, for finding the truth of God, and at the same time I must trust in God's will so that if I do not find it today, there will be a wisdom or reason for it. This attitude is interpreted by the term "tranquility of the heart". One of the verses of the Koran to the same effect is: "O, THOU SOUL WHO ART TRANQUILIZED, RETURN UNTO THY LORD WELL PLEASED AND PLEASING". Pleasing others, which means pleasing God. When in good will, you please your fellowmen, through patience and love, without forcing or urging them to uphold your attitude, even though it may be the very truth of God; doing the best you can in the hope that something you are doing is going to rebound to the betterment of the condition of a human individual as well as humanity at large; and then, at the same time, trusting in God who will alone guarantee the success of your quest or your search - that is the state of tranquility of the heart.

Mystic poets and philosophers of other countries and nations illustrate the necessity and the importance of prayer by referring to the crying of the infant for its food. The poet says how can the infant find milk without crying, namely, searching for it. So, you see this means that we have to utter words, utter prayers within, and also express ourselves outwardly in the form of prayer. In the same way that despite the heedfulness of parents to feed the child, still the infant's crying is a form of earnest prayer to be fed. Another interpretation is that there are always two elements which are needed in order to bring about a result, a consummation. One is the element of search; the other is the element of bounty and gift. God's bounties are everywhere, but you must seek for them and prayer is the means by which this can be achieved.

There are so many mysteries in prayer it would take a long time to take up all of them. Both the one who seeks and the one who grants, should cooperate. If we assume that God is going to do what He has destined, irrespective of our wishes, it would be useless for us to seek His guidance or His bounty. That isn't enough; for, you see, a true believer in God is a dynamic being, constantly active, either performing, or preparing for a performance--and in each case praying and striving to achieve his goal.

Have you ever seen a field, in which you plant, inactive? The farmer plants the seeds and goes away and do you think that is all there is to be done? The seed is never idle. There is a period, which to us appears to be a period of absolute halt, immobility, nothing changed, nothing perceptible; but that is the most important period in the life of the seeds you have planted, because it is called the period of gestation. When that period of vitality under the soil has run its course, then, there will be an emergence of the essence of the seeds above the soil, which prepares the way for an abounding harvest. So a soul, a human soul -- after all, we are either human beings or a sort of animal -- as we are human beings, we are conscious that we are created in the image of God, and that not only means in one way, but it means that we are of Him. Through the gift of the soul given to all of us, we are the recipients of innumerable eternal rays that emanate from the Sun of Truth. Is it possible for the sun's rays to consider they have half a day's job? They must constantly manifest forth the potentiality of that wonderful relationship to God, which is like that of the rays in their relationship to the sun. There is no halt .

THE NEW CREATION

I think today we will discuss the question "What is the meaning of the New Creation, the New Heaven and the New Earth?", which are among the signs of the coming of the Day of Judgment or Time of the End.

The literal interpretation of these prophecies held by people have led to the assumption, by many, that there is no logic in religion. They could not see how the heaven that is stretched out above our heads could be set aside and a new heaven unfolded in its place with new stars, with new constellations; or yet, how God, in that day, could literally make everything new!

According to the prophecies of all the heavenly books, Baha'u'llah fulfills what had been revealed by the Prophets of the past ages, and reveals the inner significances of the signs and tokens which were to precede the coming of the Lord. We shall prove that Baha'u'llah has accomplished these very things.

Without this Revelation, the world would have continued to believe that religion was not intended to prove anything through logic, and that, in other words, the teachings and prophecies of every religion could never intelligently be explained. This is why the fundamentalists claim that religious mysteries are too holy and too sacred to be discussed, and the modernists almost eliminate the supernatural from religion.

As we have formerly stated, there are three elements dealt with in every religion: One is laws and regulations given by a Prophet which are related to the physical and social aspects of men's lives. For example, laws about dealing with your fellowman; the way one should live in a community with other people, so that one would enjoy freedom without infringing the freedom of his fellows. As an example, we cite traffic regulations in the life of every city, which are made for the protection of the people. When the laws of traffic are infringed, naturally, there is going to be an accident which would hurt someone, which would take the life of someone. They are necessary laws, and are purely intended to govern the physical and social conduct of the people in a civilized community. When you come down the street, you walk on the right, so that those coming from the opposite direction would also walk on their right; and thus there would be no mishap, no accident. Then, another rule is that which requires the people of a community to attend their place of worship once a week, thus identifying themselves with a body of believers to which they belong. Likewise, in his spiritual life, man has certain duties to perform. Hence, certain religious laws are laid down (such as the Golden Rule, etc.) to guide men. These also include avoidance of what will infringe the freedom of others and the rest of the rules given in the Ten Commandments.

Then there is a third line, in each of the past religions, called prophecies. These are directed to two ends: One, which refers to the coming of the next Prophet; and the other, to the Advent of the Lord, i.e., the Universal Manifestation at the "time of the end." The followers of former religions have taken those prophecies as dealing only with the coming of the next Prophet, who, they believed, would fulfill them all. But this has led to difficulties and confusion which have caused conflict among men and nations. For instance, the

prophecies of Moses concerning the coming of the Messiah are believed by the Christian Church to have been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. This, despite the fact (and the fact is very important) that Jesus, Himself, did not say that His coming fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament which referred to the coming of the Lord Messiah. One of these deals with the coming of the Lord who would establish peace and unity among all men and would restore the people of Israel to their ancient glory. The contrary, in that particular case, was true. For His Advent marked the beginning of the long period of tribulations suffered by the people of Israel. We had, first the Roman General, Titus, who came decades after Jesus and destroyed the Holy Temple at Jerusalem, an institution which played a role of crucial importance in the religious life of Israel. For, the most sacred rite of Israel, the burnt offering, which was to be performed in the Holy Temple as a mandatory act, could no longer be observed. That, in reality, marked the termination of the Mosaic Dispensation through the coming of the first Messiah. Nor were the wounds of Israel, which the Messiah was to bind, found healing, for the Lord, who was to bring solace and relief to the people of Israel was not to become manifest for another 2000 years. How, then, are we to believe, as the Christian Churches do, that all the prophecies of Moses concerning the coming of the Lord Messiah at the Time of the End were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus?

Notwithstanding all proofs to the contrary - and especially Christ's own testimony that they should not think He had brought peace, nay, He had brought a sword - these views still persist. However, we have no quarrel with them, and we are to believe what Baha'u'llah teaches; namely, that once in every 500,000 years, i.e., at the beginning of a new Greater Cycle, a Universal Manifestation appears who establishes the reign of God among all men. And that Manifestation's fore-runner was the Bab; namely, the "Gate", who heralded the dawn of the new Greater Cycle in the year 1844. We are now living in that Great Day, when the Book which the past Prophets referred to as "sealed" has been opened and, by the Revelation of its inner meanings all that run can read and men of all races and religions can understand it. In other words, religions whose inner meanings were sealed in symbolism are now made clear and their teachings are proven by the standards of logic. Thus, in this great Day, a New Heaven is being unfolded and a New Earth is revealed as the hallmark of the New Creation.

Baha'u'llah says that by the New Heaven is meant a New Universal Faith. He says "heaven" is the symbol of religion; and, as rains falling from the phenomenal heaven provide sustenance and as sun rays confer warmth and light upon men, likewise, the rains of Divine Verses and the rays of the Sun of Truth, shining from the horizon of the Heaven of Religion, bless mankind with spiritual life and light. The rains of the laws and commandments of God descending from the heaven of Divine Glory shower upon the sterile, brackish soil of men's hearts, and change them into a delectable garden of love and mercy, of compassion and justice. That is the meaning of the New Creation - a New Heaven and a New Earth.

What is a new creation? When a man is unjust, when a man is unkind, and the divine Religion reveals its laws and commandments, these change the individual and collective man's injustices into justice and mercy, his selfishness into benevolence. Does this not make of man a new creation? A creation which is a part from the former creation - where only materialistic desires form man's chief objective - man who prided in his search for wealth by enslaving his fellowmen and by oppressing other men for his own happiness? But, when the teachings of

the Manifestation are revealed, they transform the hearts of men and change their base qualities into noble qualities. Then you have a New Creation; then you have a Resurrection which raises men from the graves of their past inhuman conduct, and lifts them up to the new life of generosity and compassion.

Such logical interpretation of the heavenly Books makes it possible to reconcile religion with science. This is the same as the logic which makes two plus two equal four; but the literal interpretations of prophecies advanced by the various religious institutions of the times tend only to widen the chasm between religion and science. By this is meant that the eternal law of physics, which states that a body cannot rise upwards without some sort of propelling force, cannot be challenged. But, when one is insistent, as the Moslems are, that Mohammad's "Night Journey" to Heaven was literally performed and that the Angel Gabriel brought a mount from Heaven upon which Mohammad might ride to His Heavenly Destination, you have said something that does not find reason or logic to support it. Or, when you say that Jesus, when crucified and entombed, was not to be found in His grave three days afterwards because He had ascended to Heaven - this is of the same category.

It should, however, be noted, that what Baha'u'llah says concerning the interpretation of the Heavenly Books is also supported by the very text of those Scriptures. Only men could not find them until He revealed them. When you read the Book of Certitude, the I'qan - then you will find that the proofs that He advances are derived from the Heavenly Books themselves.

The only Faith in the world that can reveal logic in religion is the Baha'i World Faith. This Faith enables people to be religious and worship God, and at the same time, be able to prove their Faith. Baha'u'llah is the One who has broken the seal of the Sealed Books of the prophecies of the past religions. Without His words of guidance, the world would be worshipping religions which they cannot understand. It would be like men continuing in a state of infancy or childhood - to be attending kindergarten; to be told this is an elephant, this is a bird, this is a river, this is a snake, and then not to know anything about what makes an elephant walk, or a river flow, or the snake bite, or the nightingale sing. That would be the state of the people of the world without the Revelation of Baha'u'llah. There would be either people who have no religion or people who would follow religion in order to appear respectable so that people would say that this merchant is a man of integrity because he goes to church every Sunday, and when they would want to buy things, they would patronize his store. But when you ask that worshipper to prove his religion, he cannot. When, however, that man believes in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, he will have proof of the truth of his Faith. Wherefore the fullness of the gift of God as vouchsafed in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is beyond compare.

What is the Chief Reason for Man's Creation?

These are eternal questions, and the only way we can answer them is to refer to the teachings of the Prophets of God, especially in this day, which is the fulfillment of all other days. The reason for our creation is given in a holy, divine utterance which Baha'u'llah reveals from the prophetic utterances of the past. God says, "I was an invisible treasure; as I loved to become known, I created man to know Me."

So many people say "What is the idea of God's being incapable of making Himself known without creating men?" But such an assumption is just as uncouth, unintelligent as to say that I can get along without worshipping God.

God says He created men through whom to become known and that is why man was created. Do you know that in this world, again, there are two elements at work. One is the objective and the other is the subjective. One is the actor, and the other is the acted upon. One is the seed, and the other is the harvest. Neither of these two, independently, can achieve that all important goal in this material plane.

The quotation mentioned earlier in this talk, means that in the world of creation, no created thing is as powerfully and fully capable of manifesting forth the greatness of the glory of God, as is man; and, because men differ in their acts and deeds and knowledge and limitations, it is only the Man chosen by God and created into the status of prophethood and messengership Who are capable of worshipping God fully and consciously and also conveying the traces of the worship of God to other men.

In its highest sense, the man who most fully manifests forth the knowledge of God -- without whom, the most complete, the most universal Revelation of the presence of God and of His names and attributes, would be impossible -- is the Universal Man that God chooses as the manifestation of His full glory at the end of the Prophetic cycles, i.e. at the end of a greater cycle, and in our time it is the Manifestation of Baha'u'llah. This is the man created by God that is capable of manifesting forth the knowledge of the highest attributes of the Almighty Creator throughout the world.

Free Will and the Laws of Necessity

Now, I would like to speak a word about one of the most absorbing, limitless questions that have occupied and challenged the minds and thoughts of the most profound thinkers of all ages. I would like to speak on the question of free will and necessity - whether man is free, or is subject to the laws of necessity, and whether the will of man is independent. Controversies along these lines have caused thousands upon thousands of volumes to be written in almost every religion and by every school of thought; but this is like so many other abstruse questions which challenge the might of the human mind, and it had to await the coming of a day when the book that was sealed, as the Old Testament prophets said, shall be opened; and that Day was spoken of by the Prophets of every nation under One Name or another as the greatest event in the history of creation - the Advent of a Universal Manifestation of God, who could unify all peoples and eliminate all division, hatred and prejudice from amongst men.

That is the greatest event in the life of the world, and that has happened only once every 500,000 years; the last of which greater cycle of 500,000 years terminated, according to the prophecies of all Faiths in the year 1844. For in that year, a new divine springtime, a new day of the Universal Manifestation of God dawned from the horizon of divine power. This is that day in which the piercing rays of the light of the Sun of Truth are shining from the horizon of Baha'u'llah. All that was concealed and hidden in the world of nature, or in the minds of men, or locked in the words of prophecies of all nations had to yield their burden. They could not resist that penetrating light, the Universal rising of the Sun of Truth. So all questions found a solution in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, and among these is this question whether man is a free agent, or is subject to the laws of necessity.

This is a most serious thing, because there are both evidences of man's subjection to the laws of necessity and of man's freedom. How, then, are you going to reconcile these two contrary, diametrically opposed facts?

Man is a free agent when he wants to get up and go out and perform a certain errand. No one can compel him not to go. At the same time, there is a limitation that he can't go beyond that boundary line that circumscribes man's activities. You can go so far, and no farther; and this is a very complicated and abstruse question. But in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, as explained by Abdul'Baha, of course, and as explained by Mirza Abul Fazl - a profound philosopher who received the gift of interpretation of the Heavenly Books from Baha'u'llah, Himself, this problem found its solution, and it could be very simply pointed out in a manner that the average man can understand.

Those who believe that man's will is not free, and those who believe that man's will is free are both right, but to a certain extent. Beyond that extent, both are wrong.

Baha'u'llah teaches that man is free in all that concerns man's responsibilities under law. He is free to keep the law and be happy, and he is also free to break the law and suffer the consequences. An illustration of it is very simple:

Now, in looking at the laws governing traffic in every city, there is a light that is red, and there is a light that is green. When the red light comes, all are warned that it is high time to stop, but they are free to go ahead. Then, when the green light comes, they all know it is time for them to proceed, and they are free in so doing. So, that is where men are free. But that in which man is not free is the consequences if he violates the law. Well, then he is free to pay no attention to the red light and proceed, but when the policeman comes and arrests him and takes him to court, then he can't do anything about the consequences. He cannot control that because it is the law of the land. So, both man is free and also subject to necessity - free in doing or not doing, and then not free so far as the consequences of his actions are concerned.

Now, I would like to make this plain by another illustration. Mind YOU, this is a very serious question, because those who do not believe that man's mind is free and disbelieve in the freedom of man, are supported by the facts that there are events that man cannot at all control, and therefore he is not free. At the same time, every child can see that people who are sitting here were free to leave their houses and come here, or they are free to stay away and not come at all.

In all that concerns man's own relationship to himself, he is free, and the laws that are brought by the Prophets of God are predicated upon man's freedom to carry them out. Otherwise, it would be like urging a man to go and lift a stone that weighs about 500 pounds when the man himself weighs only about 150 lbs -- meaning that if laws are brought that are beyond the power and capacity of man to comply with them, then the very justice of the law-giver would be in question. You would immediately say this law-giver is unjust, because he knows I weigh 150 pounds, and yet he confronts me with a stone that weighs 500 pounds; and, then if I don't lift it, the punishment is sheer injustice.

What we believe is that as far as man's relationship to his own self is concerned, man is free, but in matters that are outside man's individual limited relationships, man is not free; because man has two kinds of relationship - one to himself, and his own immediate environment; the other to the body-politic, the universal, towards the world of creation, of which we are part.

This is a very delicate question and I must try my best to make it as clear as possible. We often find that one who leads a truly religious life in the world comes to such trials and disappointments and calamities that he loses everything. Then we begin to question the justice of God. This man did everything good, not only showed devotion in his faith, in his religion, but also in his conduct towards his fellowman. Yet, despite it all, one asks why he is suffering so much. One continues - "How about it?" - "Where is the justice of God?" There wouldn't be a soul in the Universe who wouldn't ask that question. But remember, that is due to the fact that in addition to man being related to his own individual concerns, he is also inter-related with the immensity of substances, of drops, and of atoms that constitute the body of the world of creation, the body of the Universe. Even with this explanation, it, I fear, complicates it further. I hope I will be able to make it more clear.

Now, I will give you this illustration. Take the case of the intricate machinery of a watch. You know how many small pieces are made to compose it; and when those different pieces are put together, then they make the machinery of the watch move and act; and if you remember, all these various parts, except in certain rare instances, are different in shape, in form, and differ in the various functions that they perform. The spring of the watch and the hand of

of the watch, or any other part of the watch is different. They don't look alike.

Now, if any of those parts that compose the whole machinery of the watch had a tongue in its mouth, and would ask why is it that it has been created less beautiful, less efficient than any other part - and if each item questions the justice of that inadequacy, that insufficiency that this difference of form creates, well, he would be questioning the skill of the watch maker. Why? Because if each part had been made in any other shape or form, it would have not fitted into the scheme, which the combination of all these parts create in order to make the watch run and tell the time.

This would be exactly like ourselves. Now in the story of Job. We have the signs and symbols - the story of Job afflicted, and in much anguish, which we believe to be, by the way, much more ancient than any of the books in the Old Testament. In it you have the account of the entire series of calamities and hardships that could visit a human being. If any individual questions the wisdom and the justice underlying an act which made him miserable despite his having done everything that a good believer should do, he would be questioning the justice of God. For God knows how to make the acts of each individual fit into the scheme in which all the other individual component particles of the Universe play a part.

Again, I can give another explanation to make this still more clear. It is not, you see, equality of form or function, or shape of an individual that is important. It is in the ability to cooperate with other individuals in the creation of a great plan that the importance of every individual is to be recognized. We must not complain because somebody is imperfect, and we are not. We must not say, "I have a little house to live in and someone else is living in a palace;" or "Someone else is eloquent and knows so many languages, and I don't know even my own language well," or "I am so helpless compared to somebody else." If we were created any different from what we are, and the way we are, the scheme of creation which was in the mind of God could not have been perfected in the same way that if the different parts that compose a machine, whether it is that in a watch, or in a plant, or whatever it is - were made any differently from the way they are, or if they had all been made alike and each of them were capable of performing the same kind of function - the machinery would not be complete, or the machinery would not run. It would be out of the question.

For example, supposing a child in the mother's womb could talk, and supposing someone could use a language that that foetal child could understand; that foetal child would be trying to find fault with his own existence. He would want to know why on earth all these holes are put all over his face; why these holes? Or why is it that his hands are divided into all these prongs. He doesn't see the necessity of this because on each plane, we do not know what our function will be on a higher plane, but when a child grows he would learn the wisdom of those holes on his face or the prongs on his hands.

Many things constitute problems as to why God sends miseries, or God tests us and deprives us of things He has conferred upon others. If we only wait until the plane of existence is revealed into which we shall be born, and attain a superior capacity for understanding, then we would not be asking questions or criticizing the scheme of creation. As in the case of the foetal child, we would see the justice of Divine Tests on a higher plane once we enter upon the very essence of perfection, but as long as he was on a plane of limitation, the knowledge was denied him that would be his once he entered upon a higher plane of existence.

So there is a reason for everything that is happening to us. What is our duty? It is to do that which is possible on this plane, for the laws of God are made in such a way that they take note of the imperfection, inadequacy and weakness of man. There is no law made that is beyond the power of man to carry out, and man is a free agent to obey the law, or to disregard the law. So man is free in all that concerns his relationship to himself. But as I said, when it comes to the consequences of the law, man is not free, and that is where the difference between faith and unbelief becomes manifest. When you have faith, you have trust in your Maker that whatever is happening to you is for a wise purpose. When you have no faith, you are constantly worrying and complaining of happenings which you cannot explain or understand.

Now this illustration was illustrated in the last act in the drama of the life of Jesus. That act in the last hour of His life had two aspects: one had to do with man's relationship to himself, and all that constitutes man's ability to fulfill the law. Another part of it pointed the way to man's relationship to the Universe at large, so that whatever came to man not sought by him, but just the same, that experience and that hardship was due to a wise purpose; that it was necessary, and the only way to appraise it, the only way to face it, is to have faith because God decreed it.

What were those two aspects of the last hour in the life of Jesus? One was the time when he was being led to the place of crucifixion, with the cross placed on His shoulders; that illustrated His relationship to himself as a man who found the suffering was so hard to bear that He cried out "O Lord, can this cup be passed?" To be saved from that suffering, to be relieved of that burden, He lamented, He cried; and that meant man's relationship to himself, and the limitations of man's physical powers which could stand hardship only so far and no farther. But in His higher mission governed by His relationship to humanity at large, to the world of creation, He uttered "Thy will be done, not ours." Thus, He Who in his body groaned under the weight of the cross, prayed God to pass that burden was soon after saying "O Lord, Thy Will be done, not mine." For He saw in His passion, namely, bodily sacrifice, the birth of a new life which would confer everlasting happiness and salvation to all men, a salvation which would have resulted only through the physical disintegration of the seed - the sacrifice of which would produce a great harvest for the sustenance of the world.

So, you see, far from being unhappy when trials come to us and then calling ourselves tortured by the harsh laws of necessity, we must follow the example of the Manifestations of God who taught us to turn the other cheek. This means meeting what God sends with alacrity and joy and fragrance. For if God had willed it any differently, or if He had shaped our destiny differently, we would not be able to perform our mission in the scheme of the Universe, which, in the last analysis, is based upon pure justice. This teaching of the Master's is a very adequate illustration of the meaning of man's freedom from limitations, and man's subjection to the laws of necessity. I hope that we will all learn to submit to the will of God at the time of tribulation, and that we may always be thankful and grateful.

Remember, Abdul'Baha especially emphasized, and I heard him on various occasions quote a verse from the Koran, which is "And few of my servants are grateful." He said gratitude, thankfulness are among the attributes that were loved by Baha'u'llah. We must bear our burdens with willing acquiescence, with joy and fragrance. But if those burdens have been imposed on us as a consequence of our own failures, and of our own negligence to comply with the commands of God, we must then correct our conduct. For this is the same as breaking the traffic law, and the police arresting us and taking us into court where we are sentenced because of our own failure.

But if God sends any calamities, any trials and tribulations upon us and we ourselves, by our own individual and collective acts have not brought them upon us, then we must say that God has sent them for a great purpose, which will, in due time, be revealed to us, if not here, then on the higher plane.

In conclusion, all this further stresses, and emphasizes, the fact that man cannot live without God. Man by himself will never be so independent or so self-sufficient that he can do without Divine Guidance, nor would any of our agencies, sciences, arts and inventions, of which the world boasts, have ever existed if the Prophets of God had not come to save man from savagery - the state of nature in which men would tear one another to pieces. To be able to think scientifically, to study, to invent and to make discoveries in the world of nature, man's need for God will never be outgrown. For man's relationship to God's universe is eternal.

Again it is in man's relationship to himself in which man has freedom, but man's relationship to the universe is another matter, and it is in the latter sense that God has said, "Oh, man, Dcst'thou think that thou are a small being, whereas within thee a universe is expanding?" That is why man is taught that he is a microcosm, a world seemingly small, but complete in itself--whereas the universe is the macrocosm and all the expanses of the limitless spaces and constellation of the Universe are all potentially deposited in every human being, and this is why God has said that He created man after His own image and likeness.

IS A WELL-ORDERED LIFE ON THIS EARTH IMPORTANT?

There are people in the different religions of the world who think it highly meritorious to detach oneself from earthly concerns, retire from the world, and live on handful of rice, nuts or grain, and pray to God a thousand times daily. They think that is true worship.

Now, Baha'u'llah teaches that man living on earth has a two-fold function. He is a denizen of this earth; and, at the same time, he is a denizen of the spiritual worlds; that, if he neglects his earthly duties, believing that he thus intensifies his devotions to his spiritual functions, he would be like an infant in the mother's womb whose physical development is neglected. When such a one is born into the world, he will not be physically adequate to meet the challenge of earthly life.

The people of Baha must order their earthly lives in a manner befitting the requirements of human dignity, within the range of possibility. This means that in their physical appearance and in their orderliness at home, they should set an example to others. For we should recall that his earthly life is a part of God's creation, a period of infancy for man, which must lead to his eventual maturity in the spiritual world.

With this in mind, we should regard this earth with all its imperfections, with all that is sordid, with all its delusions, as a part of God's creation. Otherwise, we will fail to achieve that balance which typifies the mature man. That is why a Baha'i must meet the challenge of this earthly life, in his individual and collective relationships, in order to achieve the fulfillment of his spiritual destiny.

WHAT IS THE DIVINE WORLD AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM THIS WORLD?

What is the divine world? It is very difficult for one to come face to face with points relative to the differences between the Divine World and the present world. This is especially so in the light of the traditions, the myriad views inherent in the creeds of the many churches of the world, further complicated by differing dogmas of the many sects regarding supernal, ultra-mundane subjects as if they were dealing with material conditions and aspects of the earthly world. By all this I mean that one who has entered into the knowledge of the teachings of Baha'u'llah leaves behind him all such material considerations and petty differences and deals only with the inner meanings and significances of the teachings of the past Prophets which were mysteries to mankind until they were revealed by Baha'u'llah in this Great Day. Thus God has enabled men today to build a bridge over the chasm between the Divine planes of existence and the earthly planes of existence so that man may be taught what distinguishes the Divine as opposed to the material planes.

For it is admitted by us that the Creation in all its varieties, in all its limitations and its lack of limitations is one; that the limited, graded minds of men, taken by and large, have from the beginning to the end of life on this earth, inculcated various phases of the same reality. For, if God is one, and God is the Creator, then God's Creation must only be one despite its variegated, innumerable aspects. Some of the mystics have illustrated this by referring to this phenomenal, physical world as the shadow of the Creator; and one particular mystic poet wrote that the firmament is aglow with scintillating stars and beauteous luminaries and that here, namely, the physical world, is but a reflection of that celestial realm. Such a picture manifests in the oneness of God all the varying moods of the oceans and all the solidities of the earth which, in the light of the oneness of God, have the hollowness of the passing morning mist.

Another mystic questioned, in poetic gesture, the shamefulness of a soul which, knowing of its pristine, divine origin, still persists in remaining a temporary resident of an earthly plane. This life is evanescent. This existence is ephemeral. From such, we must conclude that Creation is the handiwork of one Creator. We must rise above the plurality of phases and of aspects that hinder our realization of the oneness of God; and, rising, we must necessarily and completely cease to worry about the future life, because that future life is the only real life of which the present life is only a beginning. The atmosphere of that heavenly world revealed by the teachings of the Baha'i Faith is a rarified ozone of the Himalayas as compared to the fetid myasma of the lowest marshes of the earthly planes. The differences between the two bear out the fact that the conditions which separate the planes of existence, one from the other in the same one Creation, will continue until man rises from the plane of limited concepts and repairs to the higher climes of the spiritual world.

For as long as man is man, the individual, and not God's idea of man, he sees the Persian man, the Russian man, the American man, the French man, the Indian, the Spaniard, the Eskimo. But, when he achieves that lofty height of his true destiny—the destiny of every man before his God - and thus assumes the raiment of the man of God, there remains no divisions, no differences, no variations, between man, the particular, and man, the universal. This is so obviously clear that it requires no further elucidation. Man must achieve this. Why? This is the ultimate objective, the chief destiny of man, that in the oneness of mankind, only, the oneness of God may be made fully manifest.

An infant is born and needs milk, needs care of the mother, until it, having grown has need of more solid substance, and of relationships outside of its environment to a plane where it asks questions about its surroundings in the schools, advancing higher and higher until it finally materializes into a being who completes, who fulfills the physical fullness of his development. Until, however, he reaches that state of full and complete development which we call maturity, he will be limited. In other words, the confusion of the world will confound him until he arrives at a greater degree of progress in his intellectual state and can face the problems of material civilization which loom on every horizon towards which man turns his face. Even then with his greater physical development and with his broadened mental capacities and understanding, he is not yet a complete being; for there is another side of man, the spiritual side, which must be developed, and without which neither his physical nor mental abilities are adequate for the good of man or of society. In the final analysis, the spiritual destiny of man is a thing that must be fulfilled if man is to be safe, to be protected from the littleness of self. The individual must become God's idea of man, the universal and the immortal; his world must culminate in God's highest and noblest plane of creative existence.

The man from whose plane we see and survey the oneness of God as expressed in the oneness of Creation, reaches this lofty station through the advent of the Prophets of God. Each of them comes with a Revelation for the men of His Day and Dispensation. Each has as His purpose, the task of guiding and teaching men, of transforming their potentialities into the realities of divine perfection.

This process has been continued in the world until this day of Universal Revelation when, in the language of the poets, men, who are the waves of the ocean merge their differences into the sea of Divine Unity. In this Day, the Revelation of God has given us the key to the repository of universal treasures.

Such will be the case when men of the Christian faiths, the Mosaic teachings, the Zoroastrian beliefs, the Buddhist faith, and the others of the Seven Great Religions of the world will realize the oneness of the lofty ideals towards which they have been aiming. Their example will be that of men, or rather, multitudes of men, climbing the same mountain over seven different trails, aiming to reach the summit. None is aware of the existence of the other, or, if aware, will acknowledge the rightness of any trail other than his own path. But, when they all reach the summit, they find that they have been the component parts of the same multitude, aiming in the same direction. All sense of separateness will disappear and oneness and unity will result from that realization. This summit is the Revelation of Baha'u'llah prophesied by the Seven Great Religions of the world.

In other words, all will find in this day that the differences were in the non-essentials. All inharmony will cease, all division will disappear, and all will unite in the recognition that all share in faith the one Reality that is God.

Divisions will no longer serve as quagmires, as marshes to impede the progress of human society toward the highest and loftiest phases of the universe of God. It will fade into unity, conflict into peace. There will remain only an era which has no parallel in the history of human endeavor in search of God.

Going back to what is the Divine world, I might mention a personal experience. I often asked the great teacher, Mirza Abul-Fazl to explain to me the nature of the spiritual world; I asked him "What is the nature of life after death?" Every time I did ask him he would smile in that beautiful, sweet smile, and he would say, "I pray God that this will become manifest to you in its good time." Not being satisfied with this vague reply, finally I, in my eager and passionate youth, spoke to him as follows:

"I have been working like a slave, translating your teachings for numerous classes, translating your lessons and your book, without asking any favors of you; and yet when I ask of you one question you will not answer it. (As I spoke, Mirza and I were out one day walking in the Trinity Church gardens in uptown New York. This place is situated beside the Hudson River). What becomes of man when he goes down to death? Where does he go? Where?"

He said that I had now compelled him to answer me and that I should not be hurt - "You are not capable of understanding if I do explain; for if you were, you would not have asked such a question of me," he said. And I was astonished. "What can you mean?" I questioned. "Do you mean that I who am grounded in the teachings of great German philosophers, in those of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, of Francis Bacon and others, and who have translated the words of Baha'u'llah and of the Master, am not capable of understanding? Nevertheless, he would not explain, but he assured me that in my devoted service to the Faith, I would one day be rewarded with the knowledge of the nature of the spiritual world.

A year later, when I and my bride were spending the winter at Portsmouth, I had an awakening. It was one sunny day as I and my wife - then an expectant mother for the first time - were walking along the beach on one of the sunny days that followed a severe winter with its melting snows as the Spring approached. At that time we would take long morning walks on the beach, at a place not far from the Hotel Wentworth, which, by the way, was in the following year the Japanese-Russian peace conference site, as a result of President Theodore Roosevelt's mediation.

I remember watching the longshoremen getting a large rowboat from a shed, launching it, and getting into it, then starting out to sea. As they rowed further out upon the waters, they became smaller and smaller to my sight. Smaller were they until they became seemingly non-existent! Only the water and the skies remained changeless, eternal. Immediately it was revealed to me that although the longshoremen were still on the water and still out of sight, non-existent so far as I was concerned, they were yet sailing onward on the same ocean which touched the shore upon which I was standing. For then I suddenly realized that as long as man stood upon his plane of limited concepts, his life ended here by death and he was seemingly annihilated; but, once man fulfilled his potentialities in the scheme of God's universe, he would, in reality, achieve an immortal existence which the changes and chances of the phenomenal world could never affect. With this thought, all I could do was to fall upon my knees and express my gratitude to God for a gift beyond all human descriptions.

Baha'i Interpretation of the Immortality of the Soul

And the Meaning of the Larger Life

Part of the teachings on the Immortality of the Soul reveals the importance of man's relationship with the Manifestations of God. Christ spoke to His disciples that those who believe on Him will not only do what He had done, but they will do even greater things. This has puzzled men through the ages. Today, the true meaning has been revealed by Baha'u'llah. To illustrate:

The ministry of Christ lasted three years, but the ministry of those who believed in Him lasted many more years. In His lifetime His teachings never went beyond Palestine, whereas those who believed in Him carried His teachings to the most distant parts of the world. There were no martyrs during His lifetime, whereas, after His death, those who believed in Him were martyred for the sake of Him and for the spread of His Faith.

So, there is in this, the alchemy which we call belief or faith, a great mystery to unravel, but, once unraveled, it becomes extremely easy to comprehend. He made this statement conditional upon belief. Belief is that subtle link between the individual man and the Universal Man. The Universal Man fulfills the aspirations of the entire world. There is no limitation to his vision, his faith, and his interest in all things.

When God said He created man in His own image, He did not only mean the individual man. The individual man is potentially capable of achieving the status of the Universal Man, but it is the Universal Man, namely Humanity, that possesses the great potentiality which represents the completeness and perfection of the creation of the Almighty God. The individual man has the potentiality, but not the full perfection until he achieves a higher measure of belief and faith in a Universal Manifestation. The individual man is limited. The Universal Man is unlimited. The individual man is a drop. The Universal man is the ocean.

Now, if you leave a drop of water on the table and come back in half an hour, it has evaporated, although it has not been destroyed. It has been translated and transmuted into a potential existence. But, for all practical purposes it is no more. That is the status of the individual. Now someone comes in and throws the drop into the ocean. It then becomes eternal; it becomes undying. The drop has the potentiality of achieving the vastness of the ocean, but it has to be linked to the ocean to achieve that full status. What is in man by which this transformation could be achieved? It is faith in the Manifestation of God in His Day, and in His Dispensation. By belief in Him, you are linked to the source of all power: You cease to be an individual. You become universal. The death of the body only releases man's higher consciousness. Instead of death being destructive, it opens the portals into a larger life that has no limitations. That is why He said belief in Him will enable them to do what He had done, and even greater things. It is not a matter of speculation. All one has to do is to read the Acts of the Apostles, and the story of Jesus and the Disciples, and then one can apply the same thing to the Founders of the seven great religions of the world, and their influence on those who believed.

Life is nothing but a potentiality. Now, if this potentiality is not translated into actuality, there is no record to be written of life; and the only way it can achieve the fullness of its innate powers is when the life of man is enlarged and expanded through faith. That unites man's life to the life of the Founder of God's faith who is a link between man and his God.

Now we speak about the Immortality of the Soul. Remember that down through the ages, God's Truth, which is universal in its Revelation to the Prophet is made commensurate with the degree of capacity of the people of the age. An example of this process is the method used in the education of a child. The kindergarten teacher is as important to teach that particular child at that particular age as is the teacher of philosophy who teaches a class in the university.

So this is an axiom. This is a thing that is accepted by all. Every Revelation that was brought by a Prophet of God into the world spoke concerning Immortality in accordance with the degree of capacity of the people. He never spoke above the intelligence and capacity of the people, and His speech was two-fold in aim. One was the part, revealed in clear language, which could be comprehended by the people who lived at the time and received His teachings. The other, which was to be held in reserve, was revealed in symbolic language to be revealed at the time when men had developed the capacity to comprehend it. So, the teachings of each Prophet are both a fulfillment and a promise-- a fulfillment to be achieved by men according to their abilities to comprehend them; and a promise which would be fulfilled at the coming of a subsequent Prophet when mankind will have reached a higher degree of capacity to comprehend the inner meanings and processes of those teachings. For example, in every religion, one of the teachings of great importance is the Immortality of the Soul, both as a reality and as a promise.

In the Dispensation of Moses, stress is put upon the race of Israel and its destiny. The Mosaic laws were to continue to be in force until the "end of time" by the people of Israel. Their clerical leaders interpret this to mean that the laws of Moses are going to endure forever and ever. This literal interpretation of the "end of time" would be like saying to a child that milk, which is its food, is to continue as its sustenance throughout its entire life. There is no physician or dietician who could ever say a thing like that. What, then, did the Prophet mean by the "end of time?" By the "end of time" Baha'u'llah says is meant the end of the Dispensation of Moses, himself. To apply this term to Creation itself would be setting a limitation to the whole of Creation, a limitation such as a beginning and an ending. Such a limitation would be absurd. For this would mean saying that there was a time when Creation was not and that there was to be a time when again it would not be. By saying this, you have stated that there will be a time when the Creator will cease to create or that there was a time when there was no Creator to create. This can never be, because as long as God is, and one of the attributes of God is that He is the Creator, there will always be a creation. When you say there was a time when there was not creation, and there will be a time when there will again be no creation, you are limiting the power of the Creator to the element of time, which is absurd. When you read in the heavenly books of the "beginning" and of the "end", if you take that literally, you have limited the power of God. So you see how great a blessing Baha'u'llah has showered upon mankind by explaining these abstruse principles to solve which the whole world has been vainly struggling. Today God has been most bountiful and most merciful towards mankind.

True civilization can never be achieved without understanding the highest purpose of life. It would be impossible to prove the most lofty truths if the minds of men were bound to limitations.

When you speak about the creation of man and the story of the Garden of Eden, there is symbolic reference to all Prophetic Dispensations without which there would be no object to human life, except for men first to destroy the lower animals, and then to pounce upon themselves. There would be chaos. The all-important matter, which is the objective of all Divine Messengers, is these Prophetic Dispensations. There was a time when a certain Prophetic Dispensation, which means a World, was not created. Then it became created. Again there was a time when that world was no more, and a different, a new one came to be. The story of the creation of man in the Garden of Eden, the first man called Adam, did not necessarily mean the first man God is supposed to have created 7,000 or 8,000 years ago. But it means that as long as there was God, the world was, and the world never was without God.

Man is the highest perfection of God's creation. In the Koran, for example, one reads that when God created man, He had perfected His creation. Can we ever imagine a time when God was and His creation was imperfect? Creation is the shadow, so to speak, of the one reality, and that is God. As long as an individual walks, his shadow is cast upon the ground. You cannot say there was ever a time when man's shadow was not cast. So, by Adam, we have the symbol of the first man in a new world, that is, a new Prophetic Dispensation, an average man of water and clay. Then God takes hold of such a creature and breathes His Spirit into him, and, lo and behold, he becomes man created after the Image of God. Take Moses, for instance, in this case. His background was questionable insofar as reputation was concerned, his having fled to the desert from the land of the Pharaohs for killing an Egyptian. He fled and lived in the wilderness for 40 years. God comes and chooses this water-and-clay individual, inspires him and gives him a mission to go and challenge the Pharaoh. Moses was surprised, said he had a stammering speech, etc. Finally God made a compromise by allowing the brother of Moses, Aaron, to be His spokesman. There is that man created in those circumstances to act as the representative of his Maker, going out with a mission. In every Dispensation you have that.

Now, how about Eve? We know that no conjugal union is achieved, except through the presence of two agents. We are told that Eve was created out of the rib of Adam, meaning the first believer in a Prophet of God is created by the word of the first man, namely, Adam, i.e., the Prophet of the new Dispensation. The status of the first believer is like unto the soil which receives the pure seed of the Divine Truth, and thus a conception is effected which finds language in innumerable generations of believing, holy beings who populate a new world and establish a new spiritual civilization. Such is the status of the Eve, or the first believer. It occurs in every Prophetic Dispensation. Thus, in the light of this interpretation which Baha'u'llah reveals, a logical and intelligent understanding of prophetic truth is given.

The world is in a state of confusion, because people are believing in something which they knew in their inmost heart cannot be proven to be true, because it runs counter, in its literal sense, with all the requirements of plain logic.

The Baha'i Concept of the Immortality of the Soul

In each Dispensation, teachings given by the Prophet are of three kinds.

1. Laws and regulations for the conduct of human affairs.
2. Moral teachings to govern man's individual conduct.
3. Prophecies pointing to:
 - a. The coming of the next Manifestation
 - b. Those which point the way to a Universal Manifestation

which is to appear at the end of all prophetic cycles, or "the time of the end."

These have been the common characteristics of the Seven Great Religions of the World. While the first two lines have been revealed in clear language, the prophecies have been clothed in symbolic language. There is no nation on earth (American Indian, or the peoples of the African jungles, or of any other part of the world) which is not taught that the advent of a subsequent Prophet and that the final Manifestation with its Universal Revelation would be about the unification of all the races of men. Eternity consists of innumerable cycles and epochs, ushered in by Divine Manifestations. A Greater Cycle is 500,000 years and is ushered in by a World Manifestation whose advent has been prophesied by the Prophets of the Lesser Cycles. All we know of the Last Greater Cycle is that which is gleaned from the records. We have no way of knowing of the past ages, and the only authority who can reveal to us its mysteries is the Manifestation of God in His Day.

Man's future destiny is locked in the doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul. In each Dispensation, this is unveiled according to the degree of capacity of the people of the age. But each Prophet taught that the fullest revelation of Immortality will be made by the Universal Manifestation at "the time of the end" as will the inner mysteries in the other teachings of the past Prophets. This is the meaning of the Prophets' uttering that the Book is sealed until the "time of the end."

For example, in primary studies, the name of the elephant or of the bird is taught to the child by pictures drawn by the teacher. But the secret of the power which makes the bird to fly and the elephant to roam is a mystery to the child until he grows to a higher plane of development. Then a new teacher will reveal to him those mysteries. Likewise, only a partial knowledge of Immortality is revealed in the past religious Dispensations, but the full knowledge of it was reserved to be revealed by the Universal Manifestation promised for the "time of the end."

Moses did not go beyond the conception of Racial Immortality in His teachings on Immortality. To Him, Israel would live as a race until the "coming of the Lord." It was to be a national immortality. It did not mean the individual immortality but that of the race.

After the Dispensation of Moses, we have the Christian Dispensation. Christ taught the immortality of the individual soul - that all life was immortal; but as to the kind of immortality, the world in His Day was not ready to receive it. A promise was made for fulfillment at a future date. In the Dispensation of Islam whose Prophet was referred to by Jesus the Comforter, when the Prophet spoke of Immortality of the Soul and the meanings of the Spirit, it was said, "The Spirit

is by the Command of God." When Ali, the first believer in Mohammed, and successor to Mohammed, was asked concerning this, he said: "Whoso sayeth why and wherefore will lose his Faith." This all means that it was beyond the people of the time to understand that the spirit which is confirmed by the "Command of God" is made manifest when man obeys the "Command of God", that is, has faith in the Universal Spirit.

To sum up, each Manifestation reveals a higher expression of the spirit and of the immortality of the soul. In the Dispensation of Islam, it was stated that the soul or spirit is from the "Command of the Lord", but this again was in the nature of a Sealed Book that had to be explained in the advent of the Great Lord who would give solace to Israel, bind her wounds, and restore her to her past glory in uniting her with those of all races and of all men. The New Dispensation which is likened to the phenomenal sun entering the Zodiacal sign of Aries, sheds its effulgence upon all parts of the earth, and that which was hidden becomes manifest.

Now, to speak about what Baha'u'llah teaches concerning the Immortality of the Soul. He teaches that the goal of man's complete destiny is to achieve the "Concourse on High," or the "Supreme Concourse." Let us see what this "Concourse on High" means. In the world of creation, God's creative energy is reflected in every plane of nature. In the plane of matter, its highest expression is found in the crystallization of the minerals which are capable of producing light and fire. Then, in the vegetable kingdom, it manifests, in addition, "virtue augmentative", i.e., the power of increase, such as a larger harvest which results from but a handful of seeds. Then, in the animal kingdom, the same Divine power is further manifested, not only with the highest results of the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, but with the higher measure of God's creative energy in the name of what is called the animal instinct. As we proceed further, we reach the plane of Man wherein a higher measure of God's creative energy is manifest which goes beyond the power of instinct which in man achieves the status of reason and intelligence. Intelligence is a great and mighty gift from on high which, only when divinely guided, frees man from all limitations. Otherwise, even men of science, who invent and achieve wonderful things, are not free from limitations. Nay, the more they know, the more they realize their inadequacy when face to face with the appalling problems of the Universe.

Nothing satisfies man concerned with material and worldly pursuits alone. The greater his wealth, the greater his eagerness to find more wealth. This means that men find their wealth not sufficient. They feel that there must be something more valuable than money itself. Every act of man every day in every department of human life is an evidence of this great fact. Materially, man is never adequate. The very highest that man can achieve is the knowledge of his own insufficiency. Unless he learns by Faith, he will never learn that he can ever achieve greater things, which are enduring. The conception of Immortality revealed by Baha'u'llah explains teachings which are all-comprehensive. It is the soul's progressive advance to the "Concourse on High" wherein man partakes of Divine Creative Energy. This is what was intended by the Spirit which is conferred upon man by the "Command of God" in this Great Day. What does that mean? It means that when Jesus came, when Moses came, and those who advanced toward Him, or those who accepted Him, they became endowed with a power that was bestowed upon them, because they believed in His Message; and that power was so great that it changed the ordinary drop of their being into the vastness of the Ocean of Divine Power. Thus the Divine Manifestation confers upon men what a thousand years of blind worship and the highest wealth of scientific education

could not confer. Once he arose and accepted the call, the limitations of a Peter succumbed to mighty powers of which the humble disciples had never dreamed. That power, which is confirmed when man responds to the call of God, has reached the zenith of its potency in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, which the momentum of 500,000 years of the past Greater Cycle has made manifest in this day. It is this vastness of vision which He opens before man which symbolically is expressed as the "Supreme Concourse".

Let us again see what the Supreme Concourse is. Baha'u'llah teaches that when death comes and this physical existence is ended, the spirit of man, that has been strengthened by faith in the Universal Manifestation of this day, will achieve such progress in the spiritual realms of God, that man's spirit will join the "Supreme Concourse" in the worlds of God, which no other term can explain.

Nothing should be more explicit to illustrate a World which baffles all human imagination than the thought of a flood of light as it comes through a window-pane. If you look into that shaft of light, you see millions upon millions of tiny notes - moving, which form the body of that shaft of light. The atmosphere of the Supreme Concourse is enveloped in an atmosphere of supernal light, every particle of which, every note composing it, is one of the enfranchised souls who, through faith in this Divine Revelation, have attained to that lofty station - which atmosphere vibrant with the Divine attributes of Perfection, such as creativeness, wherein those who breathe become filled with that eternal creative energy of which it is said:

No drop of rain descends from the clouds, except by their command;
No leaf can fall from a tree, except by their will and desire.

This is the gift of Immortality conferred by Baha'u'llah upon the people of faith in this Universal Manifestation.

What is the Meaning of the Resurrection of Christ
Three Days After the Crucifixion?

The occasion of Easter is a symbolic reminder of the continuity and ever-expanding nature of life. It is a symbol of the Covenant God made with men that as long as they remember Him, He will always be with them. It is a lesson that teaches the eternal truth that that which is real is undying; that with every seeming death is achieved a rebirth, and a resurrection on a higher plane of life. The different nations - and the different religions of the world have had experience of the evidences of this resurrection. This is why this Truth is identified always with the springtime, because the spring is a sign of reanimation, rebirth, resurrection. After everything is forgotten and seemingly non-existent, there arises from the vestiges of the dead past, the Manifestation of a new life in the same way that in the fields and forests, from the dead leaves that cover the ground, there emerges the symbol of a new life.

Amongst the Israelites, their release from the age-long night is symbolized by the celebration of Passover, which meant leaving behind the Egypt of darkness and persecution in crossing the Nile to the Promised Land, which vouchsafed a new life, and proved the birth of a new epoch in the development of the human race. That was a great event, a great symbol, the Passover, just as in another Faith we have the Easter and the rising from the dead.

I will only refer to the interpretation of the resurrection of Christ three days after the crucifixion. As the Master taught, to begin with, there were not three calendar days, and this is addressed to those who believe in the literal rising of the body of Jesus from the tomb. Christ was crucified on Friday in the afternoon, and he was in the grave Friday night, Saturday, Saturday night; and on the morning of Sunday visitors to the grave did not find His body.

It had been prophesied that Christ would rise again. The Christian Church tried to connect that prophecy with the story of the Resurrection that took place three days after the crucifixion of Jesus. So there were not three days if you are to take that literally. There were two nights and one day, and that wouldn't make three calendar days.

The true interpretation of the rising of Christ three days after his death is given by Abdu'l-Baha. It is to the effect that when Jesus was crucified, the disciples were so terrified in their fear that they then sought shelter in places of concealment - and for three days, for all practical purposes, the name of Jesus and the message of Christ were buried in the tomb of oblivion. For those who had faith in Christ and were His disciples were scattered, and thus Christ's promise that whenever they gathered together He would be in their midst was not seemingly fulfilled. This "coming together", i.e., in Greek ecclesia, became of paramount importance, that it became symbolized in countless churches, temples and cathedrals which have studded the heaven of Christianity for over nineteen centuries.

Mary, the Magdalene, searched, and found the disciples, and bringing them together again, effected that fulfillment of Christ's promise which was the true symbol of resurrection from the dead; namely, the conviction born in the minds and hearts of the disciples, as to the eternal nature of God's Holy Spirit, with which the martyred Jesus was imbued. The record that she eloquently convinced them of the fact that although the Master had died physically, the spirit that had made him Christ never died, but was realized in the coming together of the disciples, fulfilling the words of Jesus referred to above.

Another interpretation is that by the three days, three Prophet's dispensations were symbolized: namely, Christianity as the Day of Christ, Islam as the Day of the Prophet Mohammad, and the Third day, which is the Day of Dispensation of the Bab, which lasted 19 years, and following which the Spirit of Christ was to come again, manifested in Beha'u'llah, as He declared His mission at Baghdad.

So this rising from the dead in Christianity, and the emergence from the agony of darkness, of tribulation, which was the experience of the Israelites in Egypt, are symbolic of the ever-recurring essence of life. Once given, Life always endures and grows in potency. There is no cessation, nor retrogression for man. So, far from death being the end, it is the beginning of a larger life. While one door, which is that of the individual, is closed, another opens wide so that a larger and greater life can manifest itself. This is true of the life of every individual. It is like unto the period of the development of every man at the time of maturity, as compared with the condition of the individual during his infancy and early childhood. So this, I think, suffices for now.

What is "God Created Man After His Own Image?"

It came to mind to discuss a point, which, as the Master repeatedly taught, was very essential to the aims and purposes, not only of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, but of Creation itself. Creation is called by many, a fiat; that is, a command, and God said "Be," and it "Became". Naturally, Creation originated from God. It was the demonstration of the invisible, intangible, supernal reality that we call God, into an actuality.

Creation is a process. A seed was created, but it was not really a seed that was created. The seed itself is rather the culmination of processes of intermingling agencies and the evolutionary development of substances, and phases, and conditions which result in the appearance of what we call a seed. So the creative fiat is the beginning of a process which, with the lapse of time and aeons of eternity, becomes the reality which we call the universe.

I will furnish an illustration to make this clear. God said, -- as cited by the different Prophets -- that He was the Creator, and the highest form of His act was the Creation of man. In the Koran we read that, after man was created, God said "I have now perfected my creation." According to the words of the Prophet, God said, "I was an invisible essence. As I loved to become known, wherefore I created my Creation through which to become known." As the highest form in creation was man, man has always been chosen through whom the most perfect knowledge of God could be attained. In other words, in the world of Creation, man alone is the most worthy, the most perfect, the most capable agency, a medium by which God, the invisible, in His infinite, limitless powers, can be made manifest in the world. No other creature has the capacity, the gifts and the bounties with which God has blessed man. The chief aim of every religion is to make this - which is a conception in the mind of God - a reality that all can feel and know, so that what God says in the language of all the Prophets, may come to pass; namely, the divine utterance that in that Day of God's Universal Manifestation "God will be all in all."

These are not words of poetry intended to cheer the minds and the souls of men. These are realities. These constitute the rock bottom foundation of all that we call the Creation of God; but it has to find fulfillment in the life of humanity. We call the words of God creative because what they speak comes to pass. No power on earth, or in the heavenly worlds, could forestall the fulfillment and realization of what God has spoken to man through the Prophets.

The greatest of all blessings that God has conferred upon humanity through His Prophets, is this Universal Manifestation, - at the dawn of which we stand - which reveals the full glory of God once every 500,000 years.

The first thing to bear in mind, - as we remarked at the start of this talk, - is this: When we say God creates, that is, when the Creative Fiat emanates from God, we believe the creation becomes an accomplished fact. But what we really should mean is that a process is begun, which, in the lapse of time and in the course of evolution, will eventuate into what we call an accomplished fact.

For example, take the creation of an individual man. That is a process. When the individual man is conceived, his creation is not complete. Then, through the evolutionary, progressive processes, this growth develops until it finally reaches the plane where the fullness of his creation is realized. It is true that once conceived, its potentiality of reaching a full state of development is assured, but you must realize this would be accomplished through a process and not a fortuitous transformation which would immediately follow.

GOD SAID "BE" AND IT "BECAME" is to be understood in the sense that the potentialities came to be. For example, we all know that a harvest of grain is the product of grains previously planted, irrigated, and cultivated; that an abounding harvest is not the possession of a handful of grains or seeds. At the same time, the possession of a handful of wheat is potentially the ancestor, the progenitor, - given the processes of nature, - - which by evolution, which by gradual growth, becomes finally that great abounding harvest.

I have a purpose in mentioning these illustrations. My purpose is to go back to what God spoke in the language of the Prophet of every religion, namely, that in the creation of man, God perfected his creativeness, his power of creating. All other kingdoms preceding the advent of the kingdom of man were just preliminary stages. They were lacking in the great powers that one finds in man.

Now the reason these processes are necessary is to obviate the numerous obstacles or limitations which would otherwise militate against its prompt realization. In the mind of God was man created; thus, there is no sense in choosing one's Prophet above another, since one God inspired and sent all. Each Prophet came to teach that great principle to a given number of people within the boundaries of their limitations.

To illustrate, Moses spoke to the Israelites, and Jesus spoke to the Jews and to the Gentiles. Then Mohammad addressed Himself to the Arab countries, and to the nations who were brought to the Faith of Islam. The same is true of other Prophets who founded the rest of the Seven Great Religions of the world.

The question does not arise whether Moses, Jesus, or Mohammad or any Prophet-founder of the Seven Great Religions of the world was greater or lower in rank than the other. All were sent by the one God, and each revealed God's truth to His people in accordance with the latter's degree of capacity.

Bear in mind that the chief goal of God in creating was to make Himself fully known in the world of Creation. This will come to pass when all men are united. Today, separateness, as such, is much in evidence, but will disappear. The chief purpose in this Day is integration. Segregation in all forms has no ground to stand on. It is absolutely impossible. The day has come when the creative Fiat "Be" has "Become." The day has come when the promise that God created man, in order that He may thereby become known of him, becomes an accomplished fact.

So, in order to avoid further digressions, I would like to draw my conclusion right here, and it is to state that in this day, the chief point of importance for all of us is UNIFICATION, the harmonizing of all human, disparate elements, - and once human integration has been accomplished, and it is bound to be accomplished, - there is no power on earth or in heaven by which it can be forestalled. Once this is an accomplished fact, mankind will be adorned by a raiment of proclaiming the Oneness of God, and once this measure of progress and development has been achieved by man everywhere, there is nothing in the world of creation, that could be concealed from the sight of man.

The Master used to say that when the world is unified, the measure of man's perception will so be increased that it will achieve marvels of art and invention compared to which all achievements of science and discovery - marvelous as they seem at present - would appear like the playthings of children.

The Revelation of Baha'u'llah has brought the means by which all men of every race, religion, and nationality are enabled to live according to the teachings of God, as revealed by the Prophets of the past. This is the panacea He has brought. This is the establishment of the "Kingdom of Heaven" upon the earth.

But many non-Baha'is, inquirers, ask us whether or not Baha'u'llah has brought a new economic system. A study of the Faith of Baha'u'llah will reveal it to be all-comprehensive, and no important point remains unclarified. Hence, asking such questions as the one mentioned would be exactly like a man who has come to give us the key to the Treasury of the United States of America, and we still beg him for a dollar to go and buy food.

Baha'u'llah has fulfilled all that was beyond the power of men down through the ages. That vital matter relegated by all Prophets to the "time of the end" is the establishment of Unity as a foundation of Universal Peace. This divine power is awe-inspiring to contemplate, a power which the Revelation has released in the world today. But this great fact can only be seen through the eyes of Faith; otherwise, it would remain non-existent. Its example is in the field sown with grain, which to the eye of an infant is nothing, but which the mature man will see as the abounding harvest which will be garnered in due course.

COVENANT

The dictionary defines the Covenant as a solemn ordinance, an authoritative relationship between God and man. Today, in the Baha'i Faith, the Covenant of God is of deepest significance. Night and day, the importance of the Covenant of God was stressed by Abdul'Baha. For it had been but eight years after the departure of Baha'u'llah when the Covenant-breakers increased violent attacks upon the Master. They thought that now that Baha'u'llah had gone, they, the family, could not inherit spiritual authority; hence they thought to take unto themselves material wealth, prominence, and worldly position. Though the Bab had suffered martyrdom, though His disciples had likewise died the deaths of martyrs, and though Baha'u'llah, the very Manifestation of God, had suffered imprisonment for decades in order to establish His Covenant, they thought it was for them, His family, to seek tangible inheritance and temporal authority and privileges. This search after temporal things led them to break the Covenant of God, and it was this violation that Abdul'Baha, the Center of the Covenant, was determined to prevent.

A Syrian, Dr. Kheir'u'llah, came to this country in the late 1890's and spoke of the Faith in Chicago, although he knew little of it. He desired to make himself prominent and recognized as a great disciple of this Faith; and he surrounded himself with followers, none of whom really knew that this Faith had come to the world in order to destroy, once and for all, the very things the Syrian sought to acquire after the passing of Baha'u'llah.

Complicated definitions of the Covenant I shall try to avoid giving you. I shall speak only that which I learned from the numerous utterances of Abdul'Baha on those occasions when we sat with American and European pilgrims around the table at mealtimes.

The Covenant is a sacred institution, which, from time immemorial, had been preserved, so that, in the due course of time, it would be recognized by all men as that paramount ideal toward which the whole world should aspire. In the Koran, the sacred book of Islam, there is a verse which has direct reference to the Covenant of God. In it, God asks, "Am I not your Lord?" The Islamic explanation of this has taken many forms, but the Universal belief is that before the creation of living things, God assembled in His Presence all that would be created, and He invited them to affirm whether, if granted the privilege of life, they would acknowledge Him as their Lord. All of the categories of being, according to this interpretation, when confronted with this question from on high, refused an acknowledgement which would necessitate the carrying of such a weighty burden; - a burden which would mean tests and tribulations, imprisonments, martyrdoms, and tortures beyond their endurance; wherefore, all answered, "Nay, O Lord!" The Lord then called upon the angelic hosts who again said "Nay." Finally God called upon the reality of man, and man alone answered in the affirmative: "Yeah, My Lord, I recognize you as my Lord!" As a reward, God created man in His own Image and said, "I have now perfected My Creation."

Of course, the orthodox take such a story in a literal sense and interpret it in a manner which runs counter to reason. But who could ever say that there was a time when God was and creation was not? This would be like saying that you and I once did exist but our shadow did not exist. Similarly, the world of creation is like the shadow of the Creator. Without the Creator, how shall His shadow exist? Thus, you can see that the above-mentioned story cannot be taken literally. This means, the Master said, a time before the advent of a prophetic Dispensation, when God raises a man amongst other men and invests him with divine authority to rise and lead mankind and not shrink from sufferings and tribulations - and even martyrdom - in order to establish divine civilization upon this earth.

Until the advent of Baha'u'llah, these truths lay hid behind veils of concealment. These were the Book which the Prophets said was sealed and would be opened at the "Time of the End," i.e., at the Advent of the Promised Lord. For with the coming of Baha'u'llah came that "Day wherein all that has been hidden will become revealed," the day wherein the inner mysteries of all things shall become manifest in the Center of His Covenant; the one who was divinely appointed in His Will and Testament. It is in that Book that the Universal Manifestation of God entered into a covenant with all the faithful that they would stand firmly in obedience to that Sacred Center, without Whose Interpretation the inner significances of God's teachings in this Day could not be understood. Wherefore, this is the Covenant which was entered into with men who were destined to render Him complete obedience in His sacred task of establishing the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Why, then, it is asked, is it that this Covenant and the Center of the Covenant are so important? To answer this, I will now relate another story which is gleaned from the religions of the world.

It refers to a first man, an Adam, and the Adamic era. It states that Adam was the first man in a garden ages ago, where he was given a helpmate in the person of one Eve, who was moulded out of one of the ribs of Adam, and united with him, bringing forth innumerable generations. This story, according to religious narrative, dates back some 7000 years!

Baha'u'llah explains that this did not mean the creation of the first parents, but the first man chosen by God to initiate a new prophetic Dispensation, which would have both beginning and end.

The saying that there was ever a God when the world was not created, as already mentioned, is not to be taken literally; for the existence of a creation connotes a Creator. This only meant that there was a TIME when God had not yet raised man, as such, to be His Manifestation, to be the Adam of a prophetic Dispensation. That is, the world of creation, as the Creator Himself, is without beginning and without end, though the Dispensations within this world of no beginning and no end, do have beginning and end. Let us use as example the Day of Moses. The Manifestation of God, Moses, was the Adam of a Dispensation of a new world, which God created when He had breathed His own spirit into him and, lo and behold, he became man created after the Image of God.

What, then, is meant by man being made of the clay of the earth? We refer to the man Moses in His day. He was as other men (meaning of ordinary flesh and blood) until God raised him to Prophethood. Furthermore, in the world's view, he had even killed a man in settling a quarrel between an Israelite and an Egyptian, and He had fled punishment of the law and into the wilderness, where he lived the life of a shepherd. It was there that God had chosen this man of flesh-and-blood to be a Prophet. Moses, the shepherd, had become the interlocutor of God.

As for the Eve in the case of Moses, Aaron, who was the first to believe in Him as the Manifestation, was the one who had received the seed of Faith from Moses; and this spiritual, conjugal union was to find expression in generations of believers who populated the world, i.e., the world of the Mosaic Dispensation. It was such a world which had a beginning and an ending. It began in Moses and ended at the rise of Christ. When Moses said, "This law shall endure until the time of the end," he did not mean until the end of the created Universe. For, as stated above, the Universe had not a beginning any more than it has an ending. Likewise, the Christian Dispensation was a Prophetic world which had its beginning in Jesus, and ending in the coming of another Manifestation.

Here again, the soil in which the seed was planted was a Peter, or first believer, and the harvest was the Christian world which was illumined with the light of Christ. It is the same with other Prophetic Manifestations where the first one to believe is the successor, although he is not specifically recorded as the Center of the Covenant; or he is the moon that sheds its light fetched in from the sun, after the setting of the sun.

To sum up, the Center of the Covenant - or the successor in the past Dispensation, was only identified from certain mystical allusions on the part of the Prophet. For example, Christ's saying was taken to be an allusion to the first believer, Peter, whose name meant "rock", when He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church." To this source was traced the church's recognition of Peter as Christ's successor. But there was no textual and literal appointment of Peter by Christ in that capacity, any more than there was in the utterance in the case of Aaron being named his successor; or, in like manner, Ali after Mohammad.

The Shiis believe that Mohammad named Ali, the first believer, as His successor. This is on the authority of two traditions. One is that once, before His death, He addressed the assembled faithful, saying, "Those who have recognized me as their Master shall recognize Ali as such after My departure. The other is that He announced to the assemblage of the faithful that He was leaving them, but He was leaving for them two weighty matters: (1) the Book of God; (2) His family; meaning Ali and the eleven lineal descendants, namely, the eleven Imams, born of Ali and Mohammad's daughter, Fatimeh. This conception of the Shii "School of the Twelve" is not recognized by the Sunnites. The Baha'i Faith recognizes this as a documentary evidence of Ali's successorship, and his and his eleven lineal descendants' (Imams') authority as the true interpreters of the Koran.

This indirect reference concerning the successorship led to the numerous divisions which arose, amongst the faithful, to affect the solidarity of the Faith of Islam. But as gleaned from the other religions of mankind, it was therefore reserved for the Universal manifestation foretold by all of them to establish world unity amongst men by removing all stumbling blocks which had impeded such achievement in the past. Hence, Baha'u'llah, in His last Will and Testament, made definite provision with clarity for His successor thus removing all doubt as to His successor His eldest son and successor, the Center of His Covenant; namely His greatest Branch, Abbas, as the only authoritative Interpreter of His words. This left no room whatsoever for anyone to introduce divisive factors in the Faith after the passing of its Divine Founder.

We now refer to the sacred Scriptures of the Past, which furnish a Prophetic reference to this great consummation, the bulwark for the protection, and the sole means for the stability and unity of the people of Baha.

Another tradition based upon the Scriptural writings of the past, refers to the rebellion of Satan, after the creation of man. As he refused the mandate to kneel before man, the Lord said, "Thou shalt be accursed forever more." Satan then pleaded with the Lord, "Have I not served and led your angelic hosts during the aeons of eternity? Wouldst Thou not at least grant me a respite before my suffering eternal damnation? The Lord then said, "Thou shalt be given a respite only until the Time of the End when the Lord shall appear, in the Day of Resurrection when Thou shalt be imprisoned for a thousand years." Once having secured this respite, he - as one recalls Mephistopheles of Goethe's FAUST - boastingly said, Now that I have obtained this respite I shall mislead all those except those whom Thou hast chosen unto Salvation."

To apply this to the subject of this talk, one should refer to the confusion and division which began soon after the passing away of any of the Prophets. For no definite appointment of a successor was made, and thus the Satan of violation sowed the seeds of division until the right path was lost sight of and the abomination of desolation reigned up to the advent of a new Prophet to restore peace and unity amongst men.

In the advent of Baha'u'llah, one finds the fulfillment of all prophecies of the world's religions concerning the advent of the Lord at the dawn of the Day of God, the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven, upon this earth - the Day of Resurrection - which was to usher in a new world, and a new creation, out of the confusion of the past ages and by achieving this consummation to forestall the recurrence of Satanic mischiefs and seditions, which were rampant in the Dispensations of the past.

Baha'u'llah revealed the Book of the Covenant and the Testament wherein His appointed Center of the Covenant would prevent the repetition of the said confusions and divisive factors. This clearly appointed Center of the Covenant was also the only Interpreter of the Book to Whom all should turn in full obedience and complete submission. This great foundation, which has had no parallel in any of the Dispensations of the past, is the greatest phenomenon on the horizon of Baha'u'llah's Dispensation. It is this Covenant and its extension into the great Institution of Divine Guardianship, which will insure the solidarity of the Faith and complete the edifice of the promised Universal Peace during the first Millenium of the Baha'i Dispensation. This is indeed the fulfillment of the imprisonment of the Satan of division in the first Millenium of the Day of God!

Abdul'Baha is the Divine Exemplar in the Faith of Baha'u'llah, the mirror in which all Divine attributes of the Manifestation finds their full reflection. The term "servitude" should not be considered as derogatory to the full implications of the Master's appointment. This is born out by two sacred traditions of the Islamic Faith. One is that in the End of Time God would reveal Himself in His full glory and majesty, and He would be so awe-inspiring that all would tremble before Him as though thunderstruck. He would then disappear but re-appear in the guise of servitude and Humility, and then all would hasten unto Him and be healed by His love. This is indeed fulfilled in the servitude, loving-kindness, long-suffering, and patience which were the hallmarks of the Beloved Master's mission.

Another sacred prophetic utterance is this: "Servitude is a substance, the essence of which is divinity."

This is why the Master adopted servitude as the "crown of His Glory" and this adoption, which He called His special privilege, closed the door to the possibility of anyone in the Faith of Baha'u'llah arising to stand above others in leadership in a Cause whose Master proclaimed Himself as the servant of Baha and the servant of the servants of God.

The beloved Guardian of the Faith, chosen as the Distinguished Branch of the Sinaitic Tree, i.e., of the most glorious Manifestation of Baha'u'llah, represents the extension of the Institution of the Covenant, which is to consummate the reign of Justice, and to change and transform, once and for all, the world into the beatific realm of the Heavenly Kingdom upon the earth. The Guardianship is the sacred agency which will bring about the expansion of the stream of Baha'u'llah's life-giving spirit which culminated the mission of the Center of His Covenant into the oceans of the universal righteousness and peace, with crowning-glory of the "reign of God."

All this was foretold by Baha'u'llah in numerous Tablets, especially His Tablets of the Holy Mariner, and the Virgin, which clearly contain reference to the Institution of the Guardianship.

It is a belief of the Shii Moslems, based on sacred traditions traced to Ali, the First Believer in Mohammad and the First of the Twelve Imams, that at the time of the Advent of the promised Manifestation the Institution of the Islamic Imamat will return. This is supported by another sacred tradition attributed to Ali, which is to the effect that when the promised Manifestation comes Ali will have two returns, one 'before Mohammad' and the other 'after Hossein! The Shiis believe that actually and literally this will be fulfilled; but the real meaning, as made clear to us in our Faith, is that the two returns of Ali are, ** in the said tradition (1) 'before Mohammad: which means Ali Mohammad - which was the name of the Bab - and (2) 'after Hossein" - Hossein-Ali, the name of Baha'u'llah.

As for the return of the Imam, which Moslem Shiis believe to be the return of the twelve Imams, i.e., the Guardians of the Islamic Faith, this meant no other than the Institution of the Guardianship, which is found in the Will and Testament of Abdul'Baha.

** 'Before Mohammad', that is, Mohammad, the name of the Bab; and 'after Hossein Ali', the name of Baha'u'llah

BAHA'U'LLAH TEACHES THAT THE GREAT RELIGIONS ARE DIVINE IN ORIGIN

As you know, this is a class for the study of the inner teachings of the Baha'i faith. It is very difficult for people used to the older religions to believe that there could be anything right which has been revealed by another's Prophet. Every religion is based upon the word of God revealed by a Prophet to bring guidance to humanity. Every civilization worthy of the name has its origin in a great religion, but no agency has been capable of establishing a civilization unless it was based upon the words revealed by God. The Revelation of Baha'u'llah is a Universal Faith; and, as such, it is religion renewed.

People think that a new religion means one that comes in order to teach the world that they will have to abandon all of the older religions and accept the new. As a matter of fact, the principles of guidance revealed in all the religions of the world are divine in origin, and are aimed at achieving the same goal. It is only to make these principles work in the life of humanity that the founder of a new Faith opens a new Dispensation. The world today thinks that all that religion requires is that those who follow it appear once a week at a place of worship and follow certain rituals and ceremonies prescribed by that church or denomination, but devote the rest of the week to other matters. This is what is called institutionalized religion - for instance - let us say, a church to which people belong because that gives them an opportunity to get acquainted with one another, raise funds, and do social service, keep by themselves, separate and aloof from other religious bodies. But this is not a true conception of religion. To begin with, religion not only concerns the people who live at the time of the Revelation, but it is directed towards the needs of all the people that may be born both during that Dispensation as well as those who are born thousands of years later. There is a Verse in the Koran wherein the Prophet addresses Himself to the concourse of men and genii. Moselems believe the word "genii" means those invisible apparitions said to be good or evil ones; but the Baha'i interpretation of this Verse is that the word "genii" or "jinn" in Arabic, is derived from the root "Janine", which means the womb; and by addressing men and genii, the Prophet meant the generation of His own time and those which would be born from the wombs in future times.

In other words, religion is not only addressed to those who live contemporaneously with the Prophet, but it is also addressed to all those who would be born during that Prophetic Dispensation. Religion is the link between man and his God.

Because of the gift of a living soul, conferred upon all men by God, the Creator, the most important part of man's being is his spiritual aspect. Thus, in man's education, that knowledge taught in colleges and other schools of acquired learning, supply only the mental and the physical needs of the individual. Man's mind is thereby developed. But the all-important education which the soul of man requires is that education which can come to us from God only through His Prophets; and once one has received that which a Prophet of God brings in His Day, one ceases to be an ordinary human being. He then becomes man created, as God says in the heavenly Books - "After the image and likeness of God."

We all know that God, the Essence, has no material body. Then what does it mean when God says He created man after His own likeness? It does not mean the ordinary man that is born all over the world - that type of man to which all of us belong - unless we believe that every man is endowed with the potentialities capable of achieving great acts which would enhance him to the level of his likeness to his Creator. This does not mean the average human being, born only to seek the wherewithal, the means, for his own individual welfare, for his own physical comfort - on life's material plane. A man who only seeks things that are material belongs to the animal kingdom. It may be because he walks upon two legs he could be

classed as a superior order of animals. But, in the sight of God, a man who is selfish, who makes trouble in the land, who does not show forth the spirit of kindness, who does not tolerate his fellowmen because they belong to another race or religion is, in the sight of God, lower than the dumb animals of the forest. Why? Because animals, if they prey upon one another, it is to sustain life; they are not endowed with souls which would teach mercy. But man is endowed with the gift of a divine soul; and, in order that he may give a good account of the stewardship which has been entrusted to him, he must act in a God-like manner; not only to seek his own happiness, his own welfare, or satisfy his own ambitions, but to serve in a manner whereby his fellowmen would be benefitted by his acts and deeds. In other words, religion is capable of awakening the spiritual in man, and no other power on earth can achieve that.

The purpose of God in sending Prophets into the world has been this, that by the teachings that they reveal, man can convert the potentiality of greatness and achievement, with which God has endowed him, into the actuality of deeds of justice and mercy.

The reason why God has sent more than one religion is not because other religions are not divine. Those also who are not even concerned with matters of religion in this world, and are dedicated to science, should recognize that there is no such thing as a false religion in its original state. Christianity is true. Mohammadism is true. Judaism is true. Buddhism is true. Brahmanism is true. Zoroastrianism is true. They are only discredited by irresponsible, ignorant, uninformed human beings who think that only their own religions are true. Of course, we can say a great deal against the forms that have developed in the different religions of the world, and describe them as man-made. That is another matter. For example, the founder of every religion taught peace, yet you find in the development of each religion, some sect led by men of ambition will rise against other sects of the same faith and shed the blood of those who dare to differ with them in matters of interpretation. It is foolish to blame the founder of a religion for the acts of such men and leaders. For example, when a king sends a governor to rule over a certain state or province, the very fact that such a mission is conferred upon that governor is supported by the assumption that he is qualified to dispense justice and fairness towards his subjects or amongst his citizens. Now, if a governor seized the property of some of the citizens or otherwise violated the principles of trust which he is responsible to preserve, - you cannot blame the King who appointed him. You can only blame the wrong-doing, or injustice of the governor, for which reason he would eventually lose his position. Therefore, because we have seen acts of injustice perpetrated by the followers of a certain religion, we must not say that that religion is wrong. The Prophet of Islam says, "Do not, O people of Islam, spread sedition amongst men." Nevertheless, we find in certain times, various atrocious acts have been committed by Moslems. Christ, for example, says, "You must love your neighbor as yourself," and yet there have been wars in which Christians have drawn a sword against their brothers.

Communists do not believe in religion at all. They call it the opiate of the people, because certain followers of religion have committed evil deeds. You cannot blame the founders of those Faiths, nor can you substitute one wrong for another. Those wrong deeds cannot be blamed on the Prophets who founded the religions of God. Those misdeeds, far from being prompted by religion, represent aberrations, departures from the principles of the Prophets.

Now, to come back to the subject from which we digressed. No matter what the religion we speak of, there are certain rules of guidance, which have been

revealed in each, in order to improve the qualities of men; because there is in every man the potentiality of achieving great deeds of justice, of righteousness, of benevolence. God, Himself has given these potentialities to man, and His Prophets help man to develop them and avoid converse with sources which are inimical to the true progress of the human race. This is the lesson that, in one form or another, has been given by every Prophet who founded a Divine Religion. The Revelation of Baha'u'llah teaches that human beings are fundamentally brothers and kin. That is the noblest goal for men to work for, and each religion has brought some of such principles to men.

A while ago we stated that the reason why there have been several religions is that up to very recent centuries the world had not yet discovered itself. Humanity had not yet discovered its own component parts. You all know that when Columbus started to cross the Atlantic Ocean, he did not know he was going to a new hemisphere of North and South America. He thought he was merely going to find a shorter passage to India. If people do not know that other countries and peoples existed, then why should they complain because God sent other Prophets into the world in addition to their own peoples' Prophets? The only difference was the languages and forms in which the Prophets addressed their respective peoples. Knowing that God is just, we are not permitted to assume that He preferred some nations above others by sending true Prophets to some and false ones to others. That is why Baha'u'llah teaches there are seven great Religions of the world and that they are all true in their origin.

An additional important proof of the truth of all the seven great world Religions is that they all prophesied the advent of a Universal Manifestation of the Sun of Truth, whose rays would illumine and quicken the peoples of all the regions of the world. Some call it "the day of Resurrection," the day when the old heaven and earth would pass away, and the Lord, established upon a throne, would separate the quick from the dead, following the peal of a trumpet; and that God, in that day, would make all things new.

Other proofs which identify every true Prophet are that each revealed the inner meanings of the teachings and prophecies of His predecessor, and, because of this new interpretation which, to the followers of the previous religions, appeared heretical, He and His followers were persecuted. Another was that each taught that God was One, which, being contrary to the worship of many gods, was repugnant, and thus aroused the people to persecute Him and His followers.

For similar reasons, Jesus was crucified and His followers were persecuted and martyred. The same fate ^{was} met by Mohammad and other Prophets whose firmness in their Faith, in the teeth of these persecutions, was strong proof that they and their Faith were true. The records of Christ and Moses are familiar to my hearers. Here I relate, in conclusion, an incident which illustrates the sufferings of the Prophet of Islam.

The story is told of one of the followers of Mohammad who was a man from the tribe of Abi-Ghifar. He was a humble shepherd (by name Abu-zar). When the people and leaders of Mecca, who were all idolators, rose at last in force against Mohammad and His small following (and many of the latter crossed the sea and sought refuge in Abyssinia), - Mohammad was forced to flee from the city and hide himself in a cave in the mountains. It was Abu-zar, the humble shepherd, who, finding the Prophet in danger of being discovered by the pursuing enemy, entered the cave and placed the Prophet in a large sack, which he swung upon his shoulders, starting out to find a safer place.

But on emerging from the cave he was confronted by numerous enemies, who stopped him and asked him, "Where is Mohammad?"

Abu-zar replied, "Mohammad is in the sack which I am carrying on my back to a place of safety."

Hearing this, the enemy thought he was ridiculing them, and, with a parting curse, they let him go.

It was in this connection that later, when in His great glory and honor in the city of Medina - surrounded by hosts of friends and devoted followers the Prophet often referred to the incident of the cave and said: "Forsooth, had it not been for the truthfulness of Abu-zar, I would have been slain by my enemies and my mission would have never been fulfilled."

Today the numerous descendants of Abu-zar, - whose families have lived in Persia for centuries and are amongst the leading, eminent classes of the people, - take pride in relating that they are descendants of that humble shepherd whose truthfulness saved Mohammad, Prophet of Islam, from the enemies who sought His life - so that He might live and perform His mission as the Messenger of the One God.

The sun I was speaking about never goes to sleep. The sun is continually active in shedding its rays, in conferring its benign light and warmth. It never goes to sleep.

What is the meaning of that? God said He created everything for the benefit of mankind. Everything that God created was a symbol of the underlying reality, which is the chief blessing that God could confer upon human beings.

We find the rains come, and there again, they accomplish a purpose. They irrigate the soil and make seeds and plants grow. They never relax. Similarly, the rays of the Sun of Eternity are constantly at work. Does that mean that the work of a Baha'i is part time work? As I told you before, I am referring to what the Master repeated in one language or another a thousand times, namely, that deeds, not words, count. If only we realized, He used to say, the importance of our being chosen by God in the Day of this great Manifestation!

Do you know the effect of the yeast, and how it leavens the dough and prepares it for baking? Christ called His followers the "salt of the earth." We, as Baha'is, are the leaven by which the whole loaf of humankind is to be leavened. Whether we want to accept it or not, we are looked upon as such, and if we don't demonstrate our innate capacity to share what we have gained from the Blessed Perfection and express our blessings, by deeds, for the happiness of mankind, we have failed in our responsibility.

As we said before, we do not have Baha'is of this or that class. We have either Baha'is or nominal Baha'is, which means no true Baha'is. In other words, we have no good Baha'is or bad Baha'is. You say so and so is a very good Baha'i, which means some other ones are not good Baha'is. In the language of the Baha'i Faith, the one who is not a good Baha'i is no Baha'i. It does harm to the Cause of the Baha'i Faith to misrepresent the important standards set by Baha'u'llah when we, who are called Baha'is, fail in our duties.

So, by saying all these things, I have one purpose, and that is to show that it is not learning, (it is not only the knowledge of the inner meanings of the teachings of the Faith - nor is it an intellectual grasp of the inner significances of the Words of God - but it is the application of our knowledge of the Faith to the needs of the human race.) And we do not have to go far away, into the jungles of India, Malaya, or Africa, to perform this, unless we are able to do this. Wherever we are, there are thirsty people, hungry people everywhere - thirsty for the knowledge of Truth, hungry for the food of the soul - and we are the ones who through God's peace, God's mercy, are chosen; and we are destined to act as leaven which raises the entire loaf. If there is something wrong with the leaven, it will not accomplish the intended result.

We have in the "Hidden Words" the rules for the conduct of life. To take each of these every day to use as a standard for examining ourselves to find whether we have expressed it in action. So, you see, it doesn't need wealth, and it doesn't need anything except a sincere desire to express what we learn, through action.

Supposing you came here to Washington and purchased a map of the city, and spread it before you and tried to study week in and week out, month in and month out, all the details in that particular map; all the alleys and streets, highways and byways, corners and nooks - would you think you had thus achieved the knowledge of the city by studying the map? NO! This is only a guide book. You have to start out and either walk or drive to cover that territory. Just so, when we become Baha'is, we cease to be only students; for we must act.

Many men come and tell us, "We are living according to the life that God has shown us in our religion.", such as the Golden Rule, - and they ask, "Do we still need to become Baha'is?" That would be like a person who has made a study of the map of Washington, but has never seen those streets about which he has been studying - without actually having visited them in person.

WHEN ONE BECOMES A BAHA'I, HE LEARNS TO LIVE THE TEACHINGS OF HIS FORMER RELIGION, AND HE FINDS A WIDER HORIZON IN HIS SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Do you know, we neglect our duties when we do not try to find out where we can serve? I include myself amongst all our friends in the same way Abdu'l-Baha taught us. He always included Himself. I never heard the Master say, "I", or "you" must do so and so. He always used the word, "We". He always said "We must do." It was His humility, a sign of the children of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Once we arise to do the Will of God, we have no more excuse. We used to have excuses in the past. You could say, "I don't know even which way to turn." There are so many churches, denominations, warring, hating one another, and they don't know how to be guided, or "I can't find the right path in a confused situation such as this." But, remember, that excuses end for every Baha'i at the time he accepts the Faith of Baha'u'llah. For every Baha'i knows the right path, and if he fails to travel on that path, he has failed in his duty.

God can forgive us if we don't know the right path, but I don't think we can forgive ourselves, if, knowing the path, we still do not walk in it, but act selfishly as if we were islands. I would like to illustrate this by repeating a story I have told you before, and that is this: That there is a difference between God's conception of man, and man's conception of man. The difference lies in this, that when a man says, "man", that individual may be a Turk, may be a German, may be a Jew, may be a Christian; but when God says "man", He means all mankind. The chief purpose of every Prophet is to impress this point upon every human individual, so that men cease to be islands; so that men may walk together, cooperate, be integrated in one unit, and by so doing gain strength, - and then to use that strength in an effort to mold the destinies of their fellowmen, until the glorious goal, that is, the universality of man, is achieved.

God created men after His own image and likeness. When God created man, as scriptures of all nations say, He said: "Now I have perfected my Creation." Then it is the task of mankind, under the guidance of the Prophets of God, to demonstrate that truth, namely, that man is potentially endowed with the dimensions of the mighty world - man who represents, in every phase of his being, that Divinity, that Creative Will and Strength which made His creation perfect.

Through the unity of mankind only can we visualize ~~at the~~ Oneness of God, or realize what God meant, when creating man, He said, "Now I have perfected my Creation." In man divided, there will be antagonism; there will be animosity; there will be war. God's Creation will not be perfect.

Today, only the people of Baha are chosen to be the instruments for achieving the unity of mankind; and it is the duty of them to demonstrate this fact in a climate of devoted service. We are very far from that goal, and yet we are near it; - very far, if we fail to realize that the true purpose of the Words of a Manifestation is to inspire man for action, and for continuous alertness. No relaxation, in the sense of laying by, or of putting aside, our duty to act, and saying, "some other time"; any more than God's sun would perform a half day job or a part time job.

A Baha'i is a dynamic being. A Baha'i differs from others who are not Baha'is, in the sense that others are static. Others are satisfied with what they have chosen as their path, their religion, their goal in life; and the moment you try to get them out of the rut - that complacency - they refuse, asserting they do not wish to be disturbed.

Every noon a Baha'i asks, "What have I done this morning?" or, "Do I approve of a certain act of mine?" or, "What am I going to do this afternoon?" - these sound boring; these seem trifles. Let us not deceive ourselves. If we are Baha'is, we must be continuously at work to prove what we really are. If we are Baha'is in theory, well and good. Then the best we can accomplish is to be as repositories of certain precious seeds, remembering that as long as those seeds are locked up in the granary, there will be no world harvest. That's all there is to it.

A Baha'i is a man of action, continually endeavoring and trying to demonstrate his Faith, through his life, by creating an atmosphere in which people of all races and nationalities and religions may breathe a life-giving spiritual ozone. Thus, when others come in contact with Baha'is, they breathe in an atmosphere that is vibrant with life. Blind action does not take us anywhere; controversy does not; fault-finding does not, nor does projecting one's own personality over and above others.

Another point is that in this Day, we are far more blessed than those who shall come after us; for we are chosen in the days

of the First Guardian of the Baha'i Faith. Some of us in the days of Abdu'l-Baha, the Master, and others in the days of Baha'u'llah. We have a duty to perform that far transcends the duties incumbent upon those who come after us; because we are early channels through which flows the stream of the Revelation in its purity and freshness to confer a new life upon mankind. If we fail in our duty, God will entrust others with the task of accomplishing His purpose.

So, now, here is a competition. Are we going to say, as the common vernacular would, "Let Goerge do it."? It is a thing we can do everywhere in life, in our relationships with others, to find where we can be of service to Baha'is and non-Baha'is. One can try to find where we can serve by means of Baha'i News publications, etc., that call on all Baha'is to take certain action; to find the means by which these requests can be carried out. If we don't do it, who will?

BUT ONCE WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS GOAL OF SERVICE, WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT THE DYNAMICS OF OUR ACTION WILL GALVANIZE THE ENTIRE BODY-POLITIC, NAY, GO BEYOND THAT LIMITATION, AND TRANSFORM THE ENTIRE WORLD.

I dislike preaching. What are we going to do? We are talking to each other. I am not telling you I can do more than you can, or that I know more than you know. Far from it. Sometimes the humblest men in the most distant parts of the earth accomplish one little act, which, in the sight of God, has the alchemy to transmute the base metal of human imperfection into the golden glory of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Observations on Islam and the Koran

While every religion bears the name of its founder, the religion of Muhammad is known as Islam. Many western writers misrepresent the term "Islam" as being the foundation of the so-called fatalism which is attributed to the teachings of Muhammad. The word Islam means being at peace and tranquillity and yielding to God in the spirit of unity and serenity. But the vulgar assumption of Islam as meaning the complete submission to God's will is no interpretation of this word.

The fundamental requirements of Islam is to "to believe in the unseen God. . . . observe the prayers and give to charity. . . and to have assurance in the life to come. . ." (Koran, Sura ii. 1-6)

Islam further inculcates that the Creator is One, immaterial, endowed with power and mercy and that man should show supreme love towards that Creator. He should likewise be merciful and work for brotherhood amongst men; suppress passionate desires; be grateful to God the Giver of all things, and believe that he shall be accountable for his acts in another life. A Moslem should believe in God's never-ceasing mercy and in His ever-flowing life, light, and spirituality.

It is well here to point out the state of the various religious beliefs of the different peoples who were contemporary with the rise of the Arabian Prophet.

The inhabitants of pre-Islamic Arabia held to conceptions of the Divinity which differed according to their individual or tribal culture. With some it was "divinization" or deification of created phenomena. With others, it was degenerated to fetishism or the worship of stick or stone. While some believed in after life, others had no such conception. Some worshipped in groves where an oracle was to speak through trees attended by priestesses. This system was not unlike the Syro-Phoenicians. Even men's generative powers shared with the Heavenly Hosts the people's adoration. This form is traceable to the ancient Phallic worship. The Arabs, however, were not unconscious of a mystic, invisible power, which let loose the hurricane or painted the mirage of the desert.

This sorship of the unseen may have been injected into the ancient Arabs' minds through the religious ideas of the Jews who were in contact with the Arabs in Arabia from time to time. But, it did not rise to the level of the definite worship of one God by Moses and its recurrence in the teachings of Muhammad. The Jewish worship of the one God likewise varied as between those of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, and the others whose contact was with the Roman world as led by Vespasian, Trajan or Hadrian. The Jews' contact with the latter had repeatedly led them into idolatry.

Other Jewish comers into Arabia were the Shammites and the Zealots who were the worshippers of the law and whose Scribes and Rabbis, as the guardians of the law, were looked upon as objects of adoration. These priests were "considered living exemplars and mirrors in which the true mode of life. . . was preserved." (Dollinger, "The Gentile and the Jew", Vol II, P. 308) The said Jews (according to Josephus) held Moses' name next to that of God's. Sometime later, they held Ezra in the same reverence. This was when Cyrus and Darius, after their conquest of Babylon, appointed Ezra to lead the captives back to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple with the funds of the benevolent Persian kings.

Not until the rise of Jesus were the teachings of divine unity and the divine personal will accepted amongst some of the Jewish race. These were the sect called "The Worshippers of Jehovah." But even amongst them, these doctrines were

degenerated by contact with heathen metaphysics and modified by pagan influences. This deterioration of the doctrine of divine unity was also visible amongst the Hindus and their numerous gods, among the Mago-Zoroastrinas with their idea of eternal conflict between the god of good, and the god of evil, not to mention the Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks, whose numerous gods were painted in such phases of immorality far below that of their most depraved believers.

Such was the state of the civilized world when Jesus arose to teach His pure doctrines. Unfortunately, the subsequent guardians of His faith introduced such alien doctrines, which reminded one of the anthropomorphism of the preceding times, to such a degree that the very personality of the Divine Teacher is well nigh lost in a multitude of legends. The many changes in the record of the New Testament and the old idea of an "Aeon born in the bosom of eternity" created such a mist around the personality of the Founder until the Council of Nice embodied it into a dogma.

The Pure Teacher who had called Himself the Servant was, in the course of six centuries, invested by myths which introduced Him as the manifestation of the God-head and His conception of the Fatherhood of God which implied the oneness of mankind was translated into the Invisible Essence of which He was considered the Son.

To go still further, some sects added to the worship of God the Son, Mariolatry i.e. the worship of the Virgin Mary and they laid before her altar a sort of twisted cake called collyris. This is the origin of the sect Collyridians, who were numerous and exercised a great influence in the early centuries of Christianity. This is the origin of the conception of "God, the Father" and "God, the Son," to which a third was added as Virgin Mary and explains the Romanist's belief that the mother of Jesus was the "complement" of the Trinity (See Mosheim, Vol. I, p 432). In this connection Hallam (author of the "Const. Hist. of England," Chapt II, p75), following Mosheim's view, rejects the plea of the church that Islam derived "everything good it contains" from Judaism or Christianity. Or, as Deutsh remarks: "It has been the fashion to ascribe whatever is good in Muhammadanism to Christianity." And he fears that the results of honest investigation expose the falsity of this assumption. He adds that "for Arabian Christianity at the time of Muhammad, the less said, perhaps, the better. . ." (Quarterly Review, No. 254, p 315).

Muhammad directed his mission against the absurdities and religious confusions mentioned above with a fervent spirit inspired by faith in the true God. Both idolators of Arabia and the believers of Corrupted Christianity and Judaism received his clear message which appealed to their reason. He convinced his followers of the impossibility of associating any other object or being with the one, divine Creator. With fervid words revealed in the Koran, he reminded them that "their God is one God; there is no God but He Who made the Heaven and Earth, alternated night and day, and the rain He sends forth from Heaven has the quickening of the dead earth, and the different beasts which abide therein; and the changes of winds and the clouds held up betwixt Heaven and Earth are signs to men of understanding; yet how absurd that men take idols beside God and love them as with the love due to God." (Sura ii,158-160.)

Again in Sura xiii. 13-15, he speaks of God as "causing lightning to strike fear and to raise hope; and forms clouds pregnant with rain; and of thunder and of angels which celebrate His praise. With thunderbolts, He striketh whom He pleaseth. He is of right to be invoked, and not the idols which respond not . . . He hath created man and for him the cattle that are laid to pasture. . . and He hath harnessed night and day for the service of man and by the chain of His law.

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Again in Sura ii. 256: "God! There is no God but He -- the Living, the Eternal. No slumber seizeth Him. Whatsoever is in Heaven or on earth is His". . . . "He knows what has been before and what shall be; yet naught of His knowledge shall they grasp but He willeth. His throne reacheth over the Heavens and the Earth and the upholding of them both burdeneth Him not." . . . "He throweth the veil of night over the day". . . "Is not all creation and all empire His?". . . "Say, He alone is God, the Eternal. He begetteth not and He is not begotten. There is none like unto Him" (Sura cxii). . . "Thou (man) needeth not raise thy voice, for He knoweth the secret whisper and what is yet more hidden. . . No leaf falleth but He knoweth it . . . He taketh your souls in the night and knoweth what the work of your day deserveth. Then He awaketh you that the set life-term may be fulfilled." (Sura vi. 95) . . . "Verily God it is who cleaves out the grain and the date stone; He brings out the dead from the living. . . It is He who cleaves out the morning and makes night a repose. . . ." (Sura vi. 95). . . "Sight perceives Him not but He perceives men's sights; for He is the All-Penetrating, the Aware." (Sura vi. 102)

In Sura vi. 163, we read: "Say, Verily, my prayers and my devotion and my life and my death belong to God, the Lord of the Worlds."

"Dost thou not perceive that all creatures, both in Heaven and Earth praise God; and the birds also? Everyone knoweth His prayer and His praise. Unto God belongeth the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth and unto God shall be the return. . . He it is who ordaineth the night as a garment and sleep for rest; and ordaineth the day for waking up for life." (Sura xxv. 49) . . . "And He taketh off the ills of the oppressed when they cry to Him; and maketh you to succeed your sires on the earth" (Sura xvii. 63). "Shall I seek any other Lord but God when He is Lord of all things?" (Sura xiii. 10-11)

"God is the Light of the Heaven and the Earth; His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, and the lamp is in a glass; the glass is as though it were a glittering star; it is lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the East nor of the West, the oil of which would well-nigh give light though no fire touched it--light upon

light! God guides to His light whom He pleases; and God strikes out variables for men, and God doth all things know." (Chapter of Light)

Speaking of true believers, the Koran says: "Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of God, and steadfastness in prayer and giving alms, who fear a day when hearts and eyes shall be upset, that God may recompense them for the best they have done, and give them increase of His grace; for God provides whom He pleases without count." But of misbelievers, He says (Koran): "Their works are like the mirage in a plain--the thirsty counts it water till when he comes to it he finds nothing. . ." "Or like darkness on a deep sea; there covers it a wave, above which is a wave, about which is a could--darknesses one above the other--when one puts out his hand he can scarcely see it, for he to whom God has given no light he has no light."

"God interchanges the night and the day; verily in that is a lesson to those endowed with sight."

We cannot forbear from quoting the chapter called "The Merciful" which has been called the Benedicite of Islam. In this Chapter, Muhammad takes the created phenomena as a testimony to the greatness of God:

"The sun and the moon in their appointed time,
The herbs and the trees adore,
And the heavens He raised them, and set the
balance that ye should not be outrageous in the
balance;
But weigh ye aright and stint not the balance.
And the earth, He has set it for living creatures;
Therein are fruits, and palms with sheaths, and
grain with chaff, and frequent shoots.

* * * * *

"He created man of crackling clay like the potter's,
and He created the firmament from the smokeless fire.

* * * * *

"The Lord of the two easts and the Lord of the two wests,
He has let loose the two seas that meet together;
between them is a barrier they cannot pass.
He brings forth from each pearls both great and small!

* * * * *

"His are the ships which rear aloft in the sea like mountains.

* * * * *

"Every one upon it is transient, but the face of thy
Lord endowed with majesty and honour shall endure.

* * * * *

"Of Him whosoever is in the heaven and in the earth does beg;
Every day is He in (some fresh) work.

"Blessed be the name of thy Lord, possessed of
majesty and glory."

Concerning the destiny of man, the Koran says (Sura xvii. 14): "Every man's fate have we hung about his neck, and on the last day shall be laid before him a wide-opened book."

"No defect canst thou see in the creation of the God of mercy; repeat: the gaze, seest thou a single flaw, then twice more repeat the gaze, thy gaze shall return to thee dulled and weary." (Sura lxvii.3)

"He quickeneth the earth when it is dead; so too shall you be brought to life."
(Sura xxx.25)

In sura lxxxii, the Koran speaks of the signs of the day of Resurrection: "When the sun shall be folded up, and the stars shall fall, and when the mountains shall be set in motion; when. . . the wild beasts shall be gathered together; when the seas shall boil, and the souls be paired("with their bodies" is the wrong interpretation. It means that in that day different persons by believing in the Lord shall be united together.); when the female child that was buried alive shall be asked for what crime she was put to death; when the leaves of the book shall be unrolled, and the heavens shall be stripped away, and the fire of hell blaze forth, and paradise draw nigh, then shall every soul know what it hath done." . . ."What knowledge hast thou of the hour? Only God knoweth its period. It is for thee (Muhammad) only to warn those who fear it."

Some Christian authors hold a wrong conception of the Islamic God, for they represent Him as "a pitiless tyrant who plays with humanity as on a chess board" and who sacrifices men to His own end. This is contradicted by the terms under which God is mentioned in the Koran, such as the Mighty, the Most High, the Wise, the Just who suffereth not the reward of the faithful to perish. He is also the All Wise, the King, the Peaceful, the Faithful, the Shelterer of the Orphan, the Guide of the Erring, the Friend of the Bereaved, the Consoler of the afflicted; He has good in His hand and He is the Generous Lord, the Gracious, the Hearer, the Merciful who loveth man more tenderly than does the mother bird her young. One of the grandest themes is the mercy of the Almighty. . . which enfolds creation. (Sura iii.124, Sura xxv. 50, Sura xxviii. 74, Sura xlii. 3, etc., etc.)

The Arabian prophet's heart feels keenly the moral degeneration of the Christians and Jews of his day and country and the superstitious rites with which they defied the warnings of the new prophet. His denunciation of them reminds one of the fire in the bosom of Isaiah and Jeremiah. This fire, however, was rekindled in one far greater than them. If he denounced them, he also raised the voice of hope for them. His censure of the Jews was because of their worship of "false gods and idols," and he deplored the Christians for the worship they offered Jesus and his mother, a worship due the Invisible Creator.

To those who have been "constant in prayer, and give alms," he says: "What good ye have sent before you for your souls, ye shall find it with God." (Koran) To the Jewish and Christian claim that only they shall enter Paradise he replies: ". . . whoso directeth himself towards God, and doth that which is right, he shall have his reward with his Lord." This means that all men who believe righteously are the object of God's beneficence.

He speaks of Jesus as the Apostle of God and His word and condemns the Christian belief in "three gods." He reminds them of Jesus who received the Scriptures as preaching to men to be "perfect in things pertaining to God, since ye know the Scriptures and have studied deep." (Sura iii. 75). In Sura xix. 91-94, he warns against "attributing children unto the Merciful," and adds, "Verily, there is not in Heaven or on earth but shall approach the Merciful as His servant. . ." The Koran denounced the ruthless wars of Nestorian and Monophysite and the wrangling of the sects and the soulless logomachy of the Byzantine priesthood in these words: "Mankind was but one people, and God sent them their prophets of warning and glad tidings, and the Book of Truth to settle all disputes. Yet none disputed like those to whom the Book had been sent; for they were filled with jealousy of each other." He further says, "O people of the Book, why wrangle about Abraham? Why contend about that whereof ye know nothing?" From these one traces the statement of an eminent writer on Islam: "The moral idea of the new gospel was set in the common sense of duty and the familiar instances of love."

Speaking of those who shall see the face of their Lord in the last day, the Koran says: "Blessed is he who giveth away his substance that he may become pure and who offereth not favours to any one for the sake of recompense . . . but only as seeking the countenance of his Lord the Most High." (Sura xcii. 18, 19). Also, "Every soul shall bear the good and the evil for which it has labored; and God will burden no one beyond its power." "Worship God alone; be kind to kindred and servants, orphans and the poor". . . "Defer humbly to your parents; with humility and tenderness say, O Lord, be merciful to them, even as they brought me up when I was helpless". . . "Woe to them that make show of piety, and refuse help to the needy". . . "Make not your alms void by reproaches or injury". . . "He who spendeth his substance to be seen of men, is like a rock with thin soil over it, whereon the rain falleth and leaveth it hard". . . "Judge between men with truth, and follow not thy passions, lest they cause thee to err from the way of God". . . "Covet not another's gifts from God". . . "There is piety in turning the face east or west, but in believing in God only and doing good." (Sura xc. 12-15, Sura xxxviii. 25.)

"Touch not the good of the orphan. Perform your covenant, and walk not proudly on the earth." (Sura xvii. 36). "Reverence the wombs that bear you,"

"Just balances will We set up for the day of resurrection. . . though were a work but the weight of a grain of mustard seed, We would bring forth to be weighed." (Sura xxi. 48)

"The likeness of those who expend their wealth for the cause of God, is that of a grain of corn which produceth seven ears, and in each ear a hundred grains. . . no fear shall come upon them, neither shall they be put to grief. A kind speech and forgiveness is better than alms followed by injury." (Sura ii. 263, 264, 265.)

"God will not burden any soul beyond its power. . ." . . . "And marry not women whom your fathers have married; for this is a shame, and hateful, and an evil way." (Sura ix. 26). . . "O ye Moslems! Stand fast to justice, when ye bear witness before God, though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kindred, whether the party be rich or poor. . ." (Sura iv. 34)

Speaking of the love of parent birds for their offspring, the Prophet said: "I swear by Him who has sent me, Verily, God is more loving to His servants than the mother to these young birds. . ." "Fear God with regard to animals," said the

Prophet, "ride them when they are fit to be ridden, and get off when they are tired. Verily, there are rewards for our doing good to dumb animals, and giving them water to drink." In fact, in the Koran, animals are placed on the same footing as human beings in the sight of God. "There is no beast on earth, nor bird which flieth with its wings, but the same is a people like unto you--unto the Lord shall they return." This verse has a spiritual interpretation, but even in its literal sense, it inculcates kindness to animals before the Christian peoples considered it man's duty of kindness and tenderness towards animals.

The Beginning of Knowledge is the Knowledge of God
and The End Thereof is Trusting In Him (A Sacred Word of Islam)

Ali, the successor of the Prophet Mohammad -- the first of the twelve Imams, lineal descendents of Mohammad the Prophet -- was the first believer in Mohammad, who was his cousin, when Mohammad declared His Prophethood.

As explained to us in the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the first believer in a Prophet often attains the position of successor to the Prophet. For example, in Christianity, Peter was the first believer, and then he attained the status of successorship, because of the symbolic reference drawn from Christ's words that on that rock He shall build His church; and, as the term "rock" meant Petros, and the name Peter had the same meaning, the conclusion followed by inference that Christ's successorship would fall on Peter.

Ali was in the Dispensation of Islam, the exponent of the spiritual mission of Mohammad, and the interpreter of the inner significances of the Koran. Ali says, amongst his numerous and very wonderful utterances, this: The people of the world are divided into two categories, (1) Those who know and teach knowledge, and (2) those who seek knowledge. As to the rest in the world, who are neither possessors nor seekers of knowledge, Ali says they are like unto floating gnats in the atmosphere and are of no consequence except as they cause others annoyance.

Baha'u'llah says there are two kinds of knowledge. One is the acquired knowledge. The other is the innate knowledge. The first is sought and acquired in schools and in colleges or required as in the case of an apprentice under the master of a trade. Acquired knowledge is applied to the development of the material phase of man's life, and when wrongly applied, it is responsible for much of the imperfection in the material organization of the world.

As to the innate knowledge, Baha'u'llah says that this is a knowledge you cannot acquire in any school. It is a knowledge that is bestowed on man by God. God has bestowed on all men the capacity which would enable them to receive this great gift of knowledge from on high; but unless men find the source through which this divine knowledge, or innate knowledge, is bestowed, they cannot possess it. That innate knowledge originates, Bahá'u'llah says, in the Manifestation of God in every age and cycle. There is no other source. The Manifestation of God in His Day is that source; and those who claim possession of the knowledge of religion from sources other than the Manifestation of God in His Day, no matter how those sources are acceptable by the majority of the people of the world, - they do not possess true knowledge. They may have created great institutions, lead in great churches and cathedrals, synagogues, temples, mosques--but when I say the hour strikes that a new Manifestation comes, He alone is the source of Divine Knowledge through which men can achieve guidance and regeneration.

Baha'u'llah says that if one possesses the knowledge of all things which have been bestowed upon humanity from the beginning of time, but when the new Manifestation of God appears, one does not advance towards Him, the possession of knowledge of all things prior to the coming of the Manifestation would be of no avail for his guidance. For, in that day, the word of the Manifestation of God is the only source, the only means, to attain divine knowledge, and the only criterion to whose judgment man must submit.

We read so much in the heavenly Books concerning the Day of Resurrection, one of the signs of which is the rising of the dead from the graves. Baha'u'llah reveals that in the rising of a new Manifestation a new resurrection is realized and that in the advent of the Universal Manifestation of God as prophesied in the heavenly Books of the past, the Universal Resurrection is realized which would last for 500,000 years -- which is, the duration of the Greater Cycle. And that Universal Resurrection, dawned, in the year 1844.

Baha'u'llah also states that the declaration of every Prophet is that trumpet sound which strikes all men into semi-stupefaction, a state like unto seeming death; but those who respond to the call of the new Manifestation are like unto those who have arisen from the dead. Others may be living in bodies and walking the earth, talking and acting, -- but from the standpoint of spiritual life, they are dead until they accept the call of the Manifestation of their day and rise from the grave of material limitations. In other words, every human individual who has heard the voice of the new Manifestation is in the state of the dead in the grave until he responds to it and emerges from the grave of material existence and attains the life of the people of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is then of the resurrected ones.

Baha'u'llah says if one has worshipped -- (a fact supported by the utterances of all the Prophets) -- that if one has worshipped God under the guidance, under the teachings of the Prophets of God from the beginning of time but does not acknowledge Him the Universal Manifestation in that day, his worship of God throughout the cycles and ages, of the past would be of no avail to count him as one living in the life of the children of the Kingdom of Heaven. But if one has denied them from the beginning of the world, and has opposed every Manifestation when it appeared, he is counted amongst those who have worshipped and known God from the beginning of Eternity. For the Manifestation of God in His Day is the balance, is the criterion. If you accept him, you are counted of the living; if you reject him you are counted as dead, spiritually. But, of course, this does not affect those individuals and multitudes in the different parts of the globe who have not heard the call of a new Manifestation. They are judged according to the measure of their faith in the past Manifestation of God to whose religions they belonged, and they are accepted as spiritually living. But the difficulty is that, at the exact time when a new Manifestation raises His voice and people hear it, they are apt to disregard it and thus deprive themselves of the greatest of all blessings by not investigating His Message. Hence, all that they received in their previous Faiths will be of no avail to save them! For every Manifestation of God in His Day is the balance, and it is His words that determine what is best for men to attain. This is an all important matter.

Oftentimes people ask if they believe in their own religions as Catholics, as Jews, as Mohammadans, or as Buddhists, et cetera, and fulfill all the conditions of their respective faiths, which were originally divine, -- are they still bound to accept a new Revelation? Won't God accept them for the wonderful life they have led under the teachings of their respective Prophets? The answer to this is simple.

It would be like the child of the grammar school coming to his parents and saying that he has become the first pupil of his class, and then stating, "I have fulfilled all the requirements of the curriculum of my class in the grammar school, and there is no one who leads me. I am the leader in that school. Do I still need to graduate and to go to a higher school? The answer is obvious. The best

education a child acquired in the grammar school was only a stepping stone, and from a stepping stone you rise to a higher level for the acquisition of knowledge. In the same way, what we have been in the past would be a great asset to us, as long as we have not heard a new Revelation of the Word of God.

Now, remember, this is a very important point. No excuse is possible for anyone, because if you travel through the entire width and breadth of this earth, and meet with all kinds of people from the Eskimo of the North Pole down to the Eskimos of the South Pole, and if you visit all of the remote places in the world, you will not find a single human being, irrespective of his religious persuasion, who is not taught to anticipate the coming of a Universal Manifestation. No Prophet came to the world, including those who came to the Indians, and the Eskimos, -- who taught the finality of His Dispensation. Nay, each called His Dispensation a preliminary step towards the coming of a future one who would fulfill what has been taught by the Prophet of a previous Dispensation.

So, there is no excuse whatsoever for anyone in the world to say, "All right, I hear about a certain Manifestation, a certain claim of Prophethood, in a certain distant part of the world, other than my own town -- that's all nonsense. As far as I am loyal to my own religion, I have before me all that's needed." For a true believer, this will not be acceptable in the sight of God. It would be like the state of a human individual who refuses to enter into maturity and adulthood, but who desires to continue backwards as a child. So remember this, there is no excuse.

The question may arise as to how we may know that the new voice is really the voice of a true and divinely appointed Prophet. You can always find out; each Prophet, in His Day and Dispensation has revealed the signs and tokens by which a future Prophet will be known and recognized. Even if you haven't heard anything about what a new Prophet teaches, the very fact that he has arisen and calls himself a Prophet, and a messenger of God, compels us to discharge our responsibility by seeking to understand one who calls himself the fulfillment of a prophecy made by the founder of your own faith, -- who is to appear at a future time.

Let us see what are those signs by which you identify a true Prophet and distinguish a true message from a false message. For there have been many false prophets. In every heavenly Book you have these signs laid down in one form or another. Isaiah, for example, says that the word of God spoken by a Prophet is like unto the rain which never descends from the clouds without accomplishing its purpose. This means that it is the business of rain to make plants grow, to make trees and flowers flourish; and that rain will never fail to accomplish its purpose before returning to its origin. So the first sign is the Word, and the greatest miracle of a Prophet is the word that He speaks, and that Word always commands, always fulfills, itself, and rain is the symbol of the Word of God and its effectiveness.

Another sign of the truth of a new Prophet is that He fulfills the teachings of past Prophets, and reveals the teachings needed for the guidance of a progressive humanity of His Day and Dispensation. For, the people of every Dispensation represent the progressive class, as compared to the primitive state of the people of a previous Dispensation.

I will not go into further discussion because it would lead to a great deal of explanation. For example, at the coming of Jesus, we find the philosophy of the Greeks had reached the very highest point, and yet the people were living in morally primitive conditions. This means that they needed more knowledge of a spiritual nature concerning all things, that, therefore, they needed a further Revelation of the word of God, adequate to meet the needs of a more advanced humanity. This was brought to men through a new Manifestation who was Jesus the Christ.

Among the signs to distinguish a true Prophet from a false one, is that the true Prophet confirms the Teachings of the previous Prophet, and fulfills the prophecies of a former Prophet. He accepts the truth of prophets that went before him. All of them belong to a class taught by the great Master Teacher, God Almighty, who has inspired them all with knowledge to meet the requirements of the people of every age. If a man says: "I am a prophet of God, but Moses knew nothing, Jesus knew nothing, Buddha and Mohammed knew nothing, only listen to me and I will give you the right guidance," -- it is obvious that he is not a true Prophet.

Those teachers who are sent for the instruction of humanity in a primitive state, reveal simple teachings. For example, in the Dispensation of Moses, I have formerly stated it was the intention of God to prepare the Israelites in order to form a basis for the Revelation of the higher knowledge that God would reveal through the Messiah. Hence, those rigid laws, the ten commandments of Moses, - and no compromise whatsoever was permitted. You could not rationalize about them any more than you can rationalize about the municipal laws that govern the traffic in the city. When the red light comes, stop; when the green light comes, go. There is no compromise; there is no rationalization. There is no way of trying to make people accept what is not permitted according to the laws. They are rigid. They have to be obeyed. Then, as time progresses, and humanity also progresses in its inner and spiritual development, its needs increase in the same way that a new-born child later, needs more food to live. He at first needs simple food, milk, and as he grows, solid foods are added. Hence, humanity, in its primitive state receives simple, rigid principles of guidance from the Prophet of the time. As I stated once, the higher teachings concerning the future of the human soul are not discussed at all in the Dispensation of the teachings of Moses. Everything deals with the physical development of the race. Every prophecy deals with the destiny of the Children of Israel, people of a particular race or locality. Hence, you have had Moses for the people of Israel; you have had Jesus, you have had Mohammad, you have had Buddha, you have had Zoroaster. Each of these came for a particular people, but that which establishes the unity of the principles of guidance, as taught by each of these Prophets, is, first - that none of them claims finality, but they always prophesy that another one would come after. The second point which also establishes the unity of these Prophets, is that they all prophesied concerning what is called the final Manifestation. I am using the word "final" in connection with the termination of a Greater Cycle of 500,000 years. Hence, the prophecies revealed by each one of the Prophets who have founded the Seven Great Religions of the world first tell of the coming of the Prophet who is to follow Him, and, second, tell of the coming of a World Prophet who would come at what is called the "time of the end", which means the end of the Greater Cycle of 500,000 years.

How do we know that these things represent the character of the teachings of the Revelators or Messengers of the past? Because those Prophets said that the Book was sealed until the time of the end. How then do we know? We know it

because we, as Baha'is believe that the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is the Manifestation of that Universal Messenger whose advent was foretold by all the Prophets of the past ages. He is the true One who has had the power and authority to break the seal of the Book and reveal the inner significances of those teachings, and it is because of that fact that the New Revelation has succeeded in achieving a result which has been beyond the scope of the mission of all the Prophets of these past ages, -- and that results in the unification of the people of all races and religions.

Moses had the mission to free the Children of Israel and He finally led them to the Promised Land. In Jesus' coming, He had the objective to be the enlightenment of the Israelites, and as they did not receive him, he chose the Gentiles. In the Dispensation of the Prophet Mohammad, His mission was to awaken the people of Arabia, and to spread the Islamic faith into other countries; but the direct object of the message of Mohammad was to enlighten the people of Arabia. In Zoroaster, we have the reviewing of the people of ancient Persia. But in the coming of Baha'u'llah, the objective is the unification of the entire world of humanity, irrespective of religion, church, or geographic situation. That this has been the case is that, although we are in the 113th year of this Dispensation it is in more evidence every day. This Dispensation has and is achieving the high points of its goal. For it has secured the willing acceptance and devotion of the people of more than 200 different countries, among the followers of all the religious systems of the world. Hence, this establishes the fact that this is the Universal Manifestation of God whose advent was prophesied and foretold in all the Heavenly Books.

This is further proven by the fact that all the believers have forgotten the diversity of forms, which were great obstacles to their unity until His coming. To the Mohammedan the Christian was unclean and the people of other religions held no social intercourse with the people of other races and Faiths. All these factors have been removed by the teachings of Baha'u'llah so that all feel that they are the children of one Father, the creatures of one Creator, destined for the same destiny, and that is to establish on this earth the Kingdom of God that is in Heaven. Hence, the divine Fiat that man was created in the Image and Likeness of God will become an accomplished fact in the lives of men everywhere and under God will continue throughout the Greater Cycles of 500,000 years.

So you see my friends, what a great challenge the Revelation of Baha'u'llah offers. It is a challenge for every single human being who would consider it a great opportunity, and the goal of his life, to be dedicated to the spread of this great faith, to that true peace and harmony which would banish all traces of racial, national and religious differences, that is, all tyranny and injustice, from the concourse of mankind.

What is the Meaning of "In That Day God will be All in All?"

The high aim and purpose of Baha'u'llah in this day is to demonstrate that His Manifestation is to reveal the mystery of power and of greatness which God has deposited within the nature of man. This means that when God created man, He announced that He had perfected His creative mission, i.e., the creation of the highest that could be conceived as a potentiality in the nature of man. What then remained was to establish the fact that man was created after the image and likeness of His Creator. This could be achieved by enabling man to convert the seeds of potential greatness within him into the actual harvest of greatness and of achievement. In other words, the Manifestations of God came to bring to fruition seeds that were already planted in man - planted when God created him, as He has said that He created man after His own image and likeness. The Manifestations of God came to transform the potentiality of greatness and of perfections planted in man into a harvest of greatness and of perfection. This has been the function of the Manifestations of God from the beginning of time.

There was a time when a Manifestation appeared, addressing himself to the people of one land, sometimes of one city, and those who received this great bounty developed the seeds of potential greatness in their souls into actual greatness. This opened the door to the advent of a new spiritual civilization. Then another prophetic Dispensation dawned, and another Manifestation appeared to regenerate a more vast multitude of men.

Each of these Manifestations prophesied the coming of a day when a Universal Manifestation will awaken the entire humanity to the realization of the Oneness of God, and thus a united humanity will fulfill the text that in that Day God will be all in all. In other words, all would in that day acknowledge their faith in one God, the Creator, and that recognition will eliminate the various causes of alienhood, all divisive factors, which have reduced God's humanity to a divided house. Man's unity, which is the chief goal of man's creation, will be achieved, and that will be the dawn of the Universal Peace. This is the Baha'i conception of God's relationship to man through the appointment of Prophets and World Teachers. There is nothing negative in this conception; God is either One, or there is no God, and a united humanity is the highest proof of the Oneness of God.

If God is one, God's creation is one, and if man stands upon the highest pinnacle of God's creation, man's realm is a universal realm. Mankind is God's idea of man, and not individual man's idea of man. As long as that conception has been holding forth that every man has been to himself, there has been war, there has been tribulation, there has been inharmony; but when God's conception of man is established in the mind and soul of every man, there will be peace and harmony; -- and that state has been referred to by different prophets under different titles and names. One calls it the "Day of the Lord of Hosts"; another calls it the "Day of God"; another calls it the "New Day"; one calls it the "Day of the Kingdom" when God's rule would be established. But all these mean the day of a United Humanity.

Now you can see the great difference characterizing the opinions of other leaders of religions through^{out} the world, who think that there is nothing so perfectly good or right as their own particular religions and that, even in their own religions, there is nothing good or right which opposes to the definitions underlying their own particular sects. Now, it has been said that a house

divided against itself cannot stand. This man-made division must disappear in order that a universal reorganization may be effect amongst all mankind. To the people of Baha, there is no alienhood: there are no strangers, no difference of native lands, no difference of religion, no difference of geographic position. It is all oneness. All leviathans swim in one ocean. We all glorify the power of God in this great Day that a Revelation came into the world to unfold such far-reaching conceptions. This is the very highest gift that man can ever set up as a gift for which to pray. There is nothing superior to such a gift.

Abdul-Baha said often that there is a power in man which can achieve every-thing upon which man concentrates his mind. God's Manifestations show the way for man to use that power in the right direction, in order to achieve that which is for the universal good.

When we realize these lofty aims and purposes of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah it should increase our sympathy for other men who are carried away by the glowing eloquence of a religious teacher, or the substantial appearance of a great cathedral, or the dogmatic creeds of a church institution. Such things, if you can imagine such a picture, are as fog floating in the atmosphere of a universal graveyard - no sign of life whatever.

It is very difficult for one of us Baha'is, after having been so long in the Presence of the Master to meet with other men. Some of us have met with heads of nations, heads of churches, and leaders of every description. Despite the fanfare of greatness that men can manifest in politics, and religion, et cetera, a Baha'i believer who comes into contact with such personalities can only display the spirit of charity, the spirit of humility; a true believer of the Baha'i Revelation can see how empty the tangible treasures of such great personalities are when compared with the greater treasures of the divine bounty which the humblest of Baha'is may possess, divine bounty beside which all else is as the emptiness of bubbles. A true believer also recognizes that among the poor, the humble, are found the best, or rather, many of the best of the friends of the people of Baha'u'llah, of Abdul-Baha, and today, of the Guardian of the Faith. There, one finds the treasures of God. There, one finds the ones who are always in the forefront of those who advance toward the Divine Manifestation. Blessed are the humble ones, free from pride, and yet possessing that marvelous alchemy which converts the dross of mere human nature into the pure gold of the love of God. I found the best friends of Abdul-Baha the poor, the very poorest in all nations. Abdul-Baha, who called himself "The Servant of God", was adored by the poor of every race, of every nationality, of every religion, who lived in those hovel-like holes in the narrow streets of the prison city of Akka. There, once He said that while He was in Baghdad, an Arab Baha'i invited Him to be his guest. The Arab was a shepherd, residing in the midst of a palm grove. Abdul-Baha, and a few of the Baha'i friends with Him, walked a long distance. They came to a hole in the ground, which was his home, they entered, and the man actually used the plain dough to make bread over a little fire for the Master. The guests of the Arab shepherd ate it with a few dates, and a very simple drink made of goat's milk. Abdul-Baha said that the love of God had there been so strongly present, the taste of the simple food so delicious, that he had never forgotten it to this day. (1900)

Everything that is done through the love of God, whether it is martyrdom in the path of God, or service -- no matter what the capacity -- of something nobler than one's self, is the highest thing that man should seek after in this world.

Herein lies true joy and happiness. The first question the Master often asked was "Are you happy?" For, Happiness is attained only by people of faith. The happiness of good health is transitory. The breath of the Holy Spirit is the radiance from that glorious sun, and is endowed with the great life-giving attributes of a shining orb as it comes into contact with Life Eternal. These are not mere words. These are facts! That gift, once given, that wealth once given is never lost!

There isn't a thing that does not succumb to some superior power. If it is wealth, if it is acquired learning -- no matter what it is -- that constitutes a feature of man's glory in this world, -- it is perishable. It is evanescent. But the love of God, inspired through faith in the Manifestation of God in His Day and Dispensation, can never be lost. The more it is used, the greater it increases in stature. How well this is illustrated in the story of a householder, who, before leaving on a journey to some distant point, entrusted to each of his three servants a certain amount of money to hold until his return. One of these felt so conscientious that he would not risk any of his Master's money, but kept it until the return of the Master, thinking it the highest thing he could do in the name of loyalty and of faithfulness. The second servant felt that he should invest half of what he had been given, saving the next half in the event of his losing one half. The third invested all that he had, and it became manifold. One day when the Master returned, he called the servants to account for that which had been entrusted to them, and the result was that he took the whole portion of the first servant which had not been invested, the half portion of the second servant which had not been invested, and gave them to the man who had dared to risk his all.

The foregoing illustration would make it plain that when we have faith in God, if we keep that faith within ourselves, for our own purification, for the improvement of our conduct and the regulation of our own appetites and desires, it is one thing. But, if, instead, we use it for the benefit of others, attracting them to the faith of and the love of God, it is still another thing. For, when we surrender our entire lives in order to benefit others, we have done that which should be the noblest of the attributes of the people of Baha. The Master set the example.

Imagine arising, and dedicating oneself to this life of service. The crusade proclaimed by the Guardian, which calls forth the performance of individual and of collective service, would be gloriously achieved. Even a few arising and dedicating the totality of their resources, spiritually and physically, -- what a wonderful world it would be!

A Baha'i Proves His Faith Through Action

We are apt to believe that the perfection of the Baha'i life depends upon an understanding of the inner meanings of the Creative Word. This is, of course, true; but this is a thing that strengthens one phase of our being only. We thus learn to develop intellectually and develop spiritually also, within ourselves, but this individual self-sufficiency is not the all-important thing in the duties and responsibilities that a Baha'i should discharge. In fact, knowledge, if it serves the purpose of the individual, might add to one's desire for self-glorification, and for some, that of self-praise, whereas, the highest attributes of a Baha'i should be selflessness and humility.

I do not wish to be misunderstood when I say that the study and understanding of the inner meanings of the Creative Word is not, by itself, of great importance. It is of paramount importance, no doubt about it; but it will achieve its great aim and purpose only when it transcends the limits of our individual concerns, and applies itself to the enrichment of others. Finally, our knowledge must find expression in noble deeds and acts, and be dedicated to the welfare of all.

I could never over-emphasize - no matter how I repeat myself in impressing upon you - the importance of action, the importance of deeds--in this day of Baha'u'llah. (Otherwise, knowing the inner meanings of the teachings of the Faith would mean possessing seeds which by themselves produce no harvest unless planted in the field of action.)

X We all read that the archaeologists in Egypt discovered grains of wheat inside one of those coffins of the mummies; seeds that had been there for thousands of years without producing any results. This is like knowledge not expressed in action.

I think I must make this very plain. Abdu'l-Baha always taught us through action. In fact, I saw more teachings expressed in action by Abdu'l-Baha - about 99% - than by transmission through speech. I saw him rise early, at 4 or 5 o'clock or earlier in the morning, going out and visiting helpless peoples of every faith, - the poor in the wretched city of Acca, through narrow streets, so narrow that the winds could hardly ventilate them. That was His mission, and it was not a thing that He performed once a week, or once a month. He did it at all times; that was His life. In between one visit and another, He received the helpless people at home, or those who had come as pilgrims from far lands. The love expressed by Him was something that was continuous in expression.

Do you know that the sun that shines on the horizon is the symbol of the benevolent acts of the Manifestation of God, and the Centers of God's faith in all Dispensations? And in this Day, even in a more pronounced way?

This is the one Universal Manifestation that has visited the earth during the last 500,000 years. Abdu'l-Baha said whatever was necessary for the guidance of the people of the world was revealed by the Prophets of the past. The Revelation today is to convert those Teachings into action, not only amongst one people and one section of the human race, but in the concourse of mankind.