

Companion
to
Proofs
of the
Prophets



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Compiler and Commentator

Volume II of the Baha'i Studies Series

Original compilation of texts related to:

The Nomenclature of Proof; Reasons for Opposition to the Prophets of God; Principles of Approach to the Prophets of God; The Path of Illumination--as found in the Writings of Baha'u'llah, the Bab, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi, and in the Sacred Writings of various religions.

Passages from the Writings of the Bab are in some cases presented in the compiler's rendering of their French translation by A.L.M. Nicolas, originally published circa 1900-1911.

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“Verily I say! No one hath apprehended the root of this Cause. It is incumbent upon everyone, in this day, to perceive with the eye of God, and to hearken with His ear. Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.”²

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PART ONE

THE NOMENCLATURE OF PROOF

The aim of Part One will be to explore the terminology used by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha in reference to the signs, proofs, evidences and arguments which bear witness to the reality of God, the reality of prophethood and the reality of other metaphysical phenomena. We will begin with a study of terms and proceed to the use of those terms to define metaphysical realities in the Baha'i Writings. The texts cited will be from among those which are available in English translation, and this study will not attempt to consider the use of these terms in the vast literature which has yet to be translated from the Arabic and Persian languages.

Dictionaries consulted:

Arabic: Hans Wehr, A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic; edited by J. Milton Cowan; 4th edition; Ithaca, New York: Spoken Language Services, 1994)

Persian: F. Steinglass, A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary; New Delhi, India: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, second Indian edition, 1981)

Abbreviated Titles of Source Texts:

ABDP: 'Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy

ABL: 'Abdu'l-Baha in London

ADJ: Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice

AHW: Baha'u'llah, Arabic Hidden Words

BG: Bhagavad-Gita

BP: Baha'i Prayers

BWF: 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah, Baha'i World Faith

ESW: Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

FV: Baha'u'llah, The Four Valleys

GL: Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah

GPB: Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By

JA: Baha'u'llah, Javahiru'l-Asrar

JN: Gospel of John

KA: Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas

KI: Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan

LK: Gospel of Luke

MK: Gospel of Mark

MT: Gospel of Matthew

PDC: Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day is Come

PHW: Baha'u'llah, Persian Hidden Words

PM: Baha'u'llah, Prayers and Meditations

PT: 'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks

PUP: 'Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace

REV: Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse)

SAQ: 'Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions

SDC: 'Abdu'l-Baha, The Secret of Divine Civilization

SLH: Baha'u'llah, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts

SP: Bab, The Seven Proofs

SV: Baha'u'llah, The Seven Valleys

SW: *Star of the West*

SWAB: Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha

TAB: Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha

TB: Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas

TF: 'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel

Nomenclature in Arabic and Persian:

Arabic: [aayaT/aayaat] sign, token, mark, miracle, wonder, marvel, prodigy, Qur'anic verse, utterance, saying, word

Persian: [aayaT/aayaat] mark, sign, miracle, verse of the Qur'an

Arabic: ['alaamaT/'alaamaat] sign, mark, token

Persian: ['alaamaT/'ilaam] sign, signal, mark, distinguishing characteristic

Arabic: [athar/aathaar] track, trace, vestige, sign

Persian: [athar/aathaar] footprint, sign, mark, result, consequence, tradition, sunnaT

Arabic: [burHaan/baraaHiin] proof

Persian: [burHaan/baraaHiin] demonstration, proof

Arabic: [daliil/adillaT,dalaa'il] evidence, sign, token, proof

Persian: [daliil/dalaa'il] argument, demonstration, indication

Arabic: [hujjaT/hujaj] argument, proof, evidence

Persian: [hujjaT] argument, proof, reason, demonstration; plea, allegation, sentence, decision; pretence, excuse; altercation, disputation

Arabic: [ithbaat] establishment, assertion; confirmation; affirmation, attestation; demonstration; proof, evidence; documentation, authentication, verification

Persian: [thabat/ithbaat] steadfastness, argument, proof, a trusty man/confirming, corroborating, fixing, recording, registering, knowing for a certainty, affirmation, proof

Arabic: [mazhhar/mazhaahir] manifestation, expression

Persian: [mazhhar/mazhaahir] manifestation; show, sight, view

Persian: [mustanad/mustanadaat] supported, to be relied on, authenticated, genuine, and official document/proof, legal evidence

I. SIGNS

BAHA'U'LLAH

"For everything there is a sign [ʿalaamaT]. The sign of love [ʿalaamaT al-hubb] is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials." (AHW:#48)

"Enrapture my soul, O my Lord, with Thy most mighty signs, and draw me out of the depths of my corrupt and evil desires." (BP:54)

"I beg of Thee, O my Lord, by Thine eye that sleepeth not, to guard mine eyes from beholding aught beside Thee. Strengthen, then, their vision that they may discern Thy signs, and behold the Horizon of Thy Revelation." (BP:60)

"Send down, then, upon me, out of the clouds of Thy generosity, what will purge out from me the remembrance of anyone except Thee, and make me able to turn unto Him Who is the Object of the adoration of all mankind, against Whom have been arrayed the stirrers of sedition, who have broken Thy covenant, and disbelieved in Thee and in Thy signs." (BP:68-69)

"I have wakened this morning with my face set toward the splendors of the Daystar of Thy Revelation, through Which the heavens of Thy power and Thy majesty have been illumined, acknowledging Thy signs, believing in Thy Book, and holding fast unto Thy Cord." (BP:118)

"Empower us, then, O my God, to spread abroad Thy signs among Thy creatures, and to guard Thy Faith in Thy realm." (BP:160)

"Great, therefore, is the blessedness of him who hath believed in Thee, and in Thy signs, and hath humbled himself before Thy sovereignty, and hath been honored with meeting Thee, and hath attained the good pleasure of Thy will, and circled around Thee, and stood before Thy throne. Woe betide him that hath transgressed against Thee, and hath denied Thee, and repudiated Thy signs, and gainsaid Thy sovereignty, and risen up against Thee, and waxed proud before Thy face, and hath disputed Thy testimonies, and fled from Thy rule and Thy dominion, and been numbered with the infidels whose names have been inscribed by the fingers of Thy behest upon Thy holy Tablets." (BP:231-232)

"Magnify Thou, moreover, such as have believed in Him and in His signs and have turned towards Him, from among those that have acknowledged Thy unity in His Latter Manifestation--a Manifestation whereof He hath made mention in His Tablets, and in His Books, and in His Scriptures, and in all the wondrous verses and gem-like utterances that have descended upon Him." (BP:260)

"Say: In the East the light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West have appeared the signs of His dominion. Ponder this in your hearts, O people, and be not of those who have turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Praised." (TB:13)

"By holding fast unto names they deprive themselves of the inner reality and by clinging to vain imaginings they are kept back from the Dayspring of heavenly signs." (TB:58)

"The signs have been ushered in, while He Who hath revealed them is overwhelmed with manifest sorrow." (TB:75)

"Through the strengthening power of My Name seize ye the chalice of knowledge, drink then your fill in defiance of the people of the world who have broken the Covenant of God and His Testament, rejected His proofs and clear tokens, and cavilled at His signs which have pervaded all that are in heaven and on earth." (TB:79)

"Thou seest, O my God, what hath befallen me in Thy Path at the hand of those who have denied Thy truth, have violated Thy Covenant, cavilled at Thy signs, rejected the blessings Thou didst vouchsafe, disbelieved the verses Thou didst send down and have refused to acknowledge the testimony Thou didst fulfil." (TB:114)

"He hath come from the heaven pf glory and power, bearing the banners of Thy signs and the standards of Thy testimonies." (TB:115)

"All the signs appeared when We drew forth the Hand of Power from the bosom of majesty and might." (TB:118)

"We testify that He is One in His Essence, One in His attributes. He hath none to equal Him in the whole universe, nor any partner in all creation. He hath sent forth His Messengers, and sent down His Books, that they may announce unto His creatures the Straight Path." (TB:212)

"Where is he to be found who contended with God, and whither is gone he that gainsaid His signs, and turned aside from His sovereignty?" (TB:213)

OTHER PROOF TEXTS (!)

'ABDU'L-BAHA

"Else would they have acknowledged His words, and borne witness to the verses [aayaateh] He revealed, confessed the truth of His utterances, sought shelter under the protective shadow of His banner, learned of His signs and tokens [aayaateh], and rejoiced in His blissful tidings." (SWAB:#19:41; Makaatiib:#19:38)

"The reason for this was that they said: 'The Revelation of Christ, according to the clear text of the Torah, will be attested by certain signs [be-'alaamaatii], and so long as these signs ['alaamaat] have not appeared, whoso layeth claim to be a Messiah is an impostor.'" (SAWB:#20:44; Makaatiib:#20:42)

¹BWF:34,80,88,97,98,99,100,103,107,117,121,136,141; KI:12-13,23-24,27,75-76,105-106,180-182,196-198,207-209,226-228,253-255; GL:39,50,132,155,183,261,266,268,270,292,294,299,304,315,321; ESW:47,118,145,150,173

"The meaning of this is that any individual who, before the expiry of a full thousand years--years known and clearly established by common usage and requiring no interpretation [ta'wiiil]--should lay claim to a Revelation direct from God, even though he should reveal certain signs [aayaatii], that man is assuredly false and an impostor.

"This is not a reference to the Universal Manifestation [zhuhuur kullii], for it is clearly set forth in the Holy Writings [aayaat mubaarakeh] that centuries, nay thousands of years, must pass on to completion, before a Manifestation [zhuhuurii] like unto this Manifestation [zhuhuur] shall appear again." (SWAB:#33:67; Makaatiib:#33:24)

"It behoveth the loved ones of the Lord [ahbbaaii ilaahii] to be the signs and tokens of His universal mercy [mazhaaahar rahmat 'alaameh] and the embodiments of His own excelling grace." (SWAB:#206:257; Makaatiib:#206:248)

"My Lord! My Lord! I praise Thee and I thank Thee for that whereby Thou hast favored Thine humble maidservant, Thy slave beseeching and supplicating Thee, because Thou hast verily guided her unto Thine obvious Kingdom and caused her to hear Thine exalted Call in the contingent world and to behold Thy Signs which prove the appearance of Thy victorious reign over all things." (BP:66)

"O Lord, confirm them all in Thy service, and aid them in guiding others to Thee. Brighten the eyes through witnessing Thy great signs; fill the ears with harmonies through Thy melodies; and refresh the nostrils through the fragrances of Thy Kingdom. Confer upon these souls the life everlasting, gathering them all together beneath the tabernacle of the oneness of the world of humanity." (SW:IV:12, p. 209)

"The logical proof of the immortality of the spirit is this, that no sign can come from a non-existing thing; that is to say, it is impossible that from absolute non-existence signs should appear, for the signs are the consequence of an existence, and the consequence depends upon the existence of the principle. So, from a non-existing sea no waves appear, from a non-existing cloud no rain falls; a non-existing tree yields no fruit; a non-existing man neither manifests nor produces anything. Therefore as long as signs of existence appear, they are a proof that the possessor of the sign is existent." (SAQ:LX:261-262; BWF:325)

"The bestowals of God which are manifest in all phenomenal life are sometimes hidden by intervening veils of mental and mortal vision which render man spiritually blind and incapable, but when those scales are removed and the veils rent asunder, then the great signs of God will become visible, and he will witness the eternal light filling the world. The bestowals of God are all and always manifest. The promises of heaven are ever present. The favors of God are all-surrounding, but should the conscious eye of the soul of man remain veiled and darkened, he will be led to deny these universal signs and remain deprived of these manifestations of divine bounty. Therefore, we must endeavor with heart and soul in order that the veil covering the eye of inner vision may be removed, that we may behold the manifestations of the signs of God, discern His mysterious graces and realize that material blessings as compared with spiritual bounties are as nothing." (PUP:90; BWF:266)

II. PROOFS

BAHA'U'LLAH

"I bear witness, O friends! that the favor [na'mat] is complete, the argument [hujjat] fulfilled, the proof [burhaan] manifest and the evidence [daliil] established." (PHW:postlude)

"I beg of Thee, by that Word through which Thy proof was perfected among Thy creatures and Thy testimony was fulfilled amidst Thy servants, to strengthen Thy people in that whereby the face of the Cause will radiate in Thy dominion, the standards of Thy power will be planted among Thy servants, and the banners of Thy guidance will be raised throughout Thy dominions." (BP:172)

"Having thus conclusively demonstrated that no day is greater than this Day, and no revelation more glorious than this Revelation, and having set forth all these weighty and infallible proofs which no understanding mind can question, and no man of learning overlook, how can man possibly, through the idle contention of the people of doubt and fancy, deprive himself of such a bountiful grace?" (KI:143-144)

"They that valiantly labour in quest of God's will, when once they have renounced all else but Him, will be so attached and wedded to that City [City of Certitude] that a moment's separation from it would to them be unthinkable. They will

hearken unto infallible proofs from the Hyacinth of that assembly, and receive the surest testimonies from the beauty of its Rose and the melody of its Nightingale. Once in about a thousand years shall this City be renewed and re-adorned." (KI:198-199)

"Behold, how lofty is the station, and how consummate the virtue, of these verses which He hath declared to be His surest testimony, His infallible proof, the evidence of His all-subduing power, and a revelation of the potency of His will. He, the divine King, hath proclaimed the undisputed supremacy of the verses of His Book over all things that testify to His truth. For compared with all other proofs and tokens, the divinely-revealed verses shine as the sun, whilst all others are as stars. To the peoples of the world they are the abiding testimony, the incontrovertible proof, the shining light of the ideal King." (KI:205)

"O people of the Bayan! Would ye deny Him Whose presence is the very object of your creation, while ye rejoice idly upon your couches? Would ye laugh to scorn and contend with Him, a single hair of Whose head excelleth, in the sight of God, all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth? O people of the Bayan! Produce, then, that which ye possess, that I may know by what proof ye believed aforesaid in the Manifestations of His Cause, and by what reason ye now wax so disdainful!" (Suriy-i-Haykal, SLH:6-7)

"Should any one of them be called upon to confront all the hosts of creation, he would assuredly prevail through the ascendancy of My Will. This, verily, is a proof of My power, though My creatures comprehend it not." (Ibid., SLH:19)

"Thus do We expound Our verses, and make plain the truth with clear proofs, that perchance the people may reflect upon the signs of their Lord." (Ibid., SLH:19)

"Thus do We expound Our verses, and make plain the truth with clear proofs, that perchance the people may reflect upon the signs of their Lord." (Ibid., SLH:20)

"Say: We have revealed Our verses in nine different modes. Each one of them bespeaketh the sovereignty of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. A single one of them sufficeth for a proof unto all who are in the heavens and on

the earth; yet the people, for the most part, persist in their heedlessness. Should it be Our wish, We would reveal them in countless other modes.” (Ibid., SLH:26)

“Among the infidels are those who have repudiated His Self and risen up against His Cause, and who claim that these divine verses are contrived. Such also were the objections of the deniers of old, who now implore deliverance from the Fire. Say: Woe betide you for the idle words that proceed from your mouths! If these verses be indeed contrived, then by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it, if ye be men of understanding! Whensoever We revealed Our clear verses unto such men, they rejected them, and whensoever they beheld that which the combined forces of the earth are powerless to produce, they pronounced it sorcery.” (Ibid., SLH:28)

“The very words and deeds of these men bear eloquent testimony to the truth of My words, if ye be of them that judge with fairness. Whosoever attributeth the verses of God to sorcery hath not believed in any of His Messengers, hath lived and laboured in vain, and is accounted of those who speak that of which they have no knowledge. Say: O servant! Fear God, thy Creator and thy Fashioner, and transgress not against Him, but judge with fairness and act with justice. Those whom the Lord hath endued with knowledge shall find, in the very objections raised by the unbelievers, conclusive proofs to invalidate their claims and vindicate the truth of this manifest Light. Say: Would ye repeat that which the unbelievers uttered when a Message came unto them from their Lord? Woe betide you, O assemblage of foolish ones, and blighted be your works!” (Ibid., SLH:28)

“Subject not yourselves to excessive hardships, but follow the way We have made plain unto you through Our luminous verses and perspicuous proofs, and be not of the negligent.” (Ibid., SLH:47)

“He, verily, hath again come down from Heaven even as He came down from it the first time. Beware that thou dispute not with Him even as the Pharisees disputed with Him without a clear token or proof.” (Ibid., SLH:55)

“Say: If ye deny this Revelation, by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it then. Thus hath the summons of

God been sent down by the Pen of the Most High at the bidding of your Lord, the Most Glorious, in this Tablet from whose horizon the splendour of His Light hath shone forth. How many are My servants whose deeds have become veils between them and their own selves, and who have been kept back thereby from drawing nigh unto God, He Who causeth the winds to blow.” (Ibid., SLH:58)

“Say: Do ye cavil at Him Who hath come unto you bearing the clear evidence of God and His proof, the testimony of God and His signs? These things are not from Himself; nay, rather they proceed from the One Who hath raised Him up, sent Him forth through the power of truth, and made Him to be a lamp unto all mankind.” (Ibid., SLH:73)

“Judge thou between Us and them that have wronged Us without proof and without an enlightening Book.” (Ibid., SLH:99)

“And amongst the people are those who claim that He hath disbelieved in God -- yet every member of My body testifieth that there is none other God but Him; that those Whom He hath raised up in truth and sent forth with His guidance are the Manifestations of His most excellent names, the Revealers of His most exalted attributes, and the Repositories of His Revelation in the kingdom of creation; that through them the Proof of God hath been perfected unto all else but Him, the standard of Divine Unity hath been raised, and the sign of sanctity hath been made manifest; and that through them every soul hath found a path unto the Lord of the Throne on high.” (Ibid., SLH:100)

“If these souls, who have renounced all else but God for His sake and offered up their life and substance in 113 His path, are to be accounted as false, then by what proof and testimony can the truth of what others assert be established in thy presence?” (Ibid., SLH:112-113)

“Would that the world-adorning wish of His Majesty might decree that this Servant be brought face to face with the divines of the age, and produce proofs and testimonies in the presence of His Majesty the Shah!” (Ibid., SLH:114)

“Some of the divines who have declared this Servant an

infidel have at no time met with Me. Never having seen Me, or become acquainted with My purpose, they have nevertheless spoken as they pleased and acted as they desired. Yet every claim requireth a proof, not mere words and displays of outward piety.” (Ibid., SLH:114)

“Through us His signs have been diffused, His proofs revealed, and His tokens disclosed. With us is the knowledge of His hidden meanings and His untold mysteries.” (Ibid., SLH:127)

“There is a matter, which, if thou findest it possible, I request thee to submit to His Majesty the Sultan, that for ten minutes this Youth be enabled to meet him, so that he may demand whatsoever he deemeth as a sufficient testimony and regardeth as proof of the veracity of Him Who is the Truth. Should God enable Him to produce it, let him, then, release these wronged ones, and leave them to themselves.” (Ibid., SLH:171)

“Hearst thou not the sighs of the kindred of God, whom thou didst cast into prison without proof or testimony?” (Ibid., SLH:178)

“Relate unto them, O Servant, the story of 'Ali, [The Bab] when He came unto them with truth, bearing His glorious and weighty Book, and holding in His hands a testimony and proof from God, and holy and blessed tokens from Him.” (Ibid., SLH:185)

“Say: If the laws and regulations to which ye cleave be of your own making, We will, in no wise, follow them. Thus have I been instructed by Him Who is the All-Wise, the All-Informed. Such hath been My way in the past, and such will it remain in the future, through the power of God and His might. This, indeed, is the true and right way. If they be ordained by God, bring forth, then, your proofs, if ye be of them that speak the truth. Say: We have written down in a Book which leaveth not unrecorded the work of any man, however insignificant, all that they have imputed to Thee, and all that they have done unto Thee.” (Ibid., SLH:195-196)

“Thus have We related unto you that which befell Husayn, and We beseech God that He may destine for Us that which

He had decreed for him. He, verily, is the Most Generous, the All-Bountiful. By the righteousness of God! Through his deed the fragrances of holiness were wafted over all things, the proof of God was perfected, and His testimony made manifest to all men.” (Ibid., SLH:206)

“Have I, O King, ever disobeyed thee? Have I, at any time, transgressed any of thy laws? Can any of thy ministers that represented thee in 'Iraq produce any proof that can establish My disloyalty to thee? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all worlds! Not for one short moment did We rebel against thee, or against any of thy ministers. Never, God willing, shall We revolt against thee, though We be exposed to trials more severe than any We suffered in the past.” (Ibid., SLH:219)

“Hast thou not heard what a man of the family of Pharaoh, a believer, hath said of old, and which God recounted unto His Apostle, Whom He hath chosen above all human beings, and entrusted with His Message, and made the source of His mercy unto all them that dwell on earth? He said, and He, verily, speaketh the truth: "Will ye slay a man because he saith my Lord is God, when he hath already come to you with proofs of his mission? And if he be a liar, on him will be his lie, but if he be a man of truth, part at least of what he threateneth will fall upon you." This is what God hath revealed unto His Well-Beloved One, in His unerring Book. (Ibid., SLH:221)

“For eleven years We dwelt in that land, until the Minister representing thy government arrived, whose name Our pen is loth to mention, who was given to wine, who followed his lusts, and committed wickedness, and was corrupt and corrupted 'Iraq. To this will bear witness most of the inhabitants of Baghdad, wert thou to inquire of them, and be of such as seek the truth. He it was who wrongfully seized the substance of his fellow-men, who forsook all the commandments of God, and perpetrated whatever God had forbidden. Eventually, he, following his desires, rose up against Us, and walked in the ways of the unjust. He accused Us, in his letter to thee, and thou didst believe him and followed in his way, without seeking any proof or trustworthy evidence from him. Thou didst ask for no explanation, nor didst thou attempt either to investigate or ascertain the matter, that the truth might be distinguished from falsehood in thy

sight, and that thou mightest be clear in thy discernment. Find out for thyself the sort of man he was by asking those Ministers who were, at that time, in 'Iraq, as well as the Governor of the City [Baghdad] and its high Counsellor, that the truth may be revealed to thee, and that thou mayest be of the well-informed. (Ibid., SLH:229-300)

"Although His signs have encompassed the world and His proofs and testimonies are shining forth and manifest as the light, yet the ignorant appear heedless, nay rather, rebellious." (TB:33)

"I beg of Thee, by that Word through which Thy proof was perfected among Thy creatures and Thy testimony was fulfilled among Thy servants to strengthen Thy people in that whereby the face of the Cause will radiate in Thy dominion, the standards of Thy power will be planted among Thy servants, and the banners of Thy guidance will be raised throughout Thy dominions." (TB:34)

"Truly this Wronged One desireth not to demonstrate His Own Cause with proofs produced by others...One wondereth by what proof or reason the disbelievers among the people of the Bayan have turned away from the Lord of being." (TB:74)

"They have rejected the bounty of God and His proofs and have repudiated the testimony of God and His signs." (TB:107)

"Verily, the Inevitable is come, and He, the True One, hath appeared with proof and testimony." (TB:117)

"They have denied the testimony of God and His proof, after he came from the heaven of power with the kingdom of His signs." (TB:120)

"Say, O concourse of divines! Be fair in your judgement, I adjure you by God. Produce then whatever proofs and testimonies ye possess, if ye are to be reckoned among the inmates of this glorious habitation. Set your hearts towards the Dayspring of divine Revelation that We may disclose before your eyes the equivalent of all such verses, proofs, testimonies, affirmations and evidences as ye and other kindreds of the earth possess." (TB:245)

"I have manifested Myself among men, and have sent down Him Who is the Day Spring of the signs of My Revelation...He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person." (GL:49)

"Consider this Wronged One. Though the clearest proofs attest the truth of His Cause; though the prophecies He, in an unmistakable language, hath made have been fulfilled; though, in spite of His not being accounted among the learned, His being unschooled and inexperienced in the disputations current among the divines, He hath rained upon men the showers of His manifold and Divinely-inspired knowledge; yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled against Him! He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-tried in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflicted Prison, unto which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him." (GL:58)

"Say: The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth." (GL:105)

"Let him that doubteth the words which the Spirit of God hath spoken seek the court of Our presence and hear Our divinely-revealed verses, and be an eye-witness of the clear proof of Our claim." (GL:259)

OTHER PROOF TEXTS (?)

‘ABDU’L-BAHA

"If it were possible that in every city a few of the awakened ones, when opportunity offered, could hold a meeting and therein habitually present the proofs and arguments of God, this would do much to expand the consciousness of men; provided, however, that

the discourse be kept to this one theme."³

"The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed as to the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God, be they young or old, be they men or women, each according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshalling the divine proofs and evidences."⁴

"When your hearts are wholly attracted to the one true God you will acquire divine knowledge, will become attentive to the proofs and testimonies and will commit to memory the glad-tidings concerning the Manifestation of the Beauty of the All-Merciful, as mentioned in the heavenly Scriptures. Then ye shall behold how wondrous are His confirmations and how gracious is His assistance."⁵

"It is imperative to acquire the knowledge of divine proofs and evidences, and to acquaint oneself with convincing testimonies which demonstrate the revelation of God's resplendent Light. The study group thou didst organize hath imparted much joy and happiness to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Thou must exert much effort and show forth perseverance and constancy that, God willing, through the reviving breaths of His mercy, souls may be so educated as to become like radiant candles shining in the assemblage of divine knowledge and understanding. This matter is highly important. It is binding on everyone and must be regarded as an obligation."⁶

³Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at Baha'i World Centre [BWC], and cited #5, in the Research Department's compilation on scholarship, 1979; and cited #37, in Research Department's compilation entitled "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983.

⁴Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at BWC, in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #28.

⁵Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at BWC, in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #29.

⁶Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at BWC, in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #30.

"I beseech God that within a short time thou mayest be able to acquaint the children of the Abha Paradise with the divine mysteries and truths and to rend asunder the veils of idle imaginings, that each one of them may become a fluent speaker and be able to guide many others to the Cause of God. Then will the outpourings of the heavenly bounties become manifest and the invisible hosts of the Kingdom, armed with conclusive proofs and evidences, will conquer the realms of the inner realities and domains of the hearts of men, even as a single seek developing into seven ears of grain."⁷

"In this day there is nothing more important than the instruction and study of clear proofs and convincing, heavenly arguments, for therein lie the source of life and the path of salvation."⁸

"The method of instruction you have devised, namely, to begin by proving the existence and oneness of God, the Lord of Eternity, then to establish the validity of the mission proclaimed by the prophets and messengers, and finally to explain the signs, the marvels and wonders of the universe, is highly acceptable and you should proceed accordingly. Confirmations from the Lord of Glory will assuredly be vouchsafed. Memorizing the texts of the holy Tablets, and of perspicuous words and statements is highly praiseworthy. You should exert the utmost endeavour in your efforts to educate, to expound, and to instruct."⁹

"It is good to memorize the logical points and the proofs of the Holy Books. Those proofs and evidences which establish the fact that Baha'u'llah is the fulfilment of the Promises of the Holy Books. These proofs ought to be collected and memorized. As soon as someone will ask you -- What are your proofs? -- you may cry out at the top of your voice and say: 'Here they are!'"¹⁰

⁷ Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at BWC, in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #31

⁸ Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at BWC, in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #32; quoted in Hugh Motlagh, *Teaching: The Crown of Immortal Glory*, p. 200.

⁹ Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at BWC, in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #33.

¹⁰ 'Abdu'l-Baha in "Star of the West," III:11, p. 4; cited in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #65.

"Never would the Pharisees have been emboldened to calumniate Him and charge Him with that grievous sin, but for their ignorance of the inner core [haqiiqat] of mysteries and the fact that they paid no heed to His splendours and regarded not His proofs [al-aathaar]." (SWAB:#19:40-41; Makaatiib:#19:38)

"The existence of the Divine Being hath been clearly established, on the basis of logical proofs [be-dala'il 'aqliyyeh], but the reality [haqiiqat] of the Godhead [al-wahiiyat] is beyond the grasp of the mind." (SWAB:#21:46; Makaatiib:#21:44)

"Verily, 'Abdu'l-Baha inhaleth the fragrance of the love of God from every meeting-place where the Word of God is uttered and proofs [al-hujaj] and arguments [wa'l-buraahiin] set forth that shed their rays across the world, and where they recount the tribulations of 'Abdu'l-Baha at the evil hands of those who have violated the Covenant of God." (SWAB:#53:92; Makaatiib:#53:89)

"This gathering must be completely spiritual. That is, the discussions must be confined to marshalling clear and conclusive proofs [hujaj baalagheh va-buraahiin va-Daheh va-dalli'eh qaaTa'eh] that the Sun of Truth hath indeed arisen." (SWAB:#94:123-124; Makaatiib:#94:121)

"Set ye forth His arguments [hujaj] and proofs [va-buraahiin]." (SWAB:#95:124; Makaatiib:#95:121)

"If their task is to be confined to good conduct and advice, nothing will be accomplished. They must speak out, expound the proofs [burhaan], set forth clear arguments [aaqaameh adlle'h], draw irrefutable conclusions [va-Daheh ve-hujjat qaaTa'eh] establishing the truth of the manifestation of the Sun of Reality." (SWAB:#212:268; Makaatiib:#212:258)

"If thou wishest the divine knowledge and recognition, purify thy heart from all beside God, be wholly attracted to the ideal, beloved One; search for and choose Him and apply thyself to rational and authoritative arguments. For arguments are a guide to the path and by this the heart will be turned unto the Sun of Truth. And when the heart is turned unto the Sun, then the eye will be opened and will recognize the Sun through the Sun itself. Then man will be in no need of arguments (or proofs), for the Sun is altogether independent, and

absolute independence is in need of nothing, and proofs are one of the things of which absolute independence has no need. Be not like Thomas; be thou like Peter." (TAB:I:168; BWF:383-384)

"Thou hast asked about knowledge and cognition. Read the divine books and tablets and look into the books of proofs that have been written in presenting this Cause. One of them is the Book of Ighan [Kitab-i-Iqan], which is translated into English. There is also the book by Mirza Abul Fazl¹¹ and there are others written by the believers. In the time to come, many divine books and tablets will be translated and thou wilt read them; but thou mayest ask God that thou mayest attract divine knowledge by the magnet of the love of God. When the soul becomes sanctified in every condition and becomes pure and holy, then the door of the divine knowledge will be opened to the face." (TAB:II:321-322)

"As to the proofs and arguments of the Beauty of Abha, these are manifest like the sun. If thou wishest a discerning eye and seekest for a hearing ear, set aside that which thou hast heard from fathers and ancestors, for such things are imitation--and then seek for the truth with the utmost attention until the divine confirmation may reach thee and the matter may be properly disclosed unto thee." (TAB:II:409-410; BWF:387)

"Heroes are they, O my Lord, lead them to the field of battle. Guides are they, make them to speak out with arguments and proofs." (BP:176)

"These are servants of Thine that have heard Thy Voice, given ear to Thy Word and hearkened to Thy Call. They have believed in Thee, witnessed Thy wonders, acknowledged Thy proof and testified to Thine evidence." (BP:202)

"These obvious arguments are adduced for weak souls; but if the inner perception be open, a hundred thousand clear proofs become visible." (SAQ:II:7)

"Therefore it must be our task to prove to the thoughtful by reasonable arguments the prophethood of Moses, of Christ, and of the other Divine Manifestations. And the proofs and evidences which we give must not be based on traditional but on rational arguments." (SAQ:III:13)

¹¹ "The Baha'i Proofs", by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani

"Now we must prove from the Holy Books that these two Manifestations have come, and we must divine the meaning of the words of the Prophets; for we wish for proofs drawn from the Holy Books.

"A few days ago, at table, we put forth logical proofs establishing the truth of these two Manifestations." (SAQ:X:47)

"There are no clearer proofs than this in the Holy Books for any Manifestation. For him who is just, the agreement of the times indicated by the tongues of the Great Ones is the most conclusive proof. There is no other possible explanation of these prophecies. Blessed are the just souls who seek the truth." (SAQ:XIII:82)

"These are conclusive and evident facts. But the arguments which these European philosophers have used raise doubtful proofs and are not conclusive." (SAQ:XLVI:208)

"This is a spiritual proof, but one which we cannot at the beginning put forth for the benefit of the materialists; first we must speak of the logical proofs, afterwards the spiritual proofs." (SAQ:L:229)

"Therefore as long as signs of existence appear, they are a proof that the possessor of the sign is existent." (SAQ:LX:261-262; BWF:325)

"This is a rational proof which we are giving, so that the wise may weigh it in the balance of reason and justice. But if the human spirit will rejoice and be attracted to the Kingdom of God, if the inner sight becomes opened, and the spiritual healing strengthened, and the spiritual feelings predominant, he will see the immortality of the spirit as clearly as he sees the sun, and the glad tidings and signs of God will encompass him." (SAQ:LX:262; BWF:325-326)

"The attracted leaves should not, when associating with each other, talk merely about the temperature of the weather, the coldness of the water, the beauty of the flowers and gardens, the freshness of the grass and the flowing water. They should rather restrict their discussions to glorification and praise and the uttering of proofs and reasons, to quoting verses and traditions and putting forth clear testimonies, so that all the homes of the loved ones will be converted into gathering places for lessons on teaching the Cause."¹²

¹²Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in The Compilation of Compilations,

"O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned. Open your lips in praise. Adduce convincing arguments and proofs. Lead those who thirst to the fountain of life."¹³

"Those who would have men believe that religion is their own private property once more bring their efforts to bear against the Sun of Truth: they resist the Command of God; they invent calumnies, not having arguments against it, neither proofs. They attack with masked faces, not daring to come forth into the light of day.

"Our methods are different, we do not attack, neither calumniate; we do not wish to dispute with them; we bring forth proofs and arguments; we invite them to confute our statements. They cannot answer us, but instead, they write all they can think of against the Divine Messenger, Baha'u'llah." (Paris Talks [PT], p. 103)

"Told of the study of the Ighan in the Wednesday night meetings in Washington, his [Abdu'l-Baha's] comment was, 'Very good! Very good! It is very good to memorize the logical points and the proofs of the Holy Books. Those proofs and evidences which establish the fact that Baha'u'llah is the fulfillment of the Promises of the Holy Books. These proofs ought to be collected and memorized. As soon as someone will ask you--What are your proofs?--you may cry out at the top of your voice and say: "Here they are!"'"¹⁴

"When I was in America I used to go to churches to speak. When I entered they were engaged in worshipping. I also used to stand up and turn to the Kingdom of God. After they had finished their prayer I used to give the Divine Glad Tidings. I used to give the proofs and evidences of God. I gave the teachings of the Blessed Beauty. All listened. There was no opposition." (SW XI:16, p. 268-269)

vol. II, p. 396, quoted in Hugh Motlagh, Teaching: The Crown of Immortal Glory, p. 201.

¹³Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in Letter from the International Teaching Centre, 12/5/1988; quoted: Hugh Motlagh, Teaching: The Crown of Immortal Glory, p.200.

¹⁴'Abdu'l-Baha's words in conversation in Dublin, New Hampshire, 31 July 1912; in Star of the West, III:11, p. 4.

"As to the proofs and arguments of the Beauty of Abha, these are manifest like the sun. If thou wishest a discerning eye and seekest for a hearing ear, set thou aside that which thou hast heard from fathers and ancestors, for such things are imitation--and then seek for the truth with the utmost attention until the divine confirmation may reach thee and the matter may be properly disclosed unto thee." (BWF:387)

"When the prophets of God appear on this earth, their validity is established by means of certain proofs." (ABDP:43)

"Praise be to God! You have heard the call of the Kingdom. Your eyes are opened; you have turned to God. Your purpose is the good pleasure of God, the understanding of the mysteries of the heart and investigation of the realities. Day and night you must strive that you may attain to the significances of the heavenly Kingdom, perceive the signs of Divinity, acquire certainty of knowledge and realize that this world has a Creator, a Vivifier, a Provider, an Architect--knowing this through proofs and evidences and not through susceptibilities, nay, rather, through decisive arguments and real vision--that is to say, visualizing it as clearly as the outer eye beholds the sun. In this way you may behold the presence of God and attain to the knowledge of the holy, divine Manifestations.

"You must come into the knowledge of the divine Manifestations and Their teachings through proofs and evidences. You must understand unseal the divine mysteries of the supreme Kingdom and become capable of discovering the inner realities of things. Then shall you be the manifestations of the mercy of God and true believers, firm and steadfast in the Cause of God."¹⁵

"Every subject presented to a thoughtful audience must be supported by rational proofs and logical arguments. Proofs are of four kinds: first, through sense perception; second, through the reasoning faculty; third, from traditional or scriptural authority; fourth, through the medium of inspiration. That is to say, there are four criteria or standards of judgment by which the human mind reaches its conclusions. We will first consider the criterion of the senses. This is a standard still held to by the materialistic philosophers of the world. They believe that whatever is perceptible to the senses is a verity, a

¹⁵Talk of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 6 July 1912; *Khitabat*, pp. 473-478; PUP:227-228, FWU:65; cited in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #61.

certainty and without doubt existent. For example, they say, 'Here is a lamp which you see, and because it is perceptible to the sense of sight, you cannot doubt its existence. There is a tree; your sense of vision assures you of its reality, which is beyond question. This is a man; you see that he is a man; therefore, he exists.'" In a word, everything confirmed by the senses is assumed to be as undoubted and unquestioned as the product of five multiplied by five; it cannot be twenty-six nor less than twenty-five. Consequently, the materialistic philosophers consider the criterion of the senses to be first and foremost.

"But in the estimation of the divine philosophers this proof and assurance is not reliable; nay, rather, they deem the standard of the senses to be false because it is imperfect. Sight, for instance, is one of the most important of the senses, yet it is subject to many aberrations and inaccuracies. The eye sees the mirage as a body of water; it regards images in the mirror as realities when they are but reflections. A man sailing upon the river imagines that objects upon the shore are moving, whereas he is in motion, and they are stationary. To the eye the earth appears fixed, while the sun and stars revolve about it. As a matter of fact, the heavenly orbs are stationary, and the earth is turning upon its axis. The colossal suns, planets and constellations which shine in the heavens appear small, nay, infinitesimal to human vision, whereas in reality they are vastly greater than the earth in dimension and volume. A whirling spark appears to the sight as a circle of fire. There are numberless instances of this kind which show the error and inaccuracy of the senses. Therefore, the divine philosophers have considered this standard of judgment to be defective and unreliable.

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

and are contradictory in conclusions, it is an evidence that the method and standard of test must have been faulty and insufficient.

"The third criterion or standard of proof is traditional or scriptural--namely, that every statement or conclusion should be supported by traditions recorded in certain religious books. When we come to consider even the Holy Books--the Books of God--we are led to ask, 'Who understands these books? By what authority of explanation may these Books be understood?' It must be the authority of human reason, and if reason or intellect finds itself incapable of explaining certain questions, or if the possessors of intellect contradict each other in the interpretation of traditions, how can such a criterion be relied upon for accurate conclusions?

"The fourth standard is that of inspiration. In past centuries many philosophers have claimed illumination or revelation, prefacing their statements by the announcement that 'this subject has been revealed through me' or 'thus do I speak by inspiration.' Of this class were the philosophers of the Illuminati [Ishraqiyyun]. Inspirations are the promptings or susceptibilities of the human heart. The promptings of the heart are sometimes satanic. How are we to differentiate them? How are we to tell whether a given statement is an inspiration and prompting of the heart through the merciful assistance or through the satanic agency?

"Consequently, it has become evident that the four criteria or standards of judgment by which the human mind reaches its conclusions are faulty and inaccurate. All of them are liable to mistake and error in conclusions. But a statement presented to the mind accompanied by proofs which the senses can perceive to be correct, which the faculty of reason can accept, which is in accord with traditional authority and sanctioned by the promptings of the heart, can be adjudged and relied upon as perfectly correct, for it has been proved and tested by all the standards of judgment and found to be complete. When we apply but one test, there are possibilities of mistake. This is self-evident and manifest." (PUP:253-255)

"The intellectual proofs of Divinity are based upon observation and evidence which constitute decisive argument, logically proving the reality of Divinity, the effulgence of mercy, the certainty of inspiration and the immortality of the spirit." (PUP:326)

OTHER PROOF TEXTS ⁽¹⁶⁾

¹⁶BWF: 273,274,311,363; PUP: 253-255

III. EVIDENCE

BAHA'U'LLAH

"I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence [daliil] established." (PHW:postlude)

OTHER PROOF TEXTS (17)

'ABDU'L-BAHA

"The Bab hath said: 'Should a tiny ant desire in this day to be possessed of such power as to be able to unravel the abtrusest and most bewildering passages of the Qur'an, its wish will no doubt be fulfilled, inasmuch as the mystery of eternal might vibrates within the innermost being of all created things.' If so helpless a creature can be endowed with so subtle a capacity, how much more efficacious must be the power released through the liberal effusions of the grace of Baha'u'llah! Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned."¹⁸

IV. ARGUMENT

BAHA'U'LLAH

"I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument [hujjat] fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established." (PHW:postlude)

'ABDU'L-BAHA

"Verily, 'Abdu'l-Baha inhaleth the fragrance of the love of God from every meeting-place where the Word of God is uttered and proofs [al-hujaj] and arguments [wa'l-buraahin] set forth that shed their rays across the world, and where they recount the tribulations of

¹⁷GL:3,150,194,324; KI:207-209,217-218,225-226

¹⁸Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, translated at BWC, in Research Department's "The Importance of Deepening our Knowledge and Understanding of the Faith," January 1983, #36.

'Abdu'l-Baha at the evil hands of those who have violated the Covenant of God." (SWAB:#53:92; Makaatiib:#53:89)

"Set ye forth His arguments [hujaj] and proofs [va-buraahiin]." (SWAB:#95:124; Makaatiib:#95:121)

"They must speak out, expound the proofs [burhaan], set forth clear arguments [aaqaameh adlle'h], draw irrefutable conclusions [va-Daheh ve-hujjat qaaTa'eh] establishing the truth of the manifestation of the Sun of Reality." (SWAB:#212:268; Makaatiib:#212:258)

"If thou wishest the divine knowledge and recognition, purify thy heart from all beside God, be wholly attracted to the ideal, beloved One; search for and choose Him and apply thyself to rational and authoritative arguments. For arguments are a guide to the path and by this the heart will be turned unto the Sun of Truth. And when the heart is turned unto the Sun, then the eye will be opened and will recognize the Sun through the Sun itself. Then man will be in no need of arguments (or proofs), for the Sun is altogether independent, and absolute independence is in need of nothing, and proofs are one of the things of which absolute independence has no need. Be not like Thomas; be thou like Peter." (TAB:I:168; BWF:383-384)

COMMENTARY ON THE NOMENCLATURE

Perhaps the most astonishing of all the statements made here by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha are those cited from "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiiyid" (The Words of Paradise), addressed to Haji Mirza Haydar 'Ali:

"In this day the verses of the Mother Book are resplendent and unmistakable even as the sun. They can in no wise be mistaken for any of the past or more recent utterances. Truly this Wronged One desireth not to demonstrate His Own Cause with proofs produced by others. He is the One Who embraceth all things, while all else besides Him is circumscribed. Say, O people, peruse that which is current amongst you and We will peruse what pertaineth unto Us." (IB:74)

Baha'u'llah's insistence that he be examined according to his own criteria, and judged according to his own proofs applies to all of the Prophets of God:

"No man shall attain the shores of the ocean of true understanding except he be detached from all that is in heaven and on earth...inasmuch as man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom, can never enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favour, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets." (KI:3-4)

"Immeasurably high are the Prophets of God exalted above the comprehension of men, who can never know them except by their own Selves. Far be it from His glory that His chosen Ones should be magnified by any other than their own persons. Glorified are they above the praise of men; exalted are they above human understanding." (KI:35)

In "Prayers and Meditations" Baha'u'llah reiterates this teaching:

"This servant of Thine testifieth that naught else except Thee can ever express Thee, nor canst Thou be described by any one save Thyself." (P&M:CXL:229)

"None can befittingly praise Thee except Thine own Self and such as are like unto Thee." (P&M:CLXXVIII:297)

"How sweet, therefore, is the praise Thou givest to Thine own Self, and the description Thou givest of Thine own Being! (P&M:CLXXVIII:298)

If men can not attain to knowledge of the Prophets of God from each other, how are they to recognize the Prophets and understand their revealed verses? Baha'u'llah tells us to:

"...seek enlightenment from them who are the recognized Expounders...so that the hidden mysteries may be unravelled, and be made manifest...the guidance of the divine Manifestations concerning the abstruse matters..." (KI:256)

In a Tablet addressed to Muhammad Ibrahim-i-Qazvini, Baha'u'llah indicated who these "recognized Expounders" and "divine Manifestations" are to whom the people should turn for "enlightenment" and "guidance":

"In mine hand I carry the testimony of God, your Lord and the Lord of your sires of old. Weigh it with the just Balance that ye possess, the Balance of the testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God. If ye find it to be established in truth, if ye believe it to be of God, beware, then, lest ye cavil at it, and render your works vain, and be numbered with the infidels. It is indeed the sign of God that hath been sent down through the power of truth, through which the validity of His Cause hath been demonstrated unto His creatures, and the ensigns of purity lifted up betwixt earth and heaven." (GL:CXXIX:281)

While the "testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God" is here cited as the "just Balance" whereby this seeker may "weigh" Baha'u'llah's Revelation, in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" and other Tablets, Baha'u'llah affirms that his Writings are the "perfect," the "infallible," and the "unerring Balance" whereby all other testimonies must be weighed. Indeed, these Writings can only be properly tested according to this "standard, did ye but know it":

"Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its own weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it." (KA:#99; cited in ESW:128 and GL:XCVIII:198)

"Give ear unto the verses of God which He Who is the sacred Lote-Tree reciteth unto you. They are assuredly the infallible Balance, established by God, the Lord of this world and the next." (KA:#148)

"Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on earth are weighed, and their fate determined, if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth. Say: This is the Most Great Testimony, by which the validity of every proof

throughout the ages hath been established, would that ye might be assured thereof." (KA:#183; cited in GL:LXX:136-137)

"Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life. Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble." (Surat al-Muluk, in GL:CXIV:236)

If we examine the Prophet of God according to his own standards, in the "just Balance" of the "Prophets and Messengers of God" then, rather than seeing through the eyes of other men, and imitating the views of our ancestors and our contemporaries, we are seeing through our own eyes, seeing things for ourselves. Baha'u'llah commends this in Hidden Words (Kalimat-i-Maknuneh) and reiterates it in "Prayers and Meditations":

"The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour..." (AHW:#2)

"I testify that if Thy servants were to turn towards Thee with the eyes Thou didst create in them and with the ears wherewith Thou didst endow them, they would all be carried away by a single word sent down from the right hand of the throne of Thy majesty." (P&M:CXIII:190-191)

Also, by weighing the Revelation of Baha'u'llah in "God's unerring Balance" we will be endowed with "a new eye"--and we will see with the "eye of God":

"Then will the manifold favours and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the

stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation." (KI:196; cited in BWF:107)

"With the ear of God he heareth, with the eye of God he beholdeth the mysteries of divine creation." (SV:#3:17)

"With fixed and steady gaze, born of the unerring eye of God, scan for a while the horizon of divine knowledge, and contemplate those words of perfection which the Eternal hath revealed, that haply the mysteries of divine wisdom, hidden ere now beneath the veil of glory and treasured within the tabernacle of His grace, may be made manifest unto you." (KI:16-17)

"Behold Me, not with your eyes, but with Mine. Thus admonisheth you He Who is the Gracious, the All-Knowing." (GL:XLI:90-91)

"Is there any man of insight, O my God, that can behold Thee with Thine own eye, and where is the thirsty one who can direct his face towards the living waters of Thy love?" (P&M:VI:8)

"Open Thou, O my Lord, mine eyes and the eyes of all them that have sought Thee, that we may recognize Thee with Thine own eyes. This is Thy bidding given us in the Book sent down by Thee unto Him Whom Thou hast chosen by Thy behest, Whom Thou hast singled out for Thy favor above all Thy creatures, Whom Thou hast been pleased to invest with Thy sovereignty, and Whom Thou hast specially favored and entrusted with Thy Message unto Thy people." (P&M:LVI:80-81)

"Far be it, then, from Thy glory that anyone should gaze on Thy wondrous beauty with any eye save Thine own eye, or hear the melodies proclaiming Thine almighty sovereignty with any ear except Thine own ear." (P&M:LVIII:88)

"I entreat Thee, O Thou Who art my Companion, and my Best-Beloved, to lift the veil that hath come in between Thee and Thy servants, that they may recognize Thee with Thine own eye and rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee." (P&M:CXX:206)

"Where is that fair-minded soul, O my God, who will judge equitably Thy Cause, and where is the man of insight to be found who will behold Thee with Thine own eyes? Is there any man of hearing who will hear Thee with Thine ears, or one endowed with eloquence who will speak the truth in Thy days?" (P&M:CLXXVI:285)

In past ages, millions of souls have mistakenly believed that mystical enlightenment was unrelated to or opposed to rational thought, and that neither intuition nor reason had any relationship to religious practice. Baha'u'llah reintegrates all three of these aspects of spiritual life, calling for the establishment of religious experience along lines which harmonize the gifts of intuition and reason, and which insist equally upon the personal recognition and the individual practice of divine teachings. In order to "see" with the "eye of God" we must detach ourselves from all other points of view, and immerse ourselves in the Ocean of Divine Revelation. It is through study of the Word of God that we come to recognize the "infallible Balance" in which all things are to be "weighed" in this Day. It is through meditation upon the Word of God--the Word and the teachings it reveals--that we discover the gifts of divine inspiration, the wisdom and knowledge of God which is manifested in our very souls through the Holy Spirit. It is through practice of the teachings revealed in the Word of God that we participate in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, in the return to the Garden of Eden, to a state of harmony between God and humankind. These are the proofs of Baha'u'llah, and of 'Abdu'l-Baha, his chosen successor, whom he designated as the authoritative interpreter of his teachings.

As 'Abdu'l-Baha has written in another context:

"The point at issue is clear, direct and of utmost brevity. Either Baha'u'llah was wise, omniscient and aware of what would ensue, or was ignorant and in error." (SWAB:#186:213)

"But now, as that Light of Reality has set, all are in need of proofs; so we have undertaken to demonstrate logical proofs of the truth of his claim." (SAQ, X:43)

"When the Prophets of God appear on this earth, their validity is established by means of certain proofs." (ABDP:43)

According to their authors, these are DIVINE proofs--they are not Baha'u'llah's or 'Abdu'l-Baha's opinions. They are the proofs of God,

and through them we are assisted in seeing with the "eye of God." We can collect virtually innumerable references to signs, proofs, evidences and arguments of God from the Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. The process of collecting these references will serve as a great educational project for whoever chooses to do it. However, the mere collection of words does not bring understanding. If we merely collect words we will not necessarily understand them. If we seek to understand these concepts as we collect them we will come to know them, and this knowledge will change us.

In the Baha'i Writings there are signs, proofs, evidences and arguments of God which pertain to the existence and nature of God, to the existence and nature of the Prophets of God, to the existence and nature of the human soul, the kingdoms of creation, the efficacy of the divine teachings, and many other subjects. A collection of quotations pertaining to the Baha'i teachings with respect to God have been compiled, and the resulting document is entitled PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. The present book is a COMPANION to a volume devoted to PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS. On this latter subject some readers may be familiar with the works of authors who have examined some of the proofs of the prophethood of specific Prophets. Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Baha'i authors have written many tomes devoted to expounding proofs of the prophethood of Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and Baha'u'llah. While the perusal of these books might convince the reader that there are objective, rational criteria for recognizing specific claimants to prophethood, it might well be unclear to most readers that any set of criteria apply to all Prophets.

Baha'u'llah established prophethood on a scientific foundation--this readers will discover for themselves. This is not the science with which all of us are familiar, the science of physical things, based on sensory perception. Rather, this is the science of the meta-physical, of what cannot be perceived by the senses, but what can be understood by the intellect. This science is systematic, logical, inclusive, associative, and reliable. Indeed, as it is based upon the teachings of the Prophets, this science is even more reliable than physical science.

As 'Abdu'l-Baha has explained:

"Consider what it is that singles man out from among created beings, and makes of him a creature apart. Is it not his reasoning power, his intelligence? Shall he not make use of these in his study of religion? I say unto you: weigh carefully in the balance of reason and

science everything that is presented to you as religion. If it passes this test, then accept it, for it is truth! If, however, it does not conform, then reject it, for it is ignorance!" (PT:144)

"In divine questions we must not depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith revealed to us." (PUP:327)

PART TWO

REASONS FOR OPPOSITION TO THE PROPHETS OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

In every age the new Prophet of God is met with opposition from the people to whom he declares his message, from the religious hierarchy in particular, and this is true of every prophet without exception. Indeed, the opposition of the people and of the clergy are two proofs of the prophet of God. We will begin the study of the reasons for the denial and opposition of the people and the clergy in particular to the new Prophet with this citation from Baha'u'llah's "Lawh-i-'Abbas Faruq":

GL:56-58:“CONSIDER the former generations. WITNESS how every time the Day Star of Divine bounty hath shed the light of His Revelation upon the world, the people of His Day have arisen against Him, and repudiated His truth. They who were regarded as the leaders of men have invariably striven to hinder their followers from turning unto Him Who is the Ocean of God's limitless bounty.

“BEHOLD how the people, as a result of the verdict pronounced by the divines of His age, have cast Abraham, the Friend of God, into fire; how Moses, He Who held converse with the Almighty, was denounced as liar and slanderer. REFLECT how Jesus, the Spirit of God, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, the Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continually from place to place, deprived of a permanent abode. PONDER that which befell Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, may the life of all else be a sacrifice unto Him. How severe the afflictions which the leaders of the Jewish people and of the idol-worshippers caused to rain upon Him, Who is the sovereign Lord of all, in consequence of the truth of His Message! By the righteousness of My Cause! My Pen groaneth, and all created things weep with a great weeping, as a result of the woes He suffered at the hands of them that have broken the Covenant

of God, violated His Testament, rejected His proofs, and disputed His signs. Thus recount We unto thee the tale of that which happened in days past, haply thou mayest COMPREHEND.

“Thou has known how previously the Prophets of God, His Messengers and Chosen Ones, have been afflicted. MEDITATE a while on the motive and reason which have been responsible for such a persecution. At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in the guise of uprightness and piety. Day and night they passed through such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His glory.”

In this passage Baha’u’llah calls upon the readers of his words to think--consider, witness, behold, reflect, ponder, comprehend, meditate--deeply about the cause for the denial of and opposition to the new prophet of God in every new Dispensation. But we the readers are not left to our own devices to try to understand the reasons for such denials and opposition, although, as we will shortly see, our own minds will come up with plenty of reasons for such denial and opposition without any assistance, and will recognize in the reasons cited by divine philosophy many which sound very familiar to us. Baha’u’llah this subject in considerable detail in "Kitab-i-Iqan". He introduces the topic as follows:

KI:12-14:“And now, PONDER upon these things. What could have caused such contention and conflict? Why is it that the advent of every true Manifestation of God hath been accompanied by such strife and tumult, by such tyranny and upheaval? This notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. To this the records of all sacred books bear witness. Why then is it that despite the expectation of men in their quest of the Manifestations of Holiness, and in spite of the signs recorded in the sacred books, should such acts of violence, of oppression and cruelty, have been perpetrated in every age and cycle against all the Prophets and chosen Ones of God? Even as He hath revealed: "As oft as an Apostle cometh unto you with that which your souls desire not, ye swell with pride,

accusing some of being impostors and slaying others." "REFLECT, what could have been the motive for such deeds? What could have prompted such behaviour towards the Revealers of the beauty of the All-Glorious? Whatever in days gone by hath been the cause of the denial and opposition of those people hath now led to the perversity of the people of this age. To maintain that the testimony of Providence was incomplete, that it hath therefore been the cause of the denial of the people, is but open blasphemy. How far from the grace of the All-Bountiful and from His loving providence and tender mercies it is to single out a soul from amongst all men for the guidance of His creatures, and, on [the] one hand, to withhold from Him the full measure of His divine testimony, and, on the other, inflict severe retribution on His people for having turned away from His chosen One! Nay, the manifold bounties of the Lord of all beings have, at all times, through the Manifestations of His divine Essence, encompassed the earth and all that dwell therein. Not for a moment hath His grace been withheld, nor have the showers of His loving-kindness ceased to rain upon mankind."

We will begin, for no particular reason with the first reason:

**FIRST REASON:
PEOPLE DO NOT INVESTIGATE FOR
THEMSELVES SO THEY ARE UNABLE TO
RECOGNIZE FOR THEMSELVES AND MUST RELY
ON OTHERS**

In referring to the Jewish reaction to the ministry of Jesus Christ 'Abdu'l-Baha writes: "For example, during the days of Jesus Christ the Jews were expecting the appearance of the Messiah, praying and beseeching God day and night that the Promised One might appear. Why did they reject Him when he did appear? They denied Him absolutely, refused to believe in Him. There was no abuse and persecution which they did not heap upon Him. They reviled Him with curses, placed a crown of thorns on His head, led Him through the streets in scorn and derision and finally crucified Him. Why did they do this? Because they did not investigate the truth or reality of Christ and were not able to recognize Him as the Messiah of God. Had they investigated sincerely for themselves, they would surely have believed in Him, respected Him and bowed before Him in reverence. They would have considered His manifestation the greatest bestowal

upon mankind. They would have accepted Him as the very Savior of man; but, alas, they were veiled, they held to imitations of ancestral beliefs and hearsay and did not investigate the truth of Christ. They were submerged in the sea of superstitions and were, therefore, deprived of witnessing that glorious bounty; they were withheld from the fragrances or breaths of the Holy Spirit and suffered in themselves the great debasement and degradation."(PUP:62) Hence, the first principle of divine philosophy is the independent investigation of reality by each individual human being. Baha'u'llah writes in *Kitab-i-Iqan*:

KI:155:“Aside from these things, before his partaking of the reviving waters of faith, he had been so wedded to the traditions of his forefathers, and so passionately devoted to the observance of their customs and laws, that he would have preferred to suffer death rather than violate one letter of those superstitious forms and manners current amongst his people. Even as the people have cried: 'Verily we found our fathers with a faith, and verily, in their footsteps we follow.'” [Qur'an 43:22]

KI:164:“Notwithstanding the divinely-inspired admonitions of all the Prophets, the Saints, and Chosen ones of God, enjoining the people to see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears, they have disdainfully rejected their counsels and have blindly followed, and will continue to follow, the leaders of their Faith.”

Baha'u'llah articulated this principle in many other Books, including the following:

SV:5:“It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart--which is the wellspring of divine treasures--from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires...”

AHW #2:“The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour.”

TB:236:“In the Bayan We directed everyone in this Most Great Revelation to see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears. However when the horizon of the world was illumined with the resplendent light of this Revelation, many people forgot this divine commandment, lost sight of this heavenly exhortation and immersed themselves in the vain imaginings which their minds had devised.”

Baha'u'llah describes the requisites for such an equitable investigation of the Cause of God in several sources:

GL:105:“Judge ye fairly the Cause of God, your Creator, and behold that which hath been sent down from the Throne on high, and meditate thereon with innocent and sanctified hearts.”

KI:192,193:“O My brother, when a true seeker determines to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments. He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth...He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk...”

HWA:#1: “O son of spirit! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.”

The ways by which man may investigate the claims of the prophets of God are discussed in Part Two, on the Principles of Approach, and the spiritual practice which man is called upon to assume as a seeker of truth will be fully elaborated in a subsequent work, and is, in any case, described in detail in the Baha'i Writings. To apply the principle of the independent investigation of reality to the various historical Prophets

of God, we begin with Adam, who is declared a Prophet of God in certain passages of the Qur'an and in certain Writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

Adam is not described as a Prophet of God in the Torah (Pentateuch), in the first and second chapters of Bereshit (Genesis). For this reason many persons do not believe that Adam was a prophet. Have they investigated the reality of Adam for themselves? No. Have they read the passages in the Qur'an, the Bayan-i-Farsi (Persian Exposition), the Dala'il-i-Sab'ih (Seven Proofs) and other Holy Books which attest to the prophethood of Adam? Have they considered the explanations of the prophethood of Adam by 'Abdu'l-Baha? Have they considered that the Biblical story of Adam and Eve may have other meanings than the one to which he is accustomed? No, no, no! Hence, these persons have not investigated the prophethood of Adam for themselves and arrived at their own independent judgments. Inasmuch as they have not engaged in this investigation, this search for truth, they must have relied on other people for their judgments. The prophet Adam carried out His prophetic mission on earth thousands of years ago and many millions have not investigated the reality of His station. How much more is it evident that the masses of humanity do not, in the lifespan of the new prophet of God investigate His claims or study His words, either spoken or written. This failure to investigate the truth for themselves is the first and foremost reason for their denial of and opposition to the new prophets of God. In a study of the addresses and letters of 'Abdu'l-Baha it was found that the teaching requiring "the independent investigation of reality by every human being" was cited in 63% of cases as the "first principle", and in 21% of cases as the "second principle" of the present Age. This reason for the denial of and opposition to the prophets of God is closely linked to the:

**SECOND REASON:
PEOPLE ARE ATTACHED TO AND IMITATE WHAT
OTHER PEOPLE SAY**

'Abdu'l-Baha affirmed that those who "did not investigate the truth or reality...sincerely for themselves" instead "held to imitations of ancestral beliefs and hearsay" and were "submerged in the sea of superstitions". (PUP:62) As Baha'u'llah states in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:74:“Consider how men for generations have been blindly imitating their fathers, and have been trained according to such ways and manners as have been laid down by the dictates of their Faith.”

KI:207:“Say unto them: "O heedless people! Ye repeat what your fathers, in a bygone age, have said. Whatever fruits they have gathered from the tree of their faithfulness, the same we shall ye gather also. Ere long shall ye be gathered unto your fathers, and with them shall ye dwell in hellish fire. An ill abode! the abode of the people of tyranny!"”

And also in "Haft Vadi" (Seven Valleys) in describing the requisites of the seeker for truth in the Valley of Search:

SV:5:“It is incumbent on these servants...that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires, and shut the door of friendliness and enmity upon all the people of the earth.”

In "Kitab-i-Iqan" Baha'u'llah explains why it is necessary to detach oneself from "all the people of the earth":

KI:192-93: “He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the divine mysteries, and, shepherdless, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error. That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords.”

It is evident that Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha did not consider the average human being a "true seeker". It may be argued that only an elite can follow the mystic path and become informed of divine mysteries, including the identity and truth of the Prophets of God. And indeed, the Bab seems to make this very point³:

SP:12:“Yes, the sight alone of but one of these verses (suffices) for those who have the intelligent and perspicacious eye: for the others, I do not speak of them, for they are not worthy of a similar attention, God having said through the greater part of the Manifestations that these signs are for those who have Faith and Intelligence and not for the great majority of the creatures, who are not in a state to comprehend.”

SP:13:“See how God tests His creatures! If He had given to the Nuqtih-Bayan the rod which He delivered to Moses, not one of those who believe in the Qur'an would have remained in doubt, all would have believed. And here when God gave to Him a sign superior to this rod, in keeping with the religion of the Muslims and the testimony of their Book: many of the creatures were tested and withdrew themselves all of a sudden. This derives from their lack of religion and of investigation of their own religion, for the sight or the audition alone of a single verse surpasses the greatest of the miracles of the prophets.”

Baha'u'llah confirms the superiority of the verses of God in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:207:“For thou hearest how in this day the people disdainfully ignore the divinely-revealed verses, yet, nothing greater than these verses hath ever appeared, nor will ever be made manifest in the world!”

Baha'u'llah explains in "Kitab-i-Iqan" that the intention of this affirmation by the Primal Point is not that the verses of God can only be comprehended by doctors and scholars of religion, by experts in sciences. He clarifies that those who understand are those who apprehend the spiritual meanings, and these are more often to be found among the "laymen" rather than among the "clergy". His exact words are as follows:

KI:210-211:“Heed not the idle contention of those who maintain that the Book and verses thereof can never be a testimony unto the common people, inasmuch as they neither grasp their meaning nor appreciate their value. And yet, the unfailing testimony of God to both the East and the West is none other than the Qur'an. Were it beyond the comprehension of men, how could it have been declared as a universal testimony unto all people? If their contention be true, none would therefore be required, nor would it be necessary for them to know God, inasmuch as the knowledge of the divine Being transcendeth the knowledge of His Book, and the common people would not possess the capacity to comprehend it. Such contention is utterly fallacious and inadmissible. It is actuated solely by arrogance and pride. Its motive is to lead the people astray from the Ridvan of divine good-pleasure and to tighten the reins of their authority over

the people. And yet, in the sight of God, these common people are infinitely superior and exalted above their religious leaders who have turned away from the one true God. The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit. This is evidenced by those who, today, though without a single letter of the accepted standards of learning, are occupying the loftiest seats of knowledge; and the garden of their hearts is adorned, through the showers of divine grace, with the roses of wisdom and the tulips of understanding. Well is it with the sincere in heart for their share of the light of a mighty Day!"

Again, we return to the requisites of the "true seeker", characteristics which may pertain to any man, which are not the private property, the reserve of any group including that one which arrogates for itself the privilege of human learning. Once more, in referring to this necessity of being detached from all human beings and all that pertains to them, we find Baha'u'llah writing:

GL:83-84: "In like manner, when Muhammad, the Prophet of God, may all men be a sacrifice unto Him--appeared, the learned men of Mecca and Medina arose, in the early days of His Revelation, against Him and rejected His Message, while they who were destitute of all learning recognized and embraces His Faith. Ponder a while. Consider how Balal, the Ethiopian, unlettered though he was, ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude, whilst 'Abdu'llah Ubayy, a leader among the learned, maliciously strove to oppose Him. Behold, how a mere shepherd was so carried away by the ecstasy of the words of God that he was able to gain admittance into the habitation of his Best-Beloved, and was united to Him Who is the Lord of Mankind, whilst they who prided themselves on their knowledge and wisdom strayed far from His path and remained deprived of His grace. For this reason He hath written: "He that is exalted among you shall be abased, and he that is abased shall be exalted." References to this theme are to be found in most of the heavenly Books, as well as in the sayings of the Prophets and Messengers of God."

Inasmuch as the "common people" are at least as likely as the "learned" to follow in the footsteps of their fathers, and thereby through imitation of ancestral traditions, superstitions and current

hearsay to be veiled from the truth of the new prophet of God, it follows that very few of the "common people" recognize this new prophet during His lifetime. 'Abdu'l-Baha makes reference to this special company of the elect, who have so become through their actions rather than their learning: "The great mass of humanity does not exercise real love and fellowship. The elect of humanity are those who live together in love and unity. They are preferable before God because the divine attributes are already manifest in them. The supreme love and unity is witnessed in the divine Manifestations. Among Them unity is indissoluble, changeless, eternal and everlasting. Each One is expressive and representative of all. If we deny One of the Manifestations of God, we deny all. To inflict persecution upon One is to persecute the Others. In all degrees of existence each One praises and sanctifies the Others. Each of Them holds to the solidarity of mankind and promotes the unity of human hearts. Next to the divine Manifestations come the believers whose characteristics are agreement, fellowship and love." (PUP:208)

One of the principle teachings of divine philosophy is the abandonment of all prejudices, and this amounts to a whole-scale repudiation of inherited culture except for that small portion which can be absorbed into a completely truth-loving and prejudice-free society of true seekers. In a study of the talks and letters of 'Abdu'l-Baha the present author found that the principle of "the abandonment of all prejudices, whether religious, sectarian, racial, patriotic, economic, political or other" was rates as the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 11th teaching of the New Age, with an average of approximately fifth place. A similar teaching, "the abandonment of imitations, dogmas and superstitions in religion" was ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th in four different sources, and its ranking in first place was linked directly to "the independent investigation of reality". Having identified this second reason for the denial of and opposition to the prophets we are lead to seek the causes of the failure of the generality of mankind to investigate reality and of their attachment to ancestral traces; these causes are identified in divine philosophy as follows:

THIRD REASON: BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

The common people, the generality of mankind are led to deny the new prophet of God and to oppose His ministry and His teachings by the leaders of religion. There are literally countless examples of this principle, which are cited in the Gates devoted to the individual prophets, inasmuch as the opposition of the leaders of religion

constitutes one of the proofs of all of the prophets of God. Baha'u'llah writes in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:13,14,15-16:“Why then is it that despite the expectation of men in their quest of the Manifestations of Holiness, and in spite of the signs recorded in the sacred books, should such acts of violence, of oppression and cruelty, have been perpetrated in every age and cycle against all the Prophets and chosen Ones of God? ...Consequently, such behaviour can be attributed to naught save the petty-mindedness of such souls as tread the valley of arrogance and pride, are lost in the wilds of remoteness, walk in the ways of their idle fancy, and follow the dictates of the leaders of their faith...having weighed the testimony of God by the standard of their own knowledge, gleaned from the teachings of the leaders of their faith, and found it at variance with their limited understanding, they arose to perpetrate such unseemly acts. Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people. By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory. What unspeakable cruelties they that have occupied the seats of authority and learning have inflicted upon the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue! Content with a transitory dominion, they have deprived themselves of an everlasting sovereignty. Thus, their eyes beheld not the light of the countenance of the Well-Beloved, nor did their eyes hearken unto the sweet melodies of the Bird of Desire. For this reason, in all sacred books mention hath been made of the divines of every age.”

FOURTH REASON: ARROGANCE AND PRIDE

What are the root causes of the failure to recognize the prophets of God? In "Kitab-i-Iqan" Baha'u'llah refers again and again to "the petty-mindedness of such souls as tread the valley of arrogance and pride, are lost in the wilds of remoteness, walk in the ways of their idle fancy," (KI:14), "sought to exchange the divinely-revealed verses for their foul, their vile, and idle desires" (KI:208),"self and desire"

(KI:209), "perversity and pride" (KI:209)"arrogance and pride" (KI:210), "fancies and desires" (KI:214), "faithlessness and arrogance" (KI:215)...undoubtedly many other similar references could be located in this one volume.

Writing of the leaders of religion who are largely responsible for having "hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation" (KI:15), Baha'u'llah asserts that they have done so for two reasons: "Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding..." (KI:15) Here we are considering the first cause, inasmuch as the "lust for leadership" is one of the characteristics and manifestations of "arrogance and pride" and other pernicious attributes cited above. We may also refer to the Introduction and to the Fifth Unity, both of which treat the nature of man, and explain that man is lower than the animal unless he is transformed, educated and redeemed through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the influence of the Prophets of God.

Mr. A. Rangswami Ayar is reported to have given a lecture on Kalki Avatar, the Promised One of Hinduism at the First Indian Baha'i Convention, December 1920 as reported in "The Times of India," Bombay, 29/12/20 and reprinted in "Star of the West," XII:1, p. 23, as follows:

“Mr. Ayar began his lecture by quotations from Sanskrit, saying cowardice and delusions were denounced by their ancient rishis but what was it that prevented them from humility and the glory of God? These were catalogued by the Hindu sages into two heads, the pushagynan and the pachugynan, the latter being the pride of intellect that man was superior to everything. But he would say that self-glory and aggrandizement prevented them from knowing the glory of God.”

While "cowardice" and "delusions" in the Hindu sources seem to correspond closely to the common people's failure to independently investigate reality (which is motivated largely by fear) and to their attachment to ancestral traditions and superstitions (which are certainly delusions to 'Abdu'l-Baha), "pride of intellect", "self-glory" and "aggrandizement" are quite typically characteristic, according to divine philosophy and to the testimonials of the prophets, of religious leaders, and correspond to their "lust for leadership" and their "want of knowledge and understanding".

Another formulation of this reason is given in a Tablet written by Baha'u'llah:

GL:82:“Ponder a while. What is it that prompted, in every Dispensation, the peoples of the earth to shun the Manifestation of the All-Merciful? What could have impelled them to turn away from Him and to challenge His authority? ...It is the veil of idle imaginations which, in the days of the Manifestations of the Unity of God and the Day Springs of His everlasting glory, hath intervened, and will continue to intervene, between them and the rest of mankind. For in those days, He Who is the Eternal Truth manifesteth Himself in conformity with that which He Himself hath purposed, and not according to the desires and expectations of men...”

GL:82-83:“There can be no doubt whatever that had these Apostles appeared, in bygone ages and cycles, in accordance with the vain imaginations which the hearts of men had devised, no one would have repudiated the truth of these sanctified Beings.”

GL:83:“Consider the Dispensation of Jesus Christ. Behold, how all the learned men of that generation, though eagerly anticipating the coming of the Promised One, have nevertheless denied Him. Both Annas, the most learned among the divines of His day, and Caiaphas, the high priest, denounced Him and pronounced the sentence of His death. In like manner, when Muhammad, the Prophet of God--may all men be a sacrifice unto Him--appeared, the learned men of Mecca and Medina arose, in the early days of His Revelation, against Him and rejected His Message, while they who were destitute of all learning recognized and embraced His Faith. Ponder a while. Consider how Balal, the Ethiopian, unlettered though he was, ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude, whilst 'Abdu'llah Ubayy, a leader among the learned, maliciously strove to oppose Him.”

The prophet of God does not stop at this juncture; rather He describes the characteristics of the true seeker, the true believer, the truly learned and contrasts these attributes with the well-known qualities of many of the possessors of human learning--their human passions and desires, arrogance, perversity, lust for leadership, idle fancies, vain imaginations and faithlessness. The exemplars of these satanic qualities are the "anti-Christ" and "arch-Covenant-breakers", those leaders of opposition to the prophets during their lifespans: Nimrod and his soothsayers in the time of Abraham; Pharoah and his priests in the age of Moses; Herod and Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas,

and above all, Judas Iscariot in the ministry of Jesus Christ; and so on in each one of the Dispensations of the prophets of God. As easy as it is to place the blame for leadership of the opposition to the prophets, the bitterness and shame is that every human being participates in some measure to this denial of and opposition to the prophets. Each human being, while born pure and sinless is tainted by his exposure to imperfect parents, siblings, kinfolk, teachers, neighbors and other human associates, and inevitably in the course of his education he acquires imperfections along with perfections, selfishness along with a capacity to sacrifice self, arrogance along with humility, pride along with meekness, perversity with purity, faithlessness with certitude as well as many other pernicious attributes. It is however particularly difficult for those who assume positions of power and influence, for those who inherit or otherwise acquire material wealth, and for those who attain to human learning to find their way out of the strictures of self and passion, what we might call the human consciousness into the freedom of enlightenment and illumination, what we might call the divine consciousness.

Baha'u'llah assured the prospective seeker that the principal qualifications for entry into this higher consciousness are "purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit." (KI:211) It has already been affirmed in numerous citations that the seeker must "before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments."(KI:192) Clearly divine philosophy looks upon the leaders of men, whether in government or in commerce, industry or learning, and particularly in religion with even higher expectations than for the common people. For the leaders of men have incalculably more to lose, more to sacrifice, more to give up and to give than do their followers. A king who becomes a true believer is a jewel among men; likewise, a man of wealth or a man of human learning who adheres to the teachings of the prophets of God is esteemed highly in the divine order. Furthermore, a religious leader who does not turn away from the most recent prophet of God and who seeks furthermore to lead his followers to the true path to salvation is rare indeed and highly treasured. However, the responsibilities of such leaders of men, and the difficulties they will encounter and the temptations they must refuse are far greater than those of the common people. Along with the description of qualities of the true seeker

which are found in "Kitab-i-Iqan" and in many other Tablets by Baha'u'llah, in "The Secret of Divine Civilization" of 'Abdu'l-Baha we find a detailed treatise on the requisite attributes of the truly learned, a portion of which will be cited here:

“The spiritually learned must be characterized by both inward and outward perfections; they must possess a good character, an enlightened nature, a pure intent, as well as intellectual power, brilliance and discernment, intuition, discretion and foresight, temperance, reverence, and a heartfelt fear of God..Whoever is lacking in these divine qualifications and does not demonstrate these inescapable requirements in his own life, should not be referred to as learned and is not worthy to serve as a model for the believers. The first of these requirements is to guard one's own self...” (p. 33-34)

“The primary meaning of this guarding of oneself is to acquire the attributes of spiritual and material perfection. The first attribute of perfection is learning and the cultural attainments of the mind, and this eminent station is achieved when the individual combines in himself a thorough knowledge of those complex and transcendental realities pertaining to God, of the fundamental truths of Qur'anic political and religious law, of the contents of the sacred Scriptures of other faiths, and of those regulations and procedures which would contribute to the progress and civilization of this distinguished country. He should in addition be informed as to the laws and principles, the customs, conditions and manners, and the material and moral virtues characterizing the statecraft of other nations, and should be well versed in all the useful branches of learning of the day, and study the historical records of bygone governments and peoples...” (p. 35)

“The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

“The third requirement of perfection is to arise with complete sincerity and purity of purpose to educate the masses: to exert the utmost effort to instruct them in the various branches of learning and

useful sciences, to encourage the development of modern progress, to widen the scope of commerce, industry and the arts, to further such measures as will increase the people's wealth..." (p. 39)

"Other attributes of perfection are to fear God, to love God by loving His servants, to exercise mildness and forbearance and calm, to be sincere, amenable, clement and compassionate; to have resolution and courage, trustworthiness and energy, to strive and struggle, to be generous, loyal, without malice, to have zeal and a sense of honor, to be high-minded and magnanimous, and to have regard for the rights of others. Whoever is lacking in these excellent human qualities is defective..." (p. 40)

"The second of these spiritual standards which apply to the possessor of knowledge is that he should be the defender of his faith. It is obvious that these holy words do not refer exclusively to searching out the implications of the Law, observing the forms of worship, avoiding greater and lesser sins, practicing the religious ordinances, and by all these methods, protecting the Faith. They mean rather that the whole population should be protected in every way; that every effort should be exerted to adopt a combination of all possible measures to raise up the Word of God, increase the number of believers, promote the Faith of God and exalt it and make it victorious over other religions..." (p. 41)

"The third element of the utterance under discussion is, "opposes his passions." How wonderful are the implications of this deceptively easy, all-inclusive phrase. This is the very foundation of every laudable human quality; indeed, these few words embody the light of the world, the impregnable basis of all the spiritual attributes of human beings. This is the balance wheel of all behavior, the means of keeping all man's good qualities in equilibrium..." (p. 59)

"The fourth phrase of the aforementioned Utterance which points out the way of salvation is: "obedience to the commandments of his Lord." It is certain that man's highest distinction is to be lowly before and obedient to his God; that his greatest glory, his most exalted rank and honor, depend on his close observance of the Divine commands and prohibitions. Religion is the light of the world, and the progress, achievement, and happiness of man result from obedience to the laws set down in the holy Books..." (p. 71)

It is evident from this exposition as well as many other similar statements found in the addresses and writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and

the prophets of God that it is not intended for the institution of the learned to be abolished. A democracy of leveling, of eliminating stations and mandating absolute equality, of reducing all human beings to one common denominator is not envisioned in divine philosophy. Rather, the truly learned are required to devote their energies to the upliftment of mankind not to their own self-interests. They are called upon, they are commanded to educate the masses, and regard every human being no matter how humble as a brother or sister. The religious institutions of priests, monks, rabbis, fakirs, swamis, yogis, rishis, lamas, shamans are abolished in this new Age, as they are affirmed by divine philosophy to have no true foundation in the teachings of the prophets. However, all human beings are enjoined to investigate the prophets for themselves, and, if they become believers they are further exhorted to become spiritually learned and to guide others to the truth. Universal education, universal illumination is the aim of divine philosophy. Universal education as envisioned by divine philosophy would teach human beings beginning in infancy and then systematically throughout childhood and indeed into adulthood and to the last breath of life the divine truths which have been revealed by the prophets of God, which constitute the science of reality, the subjects of divine philosophy. Even as religious leaders are called to transformation, so also leaders of government, commerce, industry, the arts and sciences and professions are also summoned to this new alchemy.

FIFTH REASON: APPEARANCE OF PROPHET AS MORTAL MAN WITH LIMITATIONS

“In the time of the Manifestations of God the people were hindered [from recognizing the Manifestation during His lifespan] mostly in two ways. First the statements of the previous books were not understood. Second, the people failed to see the pure identity of the Temple or Body of the Manifestation...The second hindrance to the people was that the Blessed Manifestations in the day of the advent appeared as human beings with human bodies, and subject to the same conditions as the balance of mankind. For instance, the people noticed that Jesus Christ was the same as all the other men as regards eating, drinking, sleeping, sickness, fatigue, clothing and lodging. They said He was one like themselves and did not understand how He could be the Son of God. As He was a human being, a natural man, the people wondered how He could claim to be a heavenly man. Because He needed food, the people did not believe He could be the

manifestations of opulence. He was obliged to sleep, and was a captive in the hands of the Jews, therefore they could not believe He knew the mysteries of the heart and was the Minister of the Kingdom. As He was submissive to the Romans they said He was not the Manifestation of God. He was hung upon the cross amidst the meanest surroundings, and therefore they declared that He was not the promised Messiah. In short, as the people were gazing at the human temple of His Holiness they were hindered from seeing the essence of the light of Christ. They were like Satan who gazed at the earthly body of Adam but [by] being deprived of seeing the real individuality, his [Adam's] virtues and perfections were not noticed. Thus it was that Satan denied Adam.

“These people who are veiled and blind in the time of the Holy Manifestations are the descendants of Satan; they consider the corporeal temple, and are deprived of the mystery and reality of God which shines in the hearts of the Manifestations. They see the body but not the spirit, and consider the chimney but not the light of the lamp; they notice the shell, but not the pearl, the thorn but not the rose; they hear the word but are unable to understand the meaning; they behold the house but are unable to see the owner. That is why they are veiled and are not able to distinguish between the Holy Manifestations and themselves, and consequently in the time of Jesus they rejected the Christ. Therefore Jesus Christ said He would come again in the clouds. Here clouds signify humanity. As the clouds are obstacles or hindrances in the way of seeing the sun, so also is the human temple an obstacle in the way of seeing the light which shines from the Holy Heart ;of the Sun of Reality.” (Utterances of Abdul Beha Abbas to two young men. American pilgrims to Acre, 1901:13-14,19-21)

The purpose in citing the example of the prophet Jesus Christ demonstrates that the human body of the prophet is invariably a reason for the denial of and opposition to each prophet during His mortal lifespan. The three stations of the prophets of God (Manifestations) are described in this passage from ‘Abdu’l-Baha:

“Know that the Holy Manifestations, though they have the degrees of endless perfections, yet, speaking generally, have only three stations. The first station is the physical; the second station is the human, which is that of the rational soul; the third is that of the divine appearance and the heavenly splendour.

“The physical station is phenomenal; it is composed of elements, and necessarily everything that is composed is subject to

decomposition: it is not possible that a composition should not be disintegrated.

“The second is the station of the rational soul, which is the human reality; this also is phenomenal, and the Holy Manifestations share it with all mankind.

“Know that, although the human soul has existed on earth for prolonged times and ages, yet it is phenomenal. As it is a divine sign, when once it has come into existence it is eternal. The spirit of man has a beginning, but it has no end; it continues eternally...

“The third station is that of the divine appearance and heavenly splendour: it is the Word of God, the Eternal Bounty, the Holy Spirit. It has neither beginning nor end, for these things are related to the world of contingencies, and not to the divine world...Therefore the reality of prophethood, which is the Word of God and the perfect state of Manifestation, did not have any beginning, and will not have any end...” (SAQ:173;174)

Hence, divine philosophy recognizes that two out of the three stations of the prophet of God are human and are shared with all other human beings--the body and the soul, the physical temple and the spiritual animating and coordinating power with its "spirit and mind".(SAQ:179) What the generality of mankind does not recognize during the lifespan of the new prophet of God is the third station of His reality, that which constitutes His true purpose and meaning for humanity and His essential relationship with God. It is the failure to discern this third station because of the "veils of imagination", the "veils of learning", and the "veils of passion"--those games of the self which is profoundly threatened in its seemingly comfortable status quo--which precipitate denial of and opposition to the prophets of God. The rebellious human self cries: If this were really God's messenger He would be much more impressive--more beautiful, with dark skin if I am dark-skinned or light skin if I am light-skinned, with hair and beard just so, and possessed of supernatural powers like the legendary heroes of mythology and artifice! If this is God's prophet then I am two prophets! This claimant to prophethood does not fulfil the traditional expectations of the leaders of religion with regard to His physical characteristics and human attributes--therefore, He cannot be authentic! He doesn't speak or write in my language! He doesn't express Himself in a manner that is easy for me to understand! I don't like His style of speaking or writing and therefore I cannot accept that it comes from God! If this were truly the Word of God being revealed by this prophet I would surely be able to distinguish it from the words of men and women such a myself, but it does not seem exceptional to me! If this is really the prophet of God, how can He die? Weren't

Elijah and Elisha and Jesus Christ and Muhammad taken up into the heavens--why haven't these claimants to prophethood likewise ascended physically to the physical heavens? How can this really be a prophet of God if He does not show His oppressors, His antagonists that He has supernatural power, that He can convince the doubters and vanquish the oppressors? What sort of God would allow His prophet to suffer such denials and such opposition from mere human beings?

Baha'u'llah responds to all of these objections and their like by declaring that the prophet of God "He Who is the Eternal Truth manifesteth Himself in conformity with that which He Himself hath purposed, and not according to the desires and expectations of men."(GL:82) Nevertheless, the doubter and antagonist may answer: Of what use to us is the manifestation of the Eternal Truth if He does not fulfil our expectations and desires, if He appears for His own purposes? Baha'u'llah again replies: "Whatever, therefore, He saith unto you is wholly for the sake of God, that haply the peoples of the earthy may cleanse their hearts from the stain of evil desire, may rend its veil asunder, and attain unto the knowledge of the one true God--the most exalted station to which any man can aspire. Their belief or disbelief in My Cause can neither profit nor harm Me. We summon them wholly for the sake of God. He, verily, can afford to dispense with all creatures."(GL:85) He further writes of God that "His purpose, however, is to enable the pure in spirit and the detached in heart to ascend, by virtue of their own innate powers, unto the shores of the Most Great Ocean, that thereby they who seek the Beauty of the All-Glorious may be distinguished and separated from the wayward and perverse."(GL:71) Following the same line of thought, Baha'u'llah writes: "It is for this reason that, in every age, when a new Manifestation hath appeared and a fresh revelation of God's transcendent power was vouchsafed unto men, they that misbelieved in Him, deluded by the appearance of the peerless and everlasting Beauty in the garb of mortal men, have failed to recognize Him."(GL:72)

In "Kitab-i-Iqan" Baha'u'llah develops this theme further:

KI:71,72,73: "And now regarding His words, that the Son of man shall "come in the clouds of heaven." By the term "clouds" is meant those things that are contrary to the ways and desires of men...In another sense, they mean the appearance of that immortal Beauty in the image of mortal man, with such human limitations as eating and drinking,

poverty and riches, glory and abasement, sleeping and waking, and such other things as cast doubt in the minds of men, and cause them to turn away...Other Prophets, similarly, have been subject to poverty and afflictions, to hunger, and to the ills and chances of this world. As these holy Persons were subject to such needs and wants, the people were, consequently, lost in the wilds of misgivings and doubts, and were afflicted with bewilderment and perplexity. How, they wondered, could such a person be sent down from God, assert His ascendancy over all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and claim Himself to be the goal of all creation,--even as He hath said: "But for Thee, I would not have created all that are in heaven and on earth,"--and yet be subject to such trivial things? You must undoubtedly have been informed of the tribulations, the poverty, the ills, and the degradation that have befallen every Prophet of God and His companions."

So determined and desperate are men to attach other-worldly but tangible attributes to their prophets, sages and other holy ones that they actually invent and endlessly elaborate on folktales regarding them. In other words, without understanding the true nature of the prophets of God, they make up and cling to all sorts of superstitions, imaginations, false traditions, in other words, fictions in order, or so they imagine, to glorify and exalt the holy ones. In so doing they actually abase the true station of the prophets, who are immeasurably exalted above any perception which mere humans can have of them inasmuch as men cannot encompass what is entirely and essentially beyond their experience, and hence to try characterize what is beyond one's comprehension is actually to invent a fiction, an intellectual and affective idolatry which is in actuality nothing more than a figment of human imagination and hence not only far inferior to the reality of the prophet but actually far inferior to the reality of man himself. Inasmuch as reality, any reality is far superior to a mere fiction, therefore these imaginations, these folktales related of the prophets are inferior to the most elemental realities. But man does not stop at creating intellectual and affective fictions for himself--he manufactures idols so that he will have something physical, tangible and something anthropomorphic (human, something he can "relate" to, in other words, like himself and his parents and other humans he thinks he knows) to incarnate his fiction. According to the mythologies associated with various religions: Hinduism, the prophet Krishna had blue skin and many cowherding maiden lovers; Buddhism, the prophet Buddha was born of an elephant and achieved enlightenment by sitting in meditation under a baobab tree; Christianity, the prophet Jesus was

the only son of God and He disappeared from His physical tomb but reappeared in His physical body after His death to certain disciples and then ascended bodily into the heavens; Islam, the prophet Muhammad journeyed to Jerusalem and ascended into the heavens on a horse and then returned to the airport which just happened to be situated on the very rock on which the prophet Abraham was commanded to sacrifice His son (but then was given the reprieve that required His substitution of a ram for His son) which also just happened to be situated in the midst of the Temple Mount where King Solomon built the First Temple, and where subsequent national Sanctuaries were constructed until Herod's Temple was razed by the Roman Emperor Titus in 70 A.D.

All of these legends and many hundreds, perhaps thousands of others have been fabricated about these four prophets alone, not to speak of the many other prophets and the virtually countless saints venerated by the various religious communities. Besides all of these there are the myths and legends which chronicle the fortunes of myriads of heroes and heroines, demi-gods and demi-goddesses as well as gods and goddesses. In many of these myths are to be found the attempts of various human communities to depict prophet-like figures with supernatural traits, fantastic bodies whether for beauty or power or levitation or any number of other magical qualities. It is evident then that the merely human physical appearance and outward demeanor of the prophets of God has constituted one of the most significant and prevalent reasons for the denial of and opposition to the prophets of God.

SIXTH REASON: EXALTATION OF ILLITERATE FAITHFUL ABOVE LEARNED OPPOSITION

We have already encountered the proof of the prophets--Exaltation of the abased and abasement of the exalted--and we have also see that one of the primary reasons for the heedlessness of the common people is their blind following of their religious leaders who are for the most part shut out by the veil of their vain imaginations from the glory of the new prophet of God. We have also seen that the criterion of true learning is spirituality not acquired knowledge. It follows that those who devote their lives to the acquisition of knowledge and regard this as the most exalted path to God (and incidentally to their good-fortune) will be strongly inclined to oppose any who do not accord them the respect and the obedience which they believe themselves to be due by virtue of their learning. It also follows that

such individuals will be profoundly offended by the preference shown to the illiterate and unlettered believers in the new prophet of God, believing all such persons as inferior to themselves and therefore deserving nothing but scorn and authoritarian discipline, administered of course by their exalted selves.

As Baha'u'llah has written:

GI:83-84: "Behold, how a mere shepherd was so carried away by the ecstasy of the words of God that he was able to gain admittance into the habitation of his Best-Beloved, and was united to Him Who is the Lord of Mankind, whilst they who prided themselves on their knowledge and wisdom strayed far from His path and remained deprived of His grace. For this reason He hath written: "He that is exalted among you shall be abased, and he that is abased shall be exalted." References to this theme are to be found in most of the heavenly Books, as well as in the sayings of the Prophets and Messengers of God."

KI:71,72: "And now regarding His words, that the Son of man shall "come in the clouds of heaven." By the term "clouds" is meant those things that are contrary to the ways and desires of men...These clouds signify, in one sense...the exalting of the illiterate faithful above the learned opposers of the Faith."

This turning of the tables not only disturbs those who are enthroned in the seats of secular and religious authority; it also shakes and shatters the faith of the abased of mankind, some of whom cling to the time-honored traditions and powers for fear of change and to preserve the tolerable or personally rewarding status quo, many of whom lose their confidence in the tried and true but do not have the courage or the foresight to investigate let alone affirm the truth of the new era, and initially only a very small segment of whom recognize the eternal truth in its new garment. The generality of mankind would rather preserve what is than take the risk in giving this up in order to possess what can be. They correctly perceive that the risk is total, for the prophet of God calls for nothing less than that humanity detach itself from all things and approach his presence, the manifested presence of the Almighty, without any preconditions whatsoever. The prophet of God wants the whole heart, the whole mind, the whole life of man, not just a little bit here and there. Either the people do not believe that he is authentic, and therefore they will not undertake a

wager they feel they are sure of losing; or they are not sure of him, whether He is the real thing or not, and hence they will not assume the risk when the loss could be total, loss of possessions, of family, of friends, of work, of shelter, of health, of life itself.

What does the prophet of God offer them in exchange for this all-stakes gamble? Everlasting life! But to the practical man or woman who is sure only of this life, this earthly existence, or who may have been convinced by the leaders of religion that he is doing all that is required of him in order to attain everlasting life, for either of these this offer of everlasting life from the prophet of God is not taken seriously. It is treated as a joke, a curiosity, a mere invention of the prophet's imagination. What matters to these men and women is how to live well in this world, in this life. What, they ask, does the prophet of God offer them to improve the quality of their earthly lives? The prophet of God answers this insolent but practical question, and his answer is found in each Dispensation under the proofs of that particular prophet.

SEVENTH REASON: ATTACHMENT TO WHAT IS IN THE HEAVENS AND ON EARTH

How many of the prophets have affirmed that nothing less than complete detachment from all that is in the heavens and on the earth is necessary in order to be acceptable before the threshold of God, and to be able to appreciate the true station of the prophets of God! This theme is so common as to be virtually inexhaustible in its breadth and its depth. For example in the Bhagavad-Gita (Prabhavananda and Isherwood, U.S. 1955), the prophet Krishna enjoins Arjuna as follows:

BG:45,46,52,60:“Therefore you must perform every action sacramentally, and be free from all attachments to results...

“Do your duty, always; but without attachment...

“You must learn what kind of work to do, what kind of work to avoid, and how to reach a state of calm detachment from your work...”

“The enlightened, the Brahman-abiding,

“Calm-hearted, unbewildered,

“Is neither elated by the pleasant

“Nor saddened by the unpleasant.

“His mind is dead

“To the touch of the external:

"It is alive
 "To the bliss of the Atman.
 "Because his heart knows Brahman
 "His happiness is for ever."

Baha'u'llah writes on the same theme:

BP:55,57:"Vouchsafe unto me, through Thy grace, what will enable me to dispense with all else save Thee, and destine for me that which will make me independent of everyone else besides Thee...

"Number me with such of Thy servants as have detached themselves from everything but Thee, have sanctified themselves from the transitory things of this world, and have freed themselves from the promptings of the voicers of idle fancies." (U.S., 1985)

EIGHTH REASON: THE SLUMBER OF NEGLIGENCE OF THE HEEDLESS ONES

The generality of mankind are asleep, unconscious, unable to appreciate the reality of their own natures let alone recognize the station of prophethood which is infinitely exalted above human nature. Jesus Christ called upon those who wished to become His followers to "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead" (Mt8:22;Lk9:60), and 'Abdu'l-Baha explained that the generality of men are spiritually dead and that this is the real death, for he who is spiritually alive will live eternally and he who is spiritually dead has never lived. Jesus Christ also uses the terminology of Psalm 115:6, Isaiah 42:20 and Ezekiel 33:31 in describing those spiritually lifeless souls says that "they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand"(Mt 13:13), and to the Pharisees Jesus said, "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?"(Mk 8:18). What conditions common to all human beings is characterized by having eyes and not seeing, having ears and not hearing, having mind and not understanding or remembering? One such condition is death, and another is sleep. Baha'u'llah writes in "Lah-i-'Ali Muhammad Sharkh":

GL:103-104:"Shake off, O heedless ones, the slumber of negligence, that ye may behold the radiance which His glory hath spread through the world...O ye who are inly blind!

Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behoveth you to ascertain whether or not such a light hath appeared...If your hearing be purged and your ears attentive, ye will assuredly perceive that every limb of My body, nay all the atoms of My being, proclaim and bear witness to this call: "God, besides Whom is none other God, and He, Whose beauty is now manifest, is the reflection of His glory unto all that are in heaven and on earth."”

In "Suriy-i-Vafa" Baha'u'llah describes those who are deprived of spiritual awareness:

TB:186:“It behoveth thee to look with divine insight upon the things We have revealed and sent unto thee and not towards the people and that which is current amongst them. They are in this day like unto a blind man who, while moving in the sunshine, demandeth: Where is the sun? Is it shining? He would deny and dispute the truth, and would not be of them that perceive. Never shall he be able to discern the sun or to understand that which hath intervened between him and it. He would object, voice protests, and would be among the rebellious. Such is the state of this people. Leave them unto themselves, saying: Unto you be that which ye desire and unto us that which we desire. Wretched indeed is the plight of the ungodly.”

Baha'u'llah employs the same metaphor in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:208-209:“They see the sun with their own eyes, and yet question that brilliant Orb as to the proof of its light. They behold the vernal showers descending upon them, and yet seek an evidence of that bounty. The proof of the sun is the light thereof, which shineth and envelopeth all things. The evidence of the shower is the bounty thereof, which reneweth and investeth the world with the mantle of life. Yea, the blind can perceive naught from the sun except its heat, and the arid soil hath no share of the showers of mercy.”

In a prayer Baha'u'llah enables the reader of his words to participate in the process of awakening from the slumber of heedlessness, of emerging from the blindness of ignorance, of rising up out of the oblivion of unconsciousness:

BP:54:“Remove the veil from mine eyes, O my Lord, that I may recognize what Thou hast desired for Thy creatures, and discover, in all the manifestations of Thy handiwork, the revelations of Thine almighty power. Enrapture my soul, O my Lord, with Thy most mighty signs, and draw me out of the depths of my corrupt and evil desires...I yield Thee thanks, O my Lord, that Thou hast wakened me from my sleep, and stirred me up, and created in me the desire to perceive what most of Thy servants have failed to apprehend.”

NINTH REASON: ANNULMENT OF LAWS, REPEAL OF RITUALS AND CUSTOMS BY PROPHETS

Perhaps the most blasphemous and shocking of the acts of each of the prophets of God has been to annul certain laws and repeal certain rituals and customs as were long-established among the people and upheld by the religious and secular leaders as eternal, unassailable, immovable and necessary to the existence of order, harmony and peace in the world at large and in the community of believers in particular. Baha'u'llah makes repeated reference to this reason for denial of and opposition to the prophets in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:17-18:“And when the days of Moses were ended, and the light of Jesus, shining forth from the dayspring of the Spirit, encompassed the world, all the people of Israel arose in protest against Him. They clamoured that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfil the laws of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the law of divorce and of the sabbath day--the most weighty of all the laws of Moses.”

KI:71-72:“And now regarding His words, that the Son of man shall "come in the clouds of heaven." By the term "clouds" is meant those things that are contrary to the ways and desires of men...These "clouds" signify, in one sense, the annulment of laws, the abrogation of former Dispensations, the repeal of rituals and customs current amongst men...”

KI:73-74:“It is evident that the changes brought about in every Dispensation constitute the dark clouds that intervene between the eye of man's understanding and the divine

Luminary which shineth forth from the dayspring of the divine Essence. Consider how men for generations have been blindly imitating their fathers, and have been trained according to such ways and manners as have been laid down by the dictates of their Faith. Were these men, therefore, to discover suddenly that a Man, Who hath been living in their midst, Who, with respect to every human limitation, hath been their equal, had risen to abolish every established principle imposed by their Faith--principles by which for centuries they have been disciplined, and every opposer and denier of which they have come to regard as infidel, profligate and wicked,--they would of a certainty be veiled and hindered from acknowledging His truth.”

KI:212,213:“After the denials and denunciations which they uttered, and unto which We have referred, they protested saying: "No independent Prophet, according to our Scriptures, should arise after Moses and Jesus to abolish the Law of divine Revelation. Nay, he that is to be made manifest must needs fulfil the Law."...know of a certainty that the people in every age, clinging to a verse of the Book, have uttered such vain and absurd sayings, contending that no Prophet should again be made manifest to the world. Even as the Christian divines who, holding fast to the verse of the Gospel to which We have already referred, have sought to explain that the law of the Gospel shall at no time be annulled, and that no independent Prophet shall again be made manifest, unless He confirmeth the law of the Gospel. Most of the people have become afflicted with the same spiritual disease.”

KI:238:“Among them is the tradition, "And when the Standard of Truth is made manifest, the people of both the East and the West curse it."...It is evident that the reason for such behaviour is none other than the annulment of those rules, customs, habits, and ceremonials to which they have been subjected. Otherwise, were the Beauty of the Merciful to comply with those same rules and customs, which are current amongst the people, and were He to sanction their observances, such conflict and mischief would in no wise be made manifest in the world.”

KI:239:“The divine call of the celestial Herald from beyond the Veil of Glory, summoning mankind to renounce utterly all the things to which they cleave, is repugnant to their desire;

and this is the cause of the bitter trials and violent commotions which have occurred.”

KI:240-41:“Behold, how, notwithstanding these and similar traditions, they idly contend that the laws formerly revealed, must in no wise be altered. And yet, is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent.”

The annulment of the laws of previous Dispensations by the new prophet is one of the proofs of that prophet. Both from an historical perspective and from the point of view of human psychology and sociology it is evident that this is one of the primary immediate causes of the denial of the prophets and of opposition to them both during their lifespans and in subsequent generations and centuries. Man resists change. He resists change in particular if it threatens his treasured world-view and way of life. And he resists change especially when it runs counter to his personal desires. New divine laws always clash with the old order of things, for otherwise mankind could not break free of the chains of custom and tradition and take flight upon the wings of spiritual inspiration and divine discipline. They also must clash because otherwise they could not depose the the entrenched religious leaders and root out their rein of corruption and perversity. Inasmuch as every religion declines towards the end of its Dispensation, and some religions (such as the Brahmanists, the Buddhists, the Zoroastrians, the Jews, the Christians) have lingered on after the end of multiple Dispensations, there is much dead wood to be cut and thrown into the fire, and this cannot be accomplished except through the power of a new Revelation with a new Book and a new Law. Furthermore, the man who has resisted change successfully in the corrupt old order, who has found loopholes in the old religious establishment which enable him to do as he desires, that man will find no such leniency or moral and intellectual feebleness in the new prophet of God, in His Book, His Law, and His ardent followers. If he were to encounter these attributes in the new prophet and His devotees then he would be without motivation to change his ways, and indeed, "if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent."(KI:240-41)

TENTH REASON: WANT OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF MEN AND THEIR LEADERS

As we have already seen, the masses of humanity do not investigate religion, do not investigate the claims of the new prophet, do not become informed of the teachings of the religion of their forefathers. They rely instead upon their religious leaders to know everything that is required in their place, and generally speaking they regard those religious leaders as especially elected and inspired with reliable if not infallible knowledge and understanding.

‘Abdu’l-Baha refers to the ignorance of the people, including the religious leaders:

“In the time of the Manifestations of God the people were hindered mostly in two ways. First the statements of the previous books were not understood.” (Utterances of Abdul Beha Abbas, 1901, p. 13-14)

As Baha'u'llah wrote in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:14,15:“Consequently, such behaviour can be attributed to naught save the petty-mindedness of such souls as tread the valley of arrogance and pride, are lost in the wilds of remoteness, walk in the ways of their idle fancy, and follow the dictates of the leaders of their faith...having weighed the testimony of God by the standard of their own knowledge, gleaned from the teachings of the leaders of their faith, and found it at variance with their limited understanding, they arose to perpetrate such unseemly acts.”

KI:15:“Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people.”

KI:17:“The denials and protestations of these leaders of religion have, in the main, been due to their lack of knowledge and understanding. Those words uttered by the Revealers of the beauty of the one true God, setting forth the signs that should herald the advent of the Manifestation to come, they

never understood nor fathomed. Hence they raised the standard of revolt, and stirred up mischief and sedition.”

KI:12-13:“This notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. To this the records of all sacred books bear witness.”

The lack of knowledge and understanding of the people and particularly of the leaders of religion is a hindrance towards their recognition of all truths, not just the truth of the new prophet, but as this is a complex question it will be considered systematically. To begin with, the lack of knowledge and understanding of "the signs that should herald the advent of the Manifestation to come" to which "the records of all sacred books bear witness"--we find this theme discussed in very great detail by 'Abdu'l-Baha, speaking of the advent of the prophet Jesus Christ, in three different addresses:

“In the Bible there are prophecies of the coming of Christ. The Jews still await the coming of the Messiah, and pray to God day and night to hasten His advent.

“When Christ came they denounced and slew Him, saying: "This is not the One for whom we wait. Behold when the Messiah shall come, signs and wonders shall testify that He is in truth the Christ. We know the signs and conditions, and they have not appeared. The Messiah will arise out of an unknown city. He shall sit upon the throne of David, and behold, He shall come with a sword of steel, and with a sceptre of iron shall He rule! He shall fulfil the law of the Prophets, He shall conquer the East and the West, and shall glorify His chosen people the Jews. He shall bring with Him a reign of peace, during which even the animals shall cease to be at enmity with man. For behold the wolf and the lamb shall drink from the same spring, and the lion and the doe shall lie down in the same pasture, the serpent and the mouse shall share the same nest, and all God's creatures shall be at rest.”

“According to the Jews, Jesus the Christ fulfilled none of these conditions, for their eyes were holden¹⁹ and they could not see.

¹⁹“Holden” is the archaic past participle of "hold"; perhaps articulating archaic meaning as well: oblige, bind, constrain or hinder, prevent, restrain; see p. 910, *The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles*, 3rd edition, 1955.

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

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

“Hearken, and I will show you the meaning thereof. Although He came from Nazareth, which was a known place, He also came from Heaven. His body was born of Mary, but His Spirit came from Heaven. The sword He carried was the sword of His tongue, with which He divided the good from the evil, the true from the false, the faithful from the unfaithful, and the light from the darkness. His Word was indeed a sharp sword! The Throne upon which He sat is the Eternal Throne from which Christ reigns for ever, a heavenly throne, not an earthly one, for the things of earth pass away but heavenly things pass not away. He re-interpreted and completed the Law of Moses and fulfilled the Law of the Prophets. His word conquered the East and the West. His Kingdom is everlasting. He exalted those Jews who recognized Him. They were men and women of humble birth, but contact with Him made them great and gave them everlasting dignity. The animals who were to live with one another signified the different sects and races, who, once having been at war, were now to dwell in love and charity, drinking together the water of life from Christ the Eternal Spring.

“Thus, all the spiritual prophecies concerning the coming of Christ were fulfilled, but the Jews shut their eyes that they should not see, and their ears that they should not hear, and the Divine Reality of Christ passed through their midst unheard, unloved and unrecognized.” (PT:54-56)

“When Jesus Christ was manifested, the Jews looked at the verses of the Old Testament literally, outwardly, and were hindered because they did not understand. The outward meaning of the verses was the cause of their hindrance. For example, it is stated in the Old Testament, concerning the reign of the Messiah, that he would ascend

to the throne of David; his scepter would be of iron; he would spread the law of the Old Testament; that all the people of the world would come under the shadow of the protection of the Old Testament; that all nations would worship the God of the Israelites; and that in the time of His reign, love would appear between mankind and the animals, so that ferocious beasts would become gentle, the wolf and the lamb would drink from the same fountain, the lion and deer would graze in the same pasture, and the birds of prey and partridges would live in the same nest. The people took the outward meaning of these statements. Because Jesus was not even the possessor of a mat, they did not think he could be the possessor of the throne of the Kingdom. He was oppressed and persecuted and rejected. He fled to the mountains and the wilderness from the Jews who had denied him; he was hungry, destitute and homeless. He had not even a wooden staff; therefore, they wondered how could He be the possessor of an iron scepter. He did not ascend the throne of David, but instead was hanged upon the cross,--for His throne was His Cross. He did not spread the Old Testament, but he abolished it. Other nations did not worship the God of the Israelites, on the contrary the Israelites were conquered by the Romans and some of the Jews became idolaters.

“In the time of the cycle of Jesus cruelty and tyranny were such that the people crucified even Jesus Himself. How, then, could it be possible for the wolf and the lamb to drink from the same spring?

“As the people did not understand the real meaning of these statements in the old prophecies, they could not comprehend the Holy Book, but took the outward meaning, and therefore arose to murder His Holiness, Jesus Christ, crying out, 'We crucify him, we crucify him.' They placed a crown of thorns on his head and made him ride a donkey through the streets and bazaars. They mocked and laughed at him, spat in his Holy Face, and at last shed His pure blood.

“In short, because the Jews did not understand the Old Testament they were deprived of the Beauty of Jesus Christ, while in reality all that was stated in the Old Testament did happen and appear. Some expected Christ to descend from the placeless; some expected him from the City of Sabbath, and others expected the Messiah to descend from Heaven: In reality Jesus did descend from Heaven, because he was a Heavenly Man, although he was born from the womb of His Mother Mary. That is why He said He came from Heaven, and that He was in Heaven, as related in the Gospel of St. John. Because the people did not understand the meaning of Heaven, and had known Him from His birth as the child of His mother, Mary, they denied Him saying, 'We know this man, He is Jesus of Nazareth,' and they would not believe that He had come from Heaven.

“These ignorant people thought Heaven was the endless sky, while the real meaning of Heaven is the world of spirituality. It is possible for man to walk on earth and at the same time be in Heaven, or in the spiritual world. The body is from the world of possibility, but the spirit is from the placeless.

“As to the prophecies: One of them referred to the reign of Jesus. Here reign means spiritual reign and not rulership over a kingdom which is only a hand full of dust. Consider that reign even to this day in the world. Its commandments are effective, its lamp brilliant, and its dominion powerful. If this spiritual reign, even in this mortal world, has such effect, what will be its effect in the immortal world?

“The Jews were waiting for a Messianic reign which would be like the reign of Victoria or the Queen of Holland. The worldly reign is for conquest and death, while the spiritual reign is for the mercy of God and eternal life. This spiritual kingdom gives life, while the worldly kingdom takes life; the worldly kingdom destroys and is the cause of poverty and need, because kings and queens are in reality the poorest of people, while the spiritual kingdom gives bounty and is the means of eternal wealth. As it was said the people of the Old Testament expected that Jesus would have an iron scepter. Scepter signifies that of a shepherd leading his sheep. The meaning is that the scepter is likened unto a sword, that is to say, the sword of the tongue and not that of iron, because the sword divides enemies from friends, and the tongue of the Son of Reality is that kind of a sword which separates enemies from friends, divides darkness from light and guidance from sedition. As Isaiah the prophet in his vision stated, 'I have perceived a Temple having eyes like a flame of fire, and having two swords in His tongue, and His feet were of iron.' The meaning of this is that the eye which burns all hindrances of veils must be of fire, and the foot being constant and firm in the Cause of God, must be likened unto iron, while the tongue which divides truth from falsehood must be likened unto a sword.

“As soon as the Word of God was uttered by the tongue of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of His Holiness arose, truth was divided from falsehood and the people of light were distinguished from the people of darkness. Those who accepted the truth were considered to be the people of the Kingdom, and those who denied were accounted as the people of darkness. Therefore the tongue of His Holiness, Jesus Christ, was like a sword, that is, he spread the Teachings of God.

“The prophecies in the Old Testament referred to the spreading of the law of God. The law of God meant the spiritual teachings of God, and not the teachings pertaining to material things.

“The law and commandments are divided into two branches, spiritual teachings and corporeal or material teachings. Spiritual teaching pertain to morality and character which are the breezes of the Holy Spirit, the life of the soul. The spiritual teachings will never been abolished in any cycle, as they are the eternal law. One of the commandments is the love of God, and is the virtue that crowns the heads of the Believers. This is the original and principal teaching that Jesus Christ spread in the world.

“The teachings of Moses were effective only in Palestine; but the spiritual teachings of Jesus Christ were spread throughout the whole world.

“The material teachings, those which distinguish lawful from unlawful things, change according to the exigency of the times, because circumstances and conditions are not always the same. One of the symbols of the appearance of Jesus Christ was that the wolf and the lamb would drink at the same fountain, the lion and the deer would graze in the same pasture, et cetera. This means that the spiritual dominion of His Holiness would unite all nations and tribes in harmony and love, that is to say, nations having hostility towards each other would eat at the same table and drink from the same fountain or cup. The difference between them is likened unto the difference between the wolf and the lamb. This appears to be very difficult, but through the power of the word of God this friendship, harmony and agreement are produced, as is the case in this time when we consider the affiliation and love which now exists between the Americans and the Persians, notwithstanding the long distance which separates them.” (Utterances of Abdul Beha Abbas, 1901, pp. 14-19)

"The Book of Isaiah announces that the Messiah will conquer the East and the West, and all nations of the world will come under his shadow, that his Kingdom will be established, that he will come from an unknown place, that the sinners will be judged, and that justice will prevail to such a degree that the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the sucking child and the asp, shall all gather at one spring, and in one meadow, and one dwelling. The first coming was also under these conditions, though outwardly none of them came to pass. Therefore the Jews rejected Christ, and, God forbid! called the Messiah *masikh*²⁰, considered him to be the destroyer of the edifice of God, regarded him as the breaker of the Sabbath and the Law, and sentenced him to death. Nevertheless each one of these conditions

²⁰Footnote (published): *Masikh*--i.e. the monster. In Arabic there is a play upon the words *Masih*, the Messiah, and *masikh*, the monster.

had a signification that the Jews did not understand: therefore they were debarred from perceiving the truth of Christ.” (SAQ:127)

The lack of knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures' references to the signs which herald the advent of the new prophet of God, of the people in general and of the religious leaders in particular is addressed in many pages of the Writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. We find them reproaching the people and their leaders for their lack of knowledge and understanding, and exhorting them to investigate the truth for themselves, to consider another interpretation of the Holy Verses besides the ones they have inherited from the past, to listen to the interpretation given to these Verses by the prophets themselves.

Baha'u'llah writes in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:17-18:“And when the days of Moses were ended, and the light of Jesus, shining forth from the dayspring of the Spirit, encompassed the world, all the people of Israel arose in protest against Him. They clamoured that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfil the laws of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the law of divorce and of the sabbath day--the most weighty of the laws of Moses.”

KI:56-57:“Likewise, reflect upon the state and condition of Mary. So deep was the perplexity of that most beautiful countenance, so grievous her case, that she bitterly regretted that she had ever been born. To this beareth witness the text of the sacred verse wherein it is mentioned that after Mary had given birth to Jesus, she bemoaned her plight and cried out: 'O would that I had died ere this, and been a thing forgotten, forgotten quite!'[Qur'an 19:22] I swear by God! Such lamenting consumeth the heart and shaketh the being. Such consternation of soul, such despondency, could have been caused by no other than the censure of the enemy and the cavilings of the infidel and perverse. Reflect, what answer could Mary have given to the people around her? How could she claim that a Babe Whose father was unknown had been conceived of the Holy Ghost? Therefore did Mary, that veiled and immortal Countenance, take up her Child and return unto her home. No sooner had the eyes of the people fallen upon her than they raised their voice saying: 'O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of wickedness, nor

unchaste thy mother.[Qur'an 19:28] And now, meditate upon this most great convulsion, this grievous test. Notwithstanding all these things, God conferred upon that essence of the Spirit, Who was known amongst the people as fatherless, the glory of Prophethood, and made Him His testimony unto all that are in heaven and on earth. Behold how contrary are the ways of the Manifestations of God, as ordained by the King of creation, to the ways and desires of men!"

The lack of knowledge and understanding of the people and of their religious leaders has not afflicted only the Jewish people at the time of the appearance of Jesus Christ. It is an ongoing hindrance for those who deny the new prophet of God.

Baha'u'llah writes in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:18:"These people of Israel are even unto the present day still expecting that Manifestation which the Bible hath foretold! How many Manifestations of Holiness, how many Revealers of the light everlasting, have appeared since the time of Moses, and yet Israel, wrapt in the densest veils of satanic fancy and false imaginings, is still expectant that the idol of her own handiwork will appear with such signs as she herself hath conceived! Thus hath God laid hold of them for their sins, hath extinguished in them the spirit of faith, and tormented them with the flames of the nethermost fire. And this for no other reason except that Israel refused to apprehend the meaning of such words as have been revealed in the Bible concerning the signs of the coming Revelation. As she never grasped their true significance, and, to outward seeming, such events never came to pass, she, therefore, remained deprived of recognizing the beauty of Jesus and of beholding the face of God. And they still await His coming! From time immemorial even unto this day, all the kindreds and peoples of the earth have clung to such fanciful and unseemly thoughts, and thus have deprived themselves of the clear waters streaming from the springs of purity and holiness."

In making reference to the prophecies which Jesus Christ related and which were fulfilled by Muhammad, Baha'u'llah continues the argument in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:26-27:"Inasmuch as the Christian divines have failed to

apprehend the meaning of these words, and did not recognize their object and purpose, and have clung to the literal interpretation of the words of Jesus, they therefore became deprived of the streaming grace of the Muhammadan Revelation and its showering bounties. The ignorant among the Christian community, following the example of the leaders of their faith, were likewise prevented from beholding the beauty of the King of glory, inasmuch as those signs which were to accompany the dawn of the sun of the Muhammadan Dispensation did not actually²¹ come to pass. Thus, ages have passed and centuries rolled away, and that most pure Spirit hath repaired unto the retreats of its ancient sovereignty. Once more²² hath the eternal Spirit breathed into the mystic trumpet, and caused the dead to speed out of their sepulchres of heedlessness and error unto the realm of guidance and grace. And yet, that expectant community still crieth out: When shall these things be? When shall the promised One, the object of our expectation, be made manifest, that we may arise for the triumph of His Cause, that we may sacrifice our substance for His sake, that we may offer up our lives in His path? In like manner, have such false imaginings caused other communities to stray from the Kawthar of the infinite mercy of Providence, and to be busied with their own idle thoughts.”

In "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" (Seven Proofs) of the Bab we find the following excerpts devoted to this subject:

SP:21-22:“During one thousand years, this people was raised in the Mosaic religion and it arrived finally at perfection therein. And then everything that Moses promised them on the subject of the manifestation of Jesus after Moses took place. A little number from among them believe in the Son of Mary. The rest, despite their efforts to follow the ways of God and believe in the utterances of Moses, could not attain certitude and they remained in this way stationary, awaiting the Messiah. What value does this fashion of acting have in the eyes of the Christians? And how much less does it have in the view of God! Let us pass to the Christian nation. During five hundred years it was raised in his Law as its ancestors had been in that of Moses. When it arrived at perfection in its religion, God raised up the Messenger of God. Jesus had in a

²¹ Footnote: visibly.

²² In the Revelation of the Bab.

strongly precise manner ordained that his nation believe in him when he would manifest himself. This manner of doing had moreover been followed by all of the Prophets, for not one of them had been manifested who did not prescribe to his nation to believe in the Prophet who would succeed him. But, you know perfectly well what happened after the manifestation of Muhammad. It was at such a point that he himself cried out: 'No Prophet has been tormented as I am.' And yet, all those who walked in the ways of God in that epoch, that is the Christians, were awaiting his appearance. Night and day they prayed in hope of being among the number of those who would own up to him and would attract to him all the hearts. But, when he was manifested, nobody believed in him, except for the amir al-mu'minin²³ and a few rare persons; and yet the universe lived but for him!"

Why do the people and their religious leaders misunderstand and misinterpret the Scriptures, and in particular the prophecies which herald the advent of the new prophet of God? What is it about the language of Scripture that allows them to become so veiled from the truth? It has been several times repeated, both by 'Abdu'l-Baha and by the prophet Baha'u'llah that the fundamental error is in the interpretation of the divine verses in a literal, a material, a dogmatic and exclusionist fashion. Is there another way of interpreting the divine verses? That there is has already been demonstrated by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the above-cited passages. In the three selections which follow, the Bab and Baha'u'llah followed by 'Abdu'l-Baha explain the reason for the misinterpretation of Scripture and the nature of revealed language:

SP:50-51: "If you so desire, examine the Bihar'u'l-Anvar and if you find therein something that is contrary to my mission, know that there exist several ways to respond thereto. Before all you must refer yourself in this to the Testimony²⁴ and communicate to him this hadith, for nobody besides him knows. The Prophet said this in effect: "When I speak, I pronounce one speech which has for you seventy-one significances.""

²³Chief of the Believers, a title designating 'Ali bin Abi Talib, the cousin and son in law and first male believer in Muhammad's prophethood, and the first Imam designated by Him to carry on the leadership of the umma, the community of believers after His passing.

²⁴The Bab.

KI:254-55:“It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq, son of Muhammad²⁵, spoken: 'God verily will test them and sift them.' This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended. Thus it is recorded: 'Every knowledge hath seventy meanings, of which one only is known amongst the people. And when the Qa'im shall arise, He shall reveal unto men all that which remaineth.' He also saith: 'We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain.'”

‘Abdu’l-Baha elaborates on this theme:

"A subject that is essential for the comprehension of the questions that we have mentioned, and of others of which we are about to speak, so that the essence of the problems may be understood, is this: that human knowledge is of two kinds. One is the knowledge of things perceptible to the senses--that is to say, things which the eye, or ear, or smell, or taste, or touch can perceive, which are called objective or sensible. So the sun, because it can be seen, is said to be objective; and in the same way sounds are sensible because the ear hears them; perfumes are sensible because they can be inhaled and the sense of smell perceives them; foods are sensible because the palate perceives their sweetness, sourness, or saltiness; heat and cold are sensible because the feelings perceive them. These are said to be sensible realities.

²⁵Sadiq, also known as Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, the 6th Imam according to the Imami Shi'i community.

"The other kind of human knowledge is intellectual--that is to say, it is a reality of the intellect, it has no outward form and no place, and is not perceptible to the senses. For example, the power of intellect is not sensible; none of the inner qualities of man is a sensible thing; on the contrary, they are intellectual realities; so love is a mental reality and not sensible; for this reality the ear does not hear, the eye does not see, the smell does not perceive, the taste does not discern, the touch does not feel. Even aethereal matter, the forces of which are said in physics to be heat, light, electricity, and magnetism, is an intellectual reality, and is not sensible. In the same way nature, also, in its essence is an intellectual reality, and is not sensible; the human spirit is an intellectual, not sensible reality. In explaining these intellectual realities, one is obliged to express them by sensible figures, because in exterior existence there is nothing that is not material. Therefore to explain the reality of the spirit, its condition, its station, one is obliged to give explanations under the forms of sensible things, because in the external world all that exists is sensible. For example, grief and happiness are intellectual things; when you wish to express these spiritual qualities you say: 'My heart is oppressed; my heart is enlarged'; though the heart of man is neither oppressed nor enlarged. This is an intellectual or spiritual state, to explain which you are obliged to have recourse to sensible figures. Another example: you say, 'such an individual made great progress,' though he is remaining in the same place; or again, 'such an one's position is exalted,' although, like every one else, he walks upon the earth. This exaltation and this progress are spiritual states and intellectual realities; but to explain them you are obliged to have recourse to sensible figures, because in the exterior world there is nothing that is not sensible.

"So the symbol of knowledge is light, and of ignorance, darkness; but reflect, is knowledge sensible light, or ignorance sensible darkness? No, they are merely symbols. These are only intellectual states, but when you desire to express them outwardly, you call knowledge light, and ignorance darkness. You say: 'My heart was gloomy, and it became enlightened.' Now, that light of knowledge, and that darkness of ignorance, are intellectual realities, not sensible ones; but when we seek for explanations in the external world, we are obliged to give them a sensible form.

"Then it is evident that the dove which descended upon Christ was not a material dove, but it was a spiritual state, which, that it might be comprehensible, was expressed by a sensible figure. Thus in the Old Testament it is said that God appeared as a pillar of fire; this does not signify the material form, it is an intellectual reality which is expressed by a sensible image.

“Christ says, 'The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father.' Was Christ within God, or God within Christ? No, in the name of God! On the contrary, this is an intellectual state, which is expressed in a sensible figure.” (SAQ:95-97)

What then is the cause of the denial of and the opposition of the leaders of religion and their followers inherent in the symbolic language of much of the Scriptures? The cause is that this symbolic language is either not recognized as such and therefore interpreted literally, as if its meaning were obvious and outward, or it is misinterpreted with regard to the nature of its symbolism. In either case this symbolic language has not been properly decoded. Literalism is referred to often by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha as the result of spiritual blindness and the cause for denial of and opposition to the prophets of God.

Baha'u'llah refers to literalism in these two quotations from "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:26:“Inasmuch as the Christian divines have failed to apprehend the meaning of these words, and did not recognize their object and purpose, and have clung to the literal interpretation of the words of Jesus, they therefore became deprived of the streaming grace of the Muhammadan Revelation and its showering bounties.”

KI:256:“These things We mention only that the people may not be dismayed because of certain traditions and utterances, which have not yet been literally fulfilled, that they may rather attribute their perplexity to their own lack of understanding, and not to the non-fulfilment of the promises in the traditions, inasmuch as the meaning intended by the Imams of the Faith is not known by this people, as evidenced by the traditions themselves.”

'Abdu'l-Baha refers to literalism as follows:

“The obstacle which prevents the so-called religious men from accepting the teachings of God is literal interpretation. Moses announced the coming of Christ. The Israelites were awaiting him with the greatest impatience and anxiety, but when he came they called him Beelzebub. "The conditions laid down in the Bible for the coming of the expected one were not fulfilled," they said. They did not understand that the conditions were symbolical.” (ABDP:36)

“The second coming of Christ also will be in like manner: the signs and conditions which have been spoken of all have meanings, and are not to be taken literally. Among other things it is said that the stars will fall upon the earth. The stars are endless and innumerable, and modern mathematicians have established and proved scientifically that the globe of the sun is estimated to be about one million and a half times greater than the earth, and each of the fixed stars to be a thousand times larger than the sun. If these stars were to fall upon the surface of the earth, how could they find place there? It would be as though a thousand million of Himalaya mountains were to fall upon a grain of mustard seed. According to reason and science this thing is quite impossible. What is even more strange is that Christ said: 'Perhaps I shall come when you are yet asleep, for the coming of the Son of man is like the coming of a thief.' Perhaps the thief will be in the house and the owner will not know it. It is clear and evident that these signs have symbolic signification, and that they are not literal.” (SAQ:127-28)

“When Jesus Christ was manifested, the Jews looked at the verses of the Old Testament literally, outwardly, and were hindered because they did not understand. The outward meaning of the verses was the cause of their hindrance” (Utterances, 1901, p.14)

How then are the leaders of religion and their followers, the masses of humanity to correctly interpret the symbolic language of the Prophets of God? How are they to avoid falling into the pitfall of literalism, or even the false reading of prophetic symbolism? This question is answered by the Prophets themselves and in thoroughly straightforward fashion.

In "Kitab-i-Iqan" Baha'u'llah writes:

KI:17:“It is obvious and manifest that the true meaning of the utterances of the Birds of Eternity is revealed to none except those that manifest the Eternal Being, and the melodies of the Nightingale of Holiness can reach no ear save that of the denizens of the everlasting realm. The Copt of tyranny can never partake of the cup touched by the lips of the Sept of justice, and the Pharoah of unbelief can never hope to recognize the hand of the Moses of truth. Even as He saith: "None knoweth the meaning thereof except God and them that are well-grounded in knowledge." [Qur'an III:5] And yet they have sought the interpretation of the Book from those that are wrapt in veils, and have refused to seek enlightenment

from the fountainhead of knowledge.”

KI:213:“Even as thou dost witness how the people of the Qur'an, like unto the people of old, have allowed the words "Seal of the Prophets" to veil their eyes. And yet, they themselves testify to this verse: "None knoweth the interpretation thereof but God and they that are well-grounded in knowledge." [Qur'an III:5] And when He Who is well-grounded in all knowledge, He Who is the Mother, the Soul, the Secret, and the Essence thereof, revealeth that which is the least contrary to their desire, they bitterly oppose Him and shamelessly deny Him.”

The verse quoted from the Qur'an by Baha'u'llah is also cited by the Bab in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:17:“These miracles of which one speaks today in the books relative to the Prophet, if they had whatsoever value, God would have made of them the proof of the mission of His envoy: if it is spoken of in the Qur'an, it is no less true that God did not make of it the "testimony" of the mission of Muhammad. For example: "The moon was cleft in two." [Qur'an LIV:1] God alone knows what this verse means even as it is written in another place: "There is but God that knows the interpretation of this and men of stalwart science.”” [Qur'an III:5]

SP:27:“Glory then comes to each one according to his science. Now, see upon what the glory of the 'ulama rests: upon the interpretation of divine verses. God has assigned an elevated rank to this interpretation because He says: "There is but God that knows the interpretation of this and men of stalwart science." [Qur'an III:5] And see that it is by the intermediary of a young man of twenty-five years, ignorant of all learning, that He manifests His verses! If the doctors of Islam seek to acquire glory by the interpretation of the sacred text, this young man affirms his knowledge by the very production of verses. Also there should not be any hesitation for these doctors in recognizing him.”²⁶

²⁶The somewhat different translation of this passage in SWB:118-119: “Behold the learned who are honoured by virtue of their ability to understand the Holy Writings, and God hath exalted them to such a degree that in referring to them He saith: 'None knoweth the meaning

Baha'u'llah explains two meanings of this verse in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:255:“None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended.”

KI:256:“The people, therefore, must not allow such utterances to deprive them of the divine bounties, but should rather seek enlightenment from them who are the recognized Expounders thereof, so that the hidden mysteries may be unravelled, and be made manifest unto them.

“We perceive none, however, amongst the people of the earth who, sincerely yearning for the Truth, seeketh the guidance of the divine Manifestations concerning the abstruse matters of his Faith. All are dwellers in the land of oblivion, and all are followers of the people of wickedness and rebellion. God will verily do unto them that which they themselves are doing, and will forget them even as they have ignored His Presence in His day.”

The answer then to this question is simply stated: all must turn towards the Manifestations of God, and, in particular, the most recent Manifestation of God--in Person while He resides upon the earth, and in His Writings after He ascends to His divine kingdom. On the other hand, all must turn away from those who reject the Manifestations of God, and, in particular, those who reject the most recent Manifestation of God. Those religious leaders who continue to direct their Jewish followers to reject Jesus Christ, their Christian votaries to deny Muhammad, their Muslim religionists to repudiate the Bab, their Babi devotees to negate Baha'u'llah, their Hindu and Buddhist and Zoroastrian and Confucian and Shinto and Sikh and Jain and all other followings to turn inwardly towards their own traditions and away from all others and hence away from the most recent and presently

thereof except God and them that are well-grounded in knowledge.[Qur'an III:5] How strange then that this twenty-five-year-old untutored one should be singled out to reveal His verses in so astounding a manner. If the Muslim divines have cause for pride in understanding the meaning of the Holy Writings, His glory is in revealing the Writings, that none of them may hesitate to believe in His Words.”

ruling King of heaven and earth, these leaders condemn themselves and their followers to separation from God. For rejection of any of His Manifestations is rejection of Him Who is manifested therein, God Himself. And rejection of one Manifestation is thus rejection of the reality of all Manifestations; this is rejection of life, rejection of reality, this is estrangement from self, this is separation from God, this is hell in any language and any culture, the very thing that all religions promise their followers deliverance from.

ELEVENTH REASON: APPEARANCE OF PROPHET WHEN NOT EXPECTED

One of the most common ways in which the leaders and followers of religions misinterpret their Scriptures and fail to recognize the Prophets of God through Their fulfillment of specific verses in those same Scriptures, one of the most common failures of the tendency toward literalism, a literal understanding of the revealed Word pertains to the times of the appearance of the Prophets. 'Abdu'l-Baha states, as we have already seen in the statement of the proofs of all the prophets:

“The Prophets of God manifested complete love for all. Each One announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each subsequent One confirmed the teachings and prophecies of the Prophet Who preceded Him.” (PUP:234)

“Each of the holy Manifestations announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each One confirmed the message of His predecessor.” (PUP:339)

How did each One of the Prophets "announce the glad tidings of His successor"? In symbolic language, for otherwise all of His followers would surely have recognized His successor --which event has yet to occur in the recorded history of humankind! The symbolic language of the Prophet is made up of words and numbers much like the plain language shared by the Prophet and His followers. In the Hebrew and Arabic languages the numbers are often expressed in words and letters sometimes in a manner that is easily deciphered and in other cases in a fashion that is known only to a select few. The hiding of numbers in letters and words is known as "gematria" in Hebrew and Aramaic and as "abjad" in Arabic. 'Abdu'l-Baha states in matter-of-fact tone: "The prophecies deal with dates and symbols...In former books the conditions are explained concerning subsequent manifestors of the

divine plan." (ABDP:43) In referring to the prophecies of the Book of Daniel and those of the Book of Revelation, 'Abdu'l-Baha explains that the numbers used in these texts, although differing outwardly, if correctly interpreted refer to one and the same date in historical time.

Following a lengthy and detailed explanation of this convergence of time prophecies expressed in numbers in the two Books, 'Abdu'l-Baha affirms:

“Nothing could be more clear than this agreement of the prophecies with one another...There are no clearer proofs than this in the Holy Books for any Manifestation. For him who is just, the agreement of the times indicated by the tongues of the Great Ones is the most conclusive proof. There is no other possible explanation of these prophecies. Blessed are the just souls who seek the truth. But failing justice, the people attack, dispute, and openly deny the evidence; like the Pharisees who, at the manifestation of Christ, denied with the greatest obstinacy the explanations of Christ and of his disciples. They obscured Christ's Cause before the ignorant people, saying, "These prophecies are not of Jesus, but of the Promised One who shall come later, according to the conditions mentioned in the Bible." Some of these conditions were that he must have a kingdom, be seated on the throne of David, enforce the Law of the Bible, and manifest such justice that the wolf and the lamb shall gather at the same spring. And thus they prevented the people from knowing Christ.” (SAQ:82)

In the community of Islam the hadith (traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad are as much a source of religious observance and understanding as the revealed text of the Qur'an itself. Among the Ithna 'Ashari Shi'i branch of Islam, that which is generally observed in Iran, the hadith of the twelve Imams are accorded the same sanctity as those of the Prophet Muhammad. In this context we find citations of numerical prophecies in the hadith of the sixth Imam, Ja'afar Sadiq Ibn Muhammad in the polemical writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. The Bab, writing of the date of his own Manifestation in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:47-48:“Of the same order furthermore is the hadith Abi Lubayd Makhzumi which gives the significance of the isolated letters of the Qur'an. The demonstration of this point was given in the book entitled: Commentary on the Suratu'l-Kawthar. And this hadith refers to the year 1260. Furthermore the hadith Mufaddal where it is said: He will manifest himself in the year 60 and his name shall be

elevated.”

Baha'u'llah, referring apparently to the same hadith writes in "Kitab-i-Iqan":

KI:253-54:“Consider, that even the year in which that Quintessence of Light is to be made manifest hath been specifically recorded in the traditions, yet they still remain unmindful, nor do they for one moment cease to pursue their selfish desires. According to the tradition, Mufaddal asked Sadiq²⁷ saying: "What of the sign of His manifestation, O my master? He made reply: "In the year sixty, His Cause shall be made manifest, and His Name shall be proclaimed.””

It may be of interest to students of comparative religion that the Bab follows His citation of this numerical prophecy of Imam Sadiq with yet another hadith from the same source describing the four qualities from four Prophets which will be manifest in the Qa'im and which the Bab explicitly states are revealed in His person. (SP:48) Baha'u'llah follows the same order, with this latter hadith attributed to the "Bihar". (KI:254) Further on in the text of "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" the Bab refers to Bihar'u'l-Anvar (p. 50) which Nicolas identifies in a footnote (Ibid., #3) as a collection of hadith comprising 24 volumes and compiled by Mulla Muhammad Baghir Majlisi circa 800 A.H.(1400 A.D.), and this would seem to be the volume to which Baha'u'llah refers. Closely following the two traditions already cited, the Bab writes that correct interpretation of the hadith is not possible for all. "The Prophet said so in effect: "When I speak, I pronounce one speech which has for you seventy-one significances." (SP:51) Closely following the hadith which refers to the four signs of the four Prophets in Baha'u'llah's "Kitab-i-Iqan" is this: "He also saith: "We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain." (KI:255) There are perhaps other parallels between the order and content of "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" and "Kitab-i-Iqan".

We find Baha'u'llah in "Kitab-i-Iqan" citing the Bab's letter to the Shi'i Muslim clergy of Iran as follows:

KI:229-30:“The Bab, the Lord, the Most Exalted--may the life of all be a sacrifice unto Him,--hath specifically revealed an

²⁷Sadiq, also known as Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, the 6th Imam according to the Imami Shi'i community.

Epistle unto the divines of every city, wherein He hath fully set forth the character of the denial and repudiation of each of them. "Wherefore, take ye good heed ye who are men of insight!" [Qur'an LIX:2] By His references to their opposition He intended to invalidate the objections which the people of the Bayan might raise in the day of the manifestation of "Mustaghath," the day of the Latter Resurrection..."

In the "Lawh-i-Muhammad Saraj," Baha'u'llah addresses the followers of the Bab who have failed to recognize his own prophethood because of their misunderstanding of the numerical prophecies of the Bab relative to the date of the Manifestation of Him Whom God shall make manifest²⁸:

GL:103:“Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behoveth you to ascertain whether or not such a light hath appeared. It is neither within your power nor mine to set the time at which it should be made manifest. God's inscrutable Wisdom hath fixed its hour beforehand. Be content, O people, with that which God hath desired for you and predestined unto you...”

TWELFTH REASON: DISBELIEF IN THE REVEALED VERSES OF GOD

There are some who will deny the prophethood of every Prophet saying that no Prophet has revealed divine verses, that all such verses are actually of human fabrication, a patch-work of old tales, a pasticcio of vain imaginations, without any transcendental reality or truth or beauty.

Baha'u'llah describes their argument in every age as follows:

KI:211-12:“And likewise, He saith: "As for those who believe not in the verses of God, or that they shall ever meet Him, these of My mercy shall despair, and these doth a grievous

²⁸The appearance of Him Whom God shall manifest was seemingly designated as 9, 19, 1550 and 2001 years after the Bab's declaration. Baha'u'llah cites many references in the Bab's Writings to the year 9 and the year 19 in Kitab-i-Badi' and in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.

chastisement await." [Qur'an XXIX:23] Also, "And they say, 'Shall we then abandon our gods for a crazed poet?'" [Qur'an XXXVII:36] The implication of this verse is manifest. Behold what they observed after the verses were revealed. They called Him a poet, scoffed at the verses of God, and exclaimed saying: "These words of his are but tales of the Ancients!" By this they meant that those words which were spoken by the peoples of old Muhammad hath compiled and called them the Word of God. Likewise, in this day²⁹, thou hast heard the people impute similar charges to this Revelation, saying: "He hath compiled these words from the words of old;" or "these words are spurious." Vain and haughty are their sayings, low their estate and station!"

Moses did not make an effort to prove that his Revelations were the Words of God. When his followers rejected those Revelations and spurned those Words they were punished, and this proved to them that the word of Moses was the Word of God. Likewise, when Christ was denied by the Jewish people to whom he appeared they suffered the swift chastisement of God: many were massacred during the campaign of Titus, the sovereignty of the remaining Jewish kingdom -- Judea-- was abruptly terminated, and the Temple founded by King Solomon which was the focus and edifice of the Jewish religion was razed to the very ground and its place was supplanted by a polytheistic heathen cult. Those Arabs and other peoples who gainsaid the testimony of Muhammad suffered a similar fate, beginning during his lifetime and extending for hundreds of years afterwards.

The Bab discusses this theme in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:15-16: "If you accept as proof that which God Himself has established as such, if you believe in Him and seek to satisfy Him, then how is it that you wish to establish proof of your faith upon things which do not and cannot please Him: He has forbidden this in the Surah of the Bee [al-Nahl] to the men³⁰ who do not believe in the verses: "God will not guide those who disbelieve God's revelations. Grievous punishment awaits them. None invents falsehoods save those who disbelieve God's revelations: they alone are the liars. [Qur'an XVI:104-105] Pay close attention to this: in every

²⁹In the Dispensation of the Bab.

³⁰Literally "slaves".

manifestation it is precisely at this point where the preponderance of the creatures lose their way, who mistake the path and go from the Paradise of Faith into the hell of irreligion. Know well that he of whom the Proof has been attested, comes from God. That suffices as proof, even as God says so, in the Qur'an, by the mouth of Moses: "We come to you with a sign from your Lord: may peace be upon him who follows the straight path." [Qur'an XX:48] If the proof of Moses and of Aaron against Pharaoh did not have to be made perfect in a single sign, God would not have affirmed so in this verse. You see therefore that a single verse suffices to prove a mission."

The Bab is directing his verses to a Muslim and hence to a reader who is convinced that he already believes in God, believes in the Prophet Muhammad, believes in the truth of the Qur'an and hence believes in the sanctity and divine authority of the verses revealed by God. Baha'u'llah's statement, while also directed to a Muslim reader can be related directly to those Jews who deny Christ, those Christians who deny Muhammad and those millions who deny the reality of all of the Prophets, who deny the reality of God Himself. His message to them is as simple and straightforward as that found in the Torah, the Gospels or the Qur'an: the atheist and unbeliever is sentenced to punishment for his spiritual blindness, for his stubborn opposition to the truth, and for the untold suffering which his rejection of God and of His Prophets has entailed for the Messengers of God themselves, for their followers and for the multitudes of mankind who have remained deprived of the inestimable benefits of the Revelations of God.

THIRTEENTH REASON: BELIEF IN THE FINALITY OF DIVINE REVELATION

In "Kitab-i-Iqan", Baha'u'llah follows the rejection of the Word of God as a fabrication with belief in the finality of divine Revelation as a cause for the rejection of the Prophets of God.

KI:135-37: "When the Unseen, the Eternal, the divine Essence, caused the Day-star of Muhammad to rise above the horizon of knowledge, among the cavils which the Jewish divines raised against Him was that after Moses no Prophet should be sent of God. Yea, mention hath been made in the

scriptures of a Soul Who must needs be manifest and Who will advance the Faith, and promote the interests of the people, of Moses, so that the Law of the Mosaic Dispensation may encompass the whole earth. Thus hath the King of eternal glory referred in His Book to the words uttered by those wanderers in the vale of remoteness and error: "'The hand of God,' say the Jews, 'is chained up.' Chained up be their own hands! And for that which they have said, they were accursed. Nay, out stretched are both His hands!" [Qur'an V:67] "The hand of God is above their hands." [Qur'an XLVIII:10]

"Although the commentators of the Qur'an have related in divers manners the circumstances attending the revelation of this verse, yet thou shouldst endeavour to apprehend the purpose thereof. He saith: How false is that which the Jews imagined! How can the hand of Him Who is the King in truth, Who caused the countenance of Moses to be made manifest, and conferred upon Him the robe of Prophethood—how can the hand of such a One be chained and fettered? How can He be conceived as powerless to raise up yet another Messenger after Moses? Behold the absurdity of their saying; how far it hath strayed from the path of knowledge and understanding! Observe how in this day also, all these people have occupied themselves with such foolish absurdities. For over a thousand years they have been reciting this verse, and unwittingly pronouncing their censure against the Jews, utterly unaware that they themselves, openly and privily, are voicing the sentiments and belief of the Jewish people! Thou art surely aware of their idle contention, that all Revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the day-springs of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that the Ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the Tabernacle of ancient glory the Messengers of God have ceased to be made manifest."

KI:212-13: "After the denials and denunciations which they uttered, and unto which We have referred, they protested saying: "No independent Prophet, according to our Scriptures, should arise after Moses and Jesus to abolish the Law of divine Revelation. Nay, he that is to be made manifest must needs fulfil the Law." Thereupon this verse, indicative of all the divine themes, and testifying to the truth that the flow of the grace of the All-Merciful can never cease, was revealed: "And Joseph came to you aforetime with clear tokens, but ye

ceased not to doubt of the message with which He came to you, until, when He died, ye said, 'God will by no means raise up a Messenger after Him.' Thus God misleadeth him who is the transgressor, the doubter." [Qur'an XL:34] Therefore, understand from this verse and know of a certainty that the people in every age, clinging to a verse of the Book, have uttered such vain and absurd sayings, contending that no Prophet should again be made manifest to the world. Even as the Christian divines who, holding fast to the verse of the Gospel to which We have already referred, have sought to explain that the law of the Gospel shall at no time be annulled, and that no independent Prophet shall again be made manifest, unless He confirmeth the law of the Gospel. Most of the people have become afflicted with the same spiritual disease.

“Even as thou dost witness how the people of the Qur'an, like unto the people of old, have allowed the words "Seal of the Prophets" to veil their eyes. And yet, they themselves testify to this verse: "None knoweth the interpretation thereof but God and they that are well-grounded in knowledge." [Qur'an III:5] And when He Who is well-grounded in all knowledge, He Who is the Mother, the Soul, the Secret, and the Essence thereof, revealeth that which is the least contrary to their desire, they bitterly oppose Him and shamelessly deny Him.”

FOURTEENTH REASON: EXCESSIVE AND NARROW DEVOTION TO RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Most students of religion seem to be inclined to believe that the Prophets of God call men and women to the highest attainments in piety, in observance of religious law, in practice of religious ritual. They hold the Prophets responsible for the zealotry, the fundamentalism, the insane and unbalanced extremism of many "true believers" from the dawn of religion to the present hour. But Jesus Christ warned the Pharisees that rigid fulfillment of religious law and custom was neither necessary nor even preferable in the path of the love of God. Jesus Christ has often been understood to be an antinomian, a destroyer of the law in favor of the rule of the spirit. This has of course led to other extremes, which were severely condemned and controlled in the divine administration of the Qur'an. What would check the tendency in Islam to err on the side of legalism?

The Bab describes the ardent and pious expectancy of the Christians at the time of the manifestation of Muhammad in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:22-24:“Let us pass to the Christian nation...When it arrived at perfection in its religion, God raised up Muhammad Rasul Allah. Jesus had in a powerfully precise manner ordained that his nation believe in him when he would manifest himself. This manner of action had moreover been followed by all of the prophets, for not one of them had been manifested who did not prescribe that his nation believe in the Prophet who would succeed him. But, you know perfectly what happened after the manifestation of Muhammad. It was at such a point that he himself cried out: "No Prophet has been tormented as I have." And yet, all those who walked in the ways of God in that epoch, that is the Christians, were awaiting his appearance. Night and day they prayed in hope of being among the number of those who would own up to him and would attract to him all the hearts. But, when he was manifested, nobody believed in him, except for the amir al-mu'minin and a few rare persons; and yet the universe lived but for him!

“There is here a secret which I am going to have you learn, for you have never heard it spoken of. Examine the people of all the Prophets. The origin of their works is in the utterances of their Prophet; it follows that these works are done for him. But, as the Prophet is the Mirror of God, one can see nothing in it but God; from here on these works are all for God and uniquely for Him. Now, even as the origin and works of every nation derive its first cause from its Prophet, in the same way each converges towards the following Prophet. This way, in the day of the manifestation of Muhammad the world was uniquely preoccupied with him, but all did not understand that he had appeared, for without that they would not have been separated from their friend. Take a look at this shoe which is believed to come from the foot of the donkey of Jesus³¹. What importance is given to it and how the

³¹This religious relic, a horseshoe attributed to the donkey upon which Jesus rode into Jerusalem was apparently well known to the recipient of this treatise, for otherwise the Bab would have no reason to cite it. It has not yet been identified, but there being many hundreds, if not thousands of relics associated over the centuries with the life of Jesus and his apostles, such a relic is not at all improbable, nor is the

Christians go en masse in pilgrimage to see it: it is by this means that they seek to bring themselves closer to Divinity! A Prophet like Muhammad manifests himself and during seven years nobody wants to believe in him! See the noble equilibrium of human actions! And meanwhile these Christians if they had been able to acquire the certitude that this Prophet was indeed the promised Ahmad³² not a single one from among them would have been alienated from Muhammad. There are among them people of an incontestable science who fasted and mortified themselves to please God. Then, when He for Whom they acted in this way was manifested, they said to Him: "You are not Him Whom Jesus promised us." Do not think that these people were not attentive in their religion or that they did not want to believe. Perhaps, on the contrary, this lack of certitude and of faith comes precisely from their too great religious scruples. They believed themselves upon the paths of God, but certainly, if they could have acquired the conviction that Muhammad was truly the Prophet of God promised by Jesus, all would have accepted Him in the blink of an eye. You will remark that in truth their claim has no value in the eyes of the Muslims, so what can it be worth in the sight of the Creator, of His Prophet and of the witnesses of His religion! Their actions come from thenceforth without aim and without meaning although they truly believe [themselves] to be acting with the approval of God."

Baha'u'llah also warns believers not to value mere observance over spiritual insight:

KI:238: "The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words "One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" must needs be

behavior of Christian pilgrims uncharacteristically rendered by the Bab.

³²According to the Qur'an LXI:6: And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." But when he came to them with Clear Signs, they said, "This is evident sorcery!"

observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest.”

ESW:91:“Wert thou, for the sake of God, to ponder, though it be but for an hour, upon the things which have occurred in former times and more recently, thou wouldst turn away from the things thou dost possess unto the things which belong unto God, and wouldst become a means for the exaltation of His Word.”

In “Kitab-i-Aqdas” Baha’u’llah counsels against overdoing piety and taxing one’s soul:

KA:36:“Amongst the people is he who seateth himself amid the sandals by the door whilst coveting in his heart the seat of honour. Say: What manner of man art thou, O vain and heedless one, who wouldst appear as other than thou art? And among the people is he who layeth claim to inner knowledge, and still deeper knowledge concealed within this knowledge. Say: Thou speakest false! By God! What thou dost possess is naught but husks which We have left to thee as bones are left to dogs. By the righteousness of the one true God! Were anyone to wash the feet of all mankind, and were he to worship God in the forests, valleys, and mountains, upon high hills and lofty peaks, to leave no rock or tree, no clod of earth, but was a witness to his worship -- yet, should the fragrance of My good pleasure not be inhaled from him, his works would never be acceptable unto God. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Lord of all. How many a man hath secluded himself in the climes of India, denied himself the things that God hath decreed as lawful, imposed upon himself austerities and mortifications, and hath not been remembered by God, the Revealer of Verses. Make not your deeds as snares wherewith to entrap the object of your aspiration, and deprive not yourselves of this Ultimate Objective for which have ever yearned all such as have drawn nigh unto God. Say: The very life of all deeds is My good pleasure, and all things depend upon Mine acceptance. Read ye the Tablets that ye may know what hath been purposed in the Books of God, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Bounteous. He who attaineth to My love hath title to a throne of gold, to sit thereon in honour over all the world; he who is deprived

thereof, though he sit upon the dust, that dust would seek refuge with God, the Lord of all Religions.”

KA:149:“Pride not yourselves on much reading of the verses or on a multitude of pious acts by night and day; for were a man to read a single verse with joy and radiance it would be better for him than to read with lassitude all the Holy Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Read ye the sacred verses in such measure that ye be not overcome by languor and despondency. Lay not upon your souls that which will weary them and weigh them down, but rather what will lighten and uplift them, so that they may soar on the wings of the Divine verses towards the Dawning-place of His manifest signs; this will draw you nearer to God, did ye but comprehend.”

Baha'u'llah echoes this concern in his guidance regarding the spiritual education of children in the eighth leaf of "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih":

TB:68:“Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion, so that the Promised and the Threat recorded in the Books of God may prevent them from the things forbidden and adorn them with the mantle of the commandments; but this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry.”

In the ninth leaf of "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih" Baha'u'llah continues:

TB:69:“In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil.”

In the tenth leaf of "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih":

TB:71:“Living in seclusion or practising asceticism is not acceptable in the presence of God. It behoveth them that are endued with insight and understanding to observe that which will cause joy and radiance.”

FIFTEENTH REASON: PREFERING THE VIEWS OF MEN OVER THE STANDARD OF GOD

Why do we turn away from the Prophet of God? We turn away in most cases because we prefer our own perceptions, or those of individuals with whom we are familiar and in whom we have confidence over the standard revealed by God. In "Kitab-i-Iqan" Baha'u'llah addresses this impediment to recognition of the Prophets of God straight on and without prevarication, first by the *via positiva* and subsequently the *via negativa*:

KI:3-4:“They should put their trust in God, and, holding fast unto Him, follow in His way. Then will they be made worthy of the effulgent glories of the sun of divine knowledge and understanding, and become the recipients of a grace that is infinite and unseen, inasmuch as man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom, can never enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favour, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.”

KI:14-15:“Unto every discerning observer it is evident and manifest that had these people in the days of each of the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth sanctified their eyes, their ears, and their hearts from whatever they had seen, heard, and felt, they surely would not have been deprived of beholding the beauty of God, nor strayed far from the habitations of glory. But having weighed the testimony of God by the standard of their own knowledge, gleaned from the teachings of the leaders of their faith, and found it at variance with their limited understanding, they arose to perpetrate such unseemly acts.”

KI:181-82:“Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance be not grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery. For it behooveth no man to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his

inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate their truth. For such, today, is the manner of the divines and doctors of the age, who occupy the seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice. Were these to ask the Light of Truth concerning those images which their idle fancy hath carved, and were they to find His answer inconsistent with their own conceptions and their own understanding of the Book, they would assuredly denounce Him Who is the Mine and Wellhead of all Knowledge as the very negation of understanding. Such things have happened in every age.”

In "Lawh-i-Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil Qazvini" Baha'u'llah sounds this theme in reference to his own prophetic mission:

GL:272-73:“If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me. Ye will, otherwise, be never capable of recognizing Me, though ye ponder My Cause as long as My Kingdom endureth, and meditate upon all created things throughout the eternity of God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Omnipotent, the Ever-Abiding, the All-Wise. Thus have We manifested the truth of Our Revelation, that haply the people may be roused from their heedlessness, and be of them that understand.”

In "Kitab-i-Aqdas" Baha'u'llah sounds the clarion call to leaders of religion, summoning them one and all to the recognition of the divine standard, and its differentiation from the multitude of contending human standards:

KA:99:“Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it. The eye of My loving-kindness weepeth sore over you, inasmuch as ye have failed to recognize the One upon Whom ye have been calling in the daytime and in the night season, at even and at morn.”

Baha'u'llah does not simply assert that the divine standard exists and

that all things must be weighed according to that standard and not the opposite, where men weigh this divine standard according to the instruments and sciences of measurement currently known and practiced amongst men. He does not only engage the theologian in a Great Reversal, wherein man is called to account for daring to subject God to examination when in reality it is he whom God is testing. He goes further and challenges these leaders of religion to a contest!

KA:101:“O ye leaders of religion! Who is the man amongst you that can rival Me in vision or insight? Where is he to be found that dareth to claim to be My equal in utterance or wisdom? No, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved.”

This was not simply a written challenge buried in a text which was not destined to be published or even widely-disseminated during its Author's earthly sojourn. On the contrary, the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" was copied and distributed widely throughout Iran and every other location in which Babis and Baha'is resided. According to the historical account of Baha'u'llah's mission, as written by Shoghi Effendi and included in his work entitled "God Passes By", Baha'u'llah uttered similar challenges to Shi'i and Sunni divines both individually and en masse, and there is no record of his having been bested, and, on the contrary, there are multiple reports of his having attracted followers among notable Muslim leaders of religion, including "Ibn-i-Alusi, the Mufti of Baghdad, together with Shaykh 'Abu's-Salam, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Qadir and Siyyid Dawudi" (GPB:129) and Siyyid Isma'il Dhabih (GPB:136).

While Baha'u'llah challenged the leaders of religion of his time and place of residence to a duel of "vision" and "insight", "utterance" and "wisdom", he warned all people to beware of adhering blindly to human learning, such knowledge as would turn them away from the true standard revealed in his Writings. In one of his Tablets he specifically warned that Scriptural verses not be interpreted in such manner as to reject the revelation of a new Prophet of God:

GL:175-176:“Whoso, while reading the Sacred Scriptures, is tempted to choose therefrom whatever may suit him with which to challenge the authority of the Representative of God among men, is, indeed, as one dead, though to outward seeming he may walk and converse with his neighbors, and share with them their food and their drink.”

In "Kitab-i-Iqan" and "Kitab-i-Aqdas" he warned about judging the Prophet according to human standards:

KA:102:“We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Dayspring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed. Could ye but discover the source whence the splendour of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed Seat of glory.”

KI:3-4:“Then will they be made worthy of the effulgent glories of the sun of divine knowledge and understanding, and become the recipients of a grace that is infinite and unseen, inasmuch as man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious...unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.”

In "Kitab-i-Aqdas" he also warned that Scriptural verses not be deliberately misinterpreted:

KA:105:“Whoso interpreteth what hath been sent down from the heaven of Revelation, and altereth its evident meaning, he verily, is of them that have perverted the Sublime Word of God, and is of the lost ones in the Lucid Book.”

In "Suriy-i-Vafa", written after "Kitab-i-Aqdas" and close to the end of his earthly sojourn, Baha'u'llah emphasizes the importance of detachment from human learning and attachment to divine knowledge:

TB:186:“It behoveth thee to look with divine insight upon the things We have revealed and sent unto thee and not towards the people and that which is current amongst them. They are in this day like unto a blind man who, while moving in the sunshine, demandeth: Where is the sun? Is it shining? He would deny and dispute the truth, and would not be of them that perceive. Never shall he be able to discern the sun or to understand that which hath intervened between him and it. He would object within himself, voice protests, and would be among the rebellious. Such is the state of this people. Leave

them unto themselves, saying: Unto you be that which ye desire and unto us that which we desire. Wretched indeed is the plight of the ungodly.”

It has been suggested that the original intent of Baha'u'llah's admonitions may have been to warn against reliance upon various esoteric religious sciences common in the Islamic Middle East which do not have exact equivalents in Western civilization. However, given his warning not to turn "towards the people and that which is current amongst them", and not to weigh the Book of God "with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you" this cautionary counsel assumes universal and perennial dimensions, encompassing the many philosophies and sciences in the West which interpret everything that exists according to the "standards" and "knowledge" of men rather than in line with the "unerring Balance established amongst men" according to which "whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed". This is the Great Reversal applied to all of human learning, with no exemptions whatsoever.

'Abdu'l-Baha wrote that in a number of cases the Book of God has revealed truths which ran contrary to the ideas of the people, and that this has led to the rejection of those truths or to their obfuscation and concealment. Shoghi Effendi also indicated that in the future many scientists will discover that truths revealed in the Writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah will be confirmed by their independent scientific investigations.

Now, to consider how this has happened in the past, 'Abdu'l-Baha asserted:

“Briefly, Muhammad appeared in the desert of Hijaz in the Arabian Peninsula, which was a desolate, sterile wilderness, sandy and uninhabited...In such a country, and amidst such barbarous tribes, an illiterate man produced a book in which, in a perfect and eloquent style, he explained the divine attributes and perfections, the prophethood of the Messengers of God, the divine laws, and some scientific facts.

“Thus, you know that before the observations of modern times, that is to say, during the first centuries and down to the fifteenth century of the Christian era, all the mathematicians of the world agreed that the earth was the centre of the universe, and that the sun moved. The famous astronomer who was the protagonist of the new theory, discovered the movement of the earth and the immobility of the sun. Until his time all the astronomers and philosophers of the

world followed the Ptolemaic system, and whoever said anything against it was considered ignorant. Though Pythagoras, and Plato during the latter part of his life, adopted the theory that the annual movement of the sun around the zodiac does not proceed from the sun, but rather from the movement of the earth around the sun; this theory had been entirely forgotten, and the Ptolemaic system was accepted by all mathematicians. But there are some verses revealed in the Qur'an contrary to the theory of the Ptolemaic system. One of them is 'The sun moves in a fixed place,' [Qur'an XXXVI:38] which shows the fixity of the sun, and its movement around an axis. Again, in another verse, 'And each star moves in its own heaven.' [not Qur'an XXXVI as identified in footnote] Thus is explained the movement of the sun, of the moon, of the earth, and of other bodies. When the Qur'an appeared all the mathematicians ridiculed these statements, and attributed the theory to ignorance. Even the doctors of Islam, when they saw that these verses were contrary to the accepted Ptolemaic system, were obliged to explain them away.

"It was not until after the fifteenth century of the Christian era, nearly nine hundred years after Muhammad, that a famous astronomer made new observations and important discoveries by the aid of the telescope which he had invented. The rotation of the earth, the fixity of the sun, and also its movement around an axis, were discovered. It became evident that the verses of the Qur'an agreed with existing facts, and that the Ptolemaic system was imaginary.

"In short, many Oriental peoples have been reared for thirteen centuries under the shadow of the religion of Muhammad. During the middle ages, while Europe was in the lowest depths of barbarism, the Arab peoples were superior to the other nations of the earth in learning, in the arts, mathematics, civilization, government, and other sciences. The enlightener and educator of these Arab tribes, and the founder of the civilization and perfections of humanity among these different races, was an illiterate man, Muhammad. Was this illustrious man a thorough educator or not? A just judgment is necessary." (SAQ:27-29)

SIXTEENTH REASON: PROPHETS DO NOT COMPEL RECOGNITION AND OBEDIENCE

Deep within the human soul is ingrained a stubborn fear of taking personal responsibility coupled with an infantile desire to be taken care of by a perennial parent. These twin inheritances battle with the growth of initiative, self-determination, independence of judgment,

freedom from irrationality and undue outward influence from physical circumstances and social agencies. In most cases the twin inheritances win the battles for the souls of men, and in this triumph they have become the devils, the satans, the adversaries of spiritual enlightenment. Jesus Christ addresses these when he says to a disciple who asks permission to bury his father prior to assuming his discipleship:

Mt:VIII:22;Lk:IX:60:“...let the dead bury their dead.”

And generally to his disciples he says:

Mt:X:37:“He that loveth his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

And to those who refuse to recognize him, he says:

Jn:VIII:44-45:“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”

Baha'u'llah speaks of the self-same detachment from inheritance and attachment to the truth in "Haft Vadi" (Seven Valleys):

SV:5:“It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart--which is the wellspring of divine treasures--from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires, and shut the door of friendliness and enmity upon all the people of the earth.”

In "Kitab-i-Iqan" in reference to the Arab people at the manifestation of Muhammad, Baha'u'llah identifies this same perverse and pernicious attachment to inheritance:

KI:209:“In another passage He saith: "And when Our clear verses are recited to them, their only argument is to say, 'Bring back our fathers, if ye speak the truth!'" [Qur'an XLV:24] Behold, what foolish evidences they sought from these Embodiments of an all-encompassing mercy! They scoffed at

the verses, a single letter of which is greater than the creation of heavens and earth, and which quickeneth the dead of the valley of self and desire with the spirit of faith; and clamoured saying: "Cause our fathers to speed out of their sepulchres." Such was the perversity and pride of that people."

Baha'u'llah, in the same Book describes the "chosen ones" of the Prophets of God, and in so doing he contrasts their behavior with that of the rejectionists who cling to inheritance:

KI:154-55: "When He was invested with the robe of Prophethood, and was moved by the Spirit of God to arise and proclaim His Cause, whoever believed in Him and acknowledged His Faith, was endowed with the grace of a new life. If him it could be truly said that he was reborn and revived, inasmuch as previous to his belief in God and his acceptance of His Manifestation, he had set his affections on the things of the world, such as attachment to earthly goods, to wife, children, food, drink, and the like, so much so that in the day-time and in the night season his one concern had been to amass riches and procure for himself the means of enjoyment and pleasure. Aside from these things, before his partaking of the reviving waters of faith, he had been so wedded to the traditions of his forefathers, and so passionately devoted to the observance of their customs and laws, that he would have preferred to suffer death rather than violate one letter of those superstitious forms and manners current amongst his people. Even as the people have cried: "Verily we found our fathers with a faith, and verily, in their footsteps we follow.'" [Qur'an XLIII:22]

‘Abdu’l-Baha discusses the close relationship between the imperative for independent investigation of truth and the prohibition of attachment to the imitations, superstitions and other inherited baggage from ancestors living and deceased:

“When that Sun of Reality with its divine bestowal, its heavenly glow and effulgence transferred to the Messianic point of rising, the Jews denied its appearance in Jesus, for they were not worshippers of the Sun itself but adored its rising in Moses. Had they been worshippers of the Sun of Reality, they would have turned to Christ instead of denying Him as the Messiah.

“What was the reason of this deprivation? It was simply because they were imitating fathers and ancestors in forms of belief

instead of turning toward the Sun of Divinity. For this reason they were deprived of the bounty which dawned in the Messianic dayspring. Holding tenaciously to the former dawning point, they still remain in this position of deprivation. Consider the people and nations of the earth today and observe this same tenacious allegiance to ancestral belief. He whose father was a Zoroastrian is a Zoroastrian. He whose father was a Buddhist remains a Buddhist. The son of a Muslim continues a Muslim, and so on throughout. Why is this? Because they are slaves and captives of mere imitation. They have not investigated the reality of religion and arrived at its fundamentals and conclusions. The Jew, for instance, has not proved the validity of Moses by investigating reality. He is a Jew because his father was a Jew. He imitates the forms and belief of his fathers and ancestors. There is no thought or mention of reality. And so it is with the other peoples of religion. This is the purpose of our statement that they worship the dawning point rather than the Sun of Reality itself." (PUP:273-74)

The other side of the psychology of rejection which manifests itself in a longing for domination is the deep-seated human feeling of self-loathing, of insignificance, of estrangement and unreality. In response to both of these phenomena we find these encouraging words from Jesus Christ in his "Sermon on the Mount":

Mt:V:5:"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Mt:V:8:"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Mt:V:9:"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Mt:V:10:"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

Mt:V:12:"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Baha'u'llah likewise reveals the spiritual bounty of that soul which turns entirely to God in "Kalimat-i-Maknuneh":

HWA:11:"O Son of Being!

"Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee. Get thou from it thy radiance and seek none other than Me. For I have created thee rich and have bountifully shed My favour upon thee."

HWA:12:"O Son of Being!

"With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the

essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.”

HWA:13:“O Son of Spirit!

“I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.”

In order for a human being, any human being to consciously realize this exalted spiritual reality which is his true nature he must undergo a second birth, a spiritual awakening. This is described in the Writings of many of the Prophets. Most of us human beings, due to our twin impediments --low self-esteem and attachment to inheritance-- would prefer to be swept off our feet. We do not want the responsibility of having to investigate anything, particularly anything important by ourselves; we want to rely on other people whom we trust more than ourselves, whom we consider to be wiser, better informed, and more intelligent than ourselves. We want to be “saved” by someone else, and don’t believe we can “save” ourselves. But this is precisely what we are called upon to do, and told we are fully capable of accomplishing. Baha'u'llah addresses this theme in many passages, including the following:

GL:71-72:“He Who is the Day Spring of Truth is, no doubt, fully capable of rescuing from such remoteness wayward souls and of causing them to draw nigh unto His court and attain His Presence. "If God had pleased He had surely made all men one people." His purpose, however, is to enable the pure in spirit and the detached in heart to ascend, by virtue of their own innate power, unto the shores of the Most Great Ocean, that thereby they who seek the Beauty of the All-Glorious may be distinguished and separated from the wayward and perverse...Were the Eternal Essence to manifest all that is latent within Him, were He to shine in the plenitude of His glory, none would be found to question His power or repudiate His truth. Nay, all created things would be so dazzled and thunderstruck by the evidences of His light as to be reduced to utter nothingness. How, then, can the godly be

differentiated under such circumstances from the froward?"

KI:8-9: "Meditate profoundly, that the secret of things unseen may be revealed unto you, that you may inhale the sweetness of a spiritual and imperishable fragrance, and that you may acknowledge the truth that from time immemorial even unto eternity the Almighty hath tried, and will continue to try, His servants, so that light may be distinguished from darkness, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, guidance from error, happiness from misery, and roses from thorns. Even as He hath revealed: "Do men think when they say 'We believe' they shall be let alone and not be put to proof?" [Qur'an XXIX:2]

KI:49: "Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil. From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books."

PART THREE

PRINCIPLES OF APPROACH TO THE PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS

In the course of investigating the proofs of the Prophets and the reasons for the denial and repudiation of those prophets by the peoples of the world, it was found that certain principles were articulated with regard to the proper approach to the proofs. This approach may enable the seeker to steer clear of some of the pitfalls of denial and repudiation, the classic variety of trap which the selfish small mind calls reason and which the selfless enlightened mind calls nonsense. In any case, inasmuch as these principles did not fall easily into any of the pre-existing categories, and as they seemed to represent aspects of a holistic view of proofs that might be helpful to some readers, the texts which cite these concepts have been included in this, a separate chapter. It should be noted that they have not been organized in any deliberate fashion, but rather are offered in the order in which they were discovered.

FIRST PRINCIPLE: TO MAINTAIN THAT THE TESTIMONY OF GOD IS INCOMPLETE IS BLASPHEMOUS

This principle, and those which immediately follow it have been articulated by Baha'u'llah in "Kitab-i-Iqan" and the texts thereof are cited in full:

KI:13-14: "To maintain that the testimony of Providence was incomplete, that it hath therefore been the cause of the denial of the people, is but open blasphemy. How far from the grace of All-Bountiful and from His loving providence and tender mercies it is to single out a soul from amongst all men for the guidance of His creatures, and, on one hand, to withhold from Him the full measure of His divine testimony, and, on the other, inflict severe retribution on His people for having turned away from His chosen One! Nay, the manifold bounties of the Lord of all beings have, at all times, through the Manifestations of His divine Essence, encompassed the earth and all that dwell therein. Not for a moment hath His grace been withheld, nor have the showers of His loving-kindness ceased to rain upon mankind."

The Bab refers to this same absurdity in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:18:“If somebody wishes today to embrace the religion of Islam, the divine testimony is it complete for him, yes or no? If you say no, then, after death, how could God chastise this one? During his life, how could one reproach him for not being a Muslim? If you say yes, why yes? If it is simply because you affirm it that he believes it, that there is not really an argument; but if you say: yes, by the Qur'an" then you are right and you give a solid and irrefutable argument.”

Why, we may ask, is it blasphemous to suggest let alone allege that the testimony of God is incomplete? First of all, as Baha'u'llah has indicated, because this would render the sufferings, the heroic efforts, the sacrifices of the Prophets of God meaningless and impotent, and if the Prophets of God are thus rendered then we can reach no other conclusion but that God Himself is foolish and absurd. While there are certainly individuals who entertain and even cherish such nonsensical whimsies, the Prophet of God forcefully repudiates such vain imaginations. Secondly, as Baha'u'llah has also alluded to in this passage, if the testimony of God is incomplete, how can the believer be expected to adhere to it? And, if the believer does not adhere to it, and indeed if the non-believer does not adhere to this incomplete testimony from God how can he be held accountable to God and by God for his actions? If God has failed to hold up His end of the covenant how can man be expected to fulfill his part? Again, such a conception is absurd and indeed blasphemous inasmuch as it would depict God as an arbitrary despot, indeed as an evil or scatter-brained tyrant.

This conception of God is contrary to the reality of Divinity revealed by all of the Prophets of God, experienced intuitively by mystics, arrived at rationally by philosophers. It would also eliminate the divine edifice of morality and replace it with a merely human superstructure which could not possibly command the authority and hence the obedience which religion inspires. That all of these absurd and blasphemous ideas have enjoyed a wide and invidious circulation in 20th century Western societies; that they are more common among college students in the West than the perennial truths which they purport to uproot and replace; that such conceptions have become the basis for a new morality, a new mentality, a new behavior which has many advocates and many votaries --does not in the least justify such an agenda in the eyes of the Prophet of God. To him popularity is entirely beside the point: truth is all that matters. And he clearly states

that while the people are preoccupied "with such foolish absurdities" (KI:137), "open blasphemy" (KI:14), the way to truth is to be found in the very testimony of God which the unbeliever characterizes as incomplete.

SECOND PRINCIPLE: INVESTIGATE THE PROOFS OF THE PROPHET HIMSELF

This is a most challenging position. Baha'u'llah calls upon all those who are investigating his claims to look to the proofs he advances rather than to rely upon the proofs advanced on his behalf by his followers or the arguments against his claims which are vaunted by his detractors. In "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih" he writes:

TB:74:“Truly this Wronged One desireth not to demonstrate His Own Cause with proofs produced by others. He is the One Who embraceth all things, while all else besides Him is circumscribed.”

In another Tablet he affirms the same principle:

ADJ:77:“Verily I say! No one hath apprehended the root of this Cause. It is incumbent upon everyone, in this day, to perceive with the eye of God, and to hearken with His ear. Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.”³³

Shoghi Effendi cites two of the Tablets revealed by Baha'u'llah which repeat this theme in "God Passes By":

“To this same Sultan He, moreover, as attested by the Suriy-i-Ra'is, transmitted, while in Gallipoli, a verbal message through a Turkish officer named 'Umar, requesting the sovereign to grant Him a ten minute interview, 'so that he may demand whatsoever he would deem to be a sufficient testimony and would regard as proof of the veracity of Him Who is the Truth,' adding that 'should God enable

³³Baha'u'llah cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice".

Him to produce it, let him, then, release these wronged ones and leave them to themselves.” (GPB:173)

“To Nasiri'd-Din Shah He revealed a Tablet, the lengthiest epistle to any single sovereign, in which He...expressed the wish to be 'brought face to face with the divines of the age, and produce proofs and testimonies in the presence of His Majesty,' which would establish the truth of His Cause...” (GPB:173)

It is telling that Baha'u'llah did not depend upon any of his followers to defend his Cause in his place, that even the Writings of his chosen interpreter did not receive currency under 'Abdu'l-Baha's name until after his father's passing. There are literally innumerable passages in his Writings in which Baha'u'llah challenges his readers to hearken to his voice, to investigate the truth of his claims, to judge him according to his own standards rather than to listen to the voices of his alleged friends and foes, to investigate the truth of the claims voiced by those same followers and detractors, to judge him according to their own standards or the standards of their forefathers, leaders or peers. Notwithstanding this much repeated admonition, both categories of respondents to his teachings have received much more attention than the Writings and Proofs of Baha'u'llah himself.

THIRD PRINCIPLE: INVESTIGATE THE PROPHET'S PROOFS WITH AN UNBIASED MIND

In "Lauh-i-Jinab Mirza Madiq Mashraf Fawj" Baha'u'llah calls upon that one who would investigate his claims, his proofs, who seeks to know whether or not he is Who he asserts himself, to be unbiased in his search:

GL:11:“It behoveth every man to blot out the trace of every idle word from the tablet of his heart, and to gaze, with an open and unbiased mind, on the signs of His Revelation, the proofs of His Mission, and the tokens of His glory.”

It is this same purity of heart and fairness of intellect that Baha'u'llah counsels in the search for truth in "Kitab-i-Iqan" and "Haft Vadi":

KI:192-93:“But, O my brother, when a true seeker determines to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and

purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments. He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the divine mysteries, and, shepherdless, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error.”

KI:195-96:“Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being.”

KI:197:“He will likewise clearly distinguish all the signs of God--His wondrous utterances, His great works, and mighty deeds--from the doings, words and ways of men, even as a jeweller who knoweth the gem from the stone, or the man who distinguisheth the spring from autumn and heat from cold. When the channel of the human soul is cleansed of all worldly and impeding attachments, it will un-faillingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude.”

SV:5:“It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart--which is the wellspring of divine treasures--from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires...”

FOURTH PRINCIPLE: SEEKER SHOULD BE SATISFIED WITH ONE PROPHETIC PROOF

Having already established that the investigator of his claims must acknowledge that the testimony of God is complete and that he is therefore responsible to God for his actions including his affirmation or negation of the claimant to prophethood; must judge him according to his own proofs and evidences and not according to the arguments in his favor or to his detriment; must investigate those claims with a pure heart and an open and unbiased mind, Baha'u'llah then proceeds to recommend that the seeker content himself with one proof. In "Kitab-i-Iqan" he writes:

KI:75:“It behoveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavour, that, by God's invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heaven-sent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self. And should we ask for a testimony of His truth, we should content ourselves with one, and only one; that thereby we may attain unto Him Who is the Fountain-head of infinite grace, and in Whose presence all the world's abundance fadeth into nothingness, that we may cease to cavil at Him every day and to cleave unto our own idle fancy.”

KI:205:“He, the divine King, hath proclaimed the undisputed supremacy of the verses of His Book over all things that testify to His truth. For compared with all other proofs and tokens, the divinely-revealed verses shine as the sun, whilst all others are as stars. To the peoples of the world they are the abiding testimony, the incontrovertible proof, the shining light of the ideal King. Their excellence is unrivalled, their virtue nothing can surpass.”

The Bab takes this argument even further in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:11-12:“And so, even as you embraced the religion of the Arab Prophet, by means of His book, you should have, in the same fashion, given your faith to the Point of the Bayan [the Bab]. For finally, once again, you did not see Muhammad and nevertheless you believed in His book: from then on, in the same fashion you should have, after having seen a verse of the

Bayan, believed in all of its verses as you believed in those of the Qur'an. God has sent no Prophet who distributes a book issuing from Him as proof of His mission: that is a point particular to the Point of the Bayan, that if He presents verses to a Muslim, these verses are, as of the essence of the Qur'an itself, a complete and perfect proof for this Muslim. Yes, the sight alone of but one of these verses suffices for those who have the intelligent and perspicacious eye..."

As the investigator can readily verify for himself, Baha'u'llah offered a multitude of proofs in support of his own claims, and these are detailed, first in his own words and followed by the elucidations of his appointed interpreters. He does not expect every investigator to be satisfied with his first and foremost proof, let alone with one solitary sample of that particular proof. As Baha'u'llah often asserted and as has been articulated in the voluminous writings and discourses of 'Abdu'l-Baha, it is preferable to do one thing well, to perfection than to try to do many things passably and hence to imperfection. The emphasis then is on quality and not on quantity.

**FIFTH PRINCIPLE:
TO SEEK EVIDENCE WHEN THE PROOF IS
ESTABLISHED IS UNSEEMLY**

Inasmuch as the Prophet of God establishes "weighty and infallible proofs which no understanding mind can question, and no man of learning overlook" (KI:143-44):

KI:147:"Therefore, it hath been said: "To seek evidence, when the Proof hath been established is but an unseemly act, and to be busied with the pursuit of knowledge when the Object of all learning hath been attained is truly blameworthy." Say, O people of the earth! Behold this flamelike-Youth that speedeth across the limitless profound of the Spirit, heralding unto you the tidings: 'Lo, the Lamp of God is shining,' and summoning you to heed His Cause which, though hidden beneath the veils of ancient splendour, shineth in the land of 'Iraq above the day-spring of eternal holiness."

This theme was sounded by 'Abdu'l-Baha in a discourse, to the effect that "there are some people who, even if all the proofs in the world be adduced before them, still will not judge justly!" (SAQ:44) The Bab also refers to those who are unwilling or unable to acknowledge the

proofs advanced by the Prophets, stating that "God has said in most of the Manifestations that these signs are for those who have faith and intelligence and not for the great majority of the creatures, who are not in such a state as to understand" (SP:12). The purpose of investigation is to arrive at a determination; the valley of search is the first on the upward journey towards God. Hence the Prophet urges the seeker to remember his goal and not to become enmeshed and detained by the process of investigation itself. This is integral to the investigation of Prophet's claims according to his own standards, his own criteria. He demands that we make a choice, make a decision. As for those who will deny the truth of the claims of the Manifestations of God, his advice is to "Leave them unto themselves, saying: Unto you be that which ye desire and unto us that which we desire." (TB:186) And addressing such persons Baha'u'llah writes: "Say, O people, peruse that which is current amongst you and We will peruse what pertaineth unto Us." (TB:74)

**SIXTH PRINCIPLE:
EITHER RECOGNIZE THIS PROPHET OR DENY
ALL THE PROPHETS**

That seeker who feels comfortable in his religious convictions, in his chosen or inherited faith, who decides that the claims of Baha'u'llah are false or not to his personal taste, let him carefully consider these words:

SW:119:“O thou who art reputed for thy learning! Bid men to do that which is praiseworthy, and be not of such as tarry. Observe thou with a keen eye. The Sun of Truth shineth resplendently, at the bidding of the Lord of the kingdom of utterance, and the King of the heaven of knowledge, above the horizon of the prison-city of 'Akka. Repudiation hath not Veiled it, and ten thousand hosts arrayed against it were powerless to withhold it from shining. Thou canst excuse thyself no longer. Either thou must recognize it, or--God forbid--arise and deny all the Prophets!”

Inasmuch as the reality of all of the Prophets is one, as attested by the various Scriptures with which the investigators are familiar, hence rejection of one Prophet results in denial of all the Prophets. This is clear to all, but the apparent motive of those who deny the claims of one Prophet is to remain faithful to the claims of another Prophet. Baha'u'llah warns his reader that in denying, in not recognizing the

claims of one Prophet he is not remaining faithful to the claims of another Prophet. Elsewhere in his Writings, as we have observed, he explains that Jesus never claimed to be the incarnation or the physical Son of God (let alone to have occupied this distinction uniquely and without parallel in the history of the universe) as this is understood by most professed Christians; nor that Muhammad never claimed to be the literal Seal of the Prophets (let alone to have occupied this distinction uniquely and without parallel in the history of the universe) as this is understood by most professed Muslims. Hence, the finality and superiority claimed for Jesus by Christians and for Muhammad by Muslims which in both cases has rendered their claims for these Prophets incompatible in their own hearts and minds with the appearance of a prophetic successor is declared by Baha'u'llah to be null and void and a product of the human imagination and indeed a most pernicious conviction and blasphemous in the extreme! In his "Lawh-i-Ahmad", Baha'u'llah writes: "Be thou assured in thyself that verily, he who turns away from this Beauty hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity." (BP:212) Indeed, in the same "Lawh" he goes even further, "O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it, O assemblage of false ones." (BP:211) Nor is this teaching entirely original in the Writings of Baha'u'llah. In the Surat al-Nisa we find the following verses:

“Surely, those who disbelieve in God and His Messengers and desire to make a distinction between God and His Messengers, and say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in others,' and desire to pursue a way in between, "These indeed are truly disbelievers, and We have prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers.

"And as for those who believe in God and in His Messengers and make no distinction between any of them, these are they whom He will give their just rewards. And God is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.” (Qur'an 4:150-152)

SEVENTH PRINCIPLE: IF YOU DENY THE PROPHET HOW DO YOU AUTHENTICATE YOUR CONVICTIONS

As we have already encountered, in "Lawh-i-Ahmad", Baha'u'llah challenges whoever may deny the truth of his claims to prove the veracity of his own convictions. This is the Great Reversal (Kitab-i-Aqdas, K157), in which he turns his adversary's argument back upon

him. As the Buddha is supposed to have said: If you spit in the sky it falls in your face. The Bab in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" writes: "everything that I tell you being evident, it is for you to find proof of the opposite" (SP:8). In "Lawh-i-Burhan" Baha'u'llah writes:

TB:206-207: "What proof did the Jewish doctors adduce wherewith to condemn Him Who was the Spirit of God, when He came unto them with truth? what could have been the evidence produced by the Pharisees and the idolatrous priests to justify their denial of Muhammad, the Apostle of God when He came unto them with a Book that judged between truth and falsehood with a justice which turned into light the darkness of the earth, and enraptured the hearts of such as had known Him? Indeed thou hast produced, in this day, the same proofs which the foolish divines advanced in that age. Unto this testifieth He Who is the King of the realm of grace in this great Prison. Thou hast, truly, walked in their ways, nay, hast surpassed them in their cruelty, and hast deemed thyself to be helping the Faith and defending the Law of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. By Him Who is the Truth! Thine iniquity hath made Gabriel hath groan, and hath drawn tears from the Law of God, through which the breezes of justice have been wafted over all who are in heaven and on earth. Hast thou fondly imagined that the judgement thou didst pronounce hath profited thee? Nay, by Him Who is the King of all Names! Unto thy loss testifieth He with Whom is the knowledge of all things as recorded in the preserved Tablet. When thou didst pen thy judgement, thou was accused by thy very pen. Unto this doth bear witness the Pen of God, the Most High, in His inaccessible station.

"O thou who hast gone astray! Thou hast neither seen Me, nor associated with Me, nor been My companion for the fraction of a moment. How is it, then, that thou hast bidden men to curse Me? Didst thou, in this, follow the promptings of thine own desires, or didst thou obey thy Lord? Produce thou a sign, if thou art one of the truthful. We testify that thou hast cast behind thy back the Law of God, and laid hold on the dictates of thy passions. Nothing, in truth, escapeth His knowledge; He, verily, is the Incomparable, the All-Informed. O heedless one! Hearken unto that which the Merciful hath revealed in Qur'an: "Say not to every one who meeteth you with a greeting, "Thou art not a believer." [Qur'an IV:96] Thus hath He decreed in Whose grasp are the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if thou be of them

that hearken. Thou hast set aside the commandment of God, and clung unto the promptings of thine own desire. Woe, then, unto thee, O careless one that doubtest! IF THOU DENIEST ME, BY WHAT PROOF CANST THOU VINDICATE THE TRUTH OF THAT WHICH THOU DOST POSSESS? Produce it, then, O thou who hast joined partners with God, and turned aside from His sovereignty that hath encompassed the worlds!”

After revealing his proofs and prophecies, his answers and arguments, his testimonies and teachings, the Prophet of God has fulfilled his mission, his purpose, his divine calling. As Baha'u'llah wrote in "Lawh-i-Ahmad": "He hath but to deliver this clear message. Whosoever desireth, let him turn aside from this counsel and whosoever desireth let him choose the path to his Lord." (BP:210-11) Affirmation leads to divine exaltation, and negation leads to utter debasement. For he continues: "O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it, O assemblage of false ones. Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another." (BP:211) Once the divine proofs have been revealed, the tables are turned, the Great Reversal is effected, and the burden of proof is now upon each one who rejects the Prophet of God. Baha'u'llah affirms that no matter how much these adversaries of the Prophet may try, they will be utterly unable to justify their rejection of the divine Messenger nor to validate their personal affirmations of belief. For what conclusive proof can there be in support of the convictions of a single person --he does not claim (and he does not manifest) divine inspiration let alone the infallibility which is peculiar to the Prophets, and hence his only justification for believing as he does is that he chooses to do so.

The Bab has deflated that argument in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:11:“And so, if it is without understanding anything that you have embraced your religion, for what have you embraced it?”

SP:15:“If you imagine that man³⁴ can do everything that he wishes, you deceive yourself. This power is in the hands of God. If it had been in the hands of man³⁵ there would not

³⁴Literally, “the slave”.

³⁵Ibid.

have remained a single infidel on the surface of the globe, for the believers all whose hopes would have been realized³⁶ would have believed in him.”

SP:18:“If someone wishes today to embrace the religion of Islam, the divine testimony is it complete for him, yes or no? ...If you say yes, why yes? If it is simply because you affirm this that he believes you, that certainly is not an argument...”

EIGHTH PRINCIPLE: THE PURE IN HEART NEED NO PROOF OF THE PROPHET'S TRUTH

Jesus Christ affirmed this principle in his "Sermon on the Mount": "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Mt:V:8) Every Prophet has explicitly or implicitly affirmed the truth of this principle, as have the stories of saints and the memoirs of mystics. In "Kitab-i-Iqan" Baha'u'llah writes:

KI:91:“It is incumbent upon thee, by the permission of God, to cleanse the eye of thine heart from the things of the world, that thou mayest realize the infinitude of divine knowledge, and mayest behold Truth so clearly that thou wilt need no proof to demonstrate His reality, nor any evidence to bear witness unto His testimony.

“O affectionate seeker! Shouldst thou soar in the holy realm of the spirit, thou wouldst recognize God manifest and exalted above all things, in such wise that thine eyes would behold none else but Him. "God was alone; there was none else besides Him." So lofty is this station that no testimony can bear it witness, neither evidence do justice to its truth. Wert thou to explore the sacred domain of truth, wilt find that all things are known only by the light of His recognition, that He hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, known through Himself.”

KI:255:“The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: "God verily will test

³⁶By Muhammad, Messenger of God.

them and sift them." This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him."

KI:181-82: "Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance be not grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery. For it behooveth no man to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate their truth."

From these passages we see two ways to arrive at truth, both of which are accessible to every human being, and both of which require that each wayfarer purify his heart and mind in preparation for the journey, and that the wayfarer recognize the Prophet God as the true and only intermediary between himself and God. One way to truth is followed whenever the wayfarer turns to the Prophet of God and His divinely appointed interpreters and is directly informed by the revealed Utterances and Writings and their infallibly inspired interpretations, a state referred to in the last of three passages cited above. A second way is that in which the heart and mind of that wayfarer will be directly inspired, knowing truth intuitively, illumined, enlightened through the influence of the Holy Spirit, a state described in two of the three passages cited above. Both ways go beyond the human need of proofs and evidences. One way may be related to prayer, to recitation, to reading of the verses penned by the Prophet of God and hence to attachment to whatsoever has been revealed by God, the Most Manifest of the Manifest. The other way may be allied to meditation, to contemplation, to silence and hence to detachment from all things save God, the Most Hidden of the Hidden. While the path of prayer is known to many, characterized as the path of outward observance, the path of emotional commitment, perhaps akin to bhakti and karma yoga (as described in "Bhagavad-Gita"), the path of meditation is known to few, and is characterized as the path of inward illumination, perhaps akin to samkhya and jnana yoga (Ibid.).

Both of these spiritual paths go beyond proofs and evidences. The methodology of the first path is prescribed in the revealed Texts themselves, which require that they be intoned, recited, that the reader

cantor purify his heart and mind prior to commencing his recital, and that there be pauses both at will and when commanded in the Text for meditation (hence the second path is folded into the first and indeed they are complementary like men and women, science and religion); it is further stipulated that the Text be studied in the context of the totality of the Prophet's Writings and of the infallibly inspired interpretative works. The methodology of the second path is also prescribed in the revealed Texts, and it consists of meditation upon spiritual questions, upon the divine source of realities, upon the chosen ones and the Messengers, and upon the teachings, the words and such other symbols as have been revealed by the Prophet.

PART FOUR

THE PATH OF ILLUMINATION

Inasmuch as the path of meditation, of illumination, of intuitive knowledge is not the path of the masses, and is unfamiliar to most religionists both of the East and of the West; and inasmuch as Western religionists in particular are confused regarding the reality and significance of contemplation as part of a spiritual path, having been taught entirely different conceptions and techniques of this discipline by Catholics (Jesuits, Cistercians and other priestly and monastic orders), by Zen and Tibetan Buddhists, by Sufis, by Hindu yogis (swamis, rishis and other so-called holy men) and by Native American shamans (medicine men and women) not to speak of the various esoteric societies such as Anthroposophists, Theosophists, Spiritualists and Subudists, and not knowing which teachers and traditions to trust and to follow: it will be helpful for many readers to become acquainted with the teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha on meditation.

‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke of the path of illumination:

“The philosophers of the world are divided into two classes: materialists, who deny the spirit and its immortality, and the divine philosophers, the wise men of God, the true ILLUMINATI who believe in the spirit and its continuance hereafter.” (PUP:240)

“In the estimation of the philosophers of the Orient, especially those of Greece and Persia, the standard of judgment is the intellect. They are of the opinion that the standard of the senses is defective, and their proof is that the senses are often deceived and mistaken. That which is liable to mistake cannot be infallible, cannot be a true standard of judgment...” (PUP:356)

“The philosophers of the East consider the perfect criterion to be reason or intellect, and according to that standard the realities of all objects can be proved; for, they say, the standard of reason and intellect is perfect, and everything provable through reason is verifiable. Therefore, those philosophers consider all philosophical deductions to be correct when weighed according to the standard of reason, and they state that the senses are the assistants and instruments of reason, and that although the investigation of realities may be conducted through the senses, the standard of knowing and judgment is reason itself. In this way the philosophers of the East and West

differ and disagree. The materialistic philosophers of the West declare that man belongs to the animal kingdom, whereas the philosophers of the East--such as Plato, Aristotle and the Persians--divide the world of existence or phenomena or life into two general categories or kingdoms: one the animal kingdom, or world of nature, the other the human kingdom, or world of reason." (PUP:356-57)

"The philosophers of Greece--such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and others--were devoted to the investigation of both natural and spiritual phenomena. In their schools they discoursed upon the world of nature as well as the supernatural world. Today the philosophy and logic of Aristotle are known throughout the world. Because they were interested in both natural and divine philosophy, furthering the development of the physical world of mankind as well as the intellectual, they rendered praiseworthy service to humanity." (PUP:327)

It is evident from the above-cited passages that 'Abdu'l-Baha in referring to Western philosophers was considering those academic philosophers and scientists who were thoroughly secular and either atheistic or agnostic in their world-views and whose views dominated intellectual life in the early twentieth century. It is also clear that the Greek philosophers referred to were among the ancients, in particular Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, but also Hippocrates (PUP:406; TB:146), Empedocles (TB:145), Pythagoras (TB:145) and "many other Greek philosophers" (PUP:406). The Persian philosophers which are referred to are not identified in any writings available to the presenter. However, some tentative identifications may be attempted based upon historical probabilities.

In Persia (Iran) there is a school of philosophy which bears the name "Hikma al-Ilahiyya"(Arabic original) or "Hikmat-i Ilahi"(Persianized form of Arabic), which, when translated into English reads "Wisdom, philosophy" (Weir:196) "divine, of God" (Weir:24). The antecedents for this "divine philosophy" have been identified by scholars in the writings of Aristotle, the neo-Platonists, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Al-Farabi and in certain Zoroastrian writings. Also influences are alleged to have included the "kalam", the philosophical study of religion by such Shi'i Muslims as Khwaja Nasiru'd-Din Tusi and the Mu'tazili school, and by such Sunni Muslims as Al-Ghazali, Fakhru'd-Din Razi and Sa'du'd-Din Taftazani among the Ash'ari school. There was also, according to scholars, some material originating in the writings of the Islamic mystics Muhyu'd-Din Muhammad Ibn al-'Arabi (1165-1240), Jalalu'd-Din Rumi (1207-1273) and 'Abdu'r-Rahman Jami (d.1492).

Also, "Hikmat-i Ilahi" is understood as a harmonization of material from three sources: the first being of course the revealed and transmitted Islamic materials, the Qur'an and the hadith; the second comprising the schools of "kalam", the rational study of religion; and the third representing intuitive spiritual illumination, called "irfan".

The single most important Persian founder of this school was undoubtedly Shihabu'd-Din Yahya Suhrawardi (d.1191), known as Shaykhu'l-Ishraq after his magnum opus entitled "Hikmat al-Ishraq", which means in English "Wisdom/philosophy of Illumination". The celebrated historian of Islam, Marshall Hodgson writes about Suhrawardi: "The great book Hikmat al-Ishraq (The Wisdom of Illumination) of Yahya Suhrawardi, for instance, is markedly unified by its prevailing Sufi themes, the exclusive reality of the Light and the crucial character of the soul's ascent in the Light." (Hodgson:II:237) Suhrawardi was "called Shaykh al-Ishraq, master of Illumination" (Ibid:232), and his followers were called Ishraqis, which in Latin would be written Illuminati. Shaykh al-Ishraq and the Ishraqis dwelled upon "the exclusive reality of the Light and the crucial character of the soul's ascent in the Light." (Ibid:237) Suhrawardi claimed that he did not arrive at this philosophy merely from the study of earlier thinkers, although he certainly "claimed that the wisdom he was presenting was nothing but a restatement...of the unitive wisdom of ancient ages..." (Ibid:235) According to Hodgson, Suhrawardi claimed that in the presentation of philosophia perennis he was "guided by mystical inspiration" (Ibid:235).

After Suhrawardi, the next important philosopher of this school is identified as Sa'inu'd-Din Ibn Turka Isfahani (d.1431), and a Sufi who had influence on the development of the school was the founder of the Nurbakhshi tariqah named 'Ala'u'd-Din Sayyid Muhammad Narbakhsh (d.1464), both of whom appeared some two hundred and fifty years later. He seems to be followed in turn by a whole collection of philosophers most of whom lived, wrote and taught philosophy in the city of Isfahan, who followed Sa'inu'd-Din after another two hundred years had passed, including Sayyid Haydar Amuli, Ibn Abi Jumhur, Muhammad Baqir Astarabadi (d.1631), Abu'l-Qasim Astarabadi (d.1640), Mulla Muhammad Taqi Majlisi (d.1659), Mulla 'Abdu'r-Razzaq Lahiji (d.1661), Mulla Rajab 'Ali Tabrizi (d.1669), Mulla Muhammad Baqir Sabzivari (d.1679), Mulla Muhsin-i Fayd Kashani (d.1680), Qadi Sa'id Qummi (d.1691), Mulla Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (n.d.), and its most famous member, the philosopher, poet and mystic named Sadru'd-Din Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Shirazi and known as Mulla Sadra (d.1640). More recent exponents of this

school were Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (d.1824), Sayyid Kazim Rashti (d.1844), Mulla Hadi Sabzivari (d.1878) and the school has been continued into the twentieth century by 'Allama Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Sayyid Jalal'u-Din Ashtiyani and Sayyid Husayn Nasr, as well as the French scholar Henri Corbin.

To which of these Persian philosophers could 'Abdu'l-Baha have been making reference? Inasmuch as Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i and Sayyid Kazim Rashti are highly honored in the Writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, it is reasonable to conclude that 'Abdu'l-Baha may have been making reference to them among others; as they are depicted as forerunners of the Bab's prophetic announcement, it is likely that they represent the strongest link between "Hikmat-i Ilahi" and the Babi and subsequently the Baha'i Revelations. The Persian philosophers whose views are described could have included Mulla Sadra and the Isfahani school of the seventeenth century, and might have gone back as far as Suhrawardi himself. There is a clue which may solve this riddle. The "divine philosophers" who are identified as "the true Illuminati", and hence are easily recognized by name in the "Hikmat-i Ilahi" [divine philosophy] school of philosophy and the particular following of Shaykh Ishraq who authored "Hikmat al-Ishraq" [Wisdom of Illumination].

On 12 January 1913, 'Abdu'l-Baha gave a lecture at the Friends' Meeting House in London which was translated, transcribed and subsequently published, first in "The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Baha" and then in "Paris Talks" (pp. 173-76). The published version of this talk³⁷ currently in print begins:

“About one thousand years ago a society was formed in Persia called the Society of the Friends, who gathered together for silent communion with the Almighty. They divided divine philosophy into two parts: one kind is that of which the knowledge can be acquired through lectures and study in schools and colleges. The second kind of philosophy was that of the Illuminati, or followers of the inner light. The schools of this philosophy were held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, from that central Light the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected in the hearts of these people. All the divine problems were solved by this power of illumination.”

The opening lines of that discourse were corrected in a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

³⁷'Abdu'l-Baha, "Paris Talks", pp. 173-76.

“From a Tablet by Abdul-Baha to Ella G. Cooper, San Francisco. Translated and mailed from Haifa, Syria, March 19, 1916.

“Question: In the copies of the talk given by Abdul-Baha to the Society of Friends in London, there seems to be a discrepancy in the time of the opening line. In some it reads, "About six thousand years ago," in others "six hundred years," and in others "sixty years." If the Society referred to signifies the Bahai Movement, would not sixty years be the correct number?

“Answer: This talk opens with the words, 'About six hundred years ago.' This Society was founded in the city of Hamadan six hundred years ago and has nothing to do with this movement. It is almost disbanded, but under different names and forms one may come across them in Persia. They were called the Society of Sokoutyoun, that is, the 'Silent Ones.’” (SW:VIII:14,204)

One thousand years preceding 1913 CE would be the year 913 CE, and, as we have seen, "Hikmat-i-ilahi" was not founded before the twelfth century, two hundred and fifty years later, in the works of Suhrawardi (d.1191). Six hundred years preceding 1913 CE would come to 1313 CE, and while this date appears to be problematic inasmuch as Suhrawardi died over one hundred and twenty years earlier, and subsequent "Ishraqi" philosophers Sa'nu'd-Din (d.1431) and Nurbakhshi (d.1464) did not appear for another century, we have a clue in the name of this Society, a clue which may permit us to make a positive identification. In 1318 CE was born Baha'u'd-Din in Bukhara, and he was known as Naqshband. He came into contact with the Khwajagan (Masters) and was adopted by one of them, Baba Muhammad Sammasi, while still very young. He was brought up in the mystical brotherhood led by his foster father and subsequently by Amir Kulal, his successor. At some point he learned of and began to practice the silent dhikr advocated by 'Abdu'l-Khaliq Gajadwani, one of the Khwajagan who died in 1220 CE. His practice of silent dhikr impelled him eventually to establish his own brotherhood, called the Naqshbandiyyih. Now, the Naqshbandiyyih could be the Silent Ones to whom 'Abdu'l-Baha referred, but they were not founded in Hamadan...they were founded in Bukhara.

Another possibility is that the Silent Ones is a reference to the Isma'ilis, inasmuch as the Imam of the Isma'ilis is called "samit" (silent one), and because of the practice of silent meditation, called dhikr-i-khafi (concealed dhikr) in their community center, called jamat khana. However, the Isma'ilis, like the Naqshbandiyyih were not founded in Hamadan, and neither were they established in the 14th century CE. It appears then that there was a mystical brotherhood located in

Hamadan circa 1313 CE which practiced silence. While no such brotherhood has been identified by the present author, he has discovered that one of the early authors of the Kabbalist tradition, which may be regarded as one of the principal contributors to all mystical culture in the medieval Middle East was Joseph of Hamadan, who lived during the 14th century. There may well have been Isma'ilis, Naqshbandis and Kabbalists in Hamada circa 1313 CE, but we cannot be sure which group is referred to by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Inasmuch as the present author has found only one description of collective silent meditation by 'Abdu'l-Baha, it is cited here in its entirety, along with periodic annotations:

"About one thousand [six hundred] years ago a society was formed in Persia [Hamadan] called the Society of the Friends [Sokoutyoun (Silent Ones): "it is almost disbanded, but under different names and forms one may come across them in Persia"], who gathered together for silent communion with the Almighty.

"They divided Divine philosophy into two parts: one kind is that of which the knowledge can be acquired through lectures and study in schools and colleges."

This Society then acquired both parts of divine philosophy, of "Hikmat-i Ilahi", including the first part which can be studied, learned from books and lectures, and which must comprise those philosophical teachings of the divine philosophers of Persia to which reference has earlier been made. At the time it was apparently established, circa 700 Hijra/1300 CE, this Society could have studied the teachings of the masters of Merkavah mystical tradition, the writings of the philosopher Abu Nasr al-Farabi (d.950), of the philosopher and scientist Abu 'Ali Ibn Sina (d.1037)--known in the West as Avicenna--of the theosophist Shihabu'd-Din Yahya Suhrawardi (d.1191) and of the mystical genius Muhyi'd-Din Ibn al-'Arabi (d.1240). Two centuries later it could have also studied the writings of Sa'inu'd-Din Ibn Turka Isfahani (d.1432) and 'Ala'u'd-Din Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh (d.1464), and two centuries after that the mystical, theological and philosophical works of the Isfahani school of "Hikmat-i Ilahi", whose prominent members included Mulla Sadra (d.1640). A final two centuries afterwards, such a Society could have studied the voluminous literary works of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (d.1824) and his successor, Sayyid Kazim Rashti (d.1844).

We will now make a digression in order to explore the nature of divine philosophy, which appears to be mysterious and difficult to identify. In the "Bhagavad Gita" in the fourth chapter there is a description of

"jnana yoga", also denominated "yogam proktavan" (imperishable yoga) and "yogah puratanah" (ancient yoga). The Hindu philosopher Radhakrishnan writes the following with reference to "yogah puratanah": "The teacher declares that he is not stating any new doctrine but is only restoring the old tradition, the eternal verity, handed down from master to pupil. The teaching is a renewal, a rediscovery, a restoration of knowledge long forgotten...The great teachers do not lay claim to originality but affirm that they are expounding the ancient truth which is the final norm by which all teachings are judged, the eternal source of all religions and philosophies, the philosophia perennis, the sanatana dharma, what Augustine calls the 'wisdom that was not made; but is at this present, as it hath ever been and so shall ever be.'2" [2 Confessions, IX,10] (BG:152) While Radhakrishnan translates "jnana" (of "jnana yoga") once as "knowledge" (BG:IV:title,33), once as "divine knowledge" (BG:IV:conclusion), in all other cases the equivalent he gives is "wisdom" (BG:IV:34,36,37,38,39,41,42).

According to Marshall Hodgson, "Suhrawardi claimed that the wisdom he was presenting was nothing but a restatement, guided by mystical inspiration, of the unitive wisdom of ancient ages, which had been obscured by the Faylasufs [philosophers] since Aristotle...He avowed himself a reviver of Plato as against Aristotle...and both the Platonic and esoteric Iranian traditions he traced back to the Hermes of the Hermetic corpus..." (Hodgson:II:235) Hence, in Islamic tradition here was one who believed in a philosophia perennis, and who recognized a lineage of esoteric wisdom accessible to him in the extant writings attributed to Greek sages and Persian mages. "For Suhrawardi, Falsafah, even in its metaphysics, must be taken seriously; it was indeed a preparatory discipline of the soul, as the Faylasufs had claimed, and not a merely useful set of natural sciences as Ghazali had presented it. But it prepared for something utterly beyond its own intellectual reach--for the unitive insights that mystical experience made possible.

On the other hand, mystical experience without the underpinning of the metaphysical understanding offered by Falsafah could lead the speculative mystic sadly astray. Such an attitude toward Falsafah was to characterize permanently the 'Ishraqi' school of mystical philosophers who were to build on Suhrawardi's foundations." (Ibid:237) He continues to cite the origins of philosophy according to Ibn al-'Arabi: "Ibn al-'Arabi had a very wide personal culture...It is typical that he took up the common notion that Falsafah [philosophical] studies had originated with the Hermes of the Greek

Hermetic corpus (identified with the Biblical patriarch Enoch--whom Muslims knew as the prophet Idris)..."³⁸

The identification of "Hikmat-i Ilahi" with *philosophia perennis* is implicit in many of the talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha, as well as explicit in this citation from "Lawh-i-Hikmat" of Baha'u'llah: "Although it is recognized that the contemporary men of learning are highly qualified in philosophy, arts and crafts, yet were anyone to observe with a discriminating eye he would readily comprehend that most of this knowledge hath been acquired from the sages of the past, for it is they who have laid the foundation of philosophy, reared its structure and reinforced its pillars. Thus doth thy Lord, the Ancient of Days, inform thee. The sages aforetime acquired their knowledge from the Prophets, inasmuch as the latter were the Exponents of divine philosophy ["hikmat-i ilahi"] and the Revealers of heavenly mysteries...The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets. That the people differ concerning the inner meanings and mysteries thereof is to be attributed to the divergence of their views and minds." (TB:144-45) In a footnote to this same "Lawh" it is stated: "In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah wrote: "The first person who devoted himself to philosophy was Idris. Thus was he named. Some called him also Hermes. In every tongue he hath a special name. He is is who hath set forth in every branch of philosophy thorough and convincing arguments. After him Balinus derived his knowledge and sciences from the Hermetic Tablets and most of the philosophers who followed him made their philosophical and scientific discoveries from his words and statements..." (TB:148)

The Society described in this discourse was thus occupied with studying *philosophia perennis* which they called "Hikmat-i Ilahi", divine philosophy, or, the wisdom of God. Their understanding of divine philosophy harmonizes with this verse, revealed in Baha'u'llah's "Lawh-i Hikmat": "Say: The beginning of Wisdom and the origin thereof is to acknowledge whatsoever God hath clearly set forth..." (TB:151) and this quote from "Lawh-i-Jam'a Aza Haba" also written by Baha'u'llah: "The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God, and the end of all things is strict observance of whatsoever hath been sent down from the empyrean of the Divine Will that pervadeth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth." (GL:5) Having established then that the subject of study in the schools and colleges of the Society of Silent Ones was *philosophia perennis*, we proceed with the text of the discourse.

³⁸Ibid., p. 239.

“The second kind of philosophy was that of the Illuminati, or followers of the inner light. The schools of this philosophy were held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, from that central Light the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected in the hearts of these people. All the Divine problems were solved by this power of illumination.

“This Society of Friends [Silent Ones] increased greatly in Persia, and up to the present time their societies exist. Many books and epistles were written by their leaders. When they assemble in their meeting-house they sit silently and contemplate; their leader opens with a certain proposition, and says to the assembly ‘You must meditate on this problem’. Then, freeing their minds from everything else, they sit and reflect, and before long the answer is revealed to them. Many abstruse divine questions are solved by this illumination.”

We have attempted to identify this Society of Friends (Silent Ones), and have referred to their practice of silent dhikr. Now we will digress again to consider the meanings of dhikr in Islamic context. In preparing the section that follows, the author has relied almost exclusively upon the website called www.cometoislam.com, which is associated with ‘Abdu’l-Hakim and Shawqat Amin.

Dhikr, meaning “remembrance”, has at least in fifteen different meanings and contexts in the Qur’an. Dhikr is enjoined categorically by the Qur’an without its form being stipulated. It is a positive requirement of every believer to perform dhikr, in addition to obligatory prayer (salat) and giving alms (Zakat):

4:103:“When you have performed Salat, remember God, standing, sitting and reclining. And when you are in safety observe proper worship verily the Salat is prescribed to the believers at definite times.”

24:37:“Men whom neither trade nor sale diverts from God’s remembrance nor from performing Salat, nor from giving the Zakat. They fear a Day when (subtle) hearts and eyes will be overturned.”

29:45:“Recite you what has been Revealed to you of the Book and establish you the Salat; verily Salat forbids indecency and dishonor. And the remembrance of God is the greatest. And God knows what you perform.”

62:10:“And when Salat is ended then disperse in the land and seek of God’s bounty and **remember** God much.”

The Qur'an also enjoins frequent practice of dhikr:

8:45: "O you who believe! When you meet any army hold firm and remember God much so that you may be successful."

33:21: "Assuredly, there has been an excellent pattern, for you in the Messenger of God, for him who hopes in God and the Last Day and remembers God much."

33:35: "... And the men and the women who remember God much, God has promised them forgiveness and a great reward."

33:41-42: "O you who believe! Remember God with much remembrance."

62:10: "And when Salat is ended then disperse in the land and seek of God's bounty and remember God much."

The Qur'an promises rewards to those who practice dhikr:

2:152: "Therefore, remember Me, I will remember you..."

13:28: "They are those who believe and whose (subtle) heart finds comfort in the remembrance of God. Lo! In the remembrance of God do (subtle) hearts find comfort."

33:35: "... And the men and the women who remember God much, God has promised them forgiveness and a great reward."

As for those who do not practice dhikr, the Qur'an promises punishment:

43:36: "And he who loses sight of or shuns dhikr, We assign to him a devil who becomes his (constant) companion."

58:19: "The devil has engrossed them to forget dhikr. They are the devil's party."

According to Islamic tradition, there are three kinds of dhikr that the believer must perform: practical remembrance, called "dhikr-i-f'ili"; vocal remembrance, called "dhikr-i-lisani" and "dhikr-i-jali"; and silent

remembrance, called “dhikr-i-khalfi” or “dhikr-i-qalbi”. The latter is commended in the Qur’an in a particular verse:

7:205:“And do you remember your Lord within yourself, with humility and awe, below your breath, at morn and evening. And do not be of the neglectful.”

According to some hadith, Muhammad regarded dhikr as superior in spiritual merit to worship:

“Abu Sa’id Khudri...records his conversation with the Holy Prophet...: “I asked him what type of worship would be held in the highest esteem on the Day of judgement?” He replied. “Those who constantly remember Allah will be the most esteemed ones.” I sought a clarification whether they would also surpass the one who strives in the way of Allah. He replied: “If the said striver wields his sword against infidels till it breaks and is himself besmeared with blood, even then those who remember Allah would surpass him.”

“Hadrat Abu Dardah...quotes the Holy Prophet...: “Should I not inform you of the most virtuous deed, far superior and rewarding, which shall raise you highest in His esteem, is better than spending gold and silver in His Cause, and is also preferable to waging war against infidels ...” The Companions...replied that they would be honored to know it. The Holy Prophet...is reported to have said: “Dhikr is by far the best deed.”

“The Holy Prophet...once addressed his Companions...: “I command you to constantly remember God. It will provide you protection like a fortress to a fugitive pursued by a fast moving enemy. Likewise, dhikr is the only effective refuge against the onslaughts of the devil.”

Let us now return to our principal subject, and consider the nature of the process that took place in the meetings of the Society of Friends:

“The schools of this philosophy were held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, from that central Light the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected in the hearts of these people. All the Divine problems were solved by this power of illumination.

“This Society of Friends [Silent Ones] increased greatly in Persia, and up to the present time their societies exist. Many books and epistles were written by their leaders. When they assemble in their meeting-house they sit silently and contemplate; their leader opens with a certain proposition, and says to the assembly ‘You must meditate on this problem’. Then, freeing their minds from everything else, they sit and reflect, and before long the answer is revealed to them. Many

abstruse divine questions are solved by this illumination."

What is described in the this account does not appear to be silent dhikr, at least not as it is depicted in the Qur'an and hadith, as its practice has been reported by Muslims and in association with mystical brotherhoods. What the Society of Friends were doing in silence was accessing knowledge intuitively, and problem solving. This process has something in common with two Baha'i institutions, the consultative portion of the nineteen day feast and the deliberations of the Spiritual Assembly. While of course the outwards differences between the two processes will be more readily observed, nevertheless the moment in which the individual arrives at a decision or a realization of the path to pursue is a moment which is silent, which is contemplative, and this moment is the very essence of the consultative process. "If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion arise, a majority of voices must prevail." (Abdu'l-Baha in "Baha'i Administration", pp. 21-22) "And, when they are called upon to arrive at a certain decision, they should, after dispassionate, anxious and cordial consultation, turn to God in prayer, and with earnestness and conviction and courage record their vote and abide by the voice of truth, never to be challenged, and always to be wholeheartedly enforced. To this voice the Friends must heartily respond, and regard it as the only means that can ensure the protection and advancement of the Cause." (Shoghi Effendi in "Baha'i Administration", pp. 63-64)

"Baha'u'llah has given the promise that in every Assembly where unity and harmony prevail, there His glorious spirit will not only be present, but will animate, sustain and guide all the friends in all their deliberations." (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Evanston and Wilmette Spiritual Assemblies, 17 November 1933: quoted in Ellen Hornby, "Lights of Guidance", p. 45) The manner by which this unity is arrived at from the diversity of human viewpoints and conceptions is called consultation. In the third Ishraq of "Ishraqat", Baha'u'llah writes: "The heaven of divine wisdom [Hikmat-i-Ilahi] is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion..." (TB:126) Baha'u'llah even calls the Tablet in which this guidance is revealed "Ishraqat", Illuminations! He even identifies this "Ishraq", Illumination, with "Hikmat-i Ilahi", divine philosophy! And both consultation and compassion are depicted in the language of light--illumination and luminosity! It is this unified decision-making, which, following discussion, is arrived at through silent contemplation and then expression of one's inward conviction which represents a decision arrived at in one's heart and according to one's inward voice

and not through the pressure of outside influences, this coming from multiplicity and arriving at unity which is so similar to the *modus apparendus* of the meditative assemblies of the Silent Ones. However, the group meditations of the Silent Ones are even more similar to the processes whereby the Society of Friends collectively memorialize and practice the presence of the divine, and further comparisons between Quakers, Isma'ilis and Naqshbandiyyih are in order.

“Some of the great questions unfolding from the rays of the Sun of Reality upon the mind of man are: the problem of the reality of the spirit of man; of the birth of the spirit; of its birth from this world into the world of God; the question of the inner life of the spirit and of its fate after its ascension from the body.”

In this discourse 'Abdu'l-Baha identifies the inspirations, the illuminations of these Silent Ones with the spiritual influence of the Prophet of God, referred to here as "the rays of the Sun of Reality". In many other discourses such inspiration is referred to, as here for example: "These obvious arguments are adduced for weak souls; but if the inner perception be open, a hundred thousand clear proofs become visible. Thus, when man feels the indwelling spirit, he is in no need of arguments for its existence; but for those who are deprived of the bounty of the spirit, it is necessary to establish external arguments." (SAQ:7) "It is then ascertained and proved that the Holy Manifestations are the centre of the bounty, signs, and perfections of God. Blessed are those who receive the light of the divine bounties from the enlightened Dawning-points! We hope that the Friends of God, like an attractive force, will draw these bounties from the source itself, and that they will arise with such illumination and signs that they will be evident proofs of the Sun of Reality." (SAQ:258) "This is a rational proof which we are giving, so that the wise may weigh it in the balance of reason and justice. But if the human spirit will rejoice and be attracted to the Kingdom of God, if the inner sight becomes opened, and the spiritual hearing strengthened, and the spiritual feelings predominant, he will see the immortality of the spirit as clearly as he sees the sun, and the glad tidings and signs of God will encompass him." (SAQ:262) "But the bounty of the Holy Spirit gives the true method of comprehension which is infallible and indubitable. This is through the help of the Holy Spirit which comes to man, and this is the condition in which certainty can alone be attained." (SAQ:343) Clearly, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit referred to here is identical to the illumination by which the Society of the Silent Ones solved divine problems and scientific questions:

“All the Divine problems were solved by this power of illumination...Many abstruse divine questions are solved by this illumination...They also meditate upon the scientific questions of the day, and these are likewise solved.”

The specific questions which have been "solved by this illumination" (PT:173) are, all of them, discussed by 'Abdu'l-Baha in many discourses which are the major sources for this entire study. Indeed, the predominant subject matter of the discourses published in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace", "Paris Talks", "Some Answered Questions" and "Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy" are topics such as these, topics in divine philosophy and among "the scientific questions of the day" (PT:174). 'Abdu'l-Baha thus identifies himself directly with this Society of Silent Ones, with the Illuminati (Ishraqis), with philosophia perennis.

“These people, who are called 'Followers of the inner light', attain to a superlative degree of power, and are entirely freed from blind dogmas and imitations. Men rely on the statements of these people: by themselves--within themselves--they solve all mysteries.”

Inasmuch as Shaykh al-Ishraq and his followers the Ishraqis were concerned with "the exclusive reality of the Light and the crucial character of the soul's ascent in the Light" (Hodgson:II:237), it is reasonable to conclude that the 'Followers of the inner light' referred to are related to this school of philosophy, the "Hikmat-i Ilahi". However, this following is not restricted to time or place. Baha'u'llah, in "Kitab-i-Iqan" writes in reference to the convictions of certain Muslim mystics (probably Sufis) regarding "attainment unto the divine Presence" and "Universal Revelation": "Nay, were man to gaze with the eye of divine and spiritual discernment, he will readily recognize that nothing whatsoever can exist without the revelation of the splendour of God, the ideal King. Consider how all created things eloquently testify to the revelation of that inner Light within them." (KI:140)

The "superlative degree of power" to which these 'Followers of the inner light' attain is evidently a spiritual power, inasmuch as the text does not extol their earthly capacities but rather identifies (1) their power to inspire confidence--"Men rely on the statements of these people"; and (2) their power to arrive at independent judgments—"by themselves, within themselves"; their power to unveil realities and to solve problems--"they solve all mysteries". A vast number of quotations could be summoned to identify each one of these powers as mandated by the Prophets and enjoined also by the divine

philosophers. "Verily, mind is the supreme gift of God. Verily, intellect is the effulgence of God. This is manifest and self-evident." (PUP:351) "Science is the first emanation from God toward man. All created beings embody the potentiality of material perfection, but the power of intellectual investigation and scientific acquisition is a higher virtue specialized to man alone. Other beings and organisms are deprived of this potentiality and attainment. God has created or deposited this love of reality in man." (PUP:49) The power of this intellectual endowment conferred upon man to "solve all mysteries" is applied both to divine and material questions in many of the discourses of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The value of being "freed from blind dogmas and imitations" is a theme that is found in many of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah, including "Kitab-i-Iqan", and is clearly stated in "Haft Vadi" as follows: "It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart--which is the wellspring of divine treasures--from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires..." (SV:5) 'Abdu'l-Baha described the fundamental principles and teachings of Baha'u'llah in numerous talks and letters, and the principle which was ranked on the average in fifth place was this--the abandonment, abolition, banishment and removal of all prejudices, whether religious, denominational, racial, political, patriotic, economic or gender-specific. This principle is often allied by 'Abdu'l-Baha with that teaching which was ranked in first place in almost two thirds of the references studied and in second place in another fifth of those references--the independent investigation of reality/search for truth.

The Silent Ones "solve all mysteries"—'Abdu'l-Baha explains which mysteries they solve, through the power of the intellectual faculty. He enumerates first the divine mysteries which are "discovered": "All the texts and teachings of the holy Testaments have intrinsic spiritual meanings. They are not to be taken literally. I, therefore, pray in your behalf that you may be given the POWER of understanding these inner real meanings of the Holy Scriptures and may become informed of the mysteries deposited in the words of the Bible so that you may attain eternal life and that your hearts may be attracted to the Kingdom of God. May your souls be illumined by the light of the Words of God, and may you become repositories of the mysteries of God, for no comfort is greater and no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings...I pray that you may be quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit and illumined by the rays of the Sun of Truth. May you be favored with heavenly blessings in the threshold of God and attain to eternal life. This is my prayer.

May God bless and enlighten you." (PUP:459-60) As to solving scientific questions of the day: "In brief, all the present arts and sciences, inventions and discoveries man has brought forth were once mysteries which nature had decreed should remain hidden and latent, but man has taken them out of the plane of the invisible and brought them into the plane of the visible. This is contrary to nature's laws. Electricity should be a latent mystery, but man discovers it and makes it his servant. He wrests the sword from nature's hand and uses it against nature, proving that there is a power in him which is beyond nature, for it is capable of breaking and subduing the laws of nature. If this power is not supernatural and extraordinary, man's accomplishments would not have been possible." (PUP:360)

"If they find a solution with the assistance of the inner light, they accept it, and afterwards they declare it: otherwise they consider it a matter of blind imitation. They go so far as to reflect upon the essential nature of the Divinity, of the Divine revelation, of the manifestation of the Deity in this world. All the divine and scientific questions are solved by them through the power of the spirit."

This manner of arriving at solutions to questions is completely independent of outside influence and interference, of worldly and acquired learning. "Divinity is not what is set forth in dogmas and sermons of the church. Ordinarily when the word Divinity is mentioned, it is associated in the minds of the hearers with certain formulas and doctrines, whereas it essentially means the wisdom and knowledge of God, the effulgence of the Sun of Truth, the revelation of reality and divine philosophy." (PUP:326) "In the same proportion that the body of man is developing, the spirit of man must be strengthened; and just as his outer perceptions have been quickened, his inner intellectual powers must be sensitized so that he need not rely wholly upon tradition and human precedent. In divine questions we must not depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith attained. Then and then only the reality of things will be revealed to us." (PUP:327)

"Baha'u'llah says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time—he cannot both speak and meditate."

One of the sources for Baha'u'llah's teaching of the "sign (from God) in every phenomenon" is "Lawh-i-Hadi": "From the exalted source,

and out of the essence of His favor and bounty He hath entrusted every created thing with a sign of His knowledge, so that none of His creatures may be deprived of its share in expressing, each according to its capacity and rank, this knowledge. This sign is the mirror of His beauty in the world of creation." (GL:262) One of the sources for this call to silence is "Kitab-i-Iqan": "He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endure a century." (KI:193)

"It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed."

This reference to the inner spiritual knowledge which is revealed when "the light breaks forth", recalls Shaykh al-Ishraq once again, and his "Hikmat al-Ishraq" on the themes of "the exclusive reality of the Light and the crucial character of the soul's ascent in the Light." (Hodgson:II:237)

"You cannot apply the name "man" to any being void of this faculty of meditation; without it he would be a mere animal, lower than the beasts."

First of all, the ontological dimension of this statement is reaffirmed: "The animal is bereft of ideality--that is to say, it is a captive of the world of nature and not in touch with that which lives within and beyond nature; it is without spiritual susceptibilities, deprived of the attractions of consciousness, unconscious of the world of God and incapable of deviating from the law of nature...The animal can only know through sense impressions and cannot grasp intellectual realities. The animal cannot conceive of the power of thought. This is an abstract intellectual matter and not limited to the senses. The animal is incapable of knowing that the earth is round. In brief, abstract intellectual phenomena are human powers." (PUP:241)

Secondly, the moral dimension is noted: "Know verily that Knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Satanic. The one welletth out from the fountain of divine inspiration; the other is but a reflection of vain and obscure thoughts. The source of the former is God Himself; the motive-force of the latter the whisperings of selfish desire." So

writes Baha'u'llah in "Kitab-i-Iqan". (KI:69) On the same theme 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke: "But the spirit of man has two aspects: one divine, one satanic; that is to say, it is capable of the utmost perfection, or it is capable of the utmost imperfection. If it acquires virtues it is the most noble of the existing beings, and if it acquires vices it becomes the most degraded existence." (SAQ:165) "If man himself is left in his natural state, he will become lower than the animal and will continue to grow more ignorant and imperfect." (PUP:309) "If man does not become the recipient of the heavenly bestowals and spiritual bounties, he remains in the plane and kingdom of the animal." (PUP:316-17)

"Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit--the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation."

"One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" is a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad and hence part of the Islamic corpus which comprised the major source of outward spiritual guidance for the Muslim Silent Ones. It is cited by Baha'u'llah in "Kitab-i-Iqan" (p. 238), and in the following context (pp. 238-239): "Among them is the tradition, "And when the Standard of Truth is made manifest, the people of both the East and the West curse it." The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words "One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest. To this truth the above-mentioned tradition beareth witness. It is evident that the reason for such behaviour is none other than the annulment of those rules, customs, habits, and ceremonials to which they have been subjected. Otherwise, were the Beauty of the Merciful to comply with those same rules and customs, which are current amongst the people, and were He to sanction their observances, such conflict and mischief would in no wise be made manifest in the world. This exalted tradition is attested and substantiated by these words which He hath revealed: "The day when the Summoner shall summon to a stern business." [Qur'án 54:6]

'Abdu'l-Baha's words related to this subject have already been cited copiously, but these passages seemed to be particularly appropriate to quote: "God has created man after His own image and likeness. He

has endowed him with a mighty power which is capable of discovering the mysteries of phenomena. Through its use man is able to arrive at ideal conclusions instead of being restricted to the mere plane of sense impressions. As he possesses sense endowment in common with the animals, it is evident that he is distinguished above them by his conscious power of penetrating abstract realities. He acquires divine wisdom; he searches out the mysteries of creation; he witnesses the radiance of omnipotence; he attains the second birth--that is to say, he is born out of the material world just as he is born of the mother; he attains to everlasting life; he draws nearer to God; his heart is replete with the love of God...You must endeavor to understand the mysteries of God, attain the ideal knowledge and arrive at the station of vision, acquiring directly from the Sun of Reality and receiving a destined portion from the ancient bestowal of God." (PUP:262-63)

"The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food. Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself; in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see."

Baha'u'llah writes on these themes in the Persian and Arabic Hidden Words. The opening invocation to the Arabic includes this statement of perennial truth: "This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful to the Covenant of God, may fulfill in their lives His trust, and in the realm of the spirit obtain the gem of Divine virtue." As to the specific terminology employed in this discourse, it is presaged in these verses: "O man of two vision! Close one eye and open the other. Close one to the world and all that is therein, and open the other to the hallowed beauty of the Beloved." (HWP:12) The nature of the two kinds of vision is revealed even more clearly in these two passages: "Open Thou, O my Lord, mine eyes and the eyes of all them that have sought Thee, that we may recognize Thee with Thine own eyes. This is Thy bidding given us in the Book sent down by Thee..."(P&M:80) "Then will the manifold favours and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a

new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation." (KI:196)

"This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God."

'Abdu'l-Baha describes this faculty of meditation in other talks: "Man has also spiritual powers: imagination, which conceives things; thought, which reflects upon realities; comprehension, which comprehends realities, memory, which retains whatever man imagines, thinks, and comprehends." (SAQ:317) "His spiritual powers, being nobler and higher, possess virtues of which nature intrinsically has no evidence; therefore, they triumph over natural conditions. These ideal virtues or powers in man surpass or surround nature, comprehend natural laws and phenomena, penetrate the mysteries of the unknown and invisible and bring them forth into the realm of the known and visible...When it is clearly manifest and evident that the intelligence of man, his constructive faculty, his power of penetration and discovery transcend nature, how can we say he is nature's thrall and captive?" (PUP:81) He also wrote about these powers: "The spiritually learned must be characterized by both inward and outward perfections; they must possess a good character, an enlightened nature, a pure intent, as well as intellectual power, brilliance and discernment, intuition, discretion and foresight, temperance, reverence, and a heartfelt fear of God." (SDC:33-34) "It is through the power of the soul that the mind comprehendeth, imagineth and exerteth its influence, whilst the soul is a power that is free. The mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete, but the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless." (Tablet to August Forel, p. 8) "In fine, that inner faculty in man, unseen of the eye, wresteth the sword from the hands of nature, and giveth it a grievous blow. All other beings, however great, are bereft of such perfections. Man hath the powers of will and understanding, but nature hath them not." (Ibid., p. 10) "Thus man cannot grasp the Essence of Divinity, but can, by his reasoning power, by observation, by his intuitive faculties and the revealing power of his faith, believe in God, discover the bounties of His Grace." (Ibid., p. 15)

"This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out; through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God."

"All the existing arts and sciences were once hidden secrets of nature. By his command and control of nature man took them out of the plane of the invisible and revealed them in the plane of visibility, whereas according to the exigencies of nature these secrets should have remained latent and concealed." (PUP:81) "Consider, for example, that man according to natural law should dwell upon the surface of the earth. By overcoming this law and restriction, however, he sails in ships over the ocean, mounts to the zenith in airplanes and sinks to the depths of the sea in submarines." (PUP:30) "This endowment is the most praiseworthy power of man, for through its employment and exercise the betterment of the human race is accomplished, the development of the virtues of mankind is made possible and the spirit and mysteries of God become manifest." (PUP:31)

"Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man; they are like waves moving in the sea without result."

Baha'u'llah describes many "useless" thoughts, referring to them as superstitions, vain imaginings, idle fancies, fanaticisms, and false sciences. Referring to Haji Mirza Karim Khan Kirmani, a leading Shaykhi critic of the Bab, Baha'u'llah wrote: "We noticed that he had enumerated some twenty or more sciences, the knowledge of which he considered to be essential for the comprehension of the mystery of the "Mi'raj". We gathered from his statements that unless a man be deeply versed in them all, he can never attain to a proper understanding of this transcendent and exalted theme. Among the specified sciences were the science of metaphysical abstractions, of alchemy, and natural magic. Such vain and discarded learnings, this man hath regarded as the pre-requisites of the understanding of the sacred and abiding mysteries of divine Knowledge." (KI:184) In his Most Holy Book he writes: "We have permitted you to read such sciences as are profitable unto you, not such as end in idle disputation; better is this for you, if ye be of them that comprehend." (KA:77) Supplementing the Most Holy Book he writes (TB:51-52): "The third Tajalli is concerning arts, crafts and sciences. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and

end with words."

"But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the inner light and characterized with divine attributes, the results will be confirmed.

"The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these.

"But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained.

"Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed--turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects--so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit. May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven."

In another of 'Abdu'l-Baha's talks, he explains the two kinds of perception, and the two kinds of things perceived: "There are two kinds of light. There is the visible light of the sun, by whose aid we can discern the beauties of the world around us--without this we could see nothing. Nevertheless, though it is the function of this light to make things visible to us, it cannot give us the power to see them or to understand what their various charms may be, for this light has no intelligence, no consciousness. It is the light of the intellect which gives us knowledge and understanding, and without this light the physical eyes would be useless. This light of the intellect is the highest light that exists, for it is born of the Light Divine. The light of the intellect enables us to understand and realize all that exists, but it is only the Divine Light that can give us sight for the invisible things, and which enables us to see truths that will only be visible to the world thousands of years hence. It was the Divine Light which enabled the prophets to see two thousand years in advance what was going to take place and today we see the realization of their vision. Thus it is this Light which we must strive to seek, for it is greater than any other. It was by this Light that Moses was enabled to see and comprehend the Divine Appearance, and to hear the Heavenly Voice which spoke to him from the Burning Bush.³⁹ It is of this Light Muhammad is speaking when he says, 'Allah is the light of the Heavens, and of the Earth.' [Qur'an XXIV:35] Seek with all your hearts this Heavenly Light, so that you may be enabled to understand the realities, that you may know the secret things of God, that the hidden ways may be

³⁹Exodus III:2.

made plain before your eyes. This light may be likened unto a mirror, and as a mirror reflects all that is before it, so this Light shows to the eyes of our spirits all that exists in God's Kingdom and causes the realities of things to be made visible. By the help of this effulgent Light all the spiritual interpretation of the Holy Writings has been made plain, the hidden things of God's Universe have become manifest, and we have been enabled to comprehend the Divine purposes for man. I pray that God in His mercy may illumine your hearts and souls with His glorious Light, then shall each one of you shine as a radiant star in the dark places of the world.” (PT:68-70)

EPILOGUE

It is hoped that the discoveries, the correlations, the annotations, the elaborations and commentaries collected here will assist the reader to undertake a careful, a systematic, and a fair-minded enquiry into the **PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS**. If you do not yet have a copy of this book and wish to purchase it, please contact the publisher directly: http://www.lulu.com/browse/adv_search.php

If the reader wishes to contact the author with a kind word of encouragement, a question, or to point out anything in this Companion volume that is incorrectly cited, ill-conceived, poorly explained, or awkwardly positioned in the sequence of ideas presented, the author may be reached at:

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All readers who wish to participate in a community of interest related to the PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS are invited to become members of a yahoo group by emailing:

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ENDNOTES

¹Baha'u'llah, *Suriy-i-Haykal*, in *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*:242.

²Baha'u'llah, *The Advent of Divine Justice*:77.

³“*Dala'il-i-Sab'ih*, translated as “Seven Proofs”.