

THE BRILLIANT PROOF



by

Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl Gulpáygání



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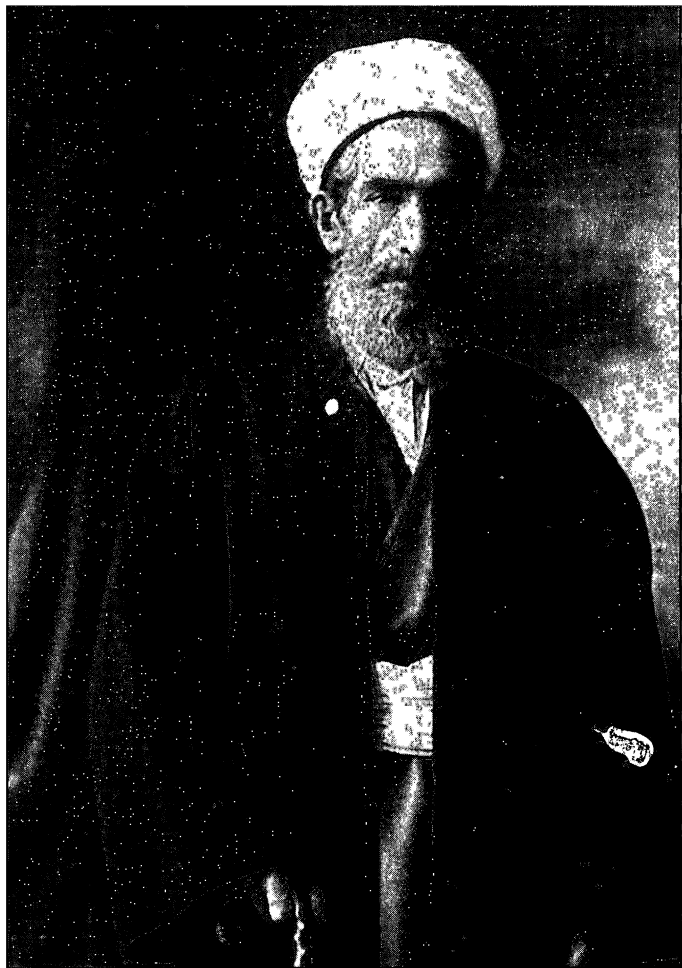
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MÍRZÁ ABU'L-FADL GULPÁYGÁNÍ

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'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN BRISTOL, ENGLAND
September 1911

FOREWORD

MÍRZÁ ABU'L-FADL GULPÁYGÁNÍ (1844-1914) is known as the greatest scholar the Bahá'í world has yet produced, and this reputation is well deserved. He is the author of numerous books and essays which blend into harmony the weight of his traditional Muslim education and the light of his discovery of the Bahá'í sacred writings. Approaching his scholarly work on the Bahá'í Faith, even now—some one hundred years after much of it was written, the reader is startled by the modernity of Abu'l-Fadl's thought and the liberal, universal direction of his writings. His ideas continue to challenge Bahá'ís to this day.

Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl was born in 1844, in the town of Gulpáygán, in central Iran. His given name was Muhammad, the son of Muhammad-Ridá. A brilliant student, he attended traditional Muslim schools in his hometown, went on to higher theological studies in Isfahan, and eventually in Tehran. He distinguished himself and rose into the highest ranks of the Shí'í Muslim clergy.

Despite this position, his interest in the Bahá'í Faith was sparked by the teaching efforts of an ordinary blacksmith. The story is well known and often told, but it is worth retelling: It seems that Abu'l-Fadl's donkey needed reshoding and, as he waited for the work to be done, the blacksmith approached him.

“Mullá, I have heard of some holy traditions¹ of the blessed Imáms which I have difficulty understanding. Can you help me?”

Abu'l-Fadl agreed to hear the man's questions.

“I have heard the mullás quoting a holy tradition on the subject of God's mercy in sending the

¹Tradition (*hadíth*), a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad or one of the Imáms of Shí'ih Islam. Such sayings have varying degrees of authenticity—ranging from the historically reliable to the obviously manufactured.

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rains: that every drop of rain is entrusted to an angel of God who carries it down to earth. Is that tradition true?"

"Yes," was Abu'l-Fadl's reply.

"Again I have heard," the blacksmith continued, "on the subject of the ritual uncleanness of dogs: there is a holy tradition that no angel will visit the house where dogs are kept. Is this true?"

"Yes," Abu'l-Fadl answered, once again.

"Then, how is it," the blacksmith asked, "that rain falls on the houses that have dogs? The rains, when they come, fall everywhere alike."

Of course, the learned scholar had no answer for the blacksmith's questions, which suddenly no longer seemed innocent. Abu'l-Fadl was both perturbed and astonished. How could this ignorant blacksmith so easily have trapped him with his riddles?

Abu'l-Fadl's companions urged him to pay no attention to the man. They explained that he was only a "misguided Bábí." But for Abu'l-Fadl, the encounter was important. Naturally, he had known of the Bahá'í Faith and had been approached by Bahá'í teachers before. But this brief

conversation, in which he was defeated in argument by a blacksmith, alerted him to the subtlety of the Bahá'í message—and to the bankruptcy of a narrow, literal, unthinking reliance on scripture and tradition. He began to study the Bahá'í religion seriously. In 1876, he found his faith and became a believer.

There followed, for Abu'l-Fadl, a lifetime of service to his new religion. First, at the direction of Bahá'u'lláh himself, he traveled in Iran, and then in the Russian realms of Ashkabad, Samarkand, and Bukhara. Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá called him to Palestine, to Cairo, and then to New York. But, Bahá'ís have argued since over whose services to the Faith were greater, Abu'l-Fadl's or those of the blacksmith who taught him the Message.

This treatise, *The Brilliant Proof*, is the product of the waning years of Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl's life. In this essay, we find his thought at its most mature and its most insightful. We also find his approach at its most expansive and all-encompassing.

The catalyst for this book was an article writ-

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ten in an English church journal by Peter Z. Easton, a Presbyterian minister who had been a missionary to Iran since 1871. Little is known about Rev. Easton, except that he was a man of extremely conservative views—so conservative, in fact, that they eventually impelled him to abandon his own Presbyterian denomination and to seek the company of more backward-looking Christian sects.

Rev. Easton was born on May 30, 1846, in New York City of parents from English stock. He attended the College of the City of New York during the Civil War, from 1860 to 1865, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree. Going on to the Union Seminary, he pursued his career as a Christian minister. In December 1868, while still a seminarian, he married his wife, Maria E. Burnham, who was nearly three years older than he; and they eventually had seven children. In 1871, he completed his studies and was appointed to the Tabriz mission in western Iran; he was formally ordained in the Presbytery of New York on April 28, 1872, and he apparently arrived in Persia in 1873.

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called God or that is worshipped. To become a Bahai means to put this anti-Christ in the place of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the people of Great Britain are now invited to do.”

Then, after presenting some dubious historical analogies, Mr. Easton was moved to express his personal hope and concern for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “I am sorry for Abdul Baha. Brought up in this terrible system, he is entangled in its meshes. From what I have heard of late, I would fain hope that some glimmerings of light have dawned upon him. May God in great mercy open his eyes to behold the truth as it is in Jesus . . . “

Mr. Easton was not content with this one article. He took his invective to the pages of *Evangelical Christendom*. Mírzá Abu’l-Fadl was then living in Beirut. He was apprised of the contents of Mr. Easton’s second article by students at the Syrian Protestant College [the American University of Beirut since 1920]. From his sick-bed he wrote one of the most effective treatises that ever came from his powerful pen, in answer to the Reverend Peter Z. Easton. This was *Burhán-i Lámi—The Brilliant Proof*—translated into English at the instruction of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and published in Chicago.²

This story provides the background for the present volume. Rev. Easton’s *Evangelical Christian* article is reproduced as an appendix to this book.

²H. M. Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1971) pp. 149-51.

It provides the context for Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl's powerful rebuttal.

Not all Christian ministers in England were hostile to the Bahá'í message, however. On Sunday, September 17, 1911, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was invited to St. John's Church in Westminster, where Archdeacon Wilberforce seated him in the Bishop's chair, addressed him as "Master" (this Rev. Easton found particularly galling), invited him to address the congregation, and knelt to receive his blessing.³ Earlier, at the City Temple, on September 10, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been introduced to the congregation by the Rev. R. J. Campbell. He had placed his distinguished visitor in his own chair and is reported to have remarked:

. . . This evening, we have in the pulpit of the City Temple the leader of one of the most remarkable religious movements of this or any age, a movement which includes, I understand, at least three million souls.⁴ The Bahá'í movement, as it is called, in Hither Asia rose on

³ See *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London: Addresses and Notes of Conversations*, comp. by Eric Hammond (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1912 [1982]) pp. 21-25.

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'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN LONDON, ENGLAND
at a meeting at the hall of the Passmore Edwards Settlement

that soil just as spontaneously as Christianity rose in the middle territories adjoining, and that faith—which, by the way, is very closely akin to, I think I might say identical with, the spiritual purpose of Christianity—that movement stands for the spiritual unity of mankind; it stands for universal peace among the nations. These are good things, and the man who teaches them and commends them to three millions of followers must be a good man as well as a great [man].

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is on a visit to this country—a private visit—but he wished to see the City Temple; and I think I am right in saying for the first time in his life he has consented to lift up his voice in public.⁵ He does not address public meetings, he does not preach sermons; he is just a religious teacher.

He spent forty years in prison for his faith, and from his prison directed the efforts of his followers. There is not much in the way of organization, but simple trust in the Spirit of God. We, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is to us and always will be the Light of the World, view with sympathy and respect every movement of the Spirit of God in the experience of mankind, and therefore we give greeting to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—I don’t know whether I could say in the name of the whole

Iranian Bahá’ís during this period is one million, and this estimate is disputed. There were never more than two or three thousand Bahá’ís in Europe and America during ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s lifetime, and the number of Bahá’ís in other countries of the world was few.

The current population of Bahá’ís is about five and one-half million worldwide.

⁵This was, indeed, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s first public address.

Christian community—that may be too much—but I think in the name of all who share the spirit of our Master, and are trying to live their lives in that spirit. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, I think, intends to say a word or two in response to this greeting that I address to him in your name.⁶

Cordial receptions of this kind by the liberal churches outraged Evangelical opinion in Britain, and Rev. Easton’s article was published a few weeks later. Such a development was to be expected, of course, but Mírzá Abu’l-Fadl appears to have been genuinely shocked by the viciousness of Easton’s attack. He begins his reply with repeated admonitions against libel, execration, falsehood, and calumny. He establishes the standard for judging the Bahá’í message as the one that Christ offers in the Gospels for judging true prophets from false: “By their fruits shall ye know them.”

Abu’l-Fadl goes on to summarize as four the arguments against the Bahá’í teachings which Easton raises in his article: 1) that Christian clergy friendly toward ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have failed to consult the missionaries in

⁶Quoted in an editorial, *Evangelical Christendom* (Sept.-Oct. 1911) p. 166. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s address to the congregation at the City Temple can be found in *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, pp. 19-20 (reprinted from *The Christian Commonwealth*, September 13, 1911).

Syria, Palestine, and Persia to learn of the true character of Bahá'u'lláh and his religion; 2) that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are pantheistic; 3) that the Bahá'í teachings advocate undemocratic government; and, 4) that the Bahá'í Faith offers no teachings beyond those that are to be found in Christianity, in any case. This is a rather loose and contradictory collection of objections, but Abu'l-Fadl takes each objection seriously. He addresses them one by one and dismisses them.

It is to the question of the new teachings brought by Bahá'u'lláh that Abu'l-Fadl devotes the bulk of his essay. And here we find his thinking at its most creative, most mature, and most universal. The year is 1911. Called upon to choose those laws and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith that distinguish it from other religions (particularly from Christianity), Abu'l-Fadl first discusses the passages in the *Kitáb-i Íqán* which reconcile the prophecies found in various holy books and point toward the unity of all religions. He then lists nine more principles gleaned from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

- 1) the end of divisions based on religious traditions;
- 2) prohibition of disagreements caused by individual interpretation of the holy scriptures;

- 3) acceptance of all views and doctrines concerning the station of the Manifestation of God;
- 4) abolition of slavery;
- 5) the obligation to engage in some trade or profession;
- 6) universal compulsory education for both sexes;
- 7) the absolute prohibition of cursing and execration;
- 8) outlawing carrying firearms, except in times of necessity; and
- 9) the establishment of the House of Justice and the institution of democratic, constitutional government.

Then, unable to contain himself to just nine, Abu'l-Fadl adds a tenth principle: the broad distribution of wealth throughout society.

Now, this is not the list of ten or twelve “Basic Principles” that was to develop a few years later in Bahá’í history and become the basis for so many standard presentations of the Bahá’í Faith. It does come pretty close, however. Missing are the principles of a universal auxiliary language and the independent investigation of truth, but the rest of the familiar list is either expressed or im-

plied. The whole emphasis of Abu'l-Fadl's choice of teachings is on the unity of humanity and on those laws of Baha'u'llah which emphasize harmony and reconciliation among all peoples. The universal nature of the Bahá'í Faith is clearly the focus of Abu'l-Fadl's formulation of new teachings in *The Brilliant Proof*. In what stark contrast it stands to Rev. Easton's narrow and bigoted sectarianism.

Abu'l-Fadl wrote his treatise in just two days, despite his illness in Beirut. When it was presented to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was then traveling in America, he approved of it and ordered that it should be published immediately. He praised the eloquence of the essay and accepted all its arguments. It was 'Abdu'l-Bahá who gave the work its distinctive title.

Habíb Mu'ayyad, who originally brought Easton's article to the attention of Abu'l-Fadl, provides this account of what transpired:

I took the article to Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl, and I explained the situation. I gave him a verbal summary of the arguments in it. Abu'l-Fadl was, at this time, sick in bed in the hotel. He got up from bed, pulled his cloak over his

shoulders, sat down, and said: "Bring paper and pen so that I can give him an answer."

He dictated to me for about an hour, and I wrote down his words. While talking, he suddenly became very weak and sick. He lay down and bade me goodbye, saying: "When I feel better, I will write the answer myself." The next day, when I went to the hotel, he said: "I have written the answer to Peter Z. Easton. It is ready. Mail this to 'Abdu'l-Bahá so that he can, in his wisdom, decide what to do with it. I mailed the essay to the United States. 'Abdu'l-Bahá published an English translation, along with the original Persian, in a pamphlet and titled it *The Brilliant Proof*.⁷

The publication of *The Brilliant Proof* in 1912, marks the end of an early era of Bahá'í teaching in the West. For as 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued his journeys in the United States and Canada, he delivered hundreds of public talks and private addresses which were tailored to Western audiences. The fresh outpouring of teachings which resulted from these encounters produced a new Bahá'í literature of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in

⁷Habíb Mu'ayyad, *Khatirát-i Habíb*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 118-128 B.E. [1961-71]) pp. 82-83. We are grateful to the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center for bringing this reference to our attention.

the West,⁸ and this literature has continued to fascinate and occupy Bahá'ís as a source of study up to the present.

The Brilliant Proof came at the end of Abu'l-Fadl's career, being his last major publication.⁹ He died on January 21, 1914, in Cairo. It also heralded the end of Rev. Easton's career. He had passed away just four months earlier on September 22, 1913.

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⁸See especially, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá During His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, comp. by Howard MacNutt, 1982 Edition (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1922-25 [1982]); *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1912); *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*; Juliet Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1983); Agnes Parsons, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America: Agnes Parsons' Diary* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1996); and Mírzá Mahmud-i Zarqání, *Kitáb-i badáyi'u'l-áthar*, vol. 1 (Bombay, 1914).

⁹Recent translations of Mírzá Adu'l-Fadl's work include: *Miracles and Metaphors*, trans. by J. R. Cole (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1981); *Letters and Essays, 1886-1913*, trans. by J. R. I. Cole (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1985); a facsimile reprint of *The Bahá'í Proofs* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, [1929] 1983).

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

In the interest of simplicity and readability, all sublinear diacritical marks have been omitted from the transliteration which appears in this volume. The editors hope that this will make the text more accessible to the general reader.

However, this change may create difficulties for the pronunciation of some names. Therefore we offer the following examples:

Bishárát — besh-awr-awt

hadíth — had-eess

Khatirát-i Habíb — cat-eh-rawt-eh hab-eeb

Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl — meer-zaw ab-ol fazz-l

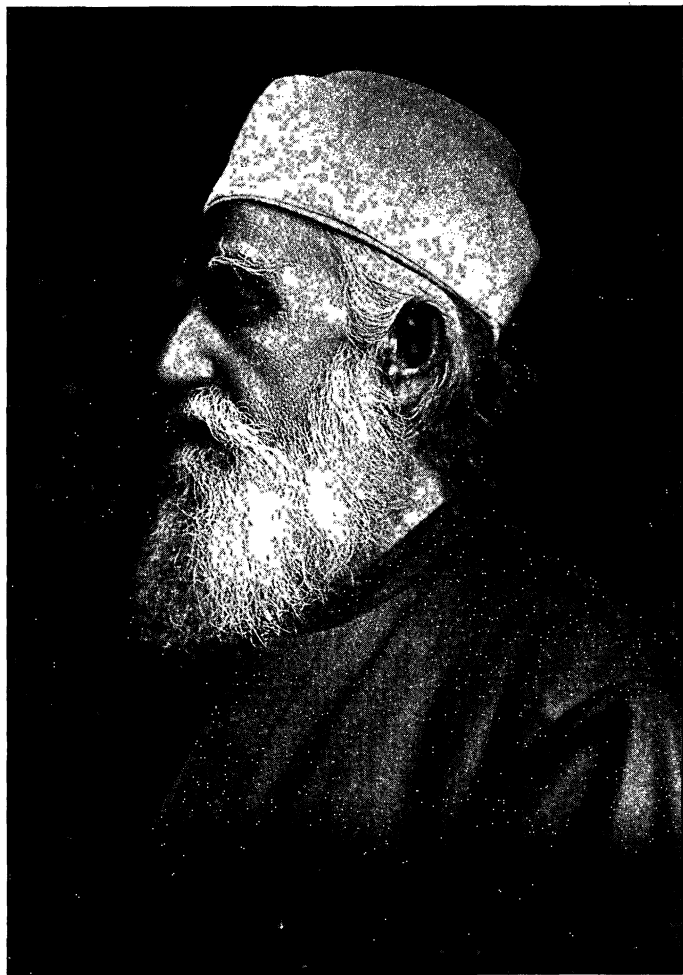
Muhammad — mo-ham-mad

Muhammad-Ridá — mo-ham-mad rezz-aw

Tahdhib al-akhlaq — tah-zeb al-ak-lag

THE BRILLIANT PROOF





'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

He is the Living, the Self-subsistent!

IN THESE DAYS, which are the latter days of 1911 A.D.. and the early days of 1330 A.H., I have seen a curious article which astonished me. What did I see? I find that one of the missionaries of the Protestant sect, who accounts himself among the learned men of the twentieth century, a helper of the pure religion of Christ and one of the civilized and cultured occidentals, by name, Peter Z. Easton, has been so provoked by jealousy at the universal spread of the heavenly word of His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá throughout the vast expanses of Europe that he has trespassed the limit of courtesy and humanity and published an article replete with execration and calumny in the magazine, *Evangelical Christendom*.¹

¹See appendix to this volume.

Yes, jealousy has caused many to fall from the high station and lofty summit of courtesy and thrown them headlong into the low depths of vain words and the writing of falsehood and slander. But the fire of jealousy has flamed in this person with even greater violence for he has seen how that glorious man, Archdeacon Wilberforce, as befitting the station of men of learning and of eminence, has spoken of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "Master" before a great assemblage and introduced him with terms of glorification and commendation to a mighty gathering.

Having considered the entire contents of the above article I found the writer's sole aim to be an attempt to allay the fire of his jealousy by the mention of evil words and execration; to count himself as victorious by wielding the arms of calumny and falsehood which are usually the only sword and sole weapon in the hand of a weak and ignorant opponent. The realization of this caused even greater regret and remorse, for I had never supposed that such traits and objectionable qualities could be manifested by souls who pretended to civilization and moral culture.

Are there not enough revilers, calumniators and prevaricators in the other parts of the world that such should also appear from Europe? Should one accounting himself a teacher of good morals and a spreader of the superior virtues of Christianity characterize himself with a quality which is the most specific sign and attribute of Anti-Christ? No! by the Life of God! Manifestors of such evil qualities exist in the world even as dawning-places of glorious qualities are also visible and manifest, in order that the blessed words of Christ, "Ye shall know the tree by its fruit,"² may be fulfilled, and that those who are akin to His Holiness Christ—upon whom be glory!—may be distinguished from those who are contrary to Him.

²This is a reference to a passage from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus warns against false prophets and declares that the true prophets will be distinguished from the false by their fruits: "Beware of false prophets, who came to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits. (Matt. 7:15-20. Revised Standard Version.)

His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá calls the people of Europe to the lofty attributes of humanity, but Peter Z. Easton teaches them libels, execration, falsehood and calumnies!

His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá summons the dwellers in the world to unity and harmony, but Peter Z. Easton invites men to division and disharmony!

His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lifts his blessed hands heavenward in the assemblage of prayer and invokes blessing and mercy for the people of Europe from the Court of the Almighty, but Peter Z. Easton attempts to prove in learned magazines the remoteness of the people of the East from praiseworthy Christian qualities, and desires that torment and punishment should fall upon them!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá commands: “Speak evil of no one and wish evil for no one;” but Peter Z. Easton says that no one should wish well for, or consider as worthy of grace, a people whose number he himself estimates as three millions!

I wonder therefore how we are to distinguish the good and evil fruits of the tree of existence; and how shall we comprehend and interpret the blessed words “Ye shall know the tree by its

fruits?" To my mind there is no criterion but this, and Peter Z. Easton cannot teach otherwise.

Consider the thirty-fourth verse of the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, where His Holiness the Christ says, "O ye generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?"³

Yes, if it were possible for the sugar-cane to yield a bitter fruit and for the fragrant rose to exhale a foul odor, such signs as these ("Ye shall know the tree by its fruits") would never have been revealed in the heavenly books and such distinction would never have been appointed as the correct criterion.

Consequently that which emanates from His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá consists in calling men to the principles of faithfulness and accord, and exhorting them to good morals and lofty attributes; while that which appears from Peter Z. Easton consists of varying degrees of falsehood, calumny, libels, execration and the like. The pur-

³"You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil." (Matt. 12:34. Revised Standard Version.)

pose of all this is that the nature of each of the two persons may become manifest, that the fruits of the tree of existence may be distinguished and men may find the true standard.

Briefly, as this servant carefully perused and weighed the above mentioned article, it was found that Peter Z. Easton, in his own supposition, has clung to "four proofs" in opposing the great Bahá'í Cause. We will therefore mention these four points and clearly show the falsity of his fanciful ideas in each instance.

First: Words of writers who in his opinion have made accusations against Bahá'u'lláh, attributing objectionable qualities to Him.

Second: The declaration that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are pantheistic and that pantheism is a false doctrine.

Third: The statement that the intention of the Bahá'í religion is to reestablish despotic government, while despotism is the practice of tyrannical and forsaken governments.

Fourth: That the Bahá'í religion is not able to show anything better or superior to other religions; in a word, what new things has Bahá'u'lláh

brought which are not found in the Christian religion; and what is the need of distinction?

Now therefore it is necessary for us to write an answer to the assertions made under the four mentioned points so that we may distinguish truth from falsehood and guidance from error.

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

AS TO THE FIRST POINT which is the testimony of the narrators, this missionary Peter Z. Easton has relied upon the statements of certain persons who have written against the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá. In criticism and arraignment he says: "Why did not that esteemed man, Wilberforce, heed and pay attention to the accounts of the Christian missionaries who have lived in Persia and the vicinity of 'Akká, all of whom have written against Bahá'u'lláh?" This is a summary of the proof advanced by the revered missionary, but in the estimation of the people of knowledge such proof is exceedingly weak and base.

In the first place, the writer of this article is truly and verily astounded that a man such as

Peter Z. Easton who considers himself among the scholars of the twentieth century and accounts himself a judge competent to differentiate truth from falsehood,—that a man of his calibre should rely upon the testimony of one side only. He should weigh the statements of at least twenty persons affirmative and negative, friendly and hostile, good and evil; then ponder upon the sayings of the two sides with justice, in order that he may arrive at a truthful conclusion as to the question, and adjudge with fairness and equity. For just as some have written unfavorably regarding the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá [Bahá'u'lláh], other people of insight and perception, both Eastern and Western historians have recorded the utmost praise and eulogy in their books concerning the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá. According to what rule shall conclusions be reached? Is man to be content with the judgment of the enemy alone and to consider as valid all that the opponent has written? Is it not true that everyone who has committed this mistake has done so by listening to the statements of one side and paying no attention to the testimony of others?

Furthermore, have not the people of Europe read history? Have they not heard the famous aphorism "History repeats itself?" Did not the great Roman philosopher and historian Tacitus at the beginning of the Christian era and the commencement of the spread of Christianity write in the most unmistakable terms that "the Christian religion is the enemy of humanity?" In another place he wrote: "The Christian religion is among the destructive superstitions." Suetonious who was another of the philosophers and a Roman historian pronounced the pure Christian religion, "dishonesty, its acceptance contrary to truthfulness and highmindedness and inimical to loyalty and good citizenship." Refer to the histories of the Church in order that these statements may be confirmed with your own eyes and that you may bear witness to the ignorance of Peter Z. Easton regarding historical facts.

At present, although traveling, the writer has with him four histories of the Church representing Protestantism, Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy. Among the books written by the Greek, Roman and Alexandrian philosophers against the

Christian religion—nay rather, against the very person of His Holiness Christ—upon Him be glory!—is that of Celsus, one of the famous philosophers of the second Christian century. He compiled a large book replete with terrible libels and calumny against the pure and holy person of Christ.

Porphyry the Syrian who was among the greatest of Platonic philosophers wrote a large book against Christianity, recording therein accusations and abusive attack against His Holiness Christ and His disciples. The book was burned and destroyed by the order of two Christian Emperors, Sydocius and Dovalantianus. The historians of the Church state that he was an eminent philosopher and an accomplished author.

Ferento the eloquent master of rhetoric, a tutor of King Antonius, wrote fifteen volumes against the Christian religion and the “ignoble manners” of Christians. He (Antonius) himself, was one of the great emperors noted for erudition and philosophy. European scholars speak of him as “the Caesar of sublime wisdom,” and have written lofty chapters detailing his virtues. James

Murdock, the American, in his translation of the History of the Church, says with regard to the great university which was founded by Ammonius Saccas at Alexandria, and which is in no need of introduction and praise on account of its fame, "From this university graduated two erudite scholars of eminence; one was the Emperor Marc Antony and the other was Epictetus."

In short, this great and wise emperor whose praises you have heard, spoke of the Christian people in terms of "inimical pretenders," "imperfect minds," "bereft of virtues and praiseworthy qualities." This emperor considered it an important duty to be hostile to Christians and exert himself in destroying them. He says: "You should ask concerning Jesus of Nazareth from his own people the Jews, and not from these poor Romans, none of whom have seen him, but whom baseness and indolence have caused to follow him."

Emperor Julian who was likewise an eminent philosopher, but whom the Christians designate Julian the Apostate, has written many books denouncing Christianity and criticizing the manners of the Christian community. He called them enemies of the world of humanity.

But what the Jews⁴ have written concerning His Holiness Jesus Christ is beyond the power of the pen to portray. One point however is sufficient for the man of intelligence and sagacity; namely, that 1900 years have passed since the Manifestation of Christ and yet none of the Jews expresses a wish to investigate His religion. This well shows what the Jewish learned men have written concerning His Holiness and what evil qualities they have attributed to Him.

Taking the above facts into consideration, we ask this astonishing writer Peter Z. Easton whether it is worthy of any unprejudiced man of sense to judge the character and qualities of Bahá'u'lláh by relying upon those who have written against Him. If so, how can one be expected to disregard what the above-mentioned hostile philosophers and eminent writers have stated concerning Christ, and trust in the text of the Gospels written by His disciples rather than the testimony of learned men engaged in investigating the quali-

⁴Here Mízá Abu'l-Fadl is referring to some Jewish scholars and theologians.

ties and character of His Holiness? Is this not very astonishing?

But the writer of this article states that neither in these days nor in the days of Christ should an intelligent man judge of a person by trusting in what his enemies say of him. Nay, one should look at the deeds, actions and traces of that person and reflect upon that which has emanated from Him, thus recognizing as the right criterion Christ's own saying "Ye shall know the tree by its fruit." For it is self-evident and proven thousands of times that every great personage finds many enemies who are jealous of him, and when an enemy feels himself impotent, he clings to slander and calumny and engages in libels and execration. Hence it is said by wise men: "Evil speech is the weapon of the weak."

In his translation of Church History, James Murdock, an American, writes that, "although Roman rulers were mostly temperate and liberal towards their subjects in religious freedom, yet for two reasons they interfered with the Christians and endeavored to extinguish and eradicate them; first, because of love for their own religion,

wherefore they would not allow the Christians to interfere therewith and cause a weakening and degrading thereof; second, because the opponents of Christianity accused its followers of vile calumnies before the rulers and characterized them with all kinds of vices and defects, such as 'lack of piety, abandonment of prayer and worship, desire for dominion and power, and a wish for leadership and changing the government.' They accused the Christians of immoral deeds and even of cannibalism, asserting that the Christians would kidnap the children of the Romans, kill them and prepare their flesh for consumption at banquets and entertainments."

This is a brief account of the calumnies which the above author has related, so that men may thereby differentiate truth from falsehood.

Were one to ponder over these facts, he would testify that dependence upon such falsehoods and calumnies has always been the excuse of the enemies of God, whereas such methods have never been conducive to attaining the knowledge of God and separating truth from falsehood.

For instance, how can a man of perception

trust in the words of Bahá'u'lláh's enemies who have written that he—God forbid!—intended to poison His brother?⁵ Were such sayings to be considered a criterion, the truth of no one could be proven, for all among the prophets have been the subject of similar reviling and accusations.

Moreover, jealousy and enmity entertained by Mírzá Yahyá, [Subh-i] Azal,⁶ for Bahá'u'lláh, dates back to the time of their residence in Baghdad. When in that city, Yahyá witnessed the shining traces [i.e., the Tablets] of the Sacred Being [Bahá'u'lláh]—whereby He assisted the Cause of God, caused the penetration of the Word of God, effected the gathering and union of the beloved and resisted the schemes and deceitful activities of the enemy—Azal himself, fearing for his life (which tendency is the most specific quality of the people of falsehood) did not dare to

⁵Cf. Myron H. Phelps, *The Master in 'Akká* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1985) pp. 57-61; Edward G. Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 1891) pp. 358-59.

⁶Subh-i Azal, Mírzá Yahyá, the half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1944) pp. 163-82.

appear nor to associate with people. Then the fire of jealousy and hatred (which is so aflame today in the heart of Mr. Easton) became ablaze in his heart, and he repeatedly planned to murder Bahá'u'lláh.⁷

Again, he sought to poison Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople, and according to trustworthy authorities, attempted to do so twice, but failing to accomplish his design, availed himself of a new scheme and cried out that others had sought to poison him and take his life.

It is an evident point that a weak and defeated enemy always stoops to such pretexts and seeks to resist his opponents through secret means and subtle designs.

On the contrary, the victorious and powerful party has no need of employing such means; for if Bahá'u'lláh had sought to destroy Azal, he was not impotent and needed no such method for the execution of his plan.

Numerous historical and tangible evidences

⁷Cf. Muhammad-'Alí-Salmání, *My Memories of Bahá'u'lláh* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1982) pp. 46-53.

can be furnished to demonstrate and prove that it was even the powerful and mighty pen of Bahá'u'lláh which protected from death His own enemies, such as Subh-i Azal, Nasíru'd-Dín Sháh, and certain great doctors and divines.

Otherwise the Bábís would not have allowed a single one of these people to have escaped alive. Yes, it was Bahá'u'lláh who, through the effect of pure, heavenly utterances even more refreshing than the zephyrs of the morn wafting from the rose garden and even more limpid than the vernal rain which distills drop by drop from the fragrant rose petals—trained his friends so that people of the world were amazed and astonished. For these possessors of hearts and souls, three hundred and thirteen of whom resisted in battle thousands of the regular troops of the government during many months, astonishing and bewildering the enemy as well as the warriors of other nations by their valor, heroism, strength of heart, firmness and resolution in the terrible battles of Nayríz, Zanján and Mazandarán, were so trained in tenderness of heart and gentleness of disposition through the glorious teachings of Bahá'u'lláh that during the

long years from the time of His arrival in Baghdad down to the present day, they have shown forbearance and self-restraint throughout many great events and have not committed that which would disturb any soul or be contrary to the law of any government. They were killed, but they killed no one. They endured violent calamities, but their lips were not opened in complaint.⁸

When the late Hájí Muhammad-Rida of Isfahan suffered martyrdom in the city Ashkabad in 1882, the chief of police found the city in great excitement and the Bahá'ís exposed to danger. He therefore permitted the Bahá'ís to carry arms, but they did not do so, considering death better than self-defense. The government then engaged in the trial of those who conspired and murdered the martyr. After five months' trial examining and hearing both sides, a high justice of the war department, accompanied by an imposing body arrived at Ashkabad from St. Petersburg. An open court, the account of whose proceedings would

⁸Concerning the pacification of the Bábís, see Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1941) pp. 122-25.

lead to prolixity, was held. That court ordered two of the murderers to be hanged and the conspirators to be imprisoned for life in Siberia and subjected to hard labor. As the governor of the province had the right to lessen this penalty, in three days four of the Bahá'ís appeared before him. This great man was Kamaroff, the victor of Merv and the viceroy of the province. They interceded for the condemned murderers. As the governor was greatly pleased with the excellent conduct and good training of the Bahá'ís, he accepted their intercession and exercised his authority by changing the verdict of hanging into exile and reducing the punishment of the others from hard labor to simple confinement.⁹

The incidents referred to are not based upon hearsay but are recorded in the register of the government of Ashkabad and in other official papers.

Now, could such pure morality, kindness and gentleness, such training and noble conduct be

⁹Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78; Anthony A. Lee, "The Rise of the Bahá'í Community of 'Ishqábád" *Bahá'í Studies*, Vol. 5 (January 1979) pp. 1-13.

inculcated by the one who had attempted murder and who sought to poison his own brother? What then becomes of the words of His Holiness Christ: "Ye shall know the tree by its fruit"? And what becomes of the criterion embodied in the words: "Thou makest righteous by Thy words and Thou judgest by Thy sayings"?¹⁰

Should hatred for the people of Bahá cause one to deny all reliable criteria and rules of judgment? "It is for ye to judge."¹¹

THE QUESTION OF PANTHEISM

AS TO THE SECOND POINT which is Peter Z. Easton's statement that the creed of the Bahá'ís is pantheism; this likewise is a manifest calumny and a false accusation, displaying his ignorance of the subject of pantheism. For the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in no manner resemble pantheism. Pantheism is a philosophical question and to treat

¹⁰Cf. Matt. 12:37.

¹¹Qur'an 10:35, 37:154; 68:36.

it is the work of scholars and learned men. It has nothing to do with the function of revelation or the station of the founders of religions. The writer of this article believes that the teachings of pantheism have originated from the Platonic School of Philosophy which is founded upon devotion, seclusion, rigid discipline and shunning bodily enjoyments. The same philosophy is the source of celibacy in Christianity and Sufism in Islam. It was transferred from the Brahmans of India to the philosophers of Athens and to the Platonists of Alexandria who became known as Neo-Platonists.

This late Platonic School held that the reality of the spirit which is an active essence effective throughout the world is but one indivisible reality. This indivisible reality, simple essence and ancient identity comprehends all things, and the souls of all animate organisms are but rays descending from that Ancient Reality. These Platonists in their own belief gathered from this principle the theory that each human soul is a ray from the universal Divine Reality and a drop from the Sea of the Ancient Holy Essence, which

is confined in the prison of the body and has thus been separated from that universal simple Reality of realities. Thus they taught that a seeker of perfection must devote himself to severe discipline such as vigils, successive prayers, fasting, abstaining from physical luxuries and denial of material bounties, in order that he may release his soul from the bodily prison, cause it to unite itself with the Ancient Reality of realities and reach the apex of eternal bliss.

Referring to this theory, Ibn Miskawayh cites in his work *Tahdhib al-akhlaq* (Purification of morals) a quotation from the "Divine Plato," to wit: "Die by thy will and you shall live by nature." This is a brief account of the subject of pantheism, its source and origin. If the people of investigation look with keen eyes upon the creation and formation of nations, they would find the atoms of this strange doctrine scattered in the horizons of the Western regions. They would also trace pantheism to the thoughts of Greek philosophers. References thereto have come down to us through treatises and essays of scholars, and descriptions thereof are to be found in various

books and writings. Were it not for the desire to avoid prolixity we would draw examples from those writings in order that the real truth might be known to men of insight, and the source and origin of pantheism, as well as Peter Z. Easton's ignorance of it, become clear and manifest.

His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the book *Some Answered Questions* has clearly shown the plane of those who believe in pantheism, for he has mentioned the followers of pantheism as opposed all the Prophets and Messengers, and has removed all causes for such superstitious beliefs. Reference to page 337 of that book will thoroughly expose the shallowness of such false accusations.¹²

DESPOTIC GOVERNMENT

AS TO THE THIRD POINT: This refers to Peter Z. Easton's statement that the outcome of the Bahá'í

¹²For this passage in current editions of the book, see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 1981 Edition (Willmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981) pp. 290-96.

religion is a return of despotic rule. Overlooking the falsehood and sheer calumny of this statement, it is a proof of his lack of information regarding the laws and ordinances of the Bahá'í Faith. He is likewise ignorant of what has been explicitly revealed in the Book of Laws (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*) concerning the organization of a House of Justice in every city of the world, the members of which, according to the conditions stated in the book, shall be elected by the people. Such members must hold their consultations in the utmost purity of conscience and good will.

Moreover, in the Glad Tidings¹³ which is one of the well-known Tablets of this Most Great Manifestation, the substance of the last paragraph is as follows: "Although a republican form of government profits all the people of the world, yet the majesty of kingship is one of the signs of God. If statesmen combine the two into one form, their reward will be great before God."¹⁴ That is

¹³Cf. Bishárát (Glad Tidings) in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) pp. 21-28.

¹⁴In the current authorized translation, Bahá'u'lláh states: "Although a republican form of government profiteth all the peo-

to say, hereditary sovereignty should be limited by a national parliament and representative assembly. In this way national problems and questions of citizenship will find solution through the cooperation of these two bodies, so that the country and nation may attain perfection and the people arrive at the highest pitch of welfare and prosperity. Inasmuch as the original Tablet is not at hand, the substance thereof is mentioned. If reference be made to the Tablet of the Glad Tidings, which should be considered from all standpoints as to beauty of expression in heavenly utterances, surely the reader will exclaim: "Blessed be God, the most excellent of Creators!"

In one of the long Tablets which is considered accessory to the Kitáb-i Aqdas, He has illustrated the form of constitutional government and representative assembly by the British government.¹⁵

ples of the world, yet the majesty of kingship is one of the signs of God. We do not wish that the countries of the world should remain deprived thereof. If the sagacious combine the two forms into one, great will be their reward in the presence of God." (Ibid., p. 28)

¹⁵"The system of government which the British people have

The form of that great government has therefore met with His approval and sanction. Consequently the fear that despotism will be restored is caused by ignorance concerning the commandments of this Most Great Manifestation and the outcome of reliance upon the sayings of enemies regarding international discussions.

NEW COMMANDMENTS

AS TO THE FOURTH AND GREATEST POINT, he says: "What new command is there in the Bahá'í religion which is lacking in Christianity?"

Although this question is an abstruse one which cannot be fully comprehended by a person unless he be well versed in the books of the two peoples, yet we will expound it clearly in such a way as to be easily understood by every soul, and we will explain the specific features of this great movement and prove the necessity of this Most

adopted in London appears to be good, for it is adorned with the light of both kingship and of the consultation of the people." Bahá'u'lláh, *Lawh-i Dunyá*, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 93.

Holy Manifestation for the comfort and upbuilding of the world. Thus may disinterested persons attain insight and every just one arise in thanksgiving for this great bestowal of God, the All-Glorious.

It is evident to every perceiving soul that the world of humanity will attain perfection, and that happiness and welfare, the desire of nations and goal of all hearts, will be insured when religious differences and sectarianism, the cause of alienation and estrangement of the people, are utterly removed from the world, and all estrangements and schisms, such as racial, patriotic and political divisions, etc., are dispelled from among men. Thus may men become as brothers, loving and kind toward each other. These terrible wars, which are the greatest catastrophes of humanity and civilization, will disappear. The vast sums, the expenditure of which is undoubtedly the cause of impoverishing men and destroying the world, will no longer be devoted to destructive pursuits and infernal machinery. This question is so clear and lucid that the most deficient mind can pass judgment upon it. Nevertheless, this condition has

been confirmed by the divine glad tidings and established by heavenly prophecies. For the Holy Books contain explicit record that in the Great Day which has been exalted by various names, such as "The Last Day," "the time of the end," "the latter day," "the day of the Lord," etc.,¹⁶ the Glorious Lord will descend and will unite all nations in the worship of the One God. He will so train all men in lofty and spiritual qualities that warfare and conflict will be uprooted, rancor and hatred will be replaced by sociability and peace, and implements of war be changed into farming and trading tools. This is a brief statement of the promises of the prophets concerning the "latter day."

It is self-evident that all nations are awaiting and anticipating the advent of such a Day and the coming of such a great Cause; nay, they pray and supplicate God to hasten its arrival.

¹⁶Isa. 2:2; John 11:24; Dan. 12:4, 9; Job 19:25; Joel 2:31; Zeph. 1:14; etc.

THE MEANING OF THE PROPHECIES

BUT THE GREATEST OBSTACLES among the nations are the signs and conditions which shall appear with this praiseworthy Manifestation and promised Day; for all the Manifestations of God and founders of religion who have formerly come have mentioned the signs of this great event in their respective books and emphasized and clearly recorded them in their utterances. But every prophet who appeared recorded the self-same signs mentioned by his predecessor and repeated the same words; yet without undertaking to explain the meaning of those signs and conditions or make his object therein known. For instance, consider how for a thousand years His Holiness Moses and the Israelite prophets spoke and uttered glad tidings to the people of the coming of the Lord of Hosts who would harmonize and unite all in the worship of One God. Among the signs of the day of His coming announced by them are:

First: The rolling up of the heavens.

Second: The sun will be darkened.

Third: The moon shall not give her light.

Fourth: The stars shall fall from heaven.

Fifth: The dead shall arise from their tombs.

Sixth: Ferocious animals will make peace with grazing animals.

Seventh: They will share the same pasture and food.

Eight: The children will play with poisonous serpents.

Ninth: The people of Israel who in that day shall have become scattered and humiliated throughout all the nations of the East and West will be again assembled together by the Lord of Hosts, who will establish them in their promised land and confer upon them eternal glory and everlasting dominion.

These are, in short, some of the prophecies which all the Israelite prophets announced to their people and recorded in their books. They did not state however that these promises were to be taken in a literal sense without symbolism and interpretation, or that the symbolic texts were not subject to commentary.

Fifteen hundred years subsequent to the time of His Holiness Moses, the very same promises and signs were revealed by His Holiness Christ—upon whom be glory! Consider verses 29-31 of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew¹⁷ and the tenth and eleventh verses of the third chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter the Apostle;¹⁸ so that you may witness the mention of these promises and signs with the utmost clearness. Likewise His Holiness Christ and His disciples confined themselves to the mere mentioning of these signs, as was done by the Israelite Prophets,

¹⁷“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matt. 24:29-31.

¹⁸“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness . . .” 2Pet. 3:10-11.

not undertaking to explain their meaning. Consequently the Christian clergy disagreed in their interpretation of those holy books. Some said that those promises were literal statements and not subject to interpretation and must therefore be fulfilled outwardly. Others among the commentators stated that those promises were symbolic and that they were words requiring interpretation in order that their real meaning might thereby become evident; i.e., that the Seal of the Book might be opened in the latter day.

Six hundred years after His Holiness Christ, the “Seal of the Prophets”¹⁹ announced His mission and the very same promises were again revealed in the Qur’an. The same conditions and signs were identically repeated. But again the Qur’an made no reference to the meaning intended by those prophecies, nor did it state whether they were symbolic or subject to interpretation. Consequently, were a man to consider what has been stated he would most clearly find that the greatest obstacles against the unification of

¹⁹Muhammad.

nations have been those very prophecies, glad tidings, conditions and signs. For the various peoples have been prevented from uniting with each other because the meanings intended by those prophecies were not clear.

Although citing an illustration leads to prolixity, yet we will do so for the purpose of enlightening and further elucidating the matter to the reader. For example let us assume that a Christian missionary should say to a Jew: "Dear friend, why are you sleeping and heedless? The promised Messiah, whose coming was foretold by all the prophets, has appeared." Then imagine the Jew answering: "How splendid! How splendid! What beautiful glad tidings and joyous news! We Jews have made all our wishes dependent upon the coming of the Messiah and daily supplicate by prayer for His advent! Now let us see this promised Messiah whom you declare to have appeared." The Christian missionary answers: "The promised Messiah was that wronged youth, Jesus of Nazareth, who sacrificed His life for the liberation and salvation of the world." The Jew would reply: "O esteemed teacher, clear signs are

recorded in the Holy Books regarding the appearance of the Messiah, none of which came to pass. We Jews have not found our religion so easily that we can relinquish it carelessly. You consider yourself a teacher of the Holy Books. See then in the Heavenly Books the words that at the time of the coming of the promised Messiah the sun will be darkened, the moon will turn into blood, the new heaven and the new earth will become manifest, the stars will fall, the dead will arise. Where and when did these prophecies become fulfilled during the day of the Nazarene and who saw them? Furthermore, let me show you numerous passages wherein it has been clearly revealed that when the promised Messiah appears He will gather together all the Jews scattered throughout the world and he will save them from the great humiliation, execration and tyranny which they suffer. Then He will establish them in the Holy Land and confer upon them dominion and external glory. Now tell me when did Jesus of Nazareth accomplish such a thing? Nay, through His Manifestation the contrary came to pass, for we were established in the Holy Land but we

have become scattered through His coming. We were esteemed; we have become humiliated. We were assembled; we became dispersed. We were blessed; we became afflicted with curses. All this was contrary to the promises given to the Jewish people So to accept Jesus would be to deny those glorious prophets.”

In brief, at this point in the conversation the Christian missionary would fail to answer the Jew. For he himself does not understand the real meanings of these glad tidings. How then could he explain them to the Jews and cause them to be convinced and assured? Therefore during this long period the missionaries of the Christian religion have attempted to discomfit and confound the Jews, yet without traversing the pathway of true knowledge and real proof. Instead of bringing them near the Gospels, they caused them to be annoyed and further removed.

It is therefore recorded in church history that during this long period, that is since the conversion of the Great Constantine down to our time, both in the day of Charlemagne and during the crusades, they repeatedly attempted to force the

Jews to accept Christianity, but in the end they failed. Now had they known the meanings of these glad tidings there would be no need of using force and compulsion.

Similar to this is the attitude of the Muslim toward the Christian. When the Muslim desires to prove the truth of the mission of the “Seal of the Prophets” to a Christian, he refers the Christian to the signs recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew. Then that Muslim, not understanding the meanings thereof, is forced to say that this Gospel in the hands of the Christians is not the original Gospel which descended with Jesus—upon whom be peace! As you readily see, the Muslims will clearly prove in word and writing that this Gospel has been interpolated by the Christian scholars and that it has been attributed to His Holiness Christ.²⁰ In this case the Christian, to whom the reality of the Gospel is evident

²⁰Muslim clerics teach that the original Gospel taught by Jesus Christ has been lost and that the scriptures used by Christians today have been changed and corrupted. Bahá'u'lláh rejects this teaching in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*. See Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1931) pp. 88-90, 199.

and manifest, and the love of this Holy Book firmly established in his heart, will be amazed at the incorrect answer of the Muslim. Instead of fellowship and friendship with the Muslim, the Christian becomes an enemy of the Islamic religion and an opponent of the Muslim people.

In short, one of the great obstacles to the unity of the nations is this difficulty which has been explained by the foregoing illustration. All these abstruse problems are involved and explained in the statement that because the Christian missionaries do not understand the real meanings of the books of religions which have appeared prior to the manifestation of His Holiness Christ—upon whom be peace!—therefore they cannot guide others to their own religion. This has become evident and manifest.

As to the religions which have appeared after His Holiness Christ, inasmuch as retrogression and reversal are opposed to natural motion and contrary to the progress and advancement which are evident and manifest in world movements, therefore the Christian cannot turn development backward and cause other people to descend the

ladder of progress in order to unite them to themselves. The great man Lord Curzon has partly understood this point when he writes: "The conversion of Asiatics to the Christian religion is without effect and result."

Now that this subject has been clearly elucidated, we will submit that the present state of progress in the world necessitates the Most Great Manifestation. While His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh resided in Baghdad the first book revealed by Him was Kitáb-i Íqán which is the key to unlock the seals of the Heavenly Books. It comprehends the realities revealed in Holy Writ. By it the doors of the understanding of prophetic words were opened to the faces of the people of Bahá, the real meaning of the divine glad tidings were revealed and the original purposes of such terms as were latent and unknown became manifested. These terms are "Death," "Life," "Heaven," "Earth," "Sun," "Moon," "Stars," "Resurrection," etc.²¹ Thus the means of unity became facilitated and the hindrances to international misunderstandings

²¹Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-83.

were removed. The signs and emblems of accord and agreement among inimical and opposing people became manifest and apparent.

For you observe that while now is but the commencement of the Bahá'í religion, yet difficult questions and doctrines have become so clearly explained and so easily accepted by various peoples that numerous souls among Zoroastrians, Jews, Nuseyrites, et al., who have never believed in His Holiness Christ nor would listen to a single verse of the Gospel, have now become acknowledged believers in Bahá'u'lláh through the effect of His Blessed Utterances. Moreover, they consider His Holiness Christ the Promised Lord and His Heavenly Book the Divine Holy Word. They associate and consort with Christians in their feasts and gatherings with the utmost kindness and fellowship.

In the spirit of utmost friendship, a question is propounded to this esteemed missionary Peter Z. Easton who without understanding in the least the significance of the Kingdom of Christ, eulogizes it: Do these evident signs cause the Kingdom of Christ to be at hand, or do anathema, execration,

unseemly words and the writing of debasing articles in magazines, wherein libel and calumny are attributed to pure and holy souls?

It is most astonishing! We do not know what Mr. Easton and his allies understand the Kingdom of Christ to be and to signify. Is the Kingdom of Christ for the ratification and execution of His word or to prove the opposite of the word of Christ and promulgate the attributes of His enemies?

His Holiness Christ clearly states: "Bless them that curse you,"²² whereas Mr. Easton and his peers carry out the meaning of "Curse them that bless you." The soul who seeks benediction and mercy they characterize with most unseemly words and desire for him evil and perdition. Bahá'u'lláh proves to the unbelieving nations that His Holiness Christ was the Son of God and the Word of God, whereas Mr. Easton and his peers pronounce Him [Bahá'u'lláh] the Anti-Christ.

Strange! John the Evangelist, the beloved of

²²Matt. 5:44, Luke 6:28.

Christ, in his first epistle says: "He who doeth righteousness is righteous"²³ but these (opponents) say: "He who doeth a righteous deed, verily he is a murderer and an impostor." Likewise in this epistle he says: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he is in God;"²⁴ but they say that one who, according to their own admission, has convinced three millions souls and made them believe that Jesus was the Son of God and the Word of God, is deprived of the knowledge of God and has no portion of the fragrance of God. Is it not always clearly shown and positively proven that in this day we should understand by the words: "Ye shall know the tree by its fruit," in the sermon on the Mount, that the purpose of His Holiness Christ was that we should not pay heed to false accusations or listen to that which the people of prejudice spread among men? Nay, we should consider the deeds of every person the correct

²³1John 3:7.

²⁴1John 4:15.

criterion, and through this balance differentiate between truth and falsehood.

NEW BAHÁ'Í TEACHINGS

IN SHORT, LET US RETURN to the original matter, which refers to Peter Z. Easton's question: "What has Bahá'u'lláh brought which is not found in the Christian religion?" Although the great function of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in solving the intricacies of the Heavenly Books, facilitating the removal of differences from among nations and establishing unity and harmony among the sections of the human world is sufficient proof of the greatness and thoroughness of the Bahá'í religion, nevertheless we will now consider the laws and ordinances of this religion, explain their specific virtues, their benefits and good results.

First, a command which is particularly a feature of the Bahá'í religion and is not found in the other religions is "abstaining from crediting verbal traditions." It is well known to men of learning that it was verbal tradition which divided the Jews into two great sects. Such traditions are the

basis of the book of Talmud, and caused the division of that one nation. One of the two schisms called the Rabbinim looks upon the teachings of the Talmud as the law which needs to be followed and considers it the greatest means for the preservation and permanence of the Jewish people. But the other sect, Gharraim looks upon the Talmud as sheer heresy and conducive to perdition. Thus these two sects cannot possibly be harmonized or cease mutual opposition.

Similarly in the Christian religion the main cause of schism and division were these verbal traditions which were termed "authoritative." Each one of the Christian churches, such as the Catholic, the Orthodox, the Jacobite, the Nestorian, and others consider it obligatory to follow these traditions inherited from and handed down by the fathers of their Churches, as the very text of the Holy Book.

Thus when in any of the great Councils the question of the unification of the Christian people would be at issue, they would avail themselves of these inherited traditions which were opposed to union and harmony. Likewise in the religion of

Islam, claiming these verbal traditions which were related of the Founder of that religion, subsequent to His death, was the cause of the division and separation into the various principal sects, such as the Sunní, the Shí'í and the Kharajite, or into the secondary schools of Hanofite, Malakite, Shafiite, Haubilate, etc.

Each of these hold to a set of traditions considered as authentic by their own sect.

But Bahá'u'lláh closed to the people of the world this door which is the greatest means for sedition; for He has clearly announced that "in the religion of God all recorded matters are referable to the Book and all unrecorded matters are dependent upon the decision of the House of Justice." Thus all narrations, relations and verbal traditions have been discredited among the Bahá'í people and the door of dissension, which is the greatest among the doors of hell, has been closed and locked.

Second: One of the laws and ordinances peculiar to the Bahá'í religion is the law prohibiting the interpreting of the Word of God, for interpretation of the Words and exposition of personal

opinion has been one of the greatest means of dissension in the former religions, the cause of darkening of the horizon of faith and concealing the real meaning of the Book of God.

It is an evident fact that learned men differ in their minds, and the natural gifts of sagacity and intelligence or the lack of understanding and comprehension vary in degrees among them. Thus when the door of interpretation and perverting of the Words from their outward meaning is opened, strange opinions and curious contradictory interpretation will result and different sects will arise among the one people and one religious community.

Consequently, Bahá'u'lláh has explicitly commanded His followers to wholly abandon the door of interpretation and follow the Words revealed in the Tablets according to their outward meaning, so that the events which have transpired among the past nations should not recur among the Bahá'í people, and the unwelcome happenings which appeared among the various sects due to difference in mentality and viewpoint should not become manifest in this new auspicious day, which is the day of the glorious Lord.

Thus one of the explicit commands of this great Manifestation is the ordinance abrogating differences which separate men. It is because one of the occasions of dissension is difference of scholars with regard to the station of the Manifestation of the Cause. In former religions, even as testified by history, it has become evident that when in a question of this kind a difference has arisen between two doctors of religion, both parties were firm in their standpoints and held tenaciously to their sides, while the laity, according to their usage, would adhere some to one and some to the other, thus closing the doors to agreement and unity to such an extent that religious fraternity was changed into deep and bitter enmity, scientific dissension terminating in bloody strife and warfare. This is illustrated by differences which arose between Arius the priest and Alexander the Bishop of Constantinople, regarding the Trinity, in the fourth century, A.D.; also the Nestorian differences which took place in the fifth century between Nestorius the Bishop of Constantinople and the other bishops, which caused terrible wars and the shedding of precious

blood. The effect of these sad dissensions has lasted until the present day. These are clear proofs and evidences for the point at issue.

Time does not allow us to make mention of the numerous sects and divisions of the Gnostics and others, of which the church historians have counted more than thirty, and incorporated them under the term: "Born of philosophy." All seekers of full accounts are referred to authoritative books on the subject, in order that they may clearly realize that all these divisions and sects came from the disagreements of the doctors as to the degree and station of His Holiness Christ, and their persistence in their respective opinions.

The subject of disagreement by doctors as to the station of the Manifestation of God has been one of those abstruse and difficult questions to solve which proved beyond the power of great minds and baffled a mighty king like Constantine the Great. For notwithstanding the assistance and cooperation of the great bishops of the East and West, he could not reconcile the various parties to the Arian controversy.

Nay, during this long time the power of local

councils, the sword of European powers and the verdicts of the Inquisitorial Boards failed to remove divisions and schisms caused by metaphysical discussions. But the removal of this indissoluble knot and incurable disease by the easiest of means has been announced in the holy Bahá'í literature, for Bahá'u'lláh in one of His holy Tablets has clearly revealed the following: "Since men differ in their degree of knowledge, if two persons should be found to possess different viewpoints as regards the degree and station of the Manifestation of God, both are acceptable before God, for, in accord with the blessed verse: 'Verily, we have created souls different in degrees,' God has created men different in understanding and diverse in manners. But if those having two points of view engage in conflict and strife while expressing their views, both of them are rejected. For by knowing the Manifestation of God it is intended to unify the hearts, cultivate souls and to teach the truth of God, whereas conflict and strife of two persons with two different points of view would do harm to the Cause of God. Consequently both of them are referred to

the fire.”²⁵ This was the purport of the blessed Tablet in brief. Accordingly in this Holy Cause no one has power to create disharmony, and because of fear of falling, no one dares to persist in his own opinion at the expense of harmony.

Fourth: Among the specific laws clearly laid down in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is the law prohibiting slavery.²⁶ No mention of this is made in other religions. As none of the former Heavenly Books has forbidden this traffic, all the humanitarian instincts which actuated the Great Powers to abolish and destroy it could not withhold the common people from this abominable practice which has cost the governments and nations great trouble and expense. For instance, the freeing of the slaves constitutes one of the important responsibilities of the Egyptian government. This necessitates a heavy drain upon the state treasury. Furthermore, the trial and indictment of those

²⁵This refers to Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to Jamál-i Burújirdí. See Khazeh Fananapazir, "A Tablet of Mírzá Husayn 'Alí Bahá'u'lláh to Jamál-i Burújirdí: A Full Provisional Translation," *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 1-2 (January 1991).

²⁶Cf. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, K72, p. 45.

guilty of this nefarious traffic bring great affliction and often ruin upon many noted families.

Fifth: Among the laws peculiar to this Great Cause is the law making it “obligatory upon all to engage in allowable professions as a means of support, and obedience to this law is accepted as an act of worship.”²⁷ Were a man of insight to consider this strong command, he would testify to the great benefit it contributes towards regulating the affairs of civilization and removing impediments and calamities from human society. For it is evident how in this present day innumerable souls designated as monks, anchorites, hermits, religious devotees, dignitaries and others, although sound in body and limb, abstain from occupation and trade, passing their time in indolence and idleness and living upon the proceeds of other men’s labor. In reality such men are as atrophied limbs upon the body of humanity and a

²⁷The current authorized translation reads: “We have enjoined upon all to become engaged in some trade or profession, and have accounted such occupation to be an act of worship.” Bahá’u’lláh, *Trustworthiness: A Compilation of Extracts from the Bahá’í Writings*, comp. by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre, 1987) #34.

heavy burden to the men of industry and agriculture. When by a law of religion these innumerable souls abandon idleness and indolence and engage in useful occupations, one can well realize how much this will contribute to the common wealth, and remove the difficulties of the body-politic.

Sixth: The law making the education of children of both sexes compulsory.²⁸ This law is also one of the commands explicitly revealed in this Most Great Cause, and concerning which no mention is made in any of the other religions. For in the other religions the education of the masses is made dependent upon the law of the government. If in former times a government would fail to issue a decree providing for compulsory education, and this failure would result in the decadence of learning and knowledge, the nation would take no thought of it, nor would the people consider themselves and the government responsible. For no law concerning this subject has been revealed in the Heavenly Books. But where a law is laid down in the Heavenly Book of a nation,

²⁸Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Ishráqát, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) p. 128.

every individual member will consider himself bound to execute it, and no one will fail to heed that law, for they will not be dependent upon the government to carry it out.

Seventh: The command prohibiting cursing and execration and making it obligatory upon all to abstain from uttering that which may offend men.²⁹ For, as is evident in moral science, cursing, reviling and speaking in harsh words and offensive phrases is one of the greatest causes of alienating hearts, filling minds with rancor, creating hatred and animosity among the peoples and igniting the fire of calamitous warfare among men. Thus it is said by wise men: “Verily, war begins in words”; and the poet Firdousi has said: “A mere word is the cause of warfare.” Another verse illustrating this point at issue is “The wound inflicted by the tongue is deeper than that inflicted by the sword.”

Were one to ponder over the differences and schisms already spoken of which arose among the Christian peoples, creating different sects and

²⁹Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, Bishárát, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 27.

schools, such as the Aryans, Nestorians, Gnostics, et al., kindling the fire of terrible battlefields and violent calamities, he would clearly find from the testimony of authentic history that the principal and initial cause of such divisions and disasters was the difference of opinion between two religious doctors, which would result in discussion and controversy. In order to overcome his opponent and demonstrate the correctness of his own view, or because of believing his own opinion correct, each would so persist in his attitude that it would finally lead to harshness towards the other. This harshness would gradually lead to insinuating remarks and annoying statements which in time would culminate in reviling, execrating, fighting and even bloodshed. Now the harmful outcome of these religious fights and their evil effect upon human society needs no mentioning here. For the calamities caused by these differences during the past ages are recorded in the historical books of every nation, and the hardships which have continued down to our time as the painful result of those dissensions are evident to men of understanding.

Perhaps someone may advance an objection saying that ordinances prohibiting anathema and execration are found in the other Heavenly Books, as for instance, the commands of His Holiness Christ, well-known as the Sermon on the Mount, wherein He most lucidly states, “Whosoever calleth another a fool is in danger of hell-fire.”³⁰ In the Qur’an it is stated: “Curse not those who claim (spiritual mission) without the permission of God, thus without knowledge cursing God as an enemy.”³¹ The answer to this objection is evident to the people of insight, for such ordinances and prohibitions are considered as educational commands in the estimation of the learned and not as laws and enactments of religion. Consider this command of the Sermon on the Mount, wherein He states: “Whosoever is angry with his brother falsely is subject to the law.” Again He says: “Store not for yourselves treasures;” and again: “Be not concerned with the morrow.” Also: “Whosoever smiteth thee on the

³⁰Matt. 5:22.

³¹Qur’an 6:108.

right cheek turn to him the other also;" and "Whosoever desireth thy garment give him also thy cloak." Then later on He says: "Whosoever asks of thee, give unto him, and whosoever would borrow of thee, prevent him not."³²

It is fully evident that the learned men and doctors of the Christian and Muslim religions have not considered these ordinances as imperative. Men of intelligence versed in law and jurisprudence have not deemed those who disobeyed these laws deserving of punishment and trial. Nay, as already mentioned, they have unanimously accounted them educational laws. Moreover some of those laws are such that the doctors have not considered those slighting them as transgressors or evil-doers before God. For instance, "If anyone smites you upon the one cheek, turn to him the other," "He who begs of you, give to him," "He who seeks to borrow from you, do not refuse him." The above statement will clearly show why such commands and ordinances were not considered by the leaders of the

³²The Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:22-42.

Christian peoples as imperative and obligatory and why they could not remove cursing and execration from among the community.

But in the Bahá'í religion the commands prohibiting cursing, reviling, swearing and blasphemy have been revealed as imperative and obligatory laws. The responsibility attaching to the violators has been revealed in various Tablets. Emphatic commands have been issued in regard to the purity of pen and tongue, prohibiting the writing or speaking of that which will offend men. For example, although in various Tablets such as the *Ishráqát* and others, the law prohibiting cursing and execration has been explicitly laid down, nevertheless Bahá'u'lláh, during His latter days, in the Blessed Book of the Covenant fortified and emphasized the above law by addressing the following command to the people of the world:

“O ye people of the world! I exhort ye towards that which is the cause of the elevation of your station! Hold fast to the fear of God and adhere to the hem of kindness! Verily I say unto you, the tongue is for the mention of good; defile it not with unseemly words. Verily God has for-

given the past. Hereafter all must utter that which is seemly. Shun anathema, execration and that whereby man is perturbed. The station of man is great. Some time ago this lofty word was revealed from the treasury of the Pen of Abhá: 'Today is a great, blessed Day! That which was latent in man is today revealed and become manifest. The station of man is great, should he adhere to veracity and truth and remain firm and steadfast in the Cause.'"³³

Every intelligent soul who reflects upon this utterance: "Verily, God has forgiven the past; hereafter all must utter that which is seemly," "Shun anathema, execration and that whereby man is perturbed," will clearly see how emphatic an ordinance has been given forth ratifying the prohibition of anathema and execration. Because according to the law current among the people of knowledge the purport of this blessed utterance is an explicit prohibition concerning anathema and execration.

³³The current authorized translation reads: "We exhort you, O peoples of the world, to observe that which will elevate your sta-

The intended purpose thereof is the unpardonable position of the one who violates this mighty command and decisive blessed ordinance.

In this case, to the people of insight it is evident, manifest and firmly established that the prohibition as regards anathema and execration is an espezialized ordinance and one of the particular commandments of this greatest Dispensation. Thus, through the favor of God the Most High, from the traces of the Supreme Pen, this unseemly action and the ordeals resulting therefrom may disappear from among the people of the world and the glad tidings recorded in the third verse of the 22nd chapter of the Revelation of St. John concerning the events of the day of Manifestation

tion. Hold fast to the fear of God and firmly adhere to what is right. Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men. Lofty is the station of man! Not long ago this exalted Word streamed forth from the treasury of Our Pen of Glory: Great and blessed is this Day—the Day in which all that lay latent in man hath been and will be made manifest. Lofty is the station of man, were he to hold fast to righteousness and truth and to remain firm and steadfast in the Cause.” Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i ‘Ahd, Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 219-20.

—namely: “Hereafter there shall be no more cursing,” shall be realized.³⁴

Eighth: Relative to the carrying of arms except in time of necessity.³⁵ This ordinance is not to be found in other religions, but in the Bahá’í religion it is considered as one of the imperative and essential commands. The great utility of this law is most evident and manifest. How many souls who are not able to control excessive anger have given vent to it by the use of arms ready at hand? If the murderer had not been armed, often after one hour the violence of his anger would have subsided and no crime would have resulted. These are the minor evil results of carrying arms. There are other greater evils continually manifested by people who carry arms; which are productive of great revolutions and excessive losses for the government and nations. The details of this are not in keeping with brevity and are conducive to prolongation, nevertheless the afflictions of the nations and the ordeals of the people are evident to men of perception.

³⁴“There shall no more be anything accursed . . . “ Rev. 22:3.

³⁵*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, K159, p. 76.

Ninth: The question relative to the necessity of the creation of the House of Justice and institution of the National Assemblies [i.e., parliaments] and Constitutional Governments.³⁶ This command is likewise specialized to this evident religion and is not mentioned in the others. For under other religions it is possible for despotic governments to be restored and founded, because the love of the permanence, establishment and endurance of religious ordinances and the fear of going contrary to them is so deeply rooted in human souls, by reason of the fear of God, that they would not pass away in a thousand years and would not be superseded except through the renewal of the religion and the reform of laws.

In short, these are some of the special commands of the Bahá'í religion which the writer of these lines has submitted in accordance with this opportune occasion. The consideration of brevity has made it necessary to omit the mentioning of other special commandments in this Most Great Dispensation.

³⁶Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 93.

Among them are ethics and conditions requisite for a wife's knowledge of her traveling or absent husband. Another concerns the prohibition of haughtiness and egoism. Another is a command as to purity of all things, with recommendation and encouragement to observe sanitary measures and cleanliness, and to shun utterly all that tends to filth and uncleanness. Among them is a command directing the agreement of nations in the abolition of warfare and battles, and the conservation of conditions of security and peace. Many such commands exist, the word of amplification and detail of which are beyond the limits of this occasion. For justice to this most important subject would necessitate the compilation of a large volume and not a short article. But although the article may assume more lengthy proportion I am forced, nevertheless, to remind the people of knowledge of one distinguishing feature of the many in the Bahá'í religion. Perchance the radiant sight may attain to the great bestowal of this most supreme Cause, and the pure tongue may utter thanksgiving and praise to God, the Blessed, the Sublime.

It is this: One of the abstruse problems of social philosophy is the prevention of monopoly and wealth control by certain individuals. This subject has been discussed by the philosophers of the world for many years. The wise men of Europe and America, especially the Socialists, in endeavoring to solve this abstruse problem have entered into minute discussion and deep analyses. The governments of Europe and America have given the subject exhaustive attention; nevertheless they have not yet agreed upon any opinion and have not reached a consensus of remedy for the solution of this seemingly insurmountable question. But if a soul should ponder and reflect upon the divine institution concerning the question of inheritance and the modus operandi of the distribution of legacies among heirs according to the laws of this Dispensation, he will see that this all-important problem has been solved in the simplest manner. The distribution of wealth among the nations has been established according to the best method.

Inasmuch as the matter of death among

mankind is an unavoidable event, if the distribution of the estate left by those who ascend to God should be effected according to this divine recommendation, it will be impossible for wealth to be accumulated by the few or for any particular family to exercise a monopoly, leaving others deprived and afflicted by poverty and want. For the Mighty Lawgiver has dealt with this important affair in this manner: He has divided the heirs of the deceased into seven classes, including teachers, who are the spiritual fathers of enlightened individuals in the world of humanity. The heritage is divided according to the number 2520, which is the lowest number comprising the integral fractions of nine. Under this division the seven classes eligible to legacies are as follows: First: Offspring. Second: Wives. Third: Fathers. Fourth: Mothers. Fifth: Brothers. Sixth: Sisters. Seventh: Teachers. The nearest relatives are arranged the closest. Each class receives its due according to the number sixty, which runs down through all. He has decreed that these seven classes mentioned will come equally into possession

of their legitimate rights, each receiving his share from this division.³⁷

When the people of insight reflect upon that which has been recorded they will see that with this command in operation, wealth will never be monopolized by a limited few and no individual through sheer forceful skill will come into possession of another's wealth. Wealth will always be in circulation among all. All mankind will inherit from one another and all will be benefited from this capital. Yes, when a person reflects upon the distribution effected in the Book of Bayán by the Báb, he will conclude that such a division mentioned therein may affect the interest of the offspring, but the manner in which it is provided for in the Book of Aqdas, through the Supreme Pen, wherein the heritage of the children is multiplied, dispels this fear.³⁸ To all people of insight it is

³⁷Here Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl refers to the Bahá'í laws of inheritance which apply in cases of intestacy. Cf. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, K20-29, pp. 26-28.

³⁸Bahá'u'lláh's inheritance laws are based upon those of the Báb, as revealed in the Bayán, but Bahá'u'lláh doubles the portion allotted to the children of the deceased.

evident that in this Most Great Cause all the means of comfort for the nation have been provided and a plan of readjustment for the affairs of the people of the world from all standpoints has been established. That which has been stated here will suffice to answer in brief the objections of Mr. Easton and those like him.

Now, in regard to the question of features distinguishing this great Cause from other laws and religions of the people of the world in all centuries and ages: If fair-minded and intelligent men of knowledge should ponder and reflect upon the judicious laws of the Lord of mankind, they will no doubt bear witness to the perfection of Divine Providence in the laws thus instituted. For instance, these three firm and irrefutable ordinances, namely, first, the question of inheritance by which monopoly of wealth will be removed and the question of socialism solved; second, the question of universal peace and international agreements regarding disarmament and conserving expenditure now devoted to the implements of war; third, the question of all being commanded to acquire a profession, art or trade whereby they

may earn a living, thus lightening the burden of expense to those upon whom it falls, such as farmers, laborers, et al. This expense is created by the idlers and unemployed members of the human family.

These fair-minded and intelligent men will also testify that the readjustment of the world and the salvation of mankind from great dangers is conditioned upon following the commands of this Most Great Manifestation. Thus will they utter the blessed words: "Blessed is God, the Possessor of the Dominion and the Kingdom!"

CLOSING

NOW AT THIS POINT we bring our words to an end, and at the closing of this statement we beseech God the Blessed, the Supreme, to bestow upon Mr. Easton and other deniers, through His Infinite Mercy, the light of insight and knowledge in order that they may glance at that which has been submitted in an impartial and disinterested spirit. Thus may they become informed of the Reality of the Divine Cause and be guided to that

which is the source of salvation, life, glory and prosperity. And this is not difficult by the Favor of God.

*Written December 28, 1911, in Syria,
by the pen of*
MÍRZÁ ABU'L-FADL GULPÁYGÁNÍ

APPENDIX



BAHAISM—A WARNING

by Peter Z. Easton¹

Nineteen hundred years ago our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ stood before a Roman tribunal. The Governor was convinced of His innocency, and proposed to release Him. The Jews, however, cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" "Now Barabbas was a robber." Thus it was that God's chosen people, they who, for 2,000 years from the time of Abraham on, had been the special recipients of His grace and mercy, "denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto" them.

Is this scene being re-enacted before our eyes to-day? In this year of our Lord 1911, on the 17th day of September, at St. John's, Westminster, an Archdeacon of the Church of England, a man who bears an honoured name, placed in the Bishop's chair, in front of the altar, the leader of an Oriental sect, of whom, in a previous speech, he had spoken in terms of high praise, calling him "Master." Who is this man? His name is Abbas Effendi. He prefers, however, to be called

¹Reprinted from *Evangelical Christendom* (Sept.-Oct., 1911), pp. 186-88.

Abdul-Baha, servant of Baha, his father, who died at Acre, in Syria, in 1892. In order, therefore, to know what this man represents and stands for, we must ask, what sort of man was Baha, the head of this sect, after whom it is named? A worse than Barabbas—betrayer, assassin, and blasphemer—a worthy successor of that long line of Persian antichrists from the beginning of its history down to the present day. The story is a long one, and would need more time and space than can here be given to it. In the accompanying article, "The Babis of Persia," a short sketch is given of the principle and practice of this antichristian system.

How was it possible that a minister of Jesus Christ could commend such a faith? Was he ignorant of the true character of the sect? Why, then, did he commend it? Why, too, was he ignorant? Did he not know that the Church Missionary Society has had a mission in Persia for forty years, and that he needed but to inquire from missionaries of the Society in and about London to know the facts of the case? For over twenty years Professor Browne, of Cambridge, has been writing on this subject. Has the Archdeacon no knowledge of the damning facts, set forth in his works, in regard to the character of Baha? Did he wish to inquire from those in the neighbourhood of Acre? How easy would it have been to get information from the English and American missionaries of Syria and Palestine.

Eighteen months ago Archdeacon Wilberforce wrote to Abdul Baha, saying, "We are all one, there behind the veil." Is this the teaching of the Word of God? Does the Apostle say that we should be unequally yoked with unbelievers, that righteousness hath fellowship with iniquity, light with darkness, Christ with Bellial, the temple of God with idols? That, indeed, is the teaching of the pantheism on which Bahatism and all its kindred sects are founded. Way back

from the hoary antiquity of 2,500 years, the beginning of Persian history, comes the blasphemous declaration, "God and devil yoked together." Men of upright character are, it is true, welcome to the ranks of these pantheistic sects. They make excellent stool pigeons. When, however, the deed of hell is to be done, another kind of man is needed; one whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron. Not what a man is, but what use can be made of him, is the determining factor. "Evil is a name of one of the conditions of progress—is as necessary, aye, more so, than what you call good, to your and our elevation to higher spheres." This idea is carried out in these pantheistic sects, in that the morally upright members are confined to the outer circle, the children of the evil one are admitted into the inner sanctuary. Here, then, we have the much vaunted unity, from which God preserve us.

Archdeacon Wilberforce calls Abdul Baha, "Master." What about Christ? Does He teach that we can serve two masters? No. Then the archdeacon must choose whom he will serve, whether the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ or the Antichrist, Baha. He cannot serve both. What say the people of England? Will they choose this modern Barabbas?

A word as to the bearing of the Archdeacon's declarations upon missionary work in Mohammedan lands. That work, as is well known, is not easy work. So difficult indeed is it, that men like Lord Curzon are utterly incredulous that anything can be accomplished. Surely, then, men who profess to be followers of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—above all, those who are looked upon as leaders in the Church, should do nothing to make that work still more difficult. Whatever else may be said of the Bahais, it cannot be said that they are not wise in their generation, quick to

use every means, fair or foul, which will advance their interests. That Abdul Baha has been greatly encouraged by what he has seen and heard here in England to persevere in his scheme to make Bahaism "the universal religion of the world, and the basis of the great universal civilization that is to be," is evident from his own words. That it will have a like effect upon his followers, to whom the news will be transmitted, not in cold English, but in the glowing phrases of Oriental imagination, cannot be doubted. Like Paul, on the road to Rome, they too will be encouraged; but it will not be to advance the kingdom of God, but the reign of Antichrist.

The Babis of Persia

The origin of Babism is to be sought in Persian pantheism, a system which goes back more than 1,000 years, during which time it has produced many sects, of which Babism is one of the latest. All these sects hold one fundamental doctrine, viz., that the murid, or disciple, is to give himself up absolutely, body and soul, to the murshid, or guide. To say that the murshid is, to all intents and purposes, in the place of God to the murid is to understate the matter. When God speaks to us He speaks to us as men, honouring the faculties of reason, conscience, and will with which He has endowed us. Does anything claim to be a new revelation, it must meet the demands of the old revelation, and stand or fall thereby. The pantheistic idea is other than this. Revelation, conscience, reason, will, are all annihilated. At every moment of existence there is nothing but absolute power; bare power on the one hand, and absolute passivity and negativity on the other. The murid is not a man in any true sense of the term, but mere material, a mere receptacle

which is constantly being created and then taken to pieces, or filled and then emptied. What he is has nothing to do with the nature of the communications or commands which are made to him or laid upon him. Judged by ordinary standards, they may be reasonable or unreasonable, wise or unwise, holy or unholy; but with all this he has nothing to do. Is he commanded to tell the truth, he tells the truth. Is he commanded to lie, he lies. Are counsels of wisdom given to him, he carries them out. Are the wildest vagaries of a madman enjoined upon him, this duty of obedience is exactly the same. Let me say—

First—The system is an essentially vicious one, based as it is on the degradation of the murid, who is robbed of all that makes him a man and reduced to a mere automaton. The honour and glory of the murshid is built up on the ruin of the murid. A more perfect contrast to Christianity it is impossible to conceive. “Because I live,” says the Saviour, “ye shall live also” (John xiv. 19). “And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou has loved Me” (John xvii. 22, 23).

Second—It cannot be reformed, seeing that the first step in the way of reform is to destroy the system root and branch.

Third—Every attempt to carry out the principle of this system has been fraught with the most terrible evil. The career of Mokanna in the eighth century, of which we have a true and faithful description in Moore’s “Lalla Rookh,” that of Babek in the ninth, and of Karmath in the tenth, both of whom turned the Oriental world into an Aceldema, or field of blood; more than all, that of Hassan Sabah and his

followers, the Assassins, who for 170 years, from 1090 on, inaugurated a reign of terror compared with which that of the French Revolution was child's play. These and other instances which might be given, both in ancient and modern times, amply prove our assertion.

We are now asked to believe that Babism is an exception to the rule, that this devilish, this Satanic system—and no other words can describe it—has been transformed; that the serpent has lost its fangs, and that the wolf has become the true protector of the sheep. Where, we ask, is the evidence for this amazing claim? Is it to be found in the blasphemous declarations of Baha, that he was not only Christ, but God the Father? Is it to be found in his life, stained with the basest of crimes? Is the man that attempted to poison his own brother, whom he had invited to eat with him, the inaugurator of a new dispensation of peace on earth? And what, forsooth, have we on the other side? Naught but honeyed words. The wolf arrayed in sheep's clothing—*ergo*, he is not a wolf. What makes the matter still worse is that no excuse can be pleaded for this man. He was a cold-blooded villain, not a madman, like the founder of the Druses, or a deluded enthusiast, such as we may suppose the original Bab to have been. Good men there are among the Babis, men who have been drawn towards the system, hoping to find in it truth which they had vainly sought in Mohammedanism; *good*, not because of the system, but in spite of it. Xavier was a holy man, but Jesuitism is anything but holy. We are to remember, moreover, that in all these pantheistic systems it is only a few who at first are fully initiated into "the depths of Satan," that it is the policy of the leaders to keep the multitude in ignorance, and to have some whose pure lives shall serve to mask their own corruption. In the case of the

Assassins, the character of the sect was not fully exposed to the public view until more than seventy years after it was founded.

There is no need of wasting any sympathy on the sufferings of the Babis. That they have suffered terribly is true. That they have endured suffering with marvellous fortitude and constancy is also true. So, however, it has always been in the case of these sects. When the infamous Babek, whose rule was to cause the wives and daughters of his captives to be violated before their eyes, had his hands and feet struck off, "he laughed and smilingly sealed with his blood the criminal gaiety of his tenets" (Von Hammer's "History of the Assassins," p. 27). As teachers and practisers of assassination, the Babis richly deserve all they have been called upon to suffer.

It is idle to talk about their not interfering with governments, when, in the eyes of a Babi, there is no government but that of his leader. So long as that leader is in a state of semi-captivity, the exercise of his authority over rulers and countries may well slumber, lest he bring down vengeance on his own head. Let him, however, once become an independent sovereign, and we may then expect the return of that time when there was no security for sovereign or people; save as they became the slaves of the most awful despotism which ever showed itself on earth. More freedom for women! Yes, but from the days of Mazdak these sects have taught the community of women. The millennium to be inaugurated is one of absolute science. (Von Hammer, pp. 105, &c.)

After reading this and much other such stuff which finds its way into the public Press, one wonders how it is that Christian men and women can be so deceived. Neverthe-

APPENDIX

less, it is true that there is a terrible fascination about these pantheistic schemes, which does seem for a time at least to rob men of sight, hearing, and understanding. Unquestionably, too, they contain grand views of truth, but the pity of it, the horror of it, is that the truth, which should be so presented as to be uplifting and inspiring, is but the bait upon the hook to drag down the soul to hell.

PETER Z. EASTON