

The Concept of 'Faithfulness' in the Bahá'í Texts in English Translation

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The Bahá'í texts abound with references to faithfulness: being faithful as an individual; God being faithful to His people; believers being faithful to the Covenant established by Bahá'u'lláh; Bahá'u'lláh calling the believers of a former era to be faithful to the new Manifestation of God. For people, faithfulness is a state of being, an attitude of mind and soul that reflects itself in behaviour and deeds, a spiritual quality that manifests itself in relationships as, for example, loyalty, trustworthiness and reliability.

This is a preliminary examination of the concept of faithfulness in Bahá'í English-language texts and the behaviours expected from those who are faithful.¹

Dictionary definitions of faithful

Dictionaries provide a large number of definitions for the word 'faithful':

- strict or thorough in the performance of duty: a faithful worker
- true to one's word, promises, vows, etc.

- steady in allegiance or affection; loyal; constant: faithful friends
- reliable, trusted, or believed
- adhering or true to fact, a standard, or an original; accurate: a faithful account; a faithful copy
- obsolete. full of faith; believing
- the faithful; the believers, the body of loyal members of any party or group

Some of these definitions relate to objects, such as a faithful copy of something, for example, a manuscript or model train; or to the accuracy or truth of an idea. Most, however, can be ascribed to the people. Some also relate to God and His Manifestations and their relationship with people.

Dictionaries also provide synonyms for ‘faithfulness’:

- true, devoted, staunch
- faithful, constant, loyal imply qualities of stability, dependability, and devotion.
- faithful implies long-continued and steadfast fidelity to whatever one is bound to by a pledge, duty, or obligation: a faithful friend
- constant suggests firmness and steadfastness in attachment: a constant affection
- loyal implies unswerving allegiance to a person, organization, cause, or idea: loyal to one’s associates, one’s country
- precise, exact

These definitions and synonyms are helpful when considering the way in which the concept of faithfulness is used in the English translations of Bahá’í texts.

Some of the contexts in which 'faithfulness' is used in Bahá'í texts

The concept of 'faithfulness' is used in a variety of contexts within the Bahá'í writings and texts in English. These largely correspond with the variety of definitions of the term and synonyms found in dictionaries. While any selection of categories in which 'faithfulness' or similar terms are used cannot be exact, nevertheless it is useful for a deeper understanding of the concept to group together those which seem generally to relate to the same ideas. These are my own categories and understandings and I do not wish to suggest that they are anything more than one way to study the concept of faithfulness, which appears so often in the Bahá'í writings. Thus these categories imprecise and fluid and if a particular quotation is categorized in one way and could be categorized in another, this merely demonstrates the limitations of the exercise.

With this caveat in mind, below are the categories of the concept of 'faithfulness' and related ideas, such as loyalty and fidelity, which are I have found most frequently in the available Bahá'í writings and texts in English, along with some examples of each.

The two primary ways in which the concept of 'faithfulness' is used in the Bahá'í writings is in relation to God and His Manifestations, on the one hand, and in relation to people, on the other. Each of these has numerous ways which the term 'faithfulness' or 'faithful' is used and I have selected several of these by way of example. Thus in relation to the faithfulness of God and His Manifestations, we find 'Faithfulness as one of the attributes of God', 'God is faithful to His promises'. 'Manifestations are faithful mirrors of the divine' and other ways in which the writings convey to human beings ideas and realities that are actually beyond their comprehension.

In conveying the idea of faithfulness as it relates to human beings, the writings seem to describe many more forms of faithfulness that take account of the myriad ways in which people think, behave and work with others, or ought to do; and their spiritual condition. Thus we find texts that remind us that ‘people are to be faithful to God’, explain how we can ‘develop the spiritual quality of faithfulness’, describe how we are to relate to others, and outline the implications of being faithful, and unfaithful, for all people in general and for followers of Bahá’u’lláh in particular. Some texts describe particular attitudes that need to be developed to be considered a faithful person, others look at actions and deeds that need to be done. The writings give examples of faithful people who have been spiritual lives and qualities are worthy of emulation; indeed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has composed a large number of tributes to such individuals, brought together in the book *Memorials of the Faithful*.

A third important way in which the concept of faithfulness is used in the writings is in the context of unfaithfulness, those who are not faithful, those who have broken the Covenant. Further, there are references to faithfulness in some of the mystical writings of Bahá’u’lláh and references to the Faithful Spirit.

The Faithfulness of God and His Manifestations

The concept of the faithfulness of God and His Manifestations appears numerous times in the Bahá’í texts. It is presented as absolute truth, a statement of fact that is foundational to one’s understanding of the nature of religion and of the attributes of God.

Faithfulness as one of the attributes of God

It is axiomatic in the Bahá’í teachings that God is ‘*the unknowable Essence*’ and is ‘*immensely exalted beyond every*

human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress [GWB 46]. People come to know about God through His Manifestations, *'those luminous Gems of Holiness'*, who *'appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple'* and are *'made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence'* [GWB 47]. It is by *'the revelation of these Gems of Divine virtue'* that *'all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest'* [GWB 48]. God *'chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him'* and upon *'the reality of man'* has *'focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self'* [GWB 65]. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained that *'Just as the light and effulgence of the sun when cast upon a polished mirror are reflected fully, gloriously, so, likewise, the qualities and attributes of Divinity are radiated from the depths of a pure human heart'* [PUP 69] and therefore the *'most important thing is to polish the mirrors of hearts in order that they may become illumined and receptive of the divine light'* [PUP 14].

Thus it is that human beings come to 'know' God and His attributes and try to reflect them. Among the attributes of God described in the Bahá'í writings is faithfulness:

I call on Thee O Exalted One, O Faithful One, O Glorious One! Thou the Sufficing, Thou the Healing, Thou the Abiding, O Thou Abiding One! – Bahá'u'lláh
[BP 102]

Verily thy Lord is the faithful, the perfect. – Bahá'u'lláh
[BS 193]

No God is there save Thee, the Strong and the Faithful.
– Bahá'u'lláh [BP 25]

Verily, Thou art the All-Powerful, the Ever-Faithful, the Omnipotent. — The Báb [SWB 4]

God is faithful to His promises

The keeping of promises is highly valued by many as a sign of a person's trustworthiness and reliability. The promises God are even more significant, as are part of the Greater Covenant 'which every Manifestation of God makes with His followers, promising that in the fullness of time a new Manifestation will be sent, and taking from them the undertaking to accept Him when this occurs'.² That promise is often cast in religious scripture as a prophecy of events that will occur in the end time or in thousands of years:

Verily Thou art God, the Lord of creation, the All-Sufficing. Thou art faithful to Thy promise and doest whatsoever Thou pleasest. — The Báb [SWB 209]

When Bahá'u'lláh arrived at this prison in the Holy Land, discerning souls were awakened to the fact that the prophecies which God had voiced through the tongue of His Prophets two or three thousand years before had been realized and that His Promises had been fulfilled... — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [SAQ 37]

Indeed such a consummation [arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká], He assures us, had been actually prophesied 'through the tongue of the Prophets two or three thousand years before.' God, 'faithful to His promise', had, 'to some of the Prophets' 'revealed and given the good news that the "Lord of Hosts should be manifested in the Holy Land".' Isaiah had, in this connection, announced in his Book: 'Get thee up into the high mountain, O Zion that bringest good tidings; lift up thy voice with strength, O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings. Lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of

Judah: “Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him.” David, in his Psalms, had predicted: ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.’ ‘Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence.’ Amos had, likewise, foretold His coming: ‘The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.’ – Shoghi Effendi [GPB 183]

God’s promises to those who are faithful

Blessed the one who hath remained faithful to the Covenant of God... Say: This is the Day of Bounty! Bestir yourselves that I may make you monarchs in the realms of My Kingdom. If ye follow Me, ye shall behold that which ye were promised, and I will make you My companions in the dominion of My majesty and the intimates of My beauty in the heaven of My power forevermore. – Bahá’u’lláh [SLH 64-65]

No God is there but Him. All creation and its empire are His. Unto Him return the works of the faithful. – Bahá’u’lláh [SLH 211]

For verily I say, the heavenly Father is ever with you and keeps watch over you. If you be faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver into your hands all the treasures of the earth, and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world. – The Báb [DB 93]

Manifestations are faithful mirrors of the divine

As we have seen, God makes Himself known to His people through the Manifestations of God, who have appeared on earth from time to time throughout the whole created history of humankind. They are perfect mirrors of all the attributes of God:

These Prophets and chosen Ones of God are the recipients and revealers of all the unchangeable attributes and names of God. They are the mirrors that truly and faithfully reflect the light of God. Whatsoever is applicable to them is in reality applicable to God, Himself, Who is both the Visible and the Invisible. — Bahá'u'lláh [KI 141]

The face of nature is illumined, the grass, the stones, the hills and valleys shine; but they shine not of themselves, but because they reflect the rays of the sun. It is the sun which shines. In the same way, our minds reflect God. Those who live thinking good thoughts, doing good deeds, and with love in their hearts... A stone reflects but slightly the rays of the sun; but if a mirror be held up, though it be small, the whole of the sun will be reflected in it, because the mirror is clear and bright. Just so it is with the minds of men and the Sun of Reality. The great Masters and Teachers so purified their minds by the love of God and of men that they became like polished mirrors, reflecting faithfully the Glory of God. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [BS 302-303]

People are to be Faithful to God

Faithfulness is a spiritual quality that individuals can develop as they strive to come closer to God and 'polish' the 'mirrors' of their 'hearts' [PUP 14]. While the concept of faithfulness is used to describe a fact about the nature of God and His

Manifestations, when used in relation to human beings it is often set out as an appeal or injunction for them to improve their attitude, behaviour and spiritual character, or as a reminder of the requirements and benefits of spiritual progress.

O Ye People that Have Minds to Know and Ears to Hear! The first call of the Beloved is this: O mystic nightingale! Abide not but in the rose garden of the spirit. O messenger of the Solomon of love! Seek thou no shelter except in the Sheba of the well beloved, and O immortal phoenix! dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal. – Bahá'u'lláh [HW Persian #1]

Have they not told thee that faithfulness is a duty on those who follow the mystic way, that it is the true guide to His Holy Presence? – Bahá'u'lláh [FVSV 74]

Human progress requires faithfulness

All religions teach that we must do good, that we must be generous, sincere, truthful, law-abiding, and faithful; all this is reasonable, and logically the only way in which humanity can progress. – 'Abdu'l-Bahá [PT 141]

... the Divine religions enjoin upon and encourage all the faithful to adopt such principles as will conduce to continuous improvements, and to acquire from other peoples sciences and arts. – 'Abdu'l-Bahá [SDC 99]

Faithfulness as one of the spiritual qualities of the human being

... human reality stands between the higher and the lower in man, between the world of the animal and the world

of divinity... All the imperfections found in the animal are found in man...

On the other hand, we find in him justice, sincerity, faithfulness, knowledge, wisdom, illumination, mercy and pity coupled with intellect, comprehension, the power to grasp the realities of things and the ability to penetrate the truths of existence. All these great perfections are to be found in man. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [PUP 465]

No attribute is more commendable than faithfulness. It is of the greatest of the virtues in the world of humanity. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [TAB3 634]

Be faithful

He Who is the Eternal Truth, exalted be His glory, hath ever loved faithfulness. Well is it with him who adorneth his temple with its raiment, and is honoured by this greatest of distinctions. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [CC2 333]

Give faithful service

... for our attention is directed toward the heavenly Kingdom unto which we must render faithful service. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [PUP 334]

The Guardian sends messages of consolation to you and all the friends in this bereavement, and he says that in this calamitous time all must bow down their heads and be acquiescent, arise in faithful service to His Cause, and model themselves upon that most exalted, sacred and resplendent presence. — Bahiyyih Khánum [BK 82]

Benefits of faithfulness to the individual/rewards for the faithful

Hadst thou faithfully obeyed the Decree of God, all the inhabitants of thy land would have followed thee, and would have themselves entered into the celestial Paradise, content with the good-pleasure of God for evermore. – The Báb [SWB 32]

As to those who have faithfully observed the ordinances in the Bayan from the inception of its revelation until the Day when Him Whom God shall make manifest will appear, these are indeed the companions of the paradise of His good-pleasure who will be glorified in the presence of God and will dwell in the pavilions of His celestial Garden. – The Báb [SWB 138]

This is the Day that God hath ordained to be a blessing unto the righteous, a retribution for the wicked, a bounty for the faithful and a fury of His wrath for the faithless and the froward. – Bahá'u'lláh [TB 103]

Whoso hath searched the depths of the oceans that lie hid within these exalted words, and fathomed their import, can be said to have discovered a glimmer of the unspeakable glory with which this mighty, this sublime, and most holy Revelation hath been endowed. From the excellence of so great a Revelation the honour with which its faithful followers must needs be invested can be well imagined. By the righteousness of the one true God! The very breath of these souls is in itself richer than all the treasures of the earth. Happy is the man that hath attained thereunto, and woe betide the heedless. – Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 10]

Happy is the faithful one who is attired with the vesture of high endeavour and hath arisen to serve this Cause. Such a soul hath truly attained the desired Goal and hath

apprehended the Object for which it hath been created.
 – Bahá'u'lláh [TB 257]

... after departing from this world the faithful ones will enter into paradises which have no likeness, and enjoy winning graces which are beyond comprehension: verily those paradises are the fruits of their deeds which they have accomplished in this world. – Bahá'u'lláh [BS 202]

Know thou, moreover, that those who faithfully serve the All-Merciful will be enriched by Him out of His heavenly treasury... – 'Abdu'l-Bahá [CC2 513]

Entrance into the Kingdom/The life of the soul after the body's death

... O immortal phoenix! dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal. – Bahá'u'lláh [HW Persian #1]

Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. – Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 158-159]

Thou hast, moreover, asked Me concerning the state of the soul after its separation from the body. Know thou, of a truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. By the righteousness of God! It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or

tongue describe. The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the Ideal King and Divine Educator, the pure leaven that leaveneth the world of being, and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Consider how meal needeth leaven to be leavened with. Those souls that are the symbols of detachment are the leaven of the world. Meditate on this, and be of the thankful. — Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 161]

Entrance into the Kingdom is through the love of God, through detachment, through sanctity and holiness, through truthfulness, purity, through steadfastness and faithfulness and through self-sacrifice. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [SAQ 281]

Examples of faithfulness

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s book *Memorials of the Faithful* is a tribute to a number of believers who were outstanding examples of faithfulness, courage and spiritual strength in the face of many challenges and difficulties. Below is an example of just one such individual, together with another story told by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describing the faithfulness and selflessness of Christ’s disciples:

Faithfulness of Christ’s disciples

The most memorable instance of spiritual consultation was the meeting of the disciples of Jesus Christ upon the mount after His ascension. They said, ‘Jesus Christ has been crucified, and we have no longer association and intercourse with Him in His physical body; therefore, we must be loyal and faithful to Him, we must be grateful

and appreciate Him, for He has raised us from the dead, He made us wise, He has given us eternal life. What shall we do to be faithful to Him?’ And so they held council. One of them said, ‘We must detach ourselves from the chains and fetters of the world; otherwise, we cannot be faithful.’ The others replied, ‘That is so.’ Another said, ‘Either we must be married and faithful to our wives and children or serve our Lord free from these ties. We cannot be occupied with the care and provision for families and at the same time herald the Kingdom in the wilderness. Therefore, let those who are unmarried remain so, and those who have married provide means of sustenance and comfort for their families and then go forth to spread the message of glad tidings.’ There were no dissenting voices; all agreed, saying, ‘That is right.’ A third disciple said, ‘To perform worthy deeds in the Kingdom we must be further self-sacrificing. From now on we should forego ease and bodily comfort, accept every difficulty, forget self and teach the Cause of God.’ This found acceptance and approval by all the others. Finally a fourth disciple said, ‘There is still another aspect to our faith and unity. For Jesus’ sake we shall be beaten, imprisoned and exiled. They may kill us. Let us receive this lesson now. Let us realize and resolve that though we are beaten, banished, cursed, spat upon and led forth to be killed, we shall accept all this joyfully, loving those who hate and wound us.’ All the disciples replied, ‘Surely we will—it is agreed; this is right.’ Then they descended from the summit of the mountain, and each went forth in a different direction upon his divine mission. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [PUP 74]

Zaynu’l-Ábidín Yazdí

One of the emigrants who died along the way to the Holy Land was Zaynu’l-Ábidín Yazdí of Yazd. When, in Manshád, this devoted man first heard the cry of God,

he was awakened to restless life. A holy passion stirred him, his soul was made new. The light of guidance flamed from the lamp of his heart; the love of God sparked a revolution in the country of his inner self. Carried away by love for the Loved One's beauty, he left the home that was dear to him and set out for the Desired Land.

As he travelled along with his two sons, gladdened by hopes of the meeting that would be his, he paused on every hilltop, in every plain, village and hamlet to visit with the friends. But the great distance stretching out before him changed to a sea of troubles, and although his spirit yearned, his body weakened, and at the end he sickened and turned helpless; all this when he was without a home.

Sick as he was, he did not renounce the journey, nor fail in his resolve; he had amazing strength of will, and was determined to keep on; but the illness worsened with every passing day, until at last he winged his way to the mercy of God, and yielded up his soul in a longing unfulfilled.

Although to outward eyes he never drained the cup of meeting, never gazed upon the beauty of Bahá'u'lláh, still he achieved the very spirit of spiritual communion; he is accounted as one of those who attained the Presence, and for him the reward of those who reached that Presence is fixed and ordained. He was a stainless soul, faithful, devoted and true. He never drew a breath except in righteousness, and his single desire was to worship his Lord. He walked the ways of love; he was known to all for steadfast loyalty and pure intent. May God fill up reunion's cup for him in a fair country, make him to enter the everlasting Kingdom, and console his

eyes with beholding the lights of that mysterious Realm.
 — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [MF 83-84]

Being a Faithful Person

The Bahá’í texts also describe what a faithful person is like and how one can become faithful. These texts could apply to the generality of humankind, not just to those who have already recognized Bahá’u’lláh and are trying to follow His teachings. These quotations seem to guide such people towards recognition of the Manifestation of God by building on their faithfulness to God:

Since thou hast faithfully obeyed the true religion of God in the past, it behoveth thee to follow His true religion hereafter, inasmuch as every religion proceedeth from God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. — The Báb [SWB 138]

Who are the faithful?

... the faithful, they that have believed in God and in His signs, whose hearts witness to His unity, whose tongues proclaim His oneness, and who speak not except by His leave. — Bahá’u’lláh [SLH 231]

The requirements of faithfulness

Our requirements of faithfulness is that thou mayest sacrifice thyself and, in the divine path, close thine eye to every pleasure and strive with all thy soul that thou mayest disappear and be lost, like unto a drop, in the ocean of the love of God. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [TAB3 552]

Developing the spiritual quality of faithfulness

Turn with the whole of thy being to God, forget aught else save God, and supplicate God to make thee a sign of guidance in the midst of people who are veiled from God; perchance they may be guided to the Orb of all horizons, enter the kingdom of harmony, drink of the cup of the love of God, rejoice at the manifestation of the Kingdom of God, taste the delight of the mention of God, and shelter themselves in the shadow of the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God.

This beseemeth the believers; this is the qualification of the sincere; this is the path of the knowers, and this is the utmost aim of the faithful.

Exert thy utmost power that thou mayest share this great bounty. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [JWTA 21]

Faithfulness of women

Woman has everywhere been commended for her faithfulness. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [ABL 105]

Consider thou how the faithful women in the time of Christ, and after the departure of His Highness, underwent hardships! What difficulties did they not bear; and what calamities did they not endure! But adversity and trial, misfortune and derision, became the cause of imperishable and deathless glory and rest. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [TAB2 264-265]

What sustains the faithful

The faithful are ever sustained by the presence of the Supreme Concourse. In the Supreme Concourse are

Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah, and Bahá'u'lláh, and other supreme Souls. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [ABL 97]

Being a faithful Bahá'í

Many of the verses concerning faithfulness found in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and in the letters and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are directed towards those who have already recognized—or are about to recognize—the Manifestation of God and are striving to be more faithful to His teachings. The guidance found in these passages explains who is considered to be faithful; what faithfulness is; the characteristics of a faithful Bahá'í; the attitudes, qualities, virtues, behaviours and actions that the faithful are to acquire and those they are to avoid or overcome. They outline the requisites for spiritual growth, the need for loyalty to the Cause and steadfastness in the Covenant, the trials and sacrifices that the faithful are to endure. Several of the examples below are taken from Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá written to individual believers in the West, often in response to their letters to Him. Many convey very detailed guidance about how Bahá'ís should conduct themselves, provided to those who were new to the Faith and were learning attitudes and behaviours that were sometimes very different from those they held before becoming Bahá'ís. It is noticeable that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets mention a large number of spiritual qualities in addition to faithfulness.

Who are the faithful?

Indeed those whose souls have been created through the splendour of the light of thy Lord recognize the Truth and are numbered with such as faithfully obey the One True God and are well assured... — The Báb [SWB 24]

... the favoured among the faithful, [are] they that truly uphold the unity of God and are wholly devoted to His Cause. — Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 344]

Use of the terms, 'the faithful', 'faithful followers', 'faithful workers', 'faithful servants', 'faithful lovers', 'faithful friends', etc. to mean 'believers' or followers of Bahá'u'lláh

To live the teachings of the Cause should be the paramount concern of every true believer, and the only way to do so is to commune both in spirit and through actual concrete means with the entire community of the faithful. — From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, 13 August 1936 [LG 475]

From the excellence of so great a Revelation the honour with which its faithful followers must needs be invested can be well imagined. By the righteousness of the one true God! The very breath of these souls is in itself richer than all the treasures of the earth. Happy is the man that hath attained thereunto, and woe betide the heedless. — Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 10]

... it devolves upon the faithful workers in India to follow up the work, to seize every opportunity and to give to her hasty and in many places insufficient services a more permanent and lasting character. — Shoghi Effendi [DND 17]

If His faithful servants could realize how meritorious are benevolent deeds in these days, they would all arise to do that which is meet and seemly. — Bahá'u'lláh [CC1 488]

I appeal in particular to those faithful lovers of His Cause in that vast and distant dominion. — Shoghi Effendi [DND 1]

It is a great pleasure and privilege to me to enter into direct, and I trust, permanent correspondence with those faithful friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who though few in number and scattered over that vast and flourishing

country, will I trust act as a powerful leaven to the mass of that spiritually-minded people. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [MC 3]

Faithfulness as one of a cluster of spiritual qualities of the believer

Cleave ye at all times to the cord of trustworthiness and hold fast the hem of the garment of truthfulness: thus biddeth you He Who is the Truthful, the Trusted One. God is my witness, trustworthiness is a light that shineth refulgently from the heavens, and leadeth to the exaltation of the Cause of God, the Omnipotent, the Incomparable, the All-Praised. Whoso hath remained faithful to the Covenant hath been steadfast in his adherence to trustworthiness, whilst those who have repudiated it have erred grievously. — Bahá’u’lláh [CC2 334]

We call to remembrance every one of the friends and exhort them to have regard to trustworthiness, which is a charge that God hath entrusted to the safe-keeping of His servants; to righteousness, which He hath made to be a citadel of strength for His well-favoured ones and faithful, humble servants; and to whatever virtues shall conduce to their dignity and honour among all peoples. — Bahá’u’lláh [CC2 330]

... ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes

of the Bahá'ís.' Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God. For He hath, through irrefutable Texts, entered into a binding Covenant with us all, requiring us to act in accordance with His sacred instructions and counsels. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [SWAB 70]

Characteristics of the faithful believer

One of the teachings is that love and faithfulness must so prevail in the hearts that men may see the stranger as a friend, the sinner as an intimate fellow, may count enemies as allies, regard foes as loving comrades, call their executioner the giver of life, consider the denier as a believer and the unbeliever as a faithful one—that is, men must behave in such a manner as may befit the believers, the faithful, the friend and the confidant. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [BWF 413]

I desire distinction for you. The Bahá'ís must be distinguished from others of humanity. But this distinction must not depend upon wealth—that they should become more affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction I desire; not scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I desire spiritual distinction—that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity, for unity and accord, for love and justice.

In brief, you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world—for faithfulness and sincerity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness and steadfastness, for philanthropic deeds and service to the human world, for love toward every human being, for unity and accord with all people, for removing prejudices and promoting

international peace. Finally, you must become distinguished for heavenly illumination and for acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction among you. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [PUP 190]

Faithfulness of women believers

Many of the western believers who corresponded with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were women. The two excerpts from His Tablets below are a very small example of how He encouraged women to develop their spiritual capacities and strength.

Convey thou unto the handmaids of the Merciful the message that when a test turneth violent they must stand unmoved, and faithful to their love for Bahá. In winter come the storms, and the great winds blow, but then will follow spring in all its beauty, adorning hill and plain with perfumed plants and red anemones, fair to see. Then will the birds trill out upon the branches their songs of joy, and sermonize in lilting tones from the pulpits of the trees. Erelong shall ye bear witness that the lights are streaming forth, the banners of the realm above are waving, the sweet scents of the All-Merciful are wafted abroad, the hosts of the Kingdom are marching down, the angels of heaven are rushing forward, and the Holy Spirit is breathing upon all those regions. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [SWAB 163-164]

Be thou a light to every darkness, a dispeller of every sadness, a healer for every sick person, a quencher for every thirst, a shelter for every refugee, a refuge for every captive. If the Pharisees interfere with thee, it is incumbent upon thee to implore God to guide them to the road of salvation! And it is incumbent upon thee to be affable to them under all circumstances, to be patient in afflictions, to be courteous with the enemies and to

pray for the hateful sinners! This is the nature of the faithful and convinced women believers whose hearts are dilated with the fragrances of God and who instruct people in the teachings of God! — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [TAB2 285]

Through the insults and indignities suffered by the well-assured and faithful maidservants of God, portals of everlasting honour will be flung open before the face of the women in Persia, nay everywhere in the world... — Shoghi Effendi [FL 33]

How to recognise the faithful servant

The bounties of God are: to love each other, to speak the truth, to sever our hearts from the world, to be reverent, to be humble, to be hospitable. By these things you know the faithful servant of God. How do we know the light? By its rays. So when you see these qualities, you will know that the servant of God has received the regeneration. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [BS 501]

How to become faithful/how to develop faithfulness

O banished and faithful friend! Quench the thirst of heedlessness with the sanctified waters of My grace, and chase the gloom of remoteness through the morning-light of My Divine presence. Suffer not the habitation wherein dwelleth My undying love for thee to be destroyed through the tyranny of covetous desires, and overcloud not the beauty of the heavenly Youth with the dust of self and passion.

Clothe thyself with the essence of righteousness, and let thine heart be afraid of none except God. Obstruct not the luminous spring of thy soul with the thorns and brambles of vain and inordinate affections, and impede

not the flow of the living waters that stream from the fountain of thine heart. Set all thy hope in God, and cleave tenaciously to His unfailing mercy. Who else but Him can enrich the destitute, and deliver the fallen from his abasement? – Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 323]

It behoveth the loved ones of the Lord to be the signs and tokens of His universal mercy and the embodiments of His own excelling grace. Like the sun, let them cast their rays upon garden and rubbish heap alike, and even as clouds in spring, let them shed down their rain upon flower and thorn. Let them seek but love and faithfulness, let them not follow the ways of unkindness, let their talk be confined to the secrets of friendship and of peace. Such are the attributes of the righteous, such is the distinguishing mark of those who serve His Threshold. – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [SWAB 257]

But we, and the friends of God, should on no account slacken our efforts to be loyal, sincere and men of good will. We should at all times manifest our truthfulness and sincerity, nay rather, we must be constant in our faithfulness and trustworthiness, and occupy ourselves in offering prayers for the good of all.

O ye beloved of God, these are days for steadfastness, for firmness and perseverance in the Cause of God. – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [SWAB 294]

Divine verses evoke love in the faithful

... the divinely-revealed verses shine as the sun, whilst all others are as stars. To the peoples of the world they are the abiding testimony, the incontrovertible proof, the shining light of the ideal King. Their excellence is unrivalled, their virtue nothing can surpass. They are the treasury of the divine pearls and the depository of the

divine mysteries. They constitute the indissoluble Bond, the firm Cord, the Urvatu'l-Vuthqá, the inextinguishable Light. Through them floweth the river of divine knowledge, and gloweth the fire of His ancient and consummate wisdom. This is the fire which, in one and the same moment, kindleth the flame of love in the breasts of the faithful, and induceth the chill of heedlessness in the heart of the enemy. — Bahá'u'lláh [KI 204]

Prayers for faithfulness

Many of the prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá beseech God to assist the believers to remain faithful to the Covenant and to God and to help them remain strong and committed believers during times of tests and trials.

Entreat thou the one true God to enable His faithful servants to fulfil that which is conducive to the good of this world and the world to come. This is the commandment of God that hath been prescribed in His weighty and inviolable Book. — Bahá'u'lláh [CC1 489]

O God, my God! I beg of Thee by the dawning of the light of Thy Beauty that hath illumined all the earth, and by the glance of Thy divine compassion's eye that considereth all things, and by the surging sea of Thy bestowals in which all things are immersed, and by Thy streaming clouds of bounty raining down gifts upon the essences of all created things, and by the splendours of Thy mercy that existed before ever the world was—to help Thy chosen ones to be faithful, and assist Thy loved ones to serve at Thine exalted Threshold, and cause them to gain the victory through the battalions of Thy might that overpowereth all things, and reinforce them with a great fighting host from out of the Concourse on high. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [SWAB 5]

O my Lord and my Hope! Help Thou Thy loved ones to be steadfast in Thy mighty Covenant, to remain faithful to Thy manifest Cause, and to carry out the commandments Thou didst set down for them in Thy Book of Splendours; that they may become banners of guidance and lamps of the Company above, wellsprings of Thine infinite wisdom, and stars that lead aright, as they shine down from the supernal sky. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [SWAB 259]

Faithfulness necessary for spiritual growth

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

1. The recital each day of one of the Obligatory Prayers with pure-hearted devotion.
2. The regular reading of the Sacred Scriptures, specifically at least each morning and evening, with reverence, attention and thought.
3. Prayerful meditation on the teachings, so that we may understand them more deeply, fulfil them more faithfully, and convey them more accurately to others.
4. Striving every day to bring our behaviour more into accordance with the high standard that are set forth in the Teachings.
5. Teaching the Cause of God.
6. Selfless service in the work of the Cause and in the carrying on of our trade or profession. [From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 1 September 1983]

Acting faithfully

O ye beloved of the Lord! Commit not that which defileth the limpid stream of love or destroyeth the sweet fragrance of friendship. By the righteousness of the Lord! Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancour. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind. Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful and your heart enlightened. Abase not the station of the learned in Bahá and belittle not the rank of such rulers as administer justice amidst you. Set your reliance on the army of justice, put on the armour of wisdom, let your adorning be forgiveness and mercy and that which cheereth the hearts of the well-favoured of God. – Bahá'u'lláh [TB 138-139]

Faithfulness, trials, tests and sacrifice

Trials for the faithful believers are like unto divine bestowal and everlasting gifts. – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [TAB2 277]

In the estimation of the loved ones of God abasement is exaltation itself, and affliction leadeth to faithfulness. – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [FL 29-30]

Neither the world-wide growth of the Bahá’í community nor the process of learning it was experiencing... tell the whole story of these tumultuous and creative decades. When the history of the period is eventually written, one of its most brilliant chapters will recount the spiritual victories won by Bahá’í communities, in Africa particularly, who survived war, terror, political oppression and extreme privations, and who emerged from these tests with their faith intact, determined to resume the interrupted work of building a viable Bahá’í

collective life. The community in Ethiopia, homeland of one of the world's oldest and richest cultural traditions, succeeded in maintaining both the morale of its members and the coherence of its administrative structures under relentless pressure from a brutal dictatorship. Of the friends in other countries on the continent, it may be truly said that their path of faithfulness to the Cause led through a hell of suffering seldom equalled in modern history. The annals of the Faith possess few more moving testimonies to the sheer power of the spirit than the stories of courage and purity of heart emerging from the inferno that engulfed the friends in what was then Zaire, stories that will inspire generations to come and represent priceless contributions to the creation of a global Bahá'í culture. Such countries as Uganda and Rwanda added unforgettable achievements of their own to this record of heroic struggle. — Universal House of Justice [CL 105-106]

Be faithful to the Cause/Bahá'u'lláh

Whatsoever is thy desire is found in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. If thou art asking confirmation and assistance, be thou faithful, firm and steadfast. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [TAB2 246]

Bahá'u'lláh endured the greatest hardships. He found neither rest by night nor peace by day. He was constantly under the stress of great calamity—now in prison, now in chains, now threatened by the sword—until finally He broke the cage of captivity, left this mortal world and ascended to the heaven of God. He endured all these tribulations for our sakes and suffered these deprivations that we might attain the bestowals of divine bounty. Therefore, we must be faithful to Him and turn away from our own selfish desires and fancies

in order that we may accomplish that which is required of us by our Lord. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [PUP 461]

For such benefits, for such an arresting and majestic vindication of the undefeatable powers inherent in our precious Faith, we can but bow our heads in humility, awe and thanksgiving, renew our pledge of fealty to it, and, each covenanting in his own heart, resolve to prove faithful to that pledge, and persevere to the very end, until our earthly share of servitude to so transcendent and priceless a Cause has been totally and completely fulfilled. — Shoghi Effendi [MA 104]

Strive to be faithful

But we, and the friends of God, should on no account slacken our efforts to be loyal, sincere and men of good will. We should at all times manifest our truthfulness and sincerity, nay rather, we must be constant in our faithfulness and trustworthiness, and occupy ourselves in offering prayers for the good of all.

O ye beloved of God, these are days for steadfastness, for firmness and perseverance in the Cause of God. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [SWAB 294]

O saints of God! at the end of Our discourse We enjoin on you once again chastity, faithfulness, godliness, sincerity, and purity. Lay aside the evil and adopt the good. This is that whereunto ye are commanded in the Book of God, the Knowing, the Wise. Well is it with those who practice [this injunction]. At this moment the pen crieth out, saying, ‘O saints of God, regard the horizon of uprightness, and be quit, severed, and free from what is beside this. There is no strength and no power save in God.’ — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [TN 48]

How can people demonstrate they are faithful

Oh, friends of God! If ye will trust in the Word of God and be strong; if ye will follow the precepts of Bahá'u'lláh to tend the sick, raise the fallen, care for the poor and needy, give shelter to the destitute, protect the oppressed, comfort the sorrowful and love the world of humanity with all your hearts, then I say unto you that ere long this meeting-place will see a wonderful harvest. Day by day each member will advance and become more and more spiritual. But ye must have a firm foundation and your aims and ambitions must be clearly understood by each member. They shall be as follows:

1. To show compassion and goodwill to all mankind.
2. To render service to humanity.
3. To endeavour to guide and enlighten those in darkness.
4. To be kind to everyone, and show forth affection to every living soul.
5. To be humble in your attitude towards God, to be constant in prayer to Him, so as to grow daily nearer to God.
6. To be so faithful and sincere in all your actions that every member may be known as embodying the qualities of honesty, love, faith, kindness, generosity, and courage.
7. To be detached from all that is not God, attracted by the Heavenly Breath—a divine soul; so that the world may know that a Bahá'í is a perfect being.

Strive to attain this at these meetings. Then, indeed and in truth will ye, the friends of God, come together with great joy! Render help one to the other, become as one

man, having reached perfect unity. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [PT 73-74]

A word or two from Shoghi Effendi [at the commemoration in the Holy Land to mark the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] made them feel the Master nigh, and made them realise as never before that it was only in following in His steps, and in living the life that He had, that we can prove our faithfulness to our Master’s Cause. It was indeed a night of meditation and prayer... — From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi [UD 18]

Faithfully work for the Faith

Ours is the solemn, the inescapable duty to labour faithfully and unremittingly to ensure that no opportunity is being missed, that no avenues are left unexplored, that might, however indirectly, contribute to the furtherance of those tasks that claim so insistently our immediate attention. That those into whose hands this dynamic Plan has been entrusted are aware of the essential character of their obligations and will discharge worthily their duties no one, viewing the range and quality of their achievements, can entertain the slightest doubt. — Shoghi Effendi [TDH 29]

Deeds of the faithful Bahá’í

Be ye not seated and silent! Diffuse the glad-tidings of the Kingdom far and wide to the ears, promulgate the Word of God, and put into practice the advices and covenants of God; that is, arise ye with such qualities and attributes that ye may continually bestow life to the body of the world, and nurse the infants of the universe up to the station of maturity and perfection. Enkindle with all your might in every meeting the light of the love of God, gladden and cheer every heart with the utmost

loving-kindness, show forth your love to the strangers just as you show forth to your relations. If a soul is seeking to quarrel, ask ye for reconciliation; if he blame you, praise him; if he give you a deadly poison, bestow ye an all-healing antidote; if he createth death, administer ye eternal life; if he becometh a thorn, change ye into roses and hyacinths. Perchance, through such deeds and words, this darkened world will become illuminated, this terrestrial universe will become transformed into a heavenly realm, and this satanic prison become a divine court; warfare and bloodshed be annihilated, and love and faithfulness hoist the tent of unity upon the apex of the world.

These are the results of the divine advices and exhortations, and the epitome of the teachings of the Bahá'í Cycle. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [BWF 353]

Duties of the faithful Bahá'í

The duty of the concourse of the faithful in this day should be but one duty, their purpose but one purpose, their aim but one aim, and the object of their endeavour but one object, and this is none other than to foster the spirit of unity and harmony, to serve and teach His Cause and to promote His Word. Such is the meaning of true faithfulness; and in this lies the good-pleasure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. — Bahiyyih Khánum [BK 174]

Faithfulness in relationships with others

The faithful are to treat others with joy

They that are endued with sincerity and faithfulness should associate with all the peoples and kindreds of the earth with joy and radiance, inasmuch as consorting with people hath promoted and will continue to promote

unity and concord, which in turn are conducive to the maintenance of order in the world and to the regeneration of nations. — Bahá'u'lláh [TB 36]

Treat people with faithfulness

Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancour may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourselves, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [WT 14]

As to thee, O maid-servant of God! Blessed art thou, for thou hast dealt with people in goodness and good favour. Do not seek from them any reward whatever, but seek all grace and beneficence from thy Lord, and even deal with the people of great oppression in faithfulness, for as much as this is becoming of the people of Bahá. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [TAB2 356]

... they view people in the light of the Blessed Beauty's call that the entire human race are servants of the Lord of might and glory, as He hath brought the whole creation under the purview of His gracious utterance,

and hath enjoined upon us to show forth love and affection, wisdom and compassion, faithfulness and unity towards all, without any discrimination. — Universal House of Justice [CL 9]

Be friendly to all

Be fair to yourselves and to others, that the evidences of justice may be revealed, through your deeds, among Our faithful servants. Beware lest ye encroach upon the substance of your neighbour. Prove yourselves worthy of his trust and confidence in you, and withhold not from the poor the gifts which the grace of God hath bestowed upon you. He, verily, shall recompense the charitable, and doubly repay them for what they have bestowed. No God is there but Him. All creation and its empire are His. He bestoweth His gifts on whom He will, and from whom He will He withholdeth them. He is the Great Giver, the Most Generous, the Benevolent. — Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 278]

... we, and the friends of God, should on no account slacken our efforts to be loyal, sincere and men of good will. We should at all times manifest our truthfulness and sincerity, nay rather, we must be constant in our faithfulness and trustworthiness, and occupy ourselves in offering prayers for the good of all. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [SWAB 294]

In every dispensation, there hath been the commandment of fellowship and love, but it was a commandment limited to the community of those in mutual agreement, not to the dissident foe. In this wondrous age, however, praised be God, the commandments of God are not delimited, not restricted to any one group of people, rather have all the friends been commanded to show forth fellowship and love, consideration and generosity

and loving-kindness to every community on earth. Now must the lovers of God arise to carry out these instructions of His: let them be kindly fathers to the children of the human race, and compassionate brothers to the youth, and self-denying offspring to those bent with years. The meaning of this is that ye must show forth tenderness and love to every human being, even to your enemies, and welcome them all with unalloyed friendship, good cheer, and loving-kindness. When ye meet with cruelty and persecution at another's hands, keep faith with him; when malevolence is directed your way, respond with a friendly heart. To the spears and arrows rained upon you, expose your breasts for a target mirror-bright; and in return for curses, taunts and wounding words, show forth abounding love. Thus will all peoples witness the power of the Most Great Name, and every nation acknowledge the might of the Ancient Beauty, and see how He hath toppled down the walls of discord, and how surely He hath guided all the peoples of the earth to oneness; how He hath lit man's world, and made this earth of dust to send forth streams of light. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [SWAB 20-21]

One of the teachings is that love and faithfulness must prevail in the hearts that men may see the stranger as a friend, the sinner as an intimate fellow, may count enemies as allies, regard foes as loving comrades, call their executioner the giver of life, consider the denier as a believer and the unbeliever as a faithful one—that is, men must behave in such a manner as may befit the believers, the faithful, the friend and the confidant. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [BWF 414]

Be faithful in marriage

Chastity implies both before and after marriage an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely

chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one's chosen companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and in deed. — From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, 28 September 1941 [LG 360]

Trust only those who are truly faithful

*Trust no man save him whose breast hath been dilated by God through the light of **faith**, whom God hath confirmed in His religion, and who is severed from all else save God and attracted by His fragrances. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [BWF 411]*

Be loyal to government

Also, Bahá'ís, in accordance with their exalted teachings, are duty bound to be obedient to their government. Elucidating this subject, Shoghi Rabbani says: 'The people of Bahá are required to obey their respective governments, and to demonstrate their truthfulness and good will towards the authorities... Bahá'ís, in every land and without any exception, should... be obedient and bow to the clear instructions and the declared decrees issued by the authorities. They must faithfully carry out such directives.' — Shoghi Effendi [qtd. in MUHJ63 597]

If a man deal faithlessly with a just government he shall have dealt faithlessly with God; and if he render it faithful service he shall rendered that service to God. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [Trustworthiness]

Government must be loyal and faithful to subjects

Governments should fully acquaint themselves with the conditions of those they govern, and confer upon them positions according to desert and merit. It is enjoined upon every ruler and sovereign to consider this matter

with the utmost care that the traitor may not usurp the position of the faithful, nor the despoiler rule in the place of the trustworthy. Among the officials who in the past have governed in this Most Great Prison some, praise be to God, were adorned with justice, but as to others, We take refuge with God. We beseech the One true God to guide them one and all, that haply they may not be deprived of the fruit of faith and trustworthiness, nor be withheld from the light of equity and justice. — Bahá'u'lláh [TB 127]

Faithfulness to the Covenant

Blessed is he that hath been enraptured by My wondrous melodies and hath rent the veils asunder through the potency of My might. Blessed is he who hath remained faithful to My Covenant, and whom the things of the world have not kept back from attaining My Court of holiness. — Bahá'u'lláh [TB 16]

Those who have been faithful to God's Covenant are of the highest ones in the sight of the exalted Lord. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [BWF 435]

Ye must be sincere and faithful, ye must follow the ordinances which refer to the Covenant of God, who is the solid edifice.

O ye beloved of God, know that steadfastness and firmness in this new and wonderful Covenant is indeed the spirit that quickeneth the hearts which are overflowing with the love of the Glorious Lord; verily, it is the power which penetrates into the hearts of the people of the world! Your Lord hath assuredly promised His servants who are firm and steadfast to render them victorious at all times, to exalt their word, propagate their power, diffuse their lights, strengthen their hearts,

elevate their banners, assist their hosts, brighten their stars, increase the abundance of the showers of mercy upon them, and enable the brave lions or teachers to conquer.

Hasten, hasten, O ye firm believers! Hasten, hasten. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [TAB2 442]

Blessed is that teacher who remaineth faithful to the Covenant of God, and occupieth himself with the education of children. For him hath the Supreme Pen inscribed that reward which is revealed in the Most Holy Book. Blessed, blessed is he! — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [CC1 251]

Faithful obedience to the teachings and institutions

Whenever My laws appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance, they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder. He doth what He pleaseth. He chooseth; and none may question His choice. Whatsoever He, the Well-Beloved, ordaineth, the same is, verily, beloved. To this He Who is the Lord of all creation beareth Me witness. Whoso hath inhaled the sweet fragrance of the All-Merciful, and recognized the Source of this utterance, will I welcome with his own eyes the shafts of the enemy, that he may establish the truth of the laws of God amongst men. Well is it with him that hath turned thereunto, and apprehended the meaning of His decisive decree. — Bahá’u’lláh [KA ¶7]

There are two main principles which the Guardian wishes the friends to always bear in mind and to conscientiously and faithfully follow... [the second] is the principle of complete, and immediate obedience to the Assemblies, both Local and national. It is the responsibility of these Bahá’ís administrative bodies to enable the community

to acquire, and increasingly deepen in the knowledge and understanding of the Cause. Doctrinal unity and administrative unity, these are the two chief pillars that sustain the edifice of the Cause, and protect it from the storms of opposition which so severely rage against it. — From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, 5 September 1936 [DND 61]

Faithfully guard the Cause of God

Let them be a mighty fortress to defend His Faith, an impregnable citadel for the hosts of the Ancient Beauty. Let them faithfully guard the edifice of the Cause of God from every side; let them become the bright stars of His luminous skies. — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [SWAB 10]

Be faithful custodians of God’s trust

... be faithful custodians of God’s trust, and be assured that such honesty and faithfulness will be richly rewarded from on High. — From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice [LG 257]

Exhortations to Bahá’ís to be faithful in particular ways

Be faithful to the word of God

There are two main principles which the Guardian wishes the friends to always bear in mind and to conscientiously and faithfully follow... [one] is the principle of unqualified and whole-hearted loyalty to the revealed Word. The believers should be careful not to deviate, even a hair-breadth, from the Teachings. Their supreme consideration should be to safeguard the purity of the principles, tenets and laws of the Faith. It is only by this

means that they can hope to maintain the organic unity of the Cause. There can and should be no liberals or conservatives, no moderates or extremes in the Cause. For they are all subject to the one and the same law which is the Law of God. This law transcends all differences, all personal or local tendencies, moods and aspirations. — From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi [DND 60]

As regards the statement of our own views and explanations of the teachings: Shoghi Effendi believes that we should not restrict the liberty of the individual to express his own views so long as he makes it clear that these views are his own. In fact, such explanations are often helpful and are conducive to a better understanding of the teachings. God has given man a rational power to be used and not killed.

This does not, however, mean that the absolute authority does not remain in the revealed Words. We should try and keep as near to the authority as we can and show that we are faithful to it by quoting from the Works of Bahá'u'lláh in establishing our points. To discard the authority of the revealed Words is heretic and to suppress completely individual interpretation of those Words is also bad. We should try to strike a happy medium between these two extremes. — Shoghi Effendi [PBA 24-25]

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. — Bahá'u'lláh [KA ¶149]

Do your job faithfully

In the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, it is incumbent upon every soul to acquire a trade and an occupation. For example, I know how to weave or make a mat, and you know some other trade. This, in itself is an act of worship, provided that it is conducted on the basis of utmost honesty and faithfulness. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [CC1 4]

All government employees, whether of high or low rank, should, with perfect integrity, probity and rectitude, content themselves with the modest stipends and allowances that are theirs. They should keep their hands unsullied and preserve their fair name from blemish... If a man deal faithlessly with a just government he shall have dealt faithlessly with God; and if he render it faithful service he shall have rendered that service to God. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [CC2 344]

Faithfully apply yourself to your studies

Although still young in age, you should endeavour from now, through close association with your fellow-believers, and through your faithful application to your Bahá'í studies, to prepare yourself for that day when you will be called upon, as a grown-up and responsible member of the Community, to take full part in the activities of the Cause, and thus prove yourself worthy of being a member of this world-wide Fellowship created by Bahá'u'lláh. — From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, 10 April 1939 [CC2 428]

The secret of faithfulness

Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance for it is the head corner-stone of the foundation itself. This wronged

servant has spent his days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service. He rested not a moment, till the fame of the Cause of God was noised abroad in the world and the celestial strains from the Abhá Kingdom roused the East and the West. The beloved of God must also follow the same example. This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Bahá! – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [WT 10]

Faithfulness in the Bahá’í Administration

Faithfulness in the conduct of Bahá’í administration

I am much impressed and feel deeply gratified to learn of your devoted and unremitting labours, individually and collectively in the field of service to the Cause; of your constant vigilance and watchful care in upholding its fundamental principles and guarding its essential interests; of the efficiency, faithfulness and vigour with which you are conducting the administration of its affairs throughout that land. – Shoghi Effendi [BA 47]

Elect faithful Bahá’ís

The strength and progress of the Bahá’í community depend upon the election of pure, faithful and active souls... – From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the friends in Persia, 9 April 1932 [CC1 317]

The electors... must prayerfully and devotedly and after meditation and reflection elect faithful, sincere, experienced, capable and competent souls who are worthy of membership... – From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, 1 July 1943 [CC1 317]

Responsibilities of those elected

... due emphasis should not be placed only on the concentrated authority, the rights, the privileges and prerogatives enjoyed by the elected national representatives of the believers, but that special stress be laid also on their responsibilities as willing ministers, faithful stewards and loyal trustees to those who have chosen them. — Shoghi Effendi [BA 143]

Defer to the faithful

Beware that ye swell not with pride before God, and disdainfully reject His loved ones. Defer ye humbly to the faithful, they that have believed in God and in His signs, whose hearts witness to His unity, whose tongues proclaim His oneness, and who speak not except by His leave. Thus do We exhort you with justice, and warn you with truth, that perchance ye may be awakened. — Bahá'u'lláh [SLH 231]

The faithless/unfaithful

Today the world is experiencing a frightening and horrible example of the way in which one group of so-called religious fundamentalists is violently enforcing its understanding of how to treat those they consider to be 'faithless' and 'infidels' by torturing and killing them. This is not the place to discuss whether they are right in their understanding of who the 'infidels' are or their misguided actions but their beliefs have in any case been overtaken by the teachings of the Manifestation of God for this day, Bahá'u'lláh. For not only have Bahá'u'lláh's teachings abolished concepts such as jihad, in the dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh the religious division of peoples into those who are faithful and those who are infidels has been abolished. This does not mean, however, that there is no distinction between them or that they have the same spiritual status. From the

writings it seems that whereas in the past those who were not faithful to the religion were considered to be cut off from the bestowals and love of God, in this day they are, like everyone, recipients of His grace and bounty. As Bahá'u'lláh explains, it is not God who fails to love an individual but the individual who fails to love God that creates the appearance that God is not showering His love on that person:

O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant. — Bahá'u'lláh [HW Arabic #5]

The attitude other have about such individuals is also to be different in this day. They are not evil but 'asleep', 'ailing' or 'immature' and should be 'awakened', 'healed' or 'trained', treated with kindness and love. Only in extreme cases, now determined by the Universal House of Justice after long investigation and attempts to rehabilitate the individual, will a person be declared a Covenant-breaker, association with whom by Bahá'is is forbidden for their own spiritual health. And even they are still able to receive the bounties of God.

The lack of faithfulness in the world

We exhort mankind in these days when the countenance of Justice is soiled with dust, when the flames of unbelief are burning high and the robe of wisdom rent asunder, when tranquillity and faithfulness have ebbed away and trials and tribulations have waxed severe, when covenants are broken and ties are severed, when no man knoweth how to discern light and darkness or to distinguish guidance from error. — Bahá'u'lláh [TB 137-138]

In the night season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, and wept with such a weeping

that the Concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. — Bahá'u'lláh [HW Persian #77]

Who are the faithless?

The faithless... by day and night, openly and privily do their utmost to shake the foundations of the Cause, to root out the Blessed Tree, to deprive this servant of service, to kindle secret sedition and strife and to annihilate 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Outwardly they appear as sheep, yet inwardly they are naught but ravening wolves. Sweet in words, they are but at heart a deadly poison. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [SWAB 315]

Whoso faileth to quaff the choice wine which We have unsealed through the potency of Our Name, the All-Compelling, shall be unable to discern the splendours of the light of divine unity or to grasp the essential purpose underlying the Scriptures of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the sovereign Ruler of this world and of the world to come. Such a man shall be accounted among the faithless in the Book of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. — Bahá'u'lláh [TB 105]

Among the faithless is he who hath imagined that calamities can deter Bahá from fulfilling that which God, the Creator of all things, hath purposed. Say: Nay, by Him Who causeth the rain to fall! Nothing whatsoever can withhold Him from the remembrance of His Lord. — Bahá'u'lláh [SLH 60]

Division of humankind into the 'faithful' and the 'infidels', is abolished

A fundamental teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing mankind, He says, 'Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.' By this it is meant that the world of humanity is like a tree, the nations or peoples are the different limbs or branches of that tree, and the individual human creatures are as the fruits and blossoms thereof. In this way Bahá'u'lláh expressed the oneness of humankind, whereas in all religious teachings of the past the human world has been represented as divided into two parts: one known as the people of the Book of God, or the pure tree, and the other the people of infidelity and error, or the evil tree. The former were considered as belonging to the faithful, and the others to the hosts of the irreligious and infidel—one part of humanity the recipients of divine mercy, and the other the object of the wrath of their Creator. Bahá'u'lláh removed this by proclaiming the oneness of the world of humanity, and this principle is specialized in His teachings, for He has submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity. Some are asleep; they need to be awakened. Some are ailing; they need to be healed. Some are immature as children; they need to be trained. But all are recipients of the bounty and bestowals of God. — 'Abdu'l-Bahá [PUP 454]

Among the many complementary Teachings in the Faith which resolve the dilemmas of past societies are those of the unity of mankind on the one hand, and loyalty to the covenant on the other. As already mentioned, no one in this Dispensation is compelled to be a Bahá'í, and the division of humankind into the 'clean' and the 'unclean', the 'faithful' and the 'infidels', is abolished. At the same time, anyone who does choose to be a Bahá'í accepts the

Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and, while free expression of opinion within the Bahá'í community is encouraged, this cannot ever be permitted to degenerate to the level of undermining the Covenant for this would vitiate the very purpose of the Revelation itself. – Universal House of Justice [from a letter, 27 April 1995]

Yet there is a difference between the faithful and the unfaithful

The sword He [Jesus] carried was the sword of His tongue, with which He divided the good from the evil, the true from the false, the faithful from the unfaithful, and the light from the darkness. His Word was indeed a sharp sword! – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [PT 56]

The following is an evidence of the sovereignty exercised by Muḥammad, the Day-star of Truth. Hast thou not heard how with one single verse He hath sundered light from darkness, the righteous from the ungodly, and the believing from the infidel? All the signs and allusions concerning the Day of Judgement, which thou hast heard, such as the raising of the dead, the Day of Reckoning, the Last Judgement, and others have been made manifest through the revelation of that verse. These revealed words were a blessing to the righteous who on hearing them exclaimed: ‘O God our Lord, we have heard, and obeyed.’ They were a curse to the people of iniquity who, on hearing them affirmed: ‘We have heard and rebelled.’ Those words, sharp as the sword of God, have separated the faithful from the infidel, and severed father from son. – Bahá'u'lláh [KI 111-112]

Be fair: Is the testimony of those acceptable and worthy of attention whose deeds agree with their words, whose outward behaviour conforms with their inner life? The mind is bewildered at their deeds, and the soul

marvelleth at their fortitude and bodily endurance. Or is the testimony of these faithless souls who breathe naught but the breath of selfish desire, and who lie imprisoned in the cage of their idle fancies, acceptable? Like the bats of darkness, they lift not their heads from their couch except to pursue the transient things of the world, and find no rest by night except as they labour to advance the aims of their sordid life. Immersed in their selfish schemes, they are oblivious of the Divine decree. In the daytime they strive with all their soul after worldly benefits, and in the night season their sole occupation is to gratify their carnal desires. By what law or standard could men be justified in cleaving to the denials of such petty-minded souls and in ignoring the faith of them that have renounced, for the sake of the good pleasure of God, their life and substance, their fame and renown, their reputation and honour? – Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 181-182]

Do not follow the faithless

Persevere steadfastly as Thou art bidden and let not the faithless amongst men nor their utterances grieve Thee, since Thy Lord shall, by the righteousness of God, the Most Great, pass judgement upon them on the Day of Resurrection, and surely God witnesseth all things. – The Báb [SWB 71]

Fear thou God, thy Lord, and make mention of His Name in the day-time and at eventide. Follow not the promptings of the faithless, lest thou be reckoned among the exponents of idle fancies. Faithfully obey the Primal Point Who is the Lord Himself, and be of the righteous. Let nothing cause thee to be sore shaken, neither let the things which have been destined to take place in this Cause disturb thee. Strive earnestly for the sake of God and walk in the path of righteousness. Shouldst thou encounter the unbelievers, place thy whole

trust in God, thy Lord, saying, Sufficient is God unto me in the kingdoms of both this world and the next. — The Báb [SWB 160]

The evil doings of the faithless

Verily Thou art God; no God is there but Thee. Alone and unaided, Thou art independent of all created things. Neither can the devotion of Thy lovers profit Thee, nor the evil doings of the faithless harm Thee. Verily Thou art my God, He Who will never fail in His promise. — The Báb [SWB 204]

Those who are not faithful to the Covenant

O My Friends! Call ye to mind that covenant ye have entered into with Me upon Mount Paran, situate within the hallowed precincts of Zaman. I have taken to witness the concourse on high and the dwellers in the city of eternity, yet now none do I find faithful unto the covenant. Of a certainty pride and rebellion have effaced it from the hearts, in such wise that no trace thereof remaineth. Yet knowing this, I waited and disclosed it not. — Bahá'u'lláh [HW Persian #71]

Blessed the one who hath remained faithful to the Covenant of God, and woe betide him who hath broken it and disbelieved in Him, the Knower of secrets. Say: This is the Day of Bounty! Bestir yourselves that I may make you monarchs in the realms of My Kingdom. If ye follow Me, ye shall behold that which ye were promised, and I will make you My companions in the dominion of My majesty and the intimates of My beauty in the heaven of My power forevermore. If ye rebel against Me, I will in My clemency endure it patiently, that haply ye may awaken and rise up from the couch of heedlessness. Thus hath My mercy encompassed you.

Fear ye God and follow not in the ways of those who have turned away from His face, though they invoke His name in the daytime and in the night season. — Bahá'u'lláh [SLH 64-65]

Happy is the faithful one who is attired with the vesture of high endeavour and hath arisen to serve this Cause. Such a soul hath truly attained the desired Goal and hath apprehended the Object for which it hath been created. But a myriad times alas for the wayward who are like unto dried-up leaves fallen upon the dust. Ere long mortal blasts shall carry them away to the place ordained for them. Ignorant did they arrive, ignorant did they linger and ignorant did they retire to their abodes. — Bahá'u'lláh [TB 257-258]

The Faithful Spirit

In the Bahá'í writings the 'Faithful Spirit' is generally understood to be Gabriel³, who appears to be a spiritual entity beyond the understanding of humans. The Faithful Spirit is mentioned at number of times in the texts:

We have revealed Ourselves unto men, have unveiled the Cause, guided all mankind towards God's Straight Path, promulgated the laws and have enjoined upon everyone that which shall truly profit them both in this world and in the next; yet they have pronounced judgement to shed My blood, whereat the Maid of Heaven hath wept sore, Sinai hath lamented and the Faithful Spirit was made to sigh with grief. — Bahá'u'lláh [TB 251]

They ascribed unto Him what caused the Spirit Jesus to lament in His Most Sublime Station, and the Faithful Spirit to cry out. — Bahá'u'lláh [PB 78]

They that have forsaken their country for the purpose of teaching Our Cause—these shall the Faithful Spirit strengthen through its power. A company of Our chosen angels shall go forth with them, as bidden by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise. —Bahá'u'lláh [GWB 334]

Conclusion

The concept of faithfulness appears throughout the English-language Bahá'í writings in different contexts and is applied to a number of situations and people. The writings provide definitions for the sort of people and actions that are 'faithful', for example '*they that have believed in God and in His signs, whose hearts witness to His unity, whose tongues proclaim His oneness, and who speak not except by His leave*' [SLH 231] and those who are 'unfaithful', including those who '*do their utmost to shake the foundations of the Cause*' [SWAB 315]. As a spiritual quality that can be demonstrated in the individual's attitude, behaviour and relationships with the Bahá'í Faith and its institutions as well as with other people, it presents an opportunity for deepening, reflection, meditation and practice.

As this is but a preliminary sampling of some of the Bahá'í writings, there is very little analysis possible at this stage but the subject is worthy of much deeper study.

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NOTES

¹ Many of the passages by Bahá'u'lláh quoted here have been translated by Shoghi Effendi; those of the Báb were translated by Habib Taherzadeh and a committee at the Bahá'í World Centre. Some of the passages of 'Abdu'l-Bahá have also been translated by a similar committee but most quotations from His talks are translations by various people or from notes taken by individuals listening to the translations. I have made no attempt to search out the Persian or Arabic words that are translated as faithful, faithfulness, loyal and so on, as to do so is not only beyond the scope of this essay but also beyond my own capacity.

² From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual, 23 March 1975.

³ See H. M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 46. and Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, *Miracles and Metaphors*, p. 21.