

Choosing Your Destiny

Hushidar Hugh Motlagh, Ed.D.



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Dedicated to
The Universal House of Justice

*The Light of Guidance and
the Beacon of Hope, Peace, and Justice
for the World*

I have formed you, and appointed you to be
a light to all peoples, a beacon for the nations.

Isaiah 42:6

He will make justice shine on the nations...
on every race, never faltering, never breaking
down, ***he will plant justice on earth...***

Isaiah 42:1-4

Though the mountains move and the hills
shake, my love shall be immovable and
never fail, and ***my covenant of peace shall
not be shaken.***

Isaiah 54:10

I will break bow and sword and weapon of war
and sweep them off the earth. Hosea 2:18

In the last days...Many nations will come and
say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of
the Lord...There he will teach us his ways..."
***Come, people...let us walk in the light of the
Lord!***

Isaiah 2:2-5

And I saw thrones and they sat upon them...
and they lived and ***reigned with Christ a
thousand years.***

Revelation 20:4

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Choosing Your Destiny

Bahá'í Faith: Teachings for Inner Peace and Purpose

Bahá'í Faith: Teachings for Global Peace and Unity

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King of Kings

In the Clouds of Glory

The Spirit that Acknowledges Jesus Christ

By My Fruits You Shall Know Me

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Heaven's Most Glorious Gift

Destiny is a Choice

On Wings of Destiny

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The Glory of the Father

Come Now, Let Us Reason Together

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The Remembrance of God

Unto Him Shall We Return

Others

Teaching: The Crown of Immortal Glory

Proclaim the Most Great Name

Does Your Fishbowl Need Fresh Water?

A Messenger of Joy

Tributes to the Bahá'í Faith

We have conquered the moon and now are reaching for the stars. Ninety percent of all the scientists who have ever lived, live in our time. Technical knowledge doubles every 10 years, yet spiritually we are afflicted. Every year our medical specialists save the lives of millions on the brink of death, while other millions in deep distress attempt to take their own precious lives. In the United States alone, every day, more than 2,000 people attempt suicide as an escape from intolerable living.

I am firmly convinced that the knowledge and the insight that the Bahá'í Faith offers, if adopted, can restore the spiritual health of the world and elevate the human race to tranquility and peace. The power and uniqueness of the Bahá'í Faith lies in this: it makes religion as practical and rational as science and the scientist as inspired and spiritual as the saint.

*Hon. Dorothy W. Nelson
Judge, Court of Appeals, 9th circuit*

[The Bahá'í Faith] teaches the essential unity of mankind under one God...That is a force which cuts across politics, trade routes, racial groupings the world around. It can be made a powerful force in the practical affairs of the world.

*Hon. William O. Douglas
U.S. Supreme Court Justice*

...the greatest movement working today for universal peace.

*Dr. Auguste Forel
Renowned Swiss Scientist*

Bahá'u'lláh was...without question one of the supreme spiritual geniuses of history.

*Dr. John Holmes
Clergyman*

Indeed a great light came to me with the message of Bahá'u'lláh...We pass on the message...and all those we give it to see a light...and much that was obscure and perplexing becomes simple, luminous and full of hope as never before.

...Search out their Books, and let their glorious ...words and lessons sink into your hearts as they have into mine.

Queen Marie of Rumania

...the greatest light that has come into the world since Jesus Christ.

*Professor Benjamin Jowett
Oxford University*

In our times we can only survive, and our civilization can only flower, if we reorient the conventional wisdom and achieve the new insights...proclaimed by the Bahá'í Faith and... now also supported by the latest discoveries of the empirical sciences.

*Dr. Ervin Laszlo
Editor of The World Encyclopedia
of Peace, Renowned Authority on
Systems Sciences and World Order*

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Part I

First Things First

Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least. Goethe

*Anything less than a conscious commitment to the important is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant.*¹ Stephen Covey

1

Choosing Your Destiny

The Most Critical Decision in Your Life

How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfill his high *destiny*, can attain!... Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of His grace.² Bahá'í Scriptures

How would you feel if someone else had the authority to decide what you should eat, where you should live, what you should do for living, and who you should marry? Now consider this question: What would be your religion if you were born in Saudi Arabia? What about Israel, India, or China? Would you not be a Muslim, a Jew, a Hindu, or a Buddhist, depending on what your parents believed,



and where they were born? As you can see, instead of taking charge, most of us give “Chance” the authority to choose our spiritual destiny. Why do we make this exception? Why do we choose our food, but not our faith?

This book invites you to set your soul free from the invisible trap of tradition; to leave, just for a little while, the track of your ancient ancestors. It inspires you to take a step for your spiritual destiny, to come to a new garden laden with luscious fruits and flowers of the Spirit.

As you advance in your journey, you will find that each of the great religions is like a beautiful garden that leads to one Gardner and Designer. ***You will see many flowers but one fragrance, many gardens but one God, many temples but one truth, and many ways but one worship:***

This is the way [to God], walk ye in it.

Isaiah 30:21

I am the way, the truth and the light.³ Zoroaster

Just this path, there is no other.⁴ Buddha

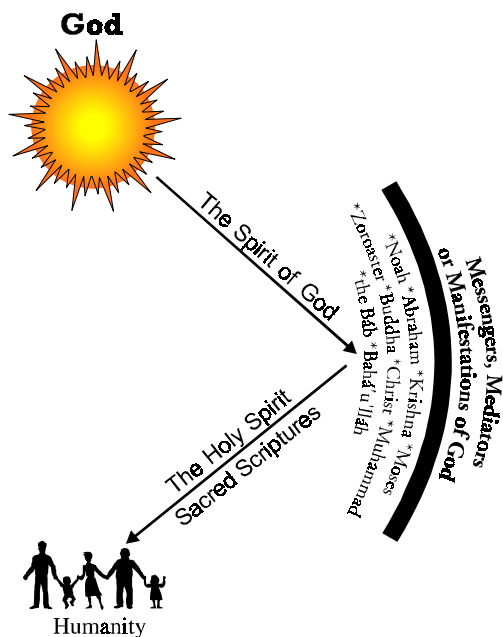
I am the way [to God]. Christ (John 14:6)

Follow me: this is the right way [to God].

Muhammad (Qur’án 43:61)

This is the Way of God unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.⁵

Bahá’í Scriptures



A rainbow is a blend of many colors. It has a beginning and an end, but is one circle of light.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End... Christ (Revelation 1:8)

Behold, He is now come...He Who is both the Beginning and the End...is now manifest before your eyes.⁶ Bahá'í Scriptures

Whenever there is decay of righteousness...then I Myself come forth...for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness. I am born from age to age. Krishna



This discovery of “many ways to one God” and “one truth in all great religions” will unravel to your soul the most awesome and exquisite beauty in the spiritual design of the universe. It will give you a new vision of your destiny, it will elevate your perspective to the paradise of peace, wonder, and oneness.

Your eternal destiny is by far your most precious gift. It is worth infinitely more than all the things you will ever own. Is it wise not to take charge, not to invest this most glorious gift of God in something that outlasts life, that will be yours for evermore?

O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high *destiny*.⁷ Bahá'í Scriptures

How superior must be the *destiny* of the true believer, whose existence and life are to be regarded as the originating purpose of all creation.⁸ Bahá'í Scriptures

Your spiritual choices matter infinitely more than *all* the other choices you will make. Everything ends except your soul, everything descends to a grave except your divine destiny. Why then not take some of the time you devote to the demands of your physical form—sleeping 8 hours, eating 2 hours, working 8 hours—and consecrate it to something that will be always yours: your own soul. Why not take 30 minutes each day away from your earthly pursuits and pleasures—watching TV, going to a party, or traveling—and invest it in heavenly pursuits and pleasures, in finding answers to questions such as: why are you here, and what on earth should you do for your journey to heaven?



Is there a sense of remorse deeper than realizing that you spent your life on things that did not really matter? At death, your spirit is the only thing that will remain of you. Taking time away from momentary demands of your body and worldly desires and devoting it to your eternal destiny is by far the wisest and most critical decision of your life. Do not allow either the convenient trap of procrastination, “Not now, later,” “I am too busy,” “Next year I will have more time,” or the common illusion of “Death has no power over me. I will be here forever,” to lull you into negligence, inaction, or complacency.

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE!

Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire!⁹

Bahá'í Scriptures

Your divine destiny is God's most precious gift to you. Do not throw it to the winds of chance.

You are the master designer of your life, whether you've realized it or not. Think of all your experiences as a huge tapestry that can be laid out in whatever pattern you wish. Each day you add a thread to the weaving...Do you craft a curtain to hide behind, or do you fashion a magic carpet that will carry you to unequalled heights?¹⁰

Anthony Robbins



Biographical Summaries

The noted author, Marzieh Gail, in her brief introduction to Bahá'í history wrote:

A columnist once said that the biggest scoop of all time would be the news of the return of Christ. He was mistaken. The return of Christ would never make the front page. The reason is this:

When a man appears calling himself the Messiah, he does not look as people expect him to look. There is no light around his head—the light is added by painters, long after he has died. He eats, walks, talks. He comes from a community where he has been known for years. And when he suddenly announces himself as a prophet, as one with a new message from God, his community laughs at him. Everybody knows, people say, that the Messiah will come seated on a throne, or riding on a cloud, and will preach the same religion that the priests are already preaching in the temples.

They laugh. The man continues to say that he is the servant of a Spirit that he cannot resist. The laughter grows to anger. Why is he so obstinate in his claim, this man they have known since he was a child. A few listen to him, and bear the hatred of the rest. The laughter stops. The hatred rises. The prophet is shut away—chained—perhaps killed.

But his voice goes on. People far away listen to it. Then...men and women in countries across the world build temples in the name of the man whose own people put him to death.



This drama is played all over again, every once in a while in human history. It has been played again, almost in our time. It did not make the headlines.¹¹

Since many readers may be unfamiliar with the major figures of the Bahá'í Faith, the following basic facts may prove helpful. A more detailed presentation of the Bahá'í history will be made later in Chapter 10.

- ***The Bahá'í Faith*** literally means ***The Glorious Faith***—the Faith that manifests ***the Glory of God***. ***Bahá'í*** means “one who is enlightened and glorified.”
- ***The Báb***. On May 23, 1844, a young man entitled the Báb (the Gate) declared the dawning of a new Day in the religious history of the world. The youth came from Shíráz in southern Persia. He announced that God would soon send a World Teacher and Savior to bring peace and order, to unify all humanity, and bring a new creation (“a new race of man”) into being. Within the brief span of His ministry (1844-1850), the Báb attracted many followers, thousands of whom were massacred, mostly by the order of fanatical religious leaders of Islam. The Báb Himself was imprisoned and finally executed in 1850 by a firing squad of 750 soldiers.
- ***Bahá'u'lláh***. In 1863, a nobleman entitled Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God) announced that He was the World Teacher promised by the Báb and expected by humanity since the dawn of history.



Like His Herald, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh encountered relentless opposition and oppression throughout His ministry. His imprisonment and exile lasted for 40 years. He often referred to His sufferings with both a sense of submission and honor—submission because He welcomed that which was ordained for Him, honor because He suffered for the sake of others—to bring hope and love to the heart of humanity, and peace and justice to the world. Bahá'u'lláh's Writings equal a hundred volumes, offering teachings and unveiling “all the truth” (John 16:13) that humanity will need for at least a thousand years.

- ***‘Abdu’l-Bahá.*** Before His passing in 1892, Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (Servant of Glory), to serve as the Interpreter and Exemplar of His teachings and the Center of His Covenant. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is also known as the Mystery of God. His station is not that of the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh, but of the Perfect Exemplar or Model for all to emulate. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá traveled to many countries, spreading the teachings of the new religion.
- ***Shoghi Effendi.*** Shoghi Effendi, grandson of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, did not consider himself one of the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith, yet he occupies a position of preeminence. After the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, he served as the appointed Guardian of the Faith. His chief accomplishment was the building of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh, which constitutes *a pattern* for the future World Order—an Order called by Christ the City that comes from heaven (Rev. 21:1-4).



- ***Universal House of Justice.*** Shortly after Shoghi Effendi's passing, the responsibility of leadership in the Bahá'í Faith was assumed by that universal assemblage, that supreme elected institution called by Bahá'u'lláh *The Universal House of Justice*. Its members represent and receive the full support of the entire Bahá'í community, which encompasses over two hundred countries and territories throughout the world.

2

A Glimpse of the Bahá'í Faith in My Life

What is the Bahá'í Faith? In this chapter I respond to that question by showing how and why I became a Bahá'í, what difference the Bahá'í Faith makes in my life in general, and in my professional life in particular. Because of widespread suspicion and skepticism toward religion, it may be helpful to see an actual example to demonstrate that the Bahá'í Faith is not just a set of grand ideals, that it does indeed make a difference to the way we live.

I grew up in a Bahá'í family, attended many classes, and listened to some of the best Bahá'í teachers. I



felt proud of my Faith, and was delighted to live in the Bahá'í community. For me going to Bahá'í classes and youth activities was heaven on earth. I could never have too much of them. My memories of those days are sweet and unexcelled.

Everything was well except for this: at times drifting doubts beclouded my faith. They would cover for brief moments even the blazing radiance of God. I would even doubt His existence. My heart was at rest but not my mind. I was 27 when I tried to solve the puzzle by reading every Bahá'í book I could find. I made a commitment to read one book a week until I had finished everything that was in print. For two years I kept up my commitment, but even a hundred volumes could not remove the remnants of the clouds.

I saw the days of my life passing swiftly and wanted to choose a direction before the journey's end. I did not want to find myself in the position of the family who traveled to Chicago for a vacation. They spent all day walking and sightseeing. By evening they felt exhausted and could hardly take another step. When they got to their hotel, they were told that the elevator was not working, and they would have to climb the stairs to the 30th floor! They had no choice but to accept the harsh verdict. But to make the climbing less painful, they decided to elevate each other's mood by sharing jokes. When they reached the 29th floor, it was the mother's turn to tell her joke. And she said, "I just discovered the best joke of my life! I forgot to get the key!" Many people go through their entire life without ever looking for a key. They simply



assume that when they get to the end they will find an open door.

Astonishing as it may seem, my extensive readings did not lead me in a clear direction. God had another plan for me. Transformation of my soul took place seemingly at the hands of two seekers who came to my home to investigate the Bahá'í Faith! They had written to the Bahá'í National Center for information. I invited them to my home. When they came, they brought along two old books about the afterlife, which they lent me. As I was glancing through one of those books, I came across some ideas about the development of the soul in the heavenly Kingdom. I found them remarkably similar to what I had read in Bahá'í sacred Scriptures. This realization suddenly created a miraculous momentum that, like falling dominoes, made every bit of resistance in my soul fall on its face. These few ideas changed everything in my life. They transformed my lingering doubts into certainty. Up to then I only “knew.” From then on I began to “see.” I cannot explain why or how this could have happened. The ones I was supposed to teach, my students, became my teachers. The reading of just a few pages in an old book transformed my life. It accomplished in less than an hour what the best teachers and over a hundred volumes had failed to do. My experience shows the awesome complexity and the mystery of being human and of believing.

The message on those pages was the “straw” that broke my resistance. Did God get tired of seeing me in suspense and decided to rescue me, or was



this all a coincidence? Many people would consider this a case of divine intervention.

Several months later I decided to write a book of proofs on the Bahá'í Faith. I still do not know why that thought crossed my mind, and I had no idea at the time where or when it would all end. I only remember writing a few paragraphs without any plans, without having the slightest idea that after 30 years, those few paragraphs would expand to six volumes, with no end in sight!

Good ideas satisfy the soul; but the mind always demands more. It asks “why?” Those six volumes are a response tailored to the demands of the mind.

Perhaps my attempt to write about proofs reflected my approach to life itself. I have always believed that the God who gave us both a mind and a Message would not make them strangers or adversaries. If they both come from Him, how can they be in conflict? That conviction has dominated my life.

Let me now focus on the way my faith has shaped my attitude towards my profession. Many people find no joy in working. For them going to work is a burden, not a privilege; an obligation, not an honor. The Bahá'í Faith has had a profound impact on my attitude about my job.

I teach child psychology, creativity, and mental health at a state university in Michigan. Every semester I receive marvelous gifts: 120 to 140 mostly young people, full of dreams, who accept a few years of self-discipline for a brighter life in the future.



As you may expect, I am not a typical teacher. Each day we sit in a big circle and share our thoughts, our hopes and dreams. We talk about understanding and unraveling the most mysterious creature in all the universe: the Human Being. We talk about self-esteem and self-actualization, creativity and communication skills. We talk about positive thinking, perception, Piaget, and paradigms. We discuss some personal problems we face now and some old ones that we have overcome. The students are reminded to respect all people and all views—even the irrational. They are told that the object of knowledge is love. Knowledge is the castle and love is the light. Who likes to live in a dark castle?

I encourage my students to raise their self-esteem by raising their values, and to distinguish themselves by deeds. I teach them that it is better to be a nice pet than a bad parent or partner. A man told his wife, “It is me or the puppy!” The next day his wife put this ad in the paper, “I have a cute, well trained puppy and a rude husband to give away. Take your pick!” Then I ask my students, “Which one would you pick?” The answer is always unanimous.

Most of my students plan to become teachers. I tell them that we teach far more by example than by words. A little boy was studying history. He asked his parents, “Why are the Catholics and Protestants fighting in Ireland? They both love Jesus. Don’t they?” His father said, “Because the Catholics are oppressed by the Protestants.” His mother said, “No dear, that is not true. The Catholics are too demanding.” The father yelled, “You are absolutely wrong!” Thus the parents were drawn into a heated argument



and a fight. At that point, the boy said, “You don’t have to tell me. I figured it out!” In just a few moments his parents taught him by example what an entire book could not do with words.

I also emphasize positive thinking as a way of reducing stress. Negativism is the prevailing disease of our time. Some experts estimate that over 70 percent of our thoughts are negative. Many people just try to find out what is wrong. Some of them worry that they have nothing to worry about! Have you heard the story of a pessimist who ordered two eggs for his breakfast? He said he wanted one of them fried, the other boiled. When the eggs were placed before him, he got angry. “What is the matter?” asked the waiter. “You fried the wrong egg,” he fumed. Compare that with the story of an optimist, an old lady who had lost all her teeth except two. She felt very grateful because the two teeth met.

Sometimes I tell my students this story related by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. One day, as Jesus and His disciples were walking, they saw the corpse of a dog. Each of the disciples complained of the horrible sight and the terrible odor. Jesus asked them why were they not looking at the dog’s perfect teeth.

I encourage my students to seek help for their personal problems privately in my office or in class. Learning from experience, I tell them, is the bridge that connects the ideal with the real. Let me cite an example of the problems the students face and the kind of solutions I recommend. This is a true story; it happened exactly as described.



Recently a student of mine (let us call her Dawn) told me about an “obnoxious, self-centered” sister-in-law she could not stand. She described her as a failure in everything she had tried. The problem was this: next summer Dawn and her husband would have to move to the house where the sister-in-law lived. She could not imagine living under the same roof with the one she despised, to listen all day long to the one whose first purpose and pleasure in life was body building, and whose second purpose and pleasure was to talk about it.

I spent about an hour giving Dawn encouragement and guidance. This is briefly what I told her: “I would like you to buy a gift for your sister-in-law and give it to her the next time you meet.” “Are you serious?” she exclaimed. “Yes, very much!” I responded emphatically. Then I followed with these encouraging words: “Carry out the project as an assignment, do it for my sake and for the class. Success in this endeavor will bring you the profoundest joy and honor. Conquering an ‘enemy’ by love is a magical achievement; it is the supreme honor, the loftiest path, the highest mountain a human being may be called upon to conquer. No task requires more strength, more commitment and sacrifice. The remedy for this patient is a dose of self-esteem sweetened with love. Be supportive of your sister-in-law and ask her a lot of questions about body-building!”

I cannot forget the excitement in Dawn’s face when about two weeks later she came to my office to tell me what had happened. “I can’t believe it! I can’t



believe it!” She shouted. “We have become good friends. She is telling me everything about her boyfriend. She trusts me. The other night, when she talked about her problems, there were tears in her eyes. She told me I was the only one who listened to her, the only one who really cared.”

Dawn’s husband is a psychologist. After seeing such a sudden transformation, he told his wife, “I am proud of you.” He was grateful that he could spend his summer in peace, that instead of enmity there would be amity, that bitter foes had become friends. Dawn probably helped herself more than she helped her sister-in-law. She was so proud of transforming trial into triumph, so proud of conquering an adversary. Without realizing it, she had also conquered her own self. This is the ultimate victory. This is true power. This is the sweetest triumph, whose spoils are not gold and silver but pride and honor, harmony, peace, and perfection.

The seemingly impossible became possible because of a little gift, a little tact, and a little love.

By the way, I had tried this strategy once on a colleague of mine who had become fervently jealous of my promotion. The outcome was similar but less dramatic. My colleague was more advanced in age and hardened by time. He did not become my close friend, but he learned to tolerate me.

We are continually faced by great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insolvable problems.

Many people in our time need therapy—*spiritual* therapy. Often I remind people of their spiritual



nature and nobility, and find this far more effective than any other therapy.

In my experience, most of my students' pains and problems arise from two deficiencies: low self-esteem and the lack of a spiritual purpose. Self-esteem provides a solid beginning and spiritual purpose a suitable and secure ending. To live in peace and stay in balance, every human being must be attached to both ends. Consider the example of a soccer player who must carry the ball towards the goal. His legs are his self-esteem. He needs their strength to stand, but legs are also for moving. The player also needs a goal or purpose to attract him, to motivate him to run.

Likewise, to fly, a kite needs a firm hand to hold it and wind to carry it aloft. The firm hand is self-esteem and the wind is the power of hope and faith, of spiritual aspiration and purpose. Religion provides for both of these needs. Psychology can help the player *to understand the process of carrying the ball or the kite*, but is quite helpless in providing either a spiritual purpose or a solid basis for self-esteem.

The students look up to me as an authority figure with power over their lives. The power comes from grades! I do not relish the power, but in this case I find it handy and invest it to make growing more pleasant.

Frankly, I am surprised that the state of Michigan pays me to do what I would have loved to do without pay. My deepest joy in my work comes from knowing that I can and do make a difference. My



job is not easy, but rewarding. Recently I hurt my back, and my doctor warned me to slow down or else. My philosophy is simple: if a candle burns out at both ends, it lasts half as long, but gives twice the light. I am all for that. The candle was almost blown out two years ago, and ten more times before that, each time for a different reason. My good luck comes from this: the candle still has lots of unpolished wax. When the wind blows, instead of dying out the candle puts out smoke. Part of the reason for its survival is the positive images and visions the candle of my soul sends to quiet the wind.

Most of the students come to class with one goal in mind: to get a good grade. And they want me to spend the whole semester preparing them for that goal. To many of them, getting a good grade from their teacher matters more than one from their Maker. Their thoughts range within a small circle.

My students have no idea of the surprises I have in store for them. I tell them right at the start: this is your first day; you are free to keep this course or to drop it. Please remember the main term of our contract: I am not here to prepare you for tests, but for life! I am not here to offer you in-formation but trans-formation. I am not here to give you fish, but to make you fishers of a grand destiny, of a splendid future.

To raise their vision, I tell them about the response of three mothers to someone who asked each of them what she was doing. The first one said, "I am changing a diaper." The second one responded, "I



am raising a daughter.” The third one declared, “I am raising a genius, a superstar.”

After many years of teaching I am still puzzled by the impact that my words of hope and encouragement have on the students. They respond like the thirsty who suddenly find themselves coming upon a stream in a faraway prairie.

They come to class with the expectation of filling their notebooks and leaving. I tell them learning without living is a travesty and living without loving is torture. It is better not to have lived than to live without loving. Most of them are surprised to hear the word *love* from an instructor. Love is something one expresses to a baby brother or little sister, to a cute pet or a special person, but not to strangers.

The pleasure of friendship and harmony soon breaks new grounds. Beautiful tulips of thought and splendid lilies and lotuses of love begin to bloom and blossom. Soon the students learn to support each other, to care and not to criticize.

Every semester I sense a new surprise at the human capacity for change. In my school days, I learned that it was hard to change people. Had it not been for a few “secrets” I have since learned, I would still espouse that view. The first secret is this: A new idea, like a seed, cannot take root and grow unless a small opening is made in the heart. The power that keeps the heart open and nourished is an abundance of *positive images and thoughts*. We are surrounded by “I can’t” “You can’t” and “It can’t” messages. After a while the distressing and



defeating signals sink in and we sink with them. Once people recognize that life is much brighter than they think, and that they ***already*** own an abundance of blessings, the humanity in them begins to bloom, a new dawn breaks in the soul, and the breath of the new Spring overwhelms them.

Dr. Ervin Laszlo, one of the most eminent scientists of our time, who has researched and written extensively on planetary peace and a global social system declares: "Positive visions and images create momentum, which move the nations to the desired end." Without them a nation is at risk. Without them an individual is at peril. History reveals that positive visions and images always precede the birth of great civilizations. The same holds true with individuals.

I work long hours every day. Sometimes when I am about to go to a class, I feel tired. My body dreams of rest; but my spirit, the commander-in-chief, knows better. Astonishing as it may seem, soon after I step into the classroom, my fatigue fades away. I gain strength from the exchange and excitement of sharing and learning, from the honor of seeing some thirty pairs of beautiful eyes peering straight at me with hope and anticipation. On many occasions my students have told me the same thing: that they come tired or depressed, but leave refreshed and spirited. Not that I do not look forward to the breaks, but that I find work in itself a break. What soothes my soul is this silent song that I constantly hear: "The next hour is heaven's gift to you. It is the precious currency of many lives, including yours. Invest it to make the world a little brighter and richer than it would have been



without you. These students may never again have a chance to learn what you fail to teach them now. You have the honor of living in their lives forever. Cherish the honor.”

What have I learned specifically from my faith that helps me in my profession?

- Work is not a curse but an act of worship. Loving what you do is an extension of loving the One who made working essential to living. You cannot love God and hate working, just as you cannot love God and hate worshipping.
- If you want God to be pleased with you, then **people** must be pleased with you. This is the Creator’s contract with all those who seek His blessings. You cannot love God and offend people, just as you cannot love your heart and hate your eyes.
- Learning is food for living. Unused, it spoils. Knowledge that begins and ends with words only burdens the mind. Like a cloud of dust, it obscures the light and stifles breathing. Knowledge is God’s splendid gift. But it is better **not** to have knowledge than to have it and not use it. As Jesus said, from those who have more, more will be expected.
- We are all together in one rocking boat. Each of us lives like a cell in the body of Humanity. The cells in the eyes never touch or meet the ones in the heart, yet they work for the same end. Harm to one is harm to the other. (This one takes a lot of practice to master, because many



people see interdependence to be an opposite to individualism and independence.)

When I began to teach I was under the spell of tradition. It took me quite a while to realize the fallacy of spreading facts at the expense of living and loving. I wish I had known then what I know now. But that is life; we grow from experience. I had no model to follow then except my own professors who were simply doing what *their* professors had done. In this I see an awakening lesson: we all suffer from blind spots. The danger comes not from the spots but from not seeing them.

I devote the last day of each class entirely to the story of my own life. The students have a chance to ask anything they wish to know about my background. No question is off limits. Students are curious and say they have not known any other teacher who would speak so openly about his life. Most people, especially professors, live a secret life. My willingness to disclose and decipher myself follows the philosophy that we can best learn from examples. Every life presents living lessons to others. "No one lives long enough to make all the mistakes by himself."

My preference is to talk about any subject other than myself. I simply feel uncomfortable in the spotlight. I know someday I will be fully exposed to that light. No one can escape a "life review." Perhaps I am getting some practice for that awesome and final disclosure.

Sometimes at the end of the semester, I invite my students to my home for a small celebration. They



find it hard to believe that an instructor prepares homemade cake for so many students. In return, they give me all kinds of thank-you cards and little gifts that I cherish.

What surprises my students more than anything else is my optimism. They wonder where it comes from. What surprises *me* is how contagious my optimism is. If I had not seen it, I would never have believed it. I instantly see a change in the students' attitudes on the *first* day. The change continues to grow day after day, week after week. I tell them that my optimism comes both from earth and from heaven. It comes from earth through my mother (now passed away) and from heaven through my faith. I tell them that I have never known a person whose love was as unconditional as my mother's. Like a fragrant flower, she spread her love equally to all people. It seemed everyone was her son or daughter. As to the influence of the Bahá'í Faith in creating a positive attitude, read *The Glory of Being Human* in the next volume and see if there is any room in your life for negative thinking. Where did my mother get *her* optimism? Mostly from her faith. The light always comes from heaven, from the main Generator.

Let me cite several brief examples from my students' anonymous weekly comments. *My purpose in citing the following comments is to reveal God's power in the life of a servant, and the positive consequence of that power in the lives of others. That servant could be anyone.* Without His power, all my optimism, and all my hopes and dreams, which



keep my soul aglow, would vanish as is bright sunlight obscured by drifting clouds.

The quotations that follow are examples from a single evaluation written by both graduate and undergraduate students after one class session:

- I love your positive attitude. It shines every day. This is extremely refreshing. It is so important to look at the positives in life—I feel that it is the only way to survive—please continue to share this attitude with us.
- I like all the stress on the *positive*—I need it for the research class about which I’m totally confused. I also like your sense of humor and ease with people. I really enjoy this class—it’s so refreshing. I also feel the knowledge I’m acquiring will be *invaluable* to me.
- The positiveness of the teacher—it is contagious. I look forward to coming to class. You are truly inspirational. Thank you!
- I love your philosophy on being a better person, a better teacher. I’m working! I appreciate the fact that you are treating us like adults. You also respect our ideas and opinions.
- You are extremely enjoyable to listen to. It is very nice to hear/see someone sooo...positive. I am looking forward to reaching my goal.
- I wish you could add some of your views and input into the university’s program. This is *the* most positive place I have found here on campus.
- My self-esteem has improved already. I look forward to class and am applying the results to



my life. It is nice to have a professor so concerned about his students as people, not just brains! You have a lot of knowledge behind your lectures. It shows by the way you speak.

- I'm really enjoying this class. I'm going through tough times right now and coming to this class is making me more positive, and I'm getting my self-esteem back. It's nice to have a class where you are always feeling good!
- Renaissance of success in attitude! You are personal, and a warm person and you show this throughout your delivery. It's great to have a teacher that cares about *my* self-esteem!
- Your positive attitude is an inspiration to me! You are the first teacher to offer outside help to his students. Thank you. It is nice to know that you care.

After reading one of my handouts, a student wrote: "Hurray! What an uplifting article. I think I could read this every Sunday morning instead of going to church, as your writing offers me a challenge to make myself a better person."

My offer of help to my students comes from this: I do not see myself separate from them. Their problem is *my* problem, their happiness is *my* happiness. So when I help them it is like helping myself. It is no sacrifice on my part and it doesn't take much time. In fact I take great pleasure in helping them solve their problems. For me it is a challenge. Take the example of Dawn, the girl whose sister-in-law was a perfectionist body builder desperately in need



of building her spirit. We had so much fun hearing her weekly reports.

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself. Ralph Emerson

Let me cite the reasons a few students came to see me this week. Two young men had lost their girlfriends and wanted to know how they could survive without them. One of them also suffered from low self-esteem and wanted help to gain confidence to speak in class. Another student was a minister who had resigned from ministry after fifteen years because he could no longer believe in some of the doctrines of his church. He had several theological questions he could not resolve. One lady wanted help for her food allergies because I told the class that I was an expert in the subject!

It seems most of our secretaries can also use some help. One of them had two daughters. They were both killed on a foggy day on their way to school. She was terribly depressed. I gave her a Bahá'í book on the afterlife. She did not believe she could ever see her daughters. Now she has a little hope. Her facial expressions testify to a change of heart. Another secretary suffers from a chronic disease, has a seriously sick mother, and a husband incapacitated and on kidney dialysis.

Several months ago I found one of them (who is a devout Catholic) very angry. I asked what was the matter. She complained about people's rudeness on the phone. I told her with an excited voice: "You



have a very important role. Don't underestimate your powers and privileges. When people are angry you can be sure, they have a reason..." Then I added softly: "Practice this imagery. When the phone rings, think that God is calling you, that He wants to speak to you through one of His creatures, some of whom are angry! Every time the phone rings say: here is one more chance to connect my soul to God. Remember that our Creator declares that when people are pleased with you, **He** will be pleased with you. Cherish every phone call. It gives you a chance to please God. It is a great honor to be in this position."

My words reminded her of all the things she had heard since childhood from her family and her church. By then her anger had abated and given way to a deep smile and an awakened and happy heart. Later, several times she said with humor in her voice "I am still doing the exercise you recommended." A little spiritual therapy lifted a burden from her soul. She already had enough problems at home and could hardly bear the annoyance of coping with angry people.

To conclude, I reached the point of certainty about the Bahá'í Faith when, I believe, God Himself intervened and gave me that most precious gift. I cannot explain, by human standards alone, the motivating power behind my sudden spiritual transformation. I felt like being in an ocean, and then suddenly recognizing its presence. The true measure of my gratitude to God for this gift is beyond my ability or estimation. I would have given anything,



even my very life, to receive it, and have no idea what life would have been like without it.

The Bahá'í Faith has made all the difference in the way I have experienced life and related to others. It has given me a wider and sharper view of the world, a telescopic image of human life on this planet. It has inspired in me a positive vision of the future, and an awareness of my role in spreading the fragrance of hope and optimism in this gloomy world.

I hope that this brief biographical sketch will help you appreciate the transforming power of the Bahá'í Faith, and make your journey of the search for truth a little more meaningful.

May God crown your life with jewels of joy and boundless blessings.

Hushidar Motlagh

Part II

Embarking on the Journey of the Search for Truth

To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues. John Locke

Of all duties, the love of truth...ranks first and highest. To love God and to love truth are one and the same. Silvio Pellico

The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving. Oliver Holmes

3

Riding on the Arch of a Rainbow

Our age is one of spiritual hunger. We stay so busy earning the earthly bread, we forget the heavenly. A little girl moaned, “Mommy, I have a bad stomach-ache.” “That’s because your stomach is empty. You will feel better if you put something in it,” her mother assured her. An hour later a family friend who had come for a visit complained of a continuous headache. The little girl had a ready solution: “That’s because your head is empty,” she exclaimed, “You will feel better if you put something in it!”



We are so engaged in the race, we forget the goal. We spend little if any time to reflect, to seek knowledge, to search for a meaning to life. We look for quick and easy solutions that require no effort. One child said to the other, "I am lucky. My dad is a doctor, I can be sick for nothing!" The other said, "I am luckier. My dad is a pastor. I can be good for nothing!"

We often see happiness as a rising star in the twilight of the future. We rush through the hours and days of our lives with our eyes fixed to the ground to avoid the mud-holes, so that we keep a balance on life's rough journey. The stress of coping and keeping up with daily demands leaves little time for spiritual fulfillment. Noted psychologist Eric Fromm declares that most of us die before we are fully born. A little girl was heard saying to her work-bound father, "Daddy, when you come home, could you please bring me a rat from the race?"

We devise attractive substitutes and distractions to quench the thirst of the spirit. But an "inner voice" keeps whispering that there must be more to living than working, saving, vacationing, retiring, and dying; that the dignity of being human deserves more, that it points to a more lasting purpose, to a more luminous horizon.

Therefore we assume that fulfillment must lie not at the beginning, but at *the end* of the rainbow. It will come later, when we make more money, meet a special person, buy an expensive toy, go on a cruise ship, or retire to an exotic island.



This book shows that there is no need to dream and wait for the future. As the renowned author and orator Dr. Leo Buscaglia declares, the future is now; the time to celebrate life is now; the time to love is now; the time to experience the wonders of being human is now; the time to grow is now; the time to choose the course of our destiny is now. The road to heaven and happiness is covered with gardens planted in due season; the road to grief and despair, with seeds planted too late.

This book invites you to take a break from the race, to pause and lift your gaze up and away from life's mud-holes. It offers you a chance to experience the exhilaration of embracing and ascending the arch of a magnificent rainbow—a warm and heavenly embrace that will lift you and lead you to spiritual fulfillment—the heaven of inner peace and harmony.

You need not dream of an elusive star; a splendid light stands within the reach of your arm. You need not wait for the end of the rainbow; the heavenly arch is nearer to you than your own soul.

Once you start to make the transformational awakening journey, there is no going back. You develop a knowledge so powerful, you will wonder how you could have lived any other way.¹

Your trust in God and in yourself as the instrument of His power and purpose determines the height to which you will ascend. Faith as little as a mustard seed can move a mountain; doubt as big as a mountain cannot move a mustard seed. As noted author and psychologist Dr. Wayne Dyer states:



Each person on this planet is inherently, intrinsically, capable of attaining “dizzying heights” of happiness and fulfillment. The main barrier to most people’s doing so seems to be fear—fear that the heights will make them dizzy...

There seems to be a widespread fear in our society of flying too close to the sun..When we look at humanity’s potentials for living in peace, harmony, productivity, even joy, and then look at the world as it is, the comparison is pathetic. And why has the human race gotten itself into this situation? For no other reason than that individuals have been blind to the limitlessness of their own potentials, and have spent their time striving to become average, to conform to what is traditionally expected of them, to fit into social structures that perpetuate the mess that much of the world is in.²

Many people spend all their lives on a wheel in a never ending journey of eating, drinking, sleeping, and working. They take little or no time for spiritual regeneration and renewal. What happens when a person loses sight of life’s purpose, when he reverses his priorities? Some young people exchanged the smaller front wheels of a mayor’s carriage with its back wheels. When the mayor went on a trip, he complained of the uphill road. And when he was told that the road is flat, he could not believe it. On his way back he discovered the reason for his uphill journey. That is what happens when we put our worldly desires ahead of our spiritual needs: Life becomes an uphill struggle.



Studies on the inner health of nations indicate that most people live in the dim twilight of life and death. In Thoreau's words, they pursue "a life of quiet desperation." They live as if they are cells, not souls, as if their goal is the dark solitude of the grave, and not the dazzling splendors of God. They investigate the mysteries of sub-atomic particles but ignore the marvels of their own self. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the authorized Interpreter of the Bahá'í teachings, declares, they "prefer to study the resemblance between their own body and that of the ape, rather than to contemplate the glorious affiliation between their spirit and that of God."³ In the words of the comedian Will Rogers, "God made man a little lower than the angels, and he has been getting lower ever since."

A Sunday school teacher proudly declared, "God made man in His wonderful image." Dan, a six year old boy protested, "But, teacher, my dad is a scientist and he says our great great great parents were monkeys." The teacher said, "Thank you Dan for sharing that information with us. But here we don't talk about anyone's genealogy."

A state of spiritual apathy and complacency prevails throughout the planet. Many people prefer a life of dreaming to one of wakefulness, search, and adventure. Two friends were listening to a lecture. When they left, one said to the other, "Did you hear Jan's snoring?" "Of course," responded the other, "that was terrible. She did not let me sleep."

Christ uttered the parable of the talents to portray the consequence of fearing to step out of one's



comfort zone, fearing to investigate new knowledge, fearing to learn, to grow and expand. Before going on a long journey, the Master (Christ) called his three servants and to each of them gave some capital to invest.

To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and *hid* his master's money.

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, '*I...was afraid* and went



out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant!...you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers...’

Matthew 25:15-27

What was the punishment meted out to the “one-talent,” *fearful* man who *hid* his talents? A perpetual life of despair, grief, and anger. Was that too harsh? Can a person be more unjust to himself and others than one who buries his marvelous talents for fear of the light? ***Manifesting one’s potential is the very purpose for which humans are made.*** Further, the punishment is always self-imposed. When someone hides from the splendors of the divine, he chooses to dwell in darkness, to descend to a life of quiet desperation, grief, and anger.

Theologian Alan Jones encourages each individual to investigate for himself firsthand the fundamental questions of life:

One of our problems is that very few of us have developed any distinctive personal life. Everything about us seems secondhand, even our emotions. In many cases we have to rely on secondhand information in order to function. I accept the word of a physician, a scientist, a farmer, on trust. I do not like to do this. I have to because they possess vital knowledge of living of which I am ignorant. Secondhand information concerning the state of my kidneys, the effects of cholesterol, and the raising of chickens, I can live with. ***But when it comes to questions of meaning, purpose, and death, secondhand information will not do. I cannot survive on a secondhand***



faith in a secondhand God. There has to be a personal word, a unique confrontation, If I am to come alive.⁴

As psychologist Dr. Robert Anthony notes:

Behind every success, or every seeming miracle of healing, there is a very simple cause—an idea...Ideas are the way out of those self-imposed limitations which can be a prison and a hell... That is why meditation is such an important part of successful living—it opens you to inspiration and understanding. When you meditate...you will never fail to receive ideas.⁵

Despair and cynicism have no place in human life. They are vacuums produced by the absence of knowledge. The following are clues for finding the gateway of heaven:

- From God's perspective the world is perfect; we can see the perfection only through His telescope.
- A mind, like a parachute, does not work unless it is open.
- If we do what God asks, only the best can happen to us.
- The human mind is made for discovering and creating, not conforming.
- God does not close a door without opening a window.
- Only those who knock will find open doors. "Knocking" means praying sincerely and seeking knowledge constantly.



“Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.” Opportunity knocks only once in a great while, but complacency keeps knocking all the time. Noted psychiatrist Dr. Scott Peck invites us to a journey of perpetual search and an ever-expanding vision:

Most of us operate from a narrower frame of reference than that of which we are capable, failing to transcend the influence of our particular culture, our particular set of parents and our particular childhood experience...It is no wonder, then, that the world of humanity is so full of conflict...human beings, who must deal with each other, have vastly different views as to the nature of reality, yet each one believes his or her own view to be the correct one since it is based on the microcosm of personal experience. And to make matters worse, most of us are not even fully aware of our own world views...⁶

To develop a religion or world view that is realistic...we must constantly revise and extend our understanding to include new knowledge of the larger world. We must constantly enlarge our frame of reference.⁷

“We are all prisoners of our self-imposed limitations. We do not realize we have been in prison until we have broken out.” As former UN Secretary Dag Hammerskjöld declared, “Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it is.” A teacher asked her students to go out and count the stars.



Everyone came up with big numbers except a little girl who said, “I could see only one star.” When the teacher asked why, she responded, “Because my eyes are small.” Some people’s visions, like the little girl’s eyes, are too small to see the grand banquet of God.

Some of us keep our vision focused only on the visible. In a recent flood in California, a fifteen-year-old boy saw his beloved bicycle being swept away by fast-flowing torrents. In a desperate attempt to save his toy he lost his life. Most people are shocked by what happened. Yet without knowing, they follow the boy’s example. They exchange their whole life to accumulate toys they know they must leave behind. The difference is this: they do in a lifetime what the boy did in an instant.

Many people are so used to the dark, they cannot live in the light. A prisoner was set free after 22 years. Eight weeks later, he went to the judge and asked to be sent home. “Where is your home?” the judge asked. “Prison,” he replied. He had found himself outside his comfort zone. Freedom was his prison, prison his freedom.

In a famous trial recently broadcast in the United States, the judge instructed the jury in these words: “Be fair, be impartial. Judge in the light of reason.” That simple instruction can change the world into a place of peace and wonder. If followed, it can transform the dark of despair into the light of hope and fulfillment. As Bahá’u’lláh, the Founder of the Bahá’í Faith, declares:



The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.⁸

Without knowing it, we are the juries of our own destiny. The judgments we make now determine if we will live in the prison of fear or in the paradise of freedom, in the dim twilight of illusions or in the luminous light of truth. This book is an attempt to reveal a glimpse of the life beyond the clouds.

Each one of us is a gift from God. How we treat this gift, how we polish and prepare it is *our* gift to Him. As sacred Scriptures teach, we are God's and unto Him shall we return.⁹ Will the gift be worthy of the Gift-Giver?

“There were two young men who thought they knew all the answers. They had been able to outsmart all the people in town and make a great deal of money, by fair means or foul. But there was a wise old woman who lived up on a hill, whom they simply could not outfox. One day one of the men said to the other: ‘We’re going to show the old woman that she doesn’t know everything, that she doesn’t have all the answers. We’ll go up on the hill, catch a bird, and ask her what we have in our hands, and she’ll answer, ‘It’s a bird.’ Then we will say, ‘If you are so wise, old woman, if you know everything, tell us, is the bird alive or is it dead?’ And if she answers, ‘The bird is alive,’ we’ll crush it in our hands and kill it. And if she



answers, ‘The bird is dead,’ we’ll open our hands, and the bird will fly away.

“So the two know-it-all’s went up on the hill, caught a bird, and knocked on the old woman’s door. ‘Tell me, if you know everything,’ one of them said, ‘if you are so wise, what’s this I have in my hands?’ The old woman said, ‘Why, it’s a bird, my son.’ And the smart aleck said, ‘Then tell me, wise old woman, is the bird alive or dead?’ The old woman hesitated, and then, looking deep into the young man’s eyes, she replied, ‘It is all in your hands.’”

How regrettable indeed that man should debar himself from the fruits of the tree of wisdom while his days and hours pass away swiftly.¹⁰ Seize the time, therefore, ere the glory of the divine springtime hath spent itself..¹¹ Bahá’u’lláh

Only have faith, patience and courage—this is but the beginning...surely you will succeed, for God is with you.¹² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

4

Spiritual Transformation and Fulfillment

I have always been delighted at the prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start, with perhaps a bit of magic waiting somewhere behind the morning.

We are made in God's image, which lies hidden in our soul. Our life's purpose is to manifest that image. Transformation is the process by which the hidden image is revealed. A little girl and her mother were visiting a friend. As the little girl was walking through the gardens, she saw a peacock with its wings outstretched, a scene she had never seen before. She got so excited, she ran to her mother and shouted, "Come quickly, a chicken is in



bloom!” Yes, transformation is the blooming of a lowly bird into a lofty and princely peacock. Like the little girl, we seldom see a soul outstretched, a mind expanded, a heart in full bloom.

A peaceful world and a peaceful mind; if we had both, we would have heaven on earth. Prophecies predict and the Bahá’í writings confirm that we are on the verge of having both: a peaceful world for the mind and a peaceful mind for the world. We are witnessing the dawning of “a new heaven,” the gift of “a new earth,” and the birth of a new vision of human life and purpose.

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered ...be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create...

Isaiah 65:17-18

This book is an invitation to spiritual adventure, a call to new frontiers of knowledge, a journey to self-awareness and understanding.

True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his self.¹

Bahá’u’lláh

“Of all human resources, the most precious is the desire to improve.” The Bahá’í Faith offers you a chance for spiritual trans-form-ation, the inspiration to go beyond your present “form” to see a far more splendid image of yourself and your destiny.

Is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly...?²

Bahá’u’lláh



Bahá'u'lláh reveals an enchanting world—a world, which like a revolving kaleidoscope, allows you to see as yet unseen and sublime images in yourself and your future. He offers you the incentive to search and to soar above your present “form,” to overstep the boundaries you have set on yourself, to evolve and reveal an ever-increasing and ever-glowing spectrum of beauty and harmony locked deep within you.

Let this be written for a future generation, that
a people not yet created may praise the Lord...
Like clothing you will change them...

Psalms 102:18,26

I will give them one heart and one way of life...
Jeremiah 32:39

We have, then, called into being a new creation,
as a token of Our grace...³ Bahá'u'lláh

And the splendor of that light is in the hearts,
yet it is hidden under the veilings of sense and
the conditions of this earth, even as a candle
within a lantern of iron, and only when the lan-
tern is removed doth the light of the candle
shine out.

In like manner, when thou strippest the wrap-
pings of illusion from off thine heart, the lights
of oneness will be made manifest.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Lift up the veil that..ye may...behold that which
no eye hath beheld, and hear that which no ear
hath heard.⁵ Bahá'u'lláh



Once you have lifted “the veil” and seen the blooming of your self and “the beauty of the Beloved,” you will gain a momentum that can move the world, that can transform the human race, that can turn the dark of gloom and grief into the dawn of glory. “Once you start to make the transformational awakening journey, there is no going back. You develop a knowledge that is so powerful that you will wonder how you could have lived any other way.”⁶

But before this magic can happen, before the beautiful but concealed butterfly of your soul can reveal its wonders, tear the veil, and soar to the grand arena of freedom and harmony, you must replace all your negative thoughts (“I can’t.” “It is impossible.” “It is hard.” “It is too late.” “I don’t have time.”) with ***positive visions and images***:

You have so little faith...if you have faith...
Nothing will be impossible to you.

Christ (Matt. 17:20-21)

As you have faith, so shall your powers and
blessings be.⁷

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

He whom the grace of Thy mercy aideth, though
he be but a drop, shall become the boundless
ocean, and the merest atom which the outpour-
ing of Thy loving-kindness assisteth, shall shine
even as the radiant star...⁸

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

A little girl knocked on a door. A lady opened it
and inquired: “What can I do for you?”

Girl: I want to sell cookies to save the planet from
pollution.



Lady: How much money is needed for this?

Girl: Billions of dollars.

Lady: Do you plan to collect all that money by yourself?

Girl: No, I have a friend.

Lady: Is he as little and young as you are?

Girl: No. He is a lot bigger, older, wiser, and kinder. You may have heard about Him. His name is God.

Uncertainty, doubt, and unwillingness to make a commitment pose the first obstacles to change:

Pass beyond the baser stages of doubt and rise to the exalted heights of certainty.⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF MAN!

Many a day hath passed over thee whilst thou hast busied thyself with thy fancies and idle imaginings. How long art thou to slumber on thy bed? Lift up thy head from slumber, for the Sun hath risen to the zenith, haply it may shine upon thee with the light of beauty.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

We should advance from the stage of simply “hearing” or knowing to that of “seeing” the beauty of the Beloved in all His splendor:

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eyes see You. Job 42:5

It is said that “seeing is believing,” but the reverse is also true: “believing is seeing.” Believing attracts blessings and activates unseen powers to remove the veils and to expand your vision.



Every journey begins with a first step. Before any transformation can take place, we must be willing to unlock our heart and let a glimmer of light reach the vast—indeed infinite—realm of our higher consciousness. This story illustrates the point. A man lost his key and kept searching for it in the street. A friend came along and asked:

“What are you doing?”

“I am looking for my key.”

“Where did you lose it?”

“Inside my house.”

“Then why are you searching for it in the street?”

“Because the door to my house is locked and there is more light outside!”

The house is the inner self and the street the outer world. Many search for answers all around them, while their hearts are closed. Unless the heart is unlocked and a glimmer of the light let in, no new frontiers can be seen, no transformation can take place. Without the glimmer and glory of that light, the kaleidoscope cannot reveal its enchanting images. Spinning alone in the darkness of desire will not unravel our divine potential; it will only lead to dizzying and distressing spells.

Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful...¹¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

I Corinthians 3:16



No one can unlock the heart except the heart itself. No one else has the key, nowhere else can it be found. Duplicates are simply unavailable.

All that which ye potentially possess can...be manifested only as a result of your own volition.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

Our efforts, like a magnet, attract the divine blessings.

For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you.¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

The “self” as God made it is free and flawless. Little by little we build walls around it, and put ceilings above it. We insulate it against heat and cold. At first we feel comfortable and secure. But soon the rain falls, the wind blows, and everything begins to shake and fall.

John Quincy Adams is well but the house in which he lives at the present time is becoming dilapidated. It's tottering on its foundations. Time and the seasons have nearly destroyed it. Its roof is pretty well worn out. Its walls are much shattered and tremble with every wind. I think John Quincy Adams will have to move out of it soon. But he himself is quite well, quite well. John Quincy Adams

If you say, “Why do I need personal transformation? I am doing fine,” then examine the following passage from Dr. Wayne Dyer, a noted author and psychologist who has transformed many thousands, perhaps millions, of lives. This is what he says about himself:



I never imagined myself needing to change. I did not have a plan to change my old ways, or a set of goals to improve anything in my life. I felt confident that I had my life running the way I wanted it to. I was extremely successful professionally, and nothing seemed to me to be missing. Yet I have undergone a major transformation that has added a luster to each of my days that I never even contemplated a few years ago.¹⁴

An essential step to self-growth is humility, the deflating of the ego. A politician once asked a saint if she could teach him the best lesson she had learned in life. The saint indicated that she could not teach him that lesson but would help him discover it for himself. The saint told him to go into the woods, raise his eyes and hands heavenwards, keep them that way for at least half an hour a day until the answer was revealed to him. The next day the politician came to the saint and said, "I did exactly what you told me to do, but didn't receive any revelation. If anything, I felt more like a fool." "Well," replied the saint, "Isn't that a good revelation for a first try?"

No human being can estimate his own potential, can conceive the heights to which he can ascend. "It is a simple procedure to calculate the number of seeds in an apple. But who among us can ever say how many apples are in a seed?"

Blessed are those who recognize the thirst in their soul for spiritual knowledge, those who see the poverty in their spirit, those humble enough to



acknowledge and mourn their own pains and suffering as well as those of others:

Blessed are the poor [humble] in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Christ (Matt. 5:3-6)

Most people pursue a life of quiet desperation. Some live in a state of panic; they run about aimlessly. Others vegetate in a state of inertia: they feel bored, depressed, unable to advance. Others are always running but never arriving. They chase an elusive butterfly that forever eludes them. Still others only cope and conform; their goal is to be “normal.” Very few people—noted psychologist Maslow estimates only one percent—experience the abundant life with all its wonders and ecstasies.

Some people are as immovable and unreachable as a damp stump, and if confronted with the spark of the Spirit, they instantly emit the smoke of resistance to smother the spark. They are as obstinate in their ways as a little girl whose mother asked her to do some task. She said, “I don’t want to.” Her mother responded, “Then do what you want to.” The little girl yelled, “But I don’t want to do what I want to do.”

I once met a retired director of a university library who proudly declared that he had plenty of time to read. Instantly I thought he would be a good candidate for a book offer. I said, “With all the free time you have, would you like to read a book with



a spiritual or religious tone?” He had his finger on the trigger. “I have been doing fine without God and faith for the last seventy years,” he declared proudly. I knew I was in trouble. One more miscalculation on my part! I knew right away that I had met a dead end road and so I changed direction. What I wanted to tell him was this: “Did not the world get along without electricity?” Of course that would have triggered a sharp argument—one I would try to avoid unless I was sure of winning! and there was no prospect of that. Once I heard on the radio that when electric light arrived, the candle industry was threatened!

Some people like to be lost in their dreams and illusions and they don’t like interruptions. A woman said to her pastor: “I really liked your sermon today.” “Why?” asked the pastor. “Because you interrupted my thoughts only five times,” she answered.

Some people want to avoid or postpone the inevitable. They try everything within their power to stay safely in their comfort zone. A woman invited a friend to a meeting on spiritual transformation. The friend arrived just when people were leaving. The woman asked him, “Why are you so late?” “Because,” he answered, “when I want to do something extraordinary I flip a coin to tell me if I should proceed.” “But flipping a coin doesn’t take that long!” “Well,” he responded calmly, “I was not getting the right answer. So I flipped the coin 200 times to see if I could find any pattern. At last I got tired, and decided to come!”

As a proverb teaches, a person who “knows that he knows not” is on his way to perfection. A person



who “knows not that he knows not” is asleep. He needs awakening. (It seems most people live in this state.) A person who “knows not but thinks he knows” is in trouble. He needs a change of heart. As long as we think we are green, we continue to grow. The moment we think we are ripe, we begin to rot.

Our stress and distress come mainly from a mistaken identity, from taking “the house” for “the householder.” It comes from assuming that the real “I” is the visible frame rather than the intelligent, invisible resident. The mistaken identity offends and agonizes the owner of the house. It causes incalculable pain and suffering to the highly sensitive occupant. If this brief and simple message were taken to heart, it would impregnate our planet with great transformational powers that would give birth to a new race of humanity, a new creation:

Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy.¹⁵

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Consider the metaphor of a fruitcake, adapted from Dr. Dyer. Suppose you see a beautiful picture of a fruitcake on a package. You buy it and take it home. When you open the package, you find none of the beauty inside. Disappointed, you throw away the content and keep the package, cherishing, praising, and watching it with the hope that it may suddenly transform into a nourishing, tantalizing cake. But your hunger pangs continue to complain and to remind you that no nourishment can come from looking, hoping, and dreaming. As Dr. Dyer concludes:



Your life may be just like that. You may be paying so much attention to the package that contains the real you that you toss away the most vital ingredients. Your form is the package, and while its beauty and appearance may seem all-important, it primarily serves to contain all the rest of your magnificent humanity. The container cannot give you the pleasure and satisfaction and nourishment that the contents do. Even though you cannot see what is inside that beautiful package, you know that whatever it is provides you with important and irreplaceable nourishment. A lifetime of focusing exclusively on the package will result in a spiritually undernourished and quite unhappy you.¹⁶

The package is already made. It is as perfect as it can be. But the flour is as yet unpalatable. To reveal its potential, it must be beaten, kneaded, molded, and baked in the fire.

Signs of Spiritual Perfection

What are the signs of beauty and perfection that lie hidden in every soul?

As psychologist Abraham Maslow notes, only one percent of people attain self-actualization; the other ninety nine percent fall short of fulfilling their potential. We have forgotten the enduring joys and pleasures that God has ordained for us. We have shifted the basis of our hope and happiness from our heart and soul to our physical form. We often act like a guest who goes to a most magnificent



feast, but instead of sitting, enjoying the scene, laughing, and listening to the music, picks up a sandwich and runs away.

Do you wish to become more spiritual? That is the main purpose of this book. If you read it with a receptive heart, it will inspire you to cultivate and reveal your soul's inner perfection.

The following are a few of the countless images of beauty and splendor that will dwell in the heart once it has been unlocked to allow the light of knowledge to enter and abide therein.¹⁷

- A tendency to see a wider and sharper image of the world.
- An inclination to think and act spontaneously as unspoiled children, to flow with life.
- An increased capacity for advancing to peak experiences of joy and beauty, and a sense of oneness with the world.
- A strong desire for extending friendship to yourself and others.
- A heightened susceptibility to fall in love with all people and all things and be unable to free yourself from the love.
- A tendency to be so enchanted by your journey of spiritual transformation, that you will gladly cancel all your other "trips."
- An inclination to accept people as they are.
- A tendency to become so busy counting your blessings, you will have little time for anything else.



- An increased capacity for abandoning some of your favorite illusions.
- An opportunity to experience an intense thirst for knowledge.
- A surprise to find fulfillment and contentment chasing you rather than you chasing them.
- An intensified unfolding of your creative potential.
- A tendency to reveal the child in you without embarrassment, to see the humor and the lighter side of life.
- A tendency to shed tears often—that is, the tears that come from the joy of fellowship with God.
- A surprise to see some of your symptoms such as headache or fatigue fade away without any apparent reason.
- An inclination to celebrate *every* day and not wait for *special* days.
- A tendency to speak to God more often and enjoy the conversation.
- An ability to find the practice of a moral life a privilege and pleasure, rather than a pressure.
- An inclination to be so busy looking for the best in people that you won't have time, and lose all desire and ability, to look for anything else.
- A tendency to uncover lessons or stepping-stones in adversity; to find a reason for everything.
- An increased ability to know that only the best can happen to those who live an awakened and enlightened life.



- A surprise to find yourself in the grip of peace and happiness and be unable to release yourself.
- A tendency to trust God and leave the unmanageable to His care.
- A loss of the ability to complain or worry for no apparent reason.
- A desire to cherish every moment of life as a gift from God.
- A tendency to be fascinated by the unknown and unfamiliar rather than to feel anxious or frightened.
- An increased capacity to fill the gap between what is and what should be.
- A tendency to feel both empowered and helpless, both glorified and humbled.
- An enhanced ability to be ruled by compassion, conscience, and justice rather than concern for personal consequences.
- A desire to cherish each person as a precious book filled with living lessons.
- A tendency to seek friendship with the pure and humble, and to avoid the pompous and pretentious.
- An increased capacity for finding abundance in your life—even if you are poor—and for sharing and giving.
- An ability to live for today and to prepare for and look forward to tomorrow.
- A tendency to see an enduring purpose and meaning in your life.



- An inclination to transform the agony of loneliness into the enjoyment of solitude.
- An ability to endure less the pain of complaining of problems and enjoy more the pleasure of finding solutions.
- A susceptibility to fall in love with God, and to thank Him and glorify Him both in good times and bad times.
- An inclination to experience frequent outbreaks of laughter and a loss of all sense of boredom.
- An increased capacity for experiencing a sense of awe, wonder, and ecstasy.
- An increased wisdom to see the “big beautiful picture” and not be distracted by little scratches or marks on the frame.
- An inclination to forget yourself and remember others.
- A tendency to cheer up, stir, and inspire people, but never to drag them up the mountain.
- An expanded capacity to become detached from all (people, power, and possessions), except from God.
- An insight to find pleasure in both work and worship, and to view them as one.
- An increased wisdom to see death as a door to a *new and expanded* heaven—the second one—for you have already experienced the first heaven here on earth.

If you find the slightest exaggeration in any of the portrayed images, ponder these promises once again:



You have so little faith...if you have faith...
Nothing will be impossible to you.

Christ (Matt. 17:20-21)

As you have faith, so shall your powers and
blessing be.¹⁸

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Illusion of Future Happiness

Our life, like our busy highways, is growing more hectic and crowded. The demand on our time is increasing relentlessly. The result is this: we seek quick remedies for our headache, toothache, or toe ache, but ignore, deny, or suppress the ache in our spirit. We do this despite knowing that we shall lose all—the head, the tooth, and the toe—but keep the spirit, the real owner of everything, the only “I and me.” By so doing, we become strangers to our own selves. Is the householder the house or is the house the householder?

- We bathe and cleanse our bodies but not our souls.
- We change our attire, but not our attitudes.
- We beautify our skin, but not our spirit.
- We seek a clear complexion but not a clear conscience.
- We polish our nails and our cars but not our character.
- We open our clogged arteries but not our minds.
- We worry about our ulcer, but ignore our ultimate destiny.



- We bask our bodies in the sun but leave our hearts in darkness.
- We fill our closets but leave our souls empty.
- We clear our gardens from weeds but not our conscience from guilt.
- We remove a callous from our toes but leave callousness in our hearts.
- We align our nose but leave our lives crooked.
- We worry about our hairline and baldness, but ignore our hollow brain.
- We remove the wrinkles from our face but not from our character.
- We make the fading, fleeting “form” fragrant but ignore the imperishable and eternal.

We ignore our soul, the glorious gift that must be groomed and made beautiful as a bride for the grand banquet of heaven. We forget the one who must be as pure and radiant as the light and as free and detached as the wind to soar beyond the stars and reside in the Master’s “many mansions” on high.

We assume that life will continue as it is, that we will have more time in the future to do all the things for which we find no time now. The thought of our mortality is too threatening.

The art of living successfully consists of being able to hold two opposite ideas in tension at the same time: first, to make long-term plans as if we were going to live forever; and, second, to conduct ourselves daily as if we were going to die tomorrow.

Sydney J. Harris



We live as if the present moments must be spent or invested for an illusive goal ***that is always in the future***. And how do we define goals? As a fixed point in time that once arrived, fulfillment follows.

We must recognize that life is not a destination but a journey, that we are travelers through time, and a goal is a sign post we see just ahead, a point we pass by and at which we can only pause. Our whole life is only a viewing of sceneries. Nothing more. The goal at age nine or ninety is the same: growth. The difference is in the scenery. As author Gena Corea notes:

My early life had been fed with dreams and a deep feeling that if I waited, did my part and was patient, love would come to me and with it such a family life as fiction depicted and romance built up. It seems to me that I have always been waiting for something better—sometimes to see the best I had snatched from me.

The assumption that a goal is always in the future, totally distorts our vision of reality. It makes us waste the precious present for an illusive end, for a moving shadow that is never reached, for a mirage that appears splendid from afar but soon fades away. Consider a man who works twelve hours a day, six days a week, and saves huge sums through all his working years. He invests his most precious moments for wealth. When he thinks he has reached his goal and stops, he finds that he has reached only a new scenery, that the “goal” he pursued during a lifetime was nothing but fable and fantasy. Besides, he encounters new challenges to his illusive dreams,



such as increased sickness and the fear of an impending death. Even in absence of these, he could “reach” no point of bliss, except move with time and see more sceneries.

So many invest their precious lives running for the end of the rainbow. As a comedian has said, “Young people look forward, old people look backward, and middle age people look terrible.”

The future is now, this very second; the goal is here right within our reach, this very moment. What is **real** is **now**. The time to act is now. This planet is not our permanent home. We come from God and we may be recalled any minute. There is no time to wait or waste. As Bahá'u'lláh declares:

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE!

...Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire!¹⁹

Trans-Forming the Planet

This work is more than a journey to personal transformation and spiritual fulfillment:

If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I? Rabbi Hillel

Three words can symbolize our invisible connection to one another. They are “**alone**” and “**all one**.” The only thing that separates them is one



letter, the letter l, which I think of as standing for love. “All one” and “alone” are identical concepts. Within every cell in the universe there is a sense of aloneness, as well as a sense of all-oneness, existing simultaneously.²⁰ Wayne Dyer

This work is also about transforming the planet, about bringing peace and harmony to our divided world. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Christ, Matt. 5:9).” It is about building a global society in which the people of diverse races and cultures, like the flowers of one garden, blend and bloom in perfect charm; a world in which the talents of its citizens, like tiny droplets of rain, draw light and warmth from the “Sun” and make magnificent rainbows—the arches of prosperity and peace that stand high, the arms of hope and harmony that embrace our whole planet.

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create...They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord...Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear...They will neither harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain...

Isaiah 65:17-25

The following quotations from the Bahá'í Scriptures express the most urgent message for our time. If heeded, they can transform the planet and its people:

Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.²¹



The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord.²²

Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellow-men, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred and strife in your hearts.²³

You must...look toward each other and then toward mankind with the utmost love and kindness...You must, therefore, be kind to all men; you must even treat your enemies as your friends. You must consider your evil-wishers as your well-wishers.²⁴

We need not create a melting pot of peoples but a magnificent mosaic of many cultures and colors that fit together with perfect harmony. We need to learn to dance together to the music of heaven without stepping on each other's toes.

The world is in desperate need of spiritual and social transformation. The distress calls are heard everywhere. We need to act before the poison of despair paralyzes the human race. "A young mother, paying a visit to her doctor, was making no attempt to restrain her 5-year-old son who was ransacking an adjoining treatment room. Finally, an extra loud clatter of bottles prompted her to say, 'I hope you don't mind Johnny being in your examination room, Doctor.' 'Not at all,' said the doctor calmly. 'He'll quiet down in a moment when he gets to the poison cabinet.'" The human race is quickly approaching the poison. Many have already lost consciousness.



We are living in the most critical time in history. The opportunities that we now have for universal peace, for spiritual knowledge, for personal transformation and fulfillment may never come again.

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die...a time to weep, and a time to laugh...a time to gain, and a time to lose...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak...

Ecclesiastes 3:1-7

Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves of...His grace.²⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Seize the time, therefore, ere the glory of the divine springtime hath spent itself, and the Bird of Eternity ceased to warble its melody, that thy inner hearing may not be deprived of hearkening unto its call. This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away. God, verily, is independent of him and of that which he may see and witness.²⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live...Seek the Lord while he may be found...

Isaiah 55:3,6

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, if put into practice, can change the life and destiny of every human being on this planet. The world does not wait for anyone. The time to choose the course of our eternal destiny is now.



God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please—you can never have both. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Love was offered me and I shrank from its disillusionment; sorrow knocked at my door, but I was afraid; ambition called to me, but I dreaded the chances. Yet all the while I hungered for meaning in my life. And now I know that we must lift the sail and catch the winds of destiny... Edgar Lee Masters

Will the door to the heavenly Banquet, to God's "many mansions" always remain open?

Many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Christ (Luke 13:24)

O my friends...! Haste ye forth unto your celestial habitation. Announce unto yourselves the joyful tidings: "He Who is the Best-Beloved is come! He hath crowned Himself with the glory of God's Revelation, and hath unlocked to the face of men the doors of His ancient Paradise." Let all eyes rejoice, and let every ear be gladdened, for now is the time to gaze on His beauty...²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Arise for the triumph of My cause, that while yet on earth thou mayest obtain the victory.²⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Ere long, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised.²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Part III

Knowing the Bahá'í Faith

The true beginning of wisdom is the desire to learn.

Wisdom of Solomon 6:17

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Knowledge is as wings to man's life...a veritable treasure...a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness...²

Bahá'u'lláh

5

What Is the Bahá'í Faith?

One People, One World,
One Religion

Who Are the Bahá'ís?

Bahá'ís are peoples of varying national, religious, and racial origins who have risen above the many obstacles that may have divided them, such as traditions, dogmas, rituals, denominations, races, languages, nationalities, and politics. They see the light of truth in *all* great religions and discern the glimmers of the divine in *all* humanity. They deplore the prevailing discord and competition



among the world's factions and religions. After seeking and searching, they have found in the Bahá'í life a haven of peace and harmony. By listening to the divine call and recognizing its distinctions, they have restored their trust and regained their hope and confidence in their Creator, in His unfailing love and concern for humanity.

Bahá'ís believe

- That the revelation of divine purpose and knowledge is continuous and progressive, that God has a grand and glorious Plan to guide and advance the human race. Each of His Messengers unveils only part of the Plan. The Creator has spoken repeatedly to humanity and will continue to do so for ages to come, each time unveiling new measures of truth adapted to an ever-advancing world.
- That the Bahá'í Faith is the latest—***not the last***—revelation of the divine purpose. Its Scriptures encompass over one hundred volumes. They expand our knowledge to the limits of our capacity for at least the next thousand years.
- That the world's most grievous disease is discord, disunity, and dissension, and that its only remedy is a global Faith with supranational ideals and the healing message of love, peace, and unity.
- That the first step in changing the world is to search for truth with an open mind; for the greatest obstacle to unity and peace is imitation of beliefs. Almost everyone assumes that the religion



or denomination he has “inherited” from his parents is the only way to truth. But one’s spiritual life is too important to be left to chance, namely, to what the religion or beliefs of one’s ancestors happen to be.

- That our happiness and well-being depend on pursuing the purpose and the goal for which we were created.
- That we should be in touch with God’s latest expression of knowledge to discover the purpose and the goal He has specifically assigned to us and our time.
- That our Creator provides us with a Plan for peace, happiness, and harmony, and places on us the responsibility for carrying out the Plan.

Our future is not determined by chance. Whether we reap war or peace, misery or happiness, despair or hope, apathy or ecstasy depends on the choices we make now. Learning about the new Revelation of divine knowledge is the first step towards the goal of building a peaceful planet and partaking of all the joys and rewards our Creator has in store for us.

The fruit we wish to pick tomorrow lies hidden in the seed of today.

It is in moments of decision that our everlasting destiny is shaped, yet so many live as if they have no choice and no destiny.



Goals of the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith seeks:

- To provide the means for the highest development of human potential, to spiritualize humanity, and to raise ethical standards to levels never before achieved.
- To create a unified, peaceful, and harmonious global society, a world crowned with justice and dedicated to promote an ever-advancing civilization.

The Bahá'í Faith is the most dynamic unifying force in the world today. Here are a few reasons:

- It teaches universality and world-mindedness; it encourages people to rise above nationalism, racism, and sectarianism—forces that have stifled and divided the world.
- It offers a new plan for global peace and unity.
- It provides a model for a new social order. This model has already been implemented on a wide scale, extending to over 200 countries and territories. It encompasses virtually every religion, sect, nationality, race, tribe or temperament known on the planet.

Many eminent scientists and leaders of thought have recognized the unique role of the Bahá'í Faith in the unfolding drama of human history. They have acknowledged the nobility of its teachings, its relevance to our time, and its inspirational powers in creating a unified and peaceful world. One great



scientist who has especially examined the Bahá'í community as a model for a global community, is Dr. Ervin Laszlo, one of the foremost authorities on systems sciences (the dynamic interdependence of all things) and world order. Dr. Laszlo, who has taught at Princeton and Yale, is rector of the Vienna Academy for the Study of the Future, editor of *World Futures*, author of 50 volumes, 250 articles, and the editor-in-chief of *The World Encyclopedia of Peace*.

Dr. Laszlo has expressed his views on the state of the world and the unique role of the Bahá'ís at this critical juncture in history:

In the context of evolution as it unfolds through history, the next step is a society of global unity. This society, I am convinced, will come...

The responsibility that you [Bahá'ís] have is a unique one because you alone, I think, of all the communities of the world form a global community committed to the belief, to the conviction that peace will come, that peace requires unity...

Your example could be a very important factor in the development of a global society at large because you show that it is possible. And today we live in turbulent times when the effect of one example like this, a living example, could spread. Why? Because...we have all the means of communication at our disposal. Your example could become known all over the world, and it is already becoming known...

This is a time in which people are looking for solutions. They are looking for meaning; they



are looking toward a future that they cannot quite see. They do not have this conviction, they do not have the belief, nor do they have the scientific insight that says, “If only we can survive, we **will** create a global society with global peace.” They think the future is unpredictable, is unknowable. It could be dark; and therefore, many young people today are prey to pessimism. It’s important under these circumstances to bring this example to light—to let people know that one **can** live the way you live.

Peace can come at last to humanity, I am convinced of that. The insight of the Bahá’ís, now confirmed and bolstered by scientific knowledge, should give you the necessary wisdom and the necessary courage to be our leaders in this great movement.³

As Dr. Laszlo states, in order to be convinced, people first need to see a model in action. The advanced model inspires them by demonstrating the outer reaches of possibility, by showing them that a dream can change into reality.

In his classic *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn points out that scientific revolutions occur when someone creates a new perspective, a new model, a new approach to reality. After such a breakthrough, great progress can be made that was previously impossible.⁴

H. G. Wells in his classic work, *The Outline of History*, predicted that the future world state

...will be based upon a common world religion, very much simplified and universalized and



better understood. This will not be Christianity nor Islám nor Buddhism...but religion itself pure and undefiled...⁵

Mr. Wells may have been describing the Bahá'í Faith. When he spoke those words, the seed of such a global vision had already germinated and has since flowered and encompassed the world.

Dr. Edwin Dahlberg, former president of the National Council of Churches, has observed that the world may be on the verge of witnessing the dawn of a new religious revival, and he has listed three conditions that commonly precede such a revival or awakening:

- A growing sense of concern and discontent regarding moral trends.
- A yearning for something better.
- The appearance of a messenger who speaks with a voice of authority—a voice that the people will instinctively recognize and obey.⁶

Dr. Dahlberg then concludes:

The first two of these three conditions are already in operation. We have yet to welcome the messenger, who will give voice to the higher conscience of the nation and the world.⁷

Bahá'ís maintain that not two but *all* three conditions have been in operation for more than a century. They have already welcomed the Messenger who has “spoken with authority” and given “voice to the higher conscience of the world.” They have already received and acknowledged the universal faith that



Toynbee and other great thinkers have deemed essential for the triumph of peace and survival of civilization.

At a time when doubt and despair have darkened the human horizons, when world leaders have proved powerless to face the demands of a changing world, how can a Messenger—Bahá'u'lláh—who was persecuted, exiled, and imprisoned most of His life, bring hope and harmony to the world, inspire a global conscience, a world society, a planetary social order? To succeed, a message must:

- Be relevant to the time. It must relate to the needs of the age.
- Be invested with such a creative power and authority as to motivate and inspire the people, to uplift them from the self to the divine, to lead them to a Source greater than themselves.
- Deal with the causes of human problems—both social and individual—rather than the symptoms.

Bahá'ís believe that the Bahá'í Faith satisfies all these conditions, that the new teachings are the spirit of the age, that the world is desperately in need of the knowledge and inspiration offered by Bahá'u'lláh.

This book is not a text in theology, a treatise on doctrines, nor a thesis on a new denomination. It concerns the very essence of “the knowledge of God” as disclosed by His latest Manifestation or Messenger: Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is its own proof. It is the best evidence of its worthiness and validity:



God's wisdom is proved by its result.

Christ (Matt. 11:19)

This is the true Law of Life: From good must come good, and from evil must come evil.

Buddha

Ye shall know them by their fruits.

Christ (Matt. 7:16)

New Teachings for a New Day

The ultimate goal of Bahá'u'lláh's social Plan is global unity. Ours is the age of the oneness of humanity. All nations, religions, and races must work together to overcome the obstacles that divide them. They must associate in a spirit of love and fellowship to create a new civilization based on justice, cooperation, peace, and concern for all humanity.

The first step in overcoming any obstacle or improving any condition is to expand one's perception. In the Bahá'í Faith this is called ***the Independent Search for Truth.***

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

In a talk given in 1912 in Sacramento, California, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated:



The first teaching is that man should investigate reality, for reality is contrary to dogmatic interpretations and imitations of ancestral forms of belief to which all nations and peoples adhere so tenaciously. These blind imitations are contrary to the fundamental basis of the divine religions, for the divine religions in their central and essential teaching are based upon unity, love and peace, whereas these variations and imitations have ever been productive of warfare, sedition and strife. Therefore, all souls should consider it incumbent upon them to investigate reality. Reality is one; and when found, it will unify all mankind. Reality is the love of God. Reality is the knowledge of God. Reality is justice. Reality is the oneness...of mankind. Reality is international peace. Reality is the knowledge of verities. Reality unifies humanity.⁹

Love for truth should rank first in our lives:

To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.

John Locke

Of all duties, the love of truth...ranks first and highest. To love God and to love truth are one and the same.

Silvio Pellico

As citizens of one planet, with one destiny, we must recognize that we are facing a new age with unparalleled crises and opportunities. We must reach beyond all the boundaries of our prevailing perceptions, our self-interests, untested beliefs and assumptions, fear of the unfamiliar, submission to or tolerance for decayed and outmoded ideologies



such as nationalism, racism, sexism, and every other “ism” that places one segment of the human race apart from or above the others. We must also rise above the prevailing cynicism and apathy, the attitudes of “there is not much I can do” and “what will be will be.”

Only the consciousness of a purpose that is mightier than any man and worthy of all men can fortify...the souls of humankind.

We need to look with a fresh gaze at the world, the people, religion, politics, economics, education, and our responsibilities as citizens of one planet. We need a new mode of thinking, a new vision inspired by our devotion to God and humanity with a desire to restore love and hope to the heart of the world.

Where there is no vision, the people perish...
Proverbs 29:18

If mankind is to stop operating reactively and become truly *pro*active, we need a star to follow ...Ideals and positive visions are important not because they can be immediately and fully attained, but because they can set standards by which we can direct our steps.¹⁰

But in the realm of positive images, we are still moving at the pace of a snail. Our “speed limits” are not imposed by an outside force: they are limits inner to our cultures...Why, then, are our powers of positive vision atrophied?¹¹

The word which God has written on every heart is Hope.



If we bring Bahá'u'lláh's vision of peace and unity to all the peoples of the planet, if we learn to communicate, to understand one another, to speak in one language, then no goal, no dream remains beyond our reach.

To succeed, our new vision must be upheld by these principles:

- ***All great religions come from the same Source.*** They unfold an ever-evolving truth; they reveal the divine Wisdom progressively according to the needs and maturity of humankind. ***Recognizing and respecting other great faiths is the most vital step towards unity and peace.***
- ***The purpose of religion is to unify humanity,*** to join people in love and harmony. But today religion is often a source of dissension and prejudice among the peoples of the world. ***This is the exact opposite of the true goals of religion.*** If a “remedy” intensifies the disease, it should be avoided.
- ***Religion and science are perfect partners.*** Their harmony must be recognized and their powers integrated. By clarifying religious symbolism, the Bahá'í Faith demonstrates the unity—indeed the oneness—of these two vital forces in society.
- ***Prejudice—racial, national, religious—must be uprooted.*** Prejudice is a false perception that justifies selfish and egotistical desires and demands; it is a veil that distorts truth and obscures reality. It blinds one's inner vision, and allows the ego to justify its selfish ends and to descend



to the depths of its desires. It is mainly an impurity of the heart and the soul. Prejudice is so powerful, it can, by itself, stifle **any** achievement, prevent **any** progress, cause **any** conflict, lead to **any** crisis. Love of God is the most powerful weapon against prejudice. Prejudice cannot co-exist with love and justice. Its prevalence is a proof of the loss of love in the heart of the world.

- ***Gender discrimination must be abolished.*** Equal opportunities and rights must be provided for both men and women. One's excellence depends upon nobility and character, not upon one's gender.
- ***Universal education must become a reality.*** It must enlighten and uplift the minds of all humanity. True knowledge expands and enriches human perception and vision.
- ***Much effort should be directed toward establishing universal peace.*** Global war in our time could cause the virtual destruction of our planet and its people.
- ***Extremes of wealth and poverty must be eliminated,*** both through laws and through the recognition of the individual's spiritual responsibility. As long as masses of humanity cannot meet their urgent needs, global unity and peace cannot be attained.
- ***Diversity among peoples and nations must be cherished and prized,*** for diversity enriches the world and enhances human perception. Various customs and traditions should be preserved;



diversity adorns and strengthens unity. The richness of an orchestra results from many instruments played in harmony.

- ***A universal auxiliary language must be adopted*** and learned throughout the planet. Communication is an essential prerequisite for understanding and peace. A family of nations whose members cannot talk to one another, cannot cooperate and live in harmony.
- ***A global order must be established*** to regulate international relations. A planetary community cannot live by laws and regulations dictated by national self-interest. The time has come for establishing a global federation of nations.
- ***We are in essence spiritual beings.*** To live in peace and contentment, to enjoy an abundant life, we must recognize our role in the grand cosmic plan of creation. Without knowledge of God and love of God, no human being can reach his or her full spiritual potential. Growing without God is as impossible for humans as for a flower to bloom and flourish in darkness. If left unguided, we submit to our selfish needs and desires. When God enters our lives, He changes our perspective. The lesson we learn is this: serving one's self is great, but serving others is even greater. This perspective inspires us to expand our small "circle of selfishness" to incorporate all human beings. Those who assume they can do without God, underestimate the heights of spiritual fulfillment they can reach.



Bahá'ís believe that the perception or mode of thinking that can save us from global conflict and war, the vision that can lead us to peace, prosperity, and contentment, must include the recognition and realization of all the preceding principles.

What Is Religion?

A tragedy of our age is the prevalence of misconception about religion, especially among the educated. Many see religion as a set of archaic creeds, superstitions, ceremonies, and confessions, mostly irrelevant, unnecessary, and unintelligible. Is this image rooted in reality? It is rooted, not in the reality of religion as revealed by God's great Messengers, but in religiosity, as fashioned by human desire and fantasy. Like a plant, every religion has a life cycle. After its cycle has ended, it moves from divine to decay. Our age coincides with the end of all the religious cycles of the past. How do the prophecies describe the spiritual state of the people of our time?

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me [their religion KJ] is made up only of rules taught by men.

Isaiah 29:13

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money...not lovers of good...having a form of godliness but denying its power. II Timothy 3:2-5

Most people love superstition:

People for the most part delight in superstitions.¹²

Bahá'u'lláh



Research indicates that people today want to draw from religion only what appeals to them. They wish to be in charge, to pick and choose, to select their beliefs according to their needs and desires.

True religion is God-made, not man-made:

True religion is not a pie in which we put whatever ingredients we choose until it tastes just right to us...True religion is not a machine for which we assemble a great collection of cogs and wheels, put them together, and hope it will run. True religion is a tree that has life and growth and unity and roots which go down deep, drawing their power from the constant activity of God, the Creator. George Parker

Research indicates that the people of our time are “assenters rather than believers. They assent to faith, to the beliefs they are meant to believe, but they don’t necessarily believe them.”

The prevailing misconception concerning the true identity of religion has caused many sincere seekers of truth, especially the youth of our age, to drift away from the very heart of faith, some of them to an empty life of addiction and affliction. Many find religion a source of prejudice, and an obstacle to peace and unity. This too has been predicted:

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other.

Christ (Matt. 24:10)
See also II Tim. 3:1-4

The world is in travail...Its face is turned towards ...unbelief.¹³ Bahá’u’lláh



Many feel alienated from religion because they see countless believers who “wrangle for religion; write for it; fight for it; die for it; anything but live for it.” That which is most visible in our age is not the pure, pristine pearl of faith, but the discolored, faded, and broken shell of confession and conformity.

It is easier to fight for principles than to live up to them.

Alfred Adler

Most men, indeed, play at religion as they play at games, religion itself being of all games the one most universally played.

A. W. Tozer

Referring to the plight of religion in our time, Bahá'u'lláh declares:

The way of God and the religion of God have ceased to be of any worth in the eyes of men.¹⁴

If this trend continues unhindered, humanity will eventually be forced to abandon religion altogether, and to turn totally to substitutes that, at best, offer only temporary relief or satisfaction.

Is not your desertion of the Lord your God that brings all this upon you?

Jeremiah 2:17

It is the purpose of every new Revelation to restore people's faith by demonstrating that divine teachings in their pure essence, stripped of fanaticism, fictitious dogmas and doctrines, constitute a most rational phase of human life, and that if adapted to the needs of the age—as done by every new Redeemer—they will undoubtedly prove to be also most essential and practical. The Bahá'í Faith, as God's latest revelation of Knowledge to humanity, has clearly proved capable of attaining such noble ends.



This book is an attempt to demonstrate that the Bahá'í ideals are not a vain hope nor a utopia sustained by fantasies, but a dream made real by the sacrifices of thousands of dedicated people who trust their Creator, knowing full well that He would not abandon His children at such a dark and despairing hour.

What the Future Holds

The Universal House of Justice, the international governing council of the Bahá'í Faith, in a statement, addressed to the peoples of the world, presents an outline of how, for the first time in human history, an enduring and global peace is possible:

The Great Peace towards which people of good will throughout the centuries have inclined their hearts, of which seers and poets for countless generations have expressed their vision, and for which from age to age the sacred scriptures of mankind have constantly held the promise, is now at long last within the reach of the nations. For the first time in history it is possible for everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective. World peace is not only possible but inevitable. It is the next stage in the evolution of this planet—in the words of one great thinker, “the planetization of mankind.”¹⁵

Many people sense the stirring of the birth of a new world. Some political leaders now speak of a New World Order, a terminology used by Bahá'u'lláh



long ago. President Bush stated that “The world is blessed by the promise of peace.”

As Henry Brandon notes, “We are suddenly living in a time when history seems to have accelerated, and we are being swept forward at a reckless pace... we have lived through a century dominated by... disasters...But we can hope that after so many decades filled with dreadful and tragic events a more promising era beckons at last.”¹⁶

Global unity is the inevitable outcome of the realization of the Bahá'í teachings. The world is fragmented by a number of barriers, such as race, religion, nationality, gender, poverty, diversity of language, superstition, and illiteracy. The Bahá'í Faith breaks down *all* these barriers, leaving nothing to keep the nations, races, and religions apart.

Over the last century, the Bahá'ís have spread Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to the farthest reaches of the earth, and they will continue to do so until the peoples of our planet have recognized them as the very life of the world, until racism, sectarianism, and national self-interest have given way to a global conscience dedicated to the welfare of all humankind. Bahá'ís believe that the peoples of the world will eventually adopt and implement these teachings, because they are the very “spirit of the age.”

Soon will the present-day order be rolled up,
and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy
Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of
things unseen.¹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh



These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the “Most Great Peace” shall come.¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

No birth is without pain and patience. As Robert Lee observed, “The march of Providence is so slow and our desires so impatient; the work of progress is so immense and our means of aiding it so feeble; the life of humanity is so long, that of the individual so brief, that we often see only the ebb of the advancing ways, and are thus discouraged. It is history that teaches us to hope.”

Quotations from the Bahá'í Scriptures

Serving Humankind

From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh:

Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth.¹⁹

That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race.²⁰

...become a source of all goodness unto men, and an example of uprightness to mankind.²¹

Blessed is he who mingleth with all men in a spirit of utmost kindliness and love.²²

Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.²³



Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor.²⁴

Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will... sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a goodly behavior.²⁵

Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.²⁶

It is not his to boast who loveth his country, but it is his who loveth the world.²⁷

It behoveth man to show forth that which will benefit mankind. He that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for the fire.²⁸

They who are the people of God have no ambition except to revive the world...²⁹

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

...is there any deed in the world that would be nobler than service to the common good?³⁰

We must gird ourselves for service, kindle love's flame...³¹

Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch; be ye compassionate and kind to all the human race.³²

Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race.³³

Service to humanity is service to God.³⁴



This is the hour when ye must associate with all the earth's peoples in extreme kindliness and love, and be to them the signs and tokens of God's great mercy.³⁵

Shed the light of boundless love on every human being whom you meet.³⁶

Love must be free from boundaries!³⁷

Make thyself the servant of all—and serve all alike.³⁸

6

A New Vision of Life and Human Destiny

A New Race of Humanity

Prophecies declare that everything will be made new:

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Revelation 21:5

How can everything be made new, if human beings are not restored and renewed?



I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, to raise...a new creation that shall turn towards Thee...¹ Bahá'u'lláh

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them. Ezekiel 11:9

Like clothing you will change them. Psalms 102:26

Dr. Brugh Joy states that the prophecies:

...foreshadow a revolution of the most astonishing proportions, but instead of being a revolution in the physical plane it is a revolution in consciousness, a revolution of the mental plane. I sense the approach of a psychological earthquake the magnitude of which has not been experienced in the human awareness for millennia and may not have been experienced in the human awareness ever before.²

Peter Russell has written a book to show that:

Humanity could be on the threshold of an evolutionary leap, a leap that could occur in a flash of evolutionary time, a leap such as occurs only once in a billion years. The changes leading to this leap are taking place right before our eyes—or rather right behind them, within our own minds.³

James Baker, United States Secretary of State, declared that our age is so new we need to make new words to define it.

Long ago Bahá'u'lláh predicted the dawning of a new age. The changes He predicted go far beyond



the vision of the most daring futurists. They are the kind that find expression in the highest fulfillment of the ethical and spiritual potential of humankind:

Lo! the entire creation hath passed away!...We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Peace is More than an End to War

“Your task...is to build a better world,” God said. I answered “How? This world is such a large, vast place, so complicated, and I so small and useless am, there’s nothing I can do.” But God in all His wisdom said, “Just build a better you.”

The real problem is in the hearts and minds of humankind. It is not a problem of physics but of ethics. It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man. Albert Einstein

The mere removal of obstacles does not in itself purify and fuse the hearts of humanity. Unity cannot last unless it evolves into oneness, unless it receives support from a supreme power, unless the individual is strengthened through a transcendent spiritual source.

Bahá'u'lláh's plan is twofold: individual and global. One without the other cannot cover the whole range of the required change, cannot activate or sustain a full cycle of renewal. To maintain lasting peace and global unity, it is essential to transform the individual



so that he will not only tolerate others, but treasure them and love them; not only abandon prejudice, promote peace, uphold the necessity of global unity, advocate equality of men and women, support universal education and justice for the poor, but become so inspired and elevated by his beliefs that he sees himself as one with the world; be so dominated by love for humankind as to fuse his identity with theirs and theirs with his own.

The kingdom of heaven cannot come to the earth unless it takes roots in the hearts. To establish peace without, we must first discover it within.

Only God can transform our souls from hating our enemies to hailing them as friends:

...if you have an enemy, consider him not as an enemy. Do not simply be long-suffering; nay, rather, love him. Your treatment of him should be that which is becoming to lovers...Be mindful that you do not consider him as an enemy and simply tolerate him, for that is but stratagem and hypocrisy...This is not becoming of any soul. You must behold him as a friend.⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The mere absence of war, poverty, or prejudice does not generate compassion and kindness, or true peace and lasting happiness. The gap between tolerance and love, between justice and service, cannot be filled by a change in the law or a mere reshaping of the mind. It needs a power so transcendent and pervasive as to touch and stir the very depths of the human heart, a divine force capable of transforming and remolding the whole self.



True religion is like the sap of a healthy tree that reaches and nourishes the most distant leaves.

A man wanted to piece a big jigsaw puzzle together. It was a picture of the world. The more he tried, the more he failed. A little girl who was watching him said: “Let *me* do it for you.” In a few minutes she had all the pieces together. She made the world. “How could you do it?” asked the man. “There was a picture of a man on the back of the puzzle,” said the little girl. “I only tried to join *him* together. When he is put together, the world is put together.”

Ultimately all the battle of life is within the individual.⁶ Shoghi Effendi

Yes, when man is put together, the world is put together, when the hearts are at peace the world is at peace.

...mere plans are not sufficient; ideas and principles are helpless without a divine power to put them into effect...We must become attracted to God. The breaths of the Holy Spirit must take effect.⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

It is the spiritual always which determines the material. Thomas Carlyle

Spiritual force is stronger than material force; thoughts rule the world. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Bahá’u’lláh introduces not only a pattern for a new society, but a plan for renewing and reshaping the individual. He portrays a new profile of being human and offers a new vision of human nature and destiny. He sanctifies our identity, He liberates us



from ignorance and apathy, and then He binds us to our Creator eternally. Recognition of our spiritual mission will allow us to view ourselves as essential and inseparable links in the ever-unfolding chain of the divine Purpose.

What most people want—young or old—is not merely security, or comfort, or luxury, although they are glad enough to have these. Most of all, they want meaning in their lives. If our era and our culture and our leaders do not, or cannot, offer great meanings, great objectives, great convictions, then people will settle for shallow and trivial substitutes. This is a deficiency for which we all bear a responsibility...This is the challenge of our times.

Rockefeller Report on Education

With God's love as our hope, and with trust in His wisdom as our standing, the impossible becomes possible.

Give me a firm place to stand, and I will move the earth.

Archimedes

A Vision of Greatness

Where there is no vision, the people perish...

Proverbs 29:18

To become great, we need a vision of greatness. A celestial vision of who we are lifts us heavenward; an earthly vision leaves us in the depths of despair.

Bahá'u'lláh:

- Exalts and elevates our nature to the crest of glory and honor.



- Regards us as the choicest and noblest fruit of the world, the consummation and crown of all creation.
- Provides us with both an immediate and an eternal purpose and perspective.
- Unfolds an ever-advancing plan for our spiritual evolution.
- Clarifies God's relation to us as well as our responsibility to Him, ourselves, and our kind.
- Provides us a compass by which we can direct the course of our spiritual destiny.
- Gives us a standard by which we can know ourselves and appreciate our nobility and greatness.
- Elevates our station and destiny to such lofty heights as only dreams can reach.
- Reminds us repeatedly to discover the divine within our souls:

O SON OF BEING!

With the hands of power I made thee and
with the fingers of strength I created thee;
and within thee have I placed the essence of
My light. Be thou content with it and seek
naught else, for My work is perfect and My
command is binding. Question it not, nor have
a doubt thereof.⁸

O SON OF SPIRIT!

I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thy-
self down to poverty? Noble I made thee,
wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of
the essence of knowledge I gave thee being,
why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone



beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.⁹

When we see ourselves in this light, when we become truly aware of our divine destiny, of God's infinite and unfading love in store for us, of His eternal and ever-advancing plan for our spiritual evolution, how can we curb our selves from visions of glory, from aspiring to hope, contentment, selflessness, and service?

A few friends watched a man catch fish. They noticed that when he caught big fish he threw them back into the river, but kept the smaller ones. When they asked him why, he said, "My frying pan is just big enough for the small fish. It can't handle the big ones." That is the attitude that prevents many people from appreciating the greatness of their own capacities.

As students need to receive a "vision of greatness" from their teachers, so do we from our divine Teachers. We live by a self-image, which rises to meet our expectations. "A stream cannot rise higher than its source." As Drs. William Purkey and John Novak note:

One of the greatest functions of a teacher is to give his students a "vision of greatness." The individual cannot or will not see and take advantage of opportunity, however physically available it may be, unless he is brought to believe that he has possibilities for growth and that this opportunity is a door for him.¹⁰



Like a sculptor who envisions something in a block of marble that others cannot see, the inviting teacher perceives possibilities in students that others miss. Good teachers...may be clearly identified from poor ones on the basis of their perceptions of people as able rather than unable, friendly rather than unfriendly, worthy rather than unworthy, dependable rather than undependable, helpful rather than hindering...¹¹

Dr. Arthur Combs, one of the originators of “perceptual theory,” states that our behavior is always a product of how we see ourselves. Love and respect for others cannot flourish without love and respect for all God’s handiwork, including one’s own self. How can the one who hates himself love others? Noted psychologist, Dr. Nathaniel Branden writes:

It has become something of a cliché to observe that if we do not love ourselves, we cannot love anyone else. This is true enough, but it is only part of the picture. If we do not love ourselves, it is almost impossible to believe fully that we ***are loved*** by someone else. It is almost impossible to ***accept*** love. It is almost impossible to receive love. No matter what our partner does to show that he or she cares, we do not experience the devotion as convincing because we do not feel lovable to ourselves.¹²

Communication specialists, Adler and Towne state:

Extensive research shows that a person with high self-esteem is more likely to think well of others whereas someone with low self-esteem is likely to have a poor opinion of others. Your



own experience may bear this out: Persons with low self-esteem are often cynical and quick to ascribe the worst possible motives to others, whereas those who feel good about themselves are disposed to think favorably about the people they encounter. As one writer put it, “What we find ‘out there’ is what we put there with our unconscious projections. When we think we are looking out a window, it may be, more often than we realize, that we are really gazing into a looking glass.”¹³

William James of Harvard stated that the greatest discovery of our time is that we can alter our lives by altering our attitude of mind.

How Can Religion Transform the Self?

The origin of both feelings and actions are thoughts. If we change our thoughts, everything will change. Religion transforms us by changing the negative into the positive:

I charge you all that each one of you concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. Thoughts of war bring destruction to all harmony, well-being, restfulness and content.

Thoughts of love are constructive of brotherhood, peace, friendship, and happiness.¹⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá



Since our essence is spiritual, that which can ultimately reach us and touch us must also be spiritual, it must come from both above and within. Purity can be inspired only by a Source endowed with a greater purity; perfection can bloom only by a Power gifted with a greater perfection.

A noble thought stands as a fragrant flower. Until we walk to the garden and see it grow from the ground we cannot believe that the lowly earth can give rise to such exquisite charm and fragrance. The exemplar, like enchanting flowers, attracts us to the garden of peace and fulfillment. He awakens and elevates the seed of our dreams. He shows us that every lowly heart can blossom and become a paradise of the most enduring hopes and dreams.

I have set you an example that you should do
as I have done for you. Christ (John 13:15)

We can be inspired to nobility and greatness by an absolute belief in a Creator who loves all, who knows all, and who rewards all; by believing in the immortality of the human soul, and the immortality of every act performed by the soul; by recognizing our eternal purpose, by knowing and being fully devoted to our enduring and exalted mission.

What is there in man so worthy of honor and reverence as this, that he is capable of contemplating something higher than his own reason, more sublime than the whole universe from which all truth proceeds?

Consider the contrast between our physical and spiritual nature:



The human body is in reality very weak...One mosquito will distress it; the smallest quantity of poison will destroy it; if respiration ceases for a moment, it will die. What instrument could be weaker and more delicate? A blade of grass severed from the root may live an hour, whereas a human body deprived of its forces may die in one minute. But in the proportion that the human body is weak, the spirit of man is strong. It can control natural phenomena; it is a supernatural power which transcends all contingent beings. It has immortal life, which nothing can destroy or pervert.

If all the kingdoms of life arise against the immortal spirit of man and seek its destruction, this immortal spirit, singly and alone, can withstand their attacks in fearless firmness and resolution because it is indestructible and empowered with supreme natural virtues...How wonderful it is! How powerful the spirit of man, while his body is so weak! If the susceptibilities of the spirit control him, there is no created being more heroic, more undaunted than man; but if physical forces dominate, you cannot find a more cowardly or fearful object because the body is so weak and incapable.

Therefore, it is divinely intended that the spiritual susceptibilities of man should gain precedence and overrule his physical forces. In this way he becomes fitted to dominate the human world by his nobility and stand forth fearless and free, endowed with the attributes of eternal life.¹⁵

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



Love of God is the most potent and pervasive of all powers. Nothing can ever compare—in courage, purity, peace, and power—with a heart stirred and enchanted by the love of God. “The death of God inevitably leads to the death of man.”

The greatest question of our time is not communism versus individualism...not even the East versus the West: it is whether man can bear to live without God.

Will Durant

It is difficult to make a man miserable while he feels he is worthy of himself and claims kindred to the great God who made him.

Abraham Lincoln

If an Arab in the desert were suddenly to discover a spring in his tent, and so would always be able to have water in abundance, how fortunate he would consider himself—so too, when a man, who as a physical being is always turned toward the outside, thinking that his happiness lies outside him, finally turns inward and discovers that the source is within him; not to mention his discovery that the source is his relation to God.

Sören Kierkegaard

Since we are in essence spiritual beings, what we value and cherish should also be spiritual.

Who has ever seen an idea? Who has ever seen love? Who has ever seen faith? The real things in the world are the invisible spiritual realities.

Charles Templeton

All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom; justice; honor; duty; mercy; hope.

Winston Churchill



People are like stained-glass windows; they sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross

It seems so natural to us to judge our worth and that of others only by what we see, without recognizing that the visible is but a burden on our souls and a veil that obscures our vision. Unless we are able to acknowledge this simple truth we will remain out of touch with the reality of our own selves: ***that the only power that can lift us to the heaven of enduring tranquility and peace is the love of God and the knowledge of our exalted spiritual destiny.*** Once we fill our hearts and souls with that power, we stay permanently aloft, beyond the reach of earthly bonds and fetters. We are not bodies but souls and minds. Our bodies are naught but burdens we need and must carry while on an earthly plane.

Man is a candle, knowledge the wax, love the flame, and God the hand that lifts and guides the flame.

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendor, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is thine. I Chronicles 29:11

O Lord my God, thou art great indeed, clothed in majesty and splendor, and wrapped in a robe of light.

Psalms 104:1-2

Better one day in thy courts than a thousand days at home...

Psalms 84:10



O SON OF MAN!

Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face.¹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Faith is the light that illumines the way and dispels darkness. The forces that activate true faith are pure motives and noble deeds. Motives and deeds are intimately intertwined, yet each has its own domain and commands, its own unique purpose and power. Unless they cooperate, victory over self is impossible. To escape darkness, first we must desire light (motive), then we must stretch our hand to turn on the light (deed). Without desire and action, darkness continues.

Contentment is not a wild plant of the wilderness. It is a tender tulip that grows only in the heart. It must be cared for with patience and nourished with faith, hope, and love. Happiness is not a weed of chance; it is a flower of choice.

When good deeds spring from a pure heart, they deserve the highest praise. But when they *also* bathe in the radiance of God's splendor, then they turn into the most perfect and powerful force in all the universe. They join the heart of God and glow in the radiance of His glory with enchanting beauty and brightness.

To conclude: Bahá'u'lláh's new World Order stands on two pillars: the individual and society. On the one hand, He transforms, inspires, and elevates the hearts to absolute trust in divine Wisdom as reflected in



His teachings; and on the other, He reshapes society into a cohesive, intimately harmonized whole.

The followers of Bahá'u'lláh have already brought about a real unity of hearts in their communities. Although coming from so many diverse backgrounds and speaking different languages, they are motivated by a strong bond of love which binds them together spiritually. This love is not... due to any special talents which the believers may possess...This love is generated through the influence of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. It is like the flow of electric current in a vast network, energizing every circuit which is connected to it.¹⁷

As William James notes:

What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible.

Religion Versus Psychology

Virtually all psychologists who write about self-development and personal transformation begin with this premise: human beings have the power to shape their lives. This passage demonstrates this view:

Thoughts aren't so much *about* things, they *are* the things themselves...A successful, happy life is simply a matter of realizing that you have the



ability to make almost anything happen—life is, literally, ***what you think about it***...Today, there's little in your body that was there a few years ago. Like a river, you're constantly changing, never completely formed. ***The real you is something beyond your form. The real you is unlimited.*** Through your thought, you can encompass everything: a vast system of harmony, co-operation, and love.

Religion in its pure form confirms the preceding principle and facilitates and expands what psychologists try but often fail to achieve. Most psychologists recognize the rational (cognitive) and emotional (affective) nature of human beings, yet ignore the spiritual. If they acknowledged and fully employed the power of the spiritual, they would be astonished by their achievements.

Abraham Maslow, who has studied the outermost reaches of human potential, and is recognized as the most prominent figure in “self-actualization movement,” has classified human needs from the most basic or urgent to the least:

- Physical or survival
- Safety or security
- Love and belonging
- Approval and recognition
- Knowledge and understanding
- Order, beauty, truth, justice, and goodness
- Transcendence: spiritual needs for broader cosmic identification

Maslow's classification adequately accounts for the behavior of children and spiritually immature adults.



But when a soul is awakened and empowered by the great Spirit, Maslow's theory falls apart. It cannot explain the priorities of the *spiritually* aspiring. When God touches a soul, the chain of command changes entirely; the individual transforms into a new creation with a new vision.

The following list shows what would come first or last in the life of a spiritually advanced person. It presents his constitution for life:

- Love for God and truth
- Love for people and nature
- Need to satisfy physical needs
- Need for safety
- Need for knowledge
- Need for recognition

To speak of the spiritual needs of a human being, as Maslow does, is the exception rather than the rule. Most psychologists define mental health mainly in terms of our primitive needs and desires in the context of the prevailing standards of society. They do not equate health with the presence of peace, awe, joy, and ecstasy, but rather with the absence of neurotic behavior. For instance, if the majority of people live an unchaste life, but experience only tolerable guilt, they consider the response normal. Only when guilt incapacitates the individual do they show any concern.

Moreover, psychology limits the human horizon to the *here* and *now*; religion expands it to *eternity* and *infinity*. It shows the interconnection of all things—from subatomic particles to the greatest galaxies—for all time. The knowledge and love of



God reveal a grand panorama of the future and a fervent hope for attaining it.

The visions of the future are the most powerful motivators for human beings.

The following are a few assets of religion for personal transformation and self-development, which most of today's psychologists fail to acknowledge or apply. ***In its pure and perfect essence***—as expressed by all the great Teachers and Messengers of the past and in this age by Bahá'u'lláh—religion:

- Anchors human beings by relating them to God and to all humanity.
- Provides a clear and lasting purpose to live for and an ever-advancing goal to pursue.
- Establishes a solid basis for building a high and humble self-esteem.
- Offers a set of practical values as guide for living.
- Reduces or eliminates the fear of death.
- Teaches accountability before God for one's behavior.
- Inspires a healthy view of adversity.
- Strengthens the individual against stress.
- Creates a community of fellowship, in which people can communicate and understand each other because they uphold the same philosophy and ethical principles.
- Promotes self-expression and an inner peace through prayer and meditation.
- Instills a positive attitude towards work.



- Honors self-sacrifice and glorifies love for people for the sake of God.
- Advocates objective thinking and independent search for truth.
- Inspires a sense of peace, awe, and ecstasy.
- Enhances harmony and understanding among people by honoring and respecting all religions and cultures.
- Fosters the expression of individuality and uniqueness.
- Reinforces family ties.
- Encourages respect for one's body and a concern for healthy living.
- Builds a positive view of the future of the world.
- Guides the individual's desire for service by providing concrete and practical means through which he can use his talents for the advancement of society.

Besides providing all these practical and verifiable assets, religion claims a mystical influence from God that can further facilitate the process of personal transformation. Thus, in its ability to manifest the human potential, religion, compared to psychology, shines with a dazzling brightness. No psychologist, however learned, can attain his full development without anchoring himself in God and reaping all the spiritual bounties that religion in its pure form bestows.

Great and Blessed is this Day—the Day in which all that lay latent in man hath been and will be made manifest.¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh



Psychologists have been avoiding the use of the word “spiritual” as if it symbolizes the superstitious beliefs of ancient times. Surprisingly, in recent years their attitude and emphasis has shifted from the mind to the soul, from the material to the spiritual. This passage, from a psychology textbook, points to a trend of times:

Human beings *need* to believe, even passionately, in things abstract, moral, and “spiritual.” But there are so many divergent “moralities” from which to choose today that the choice itself can be a source of confusion.¹⁹

The authors aptly acknowledge the need for the spiritual as well as the difficulty of finding it.

The next chapter focuses on the joy and the honor of receiving the gift of *spiritual freedom*—a most sublime and splendid gift bestowed on all human beings.

7

Life Is a Choice

The secret of happiness is freedom and the secret of freedom is courage.

Louis Brandeis

The rarest courage is the courage of thought.

Anatole France

Give me the liberty to know, to think, to believe, and to utter freely, according to conscience, above all liberties.

John Milton

Be not the slave of your own past—plunge into the sublime seas, dive deep, and swim far.

Ralph Emerson

It took thousands of years for humanity to become aware of and accept the idea of freedom. Slavery persisted up to the 19th century and was abandoned



only at great cost. Many paid with their lives to preserve it. Today it is despised. Yet the idea of slavery has not died. It still lives on in our hearts and minds. Many of those previously kept in bondage, now find themselves entangled in the bonds of spiritual segregation and separation.

You were bought at a price; do not become
slaves of men. I Corinthians 7:23

After a speaker finished his talk, some listeners thanked him, except a 6-year-old boy who said, "Your talk was very boring. It put me to sleep." His mother, embarrassed by her son's lack of courtesy, told the speaker, "Don't take him seriously. He is at an age when he can't think for himself. He simply repeats whatever he hears from others." It seems many people think and behave like this child. They continue to believe and repeat to themselves and others whatever "authority" figures have told them.

In spite of our shortcomings, we have made and are making great strides in the cause of freedom. The idea of human rights is sweeping across our planet. The idea of political freedom is dawning upon many a horizon. Women, too, are raising the call for liberty. They are rebelling against the subjugation under which they have been held for thousands of years. In some cultures they still do not have even the right to choose their spouse. In the western world, these freedoms have already blossomed and are on their way to maturity and full fruition.

People talk about all kinds of liberties that relate to the laws of the land. But there is a liberty that



surpasses the most advanced laws and is the backbone of all liberties: That is *spiritual* liberty, the awareness that we have the right and the responsibility to choose our spiritual destiny. Have we not already attained this? We have, by law, but not in spirit. The law grants us religious liberty, but we refuse to embrace it with our hearts and minds. The pressures to conform far outweigh the freedom of choice granted by the law.

The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom.

Friedrich Hegel

The time has come to declare to all humanity the principle of religious liberty—not in letter alone but in spirit. We have now attained the maturity required for its birth into the hearts and minds of all the peoples of the world. This noble ideal needs to be nurtured, to be declared and defended until it becomes the next focal point of our social-spiritual evolution.

The time will come when “spiritual bondage” will be as outmoded and unwelcome as the idea and practice of slavery, and freedom of conscience will become as sacred as life itself. But for the time being, the gift of spiritual freedom is granted only to those whose guide is truth, not tradition, only to those who seek without fear new frontiers of knowledge. In a talk delivered in 1912 in Washington D.C., ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declared:

It is evident that prejudices arising from adherence to religious forms and imitation of ancestral beliefs have hindered the progress of humanity



thousands of years. How many wars and battles have been fought, how much division, discord and hatred have been caused by this form of prejudice!...All the existing nations had a divine foundation of truth or reality originally, which was intended to be conducive to the unity and accord of mankind, but the light of that reality gradually became obscured. The darkness of superstitions and imitations came and took its place, binding the world of humanity in the chains and fetters of ignorance. Enmity arose among men, increasing to such an extent that nation strove against nation in hatred and violence. War has been a religious and political human heritage.¹

Some enlightened leaders of our time declare a similar message:

It is easier, though far less rewarding, to live in a world where the lines are all drawn, often by people who lived thousands of years ago. Where and how to worship is mandated by birth, and it seems easier to follow that path. It is easier to go along believing our enemies are those we have been taught they are, rather than to resist the vision that creates enemies in the first place.²

We may enjoy the dreaming part so much that we do not even want to consider that there is much more available if we awaken. Thus we choose to remain asleep, unaware of the grandness that is there for us in awakening.³

Dr. Wayne Dyer

God gave us two sets of eyes. He put one set in our head, the other in our heart. Everyone uses the “head-eye,” few the “heart-eye.” If someone



covered her eyes and said she did not need them, people would call her crazy. The “heart-eye” is far more critical in deciding both our immediate and ultimate destiny, yet not using it is accepted and practiced almost as regularly as breathing.

By far the greatest portion of humanity let their ancient ancestors see and select the path of truth for them. People choose their fork, food, and friend, and yet they let strangers who lived thousands of years ago make by far the most awesome choice of their lives for them: *their faith*. Alas, the “heart-eye,” God’s most precious gift, is veiled and left unused generation after generation.

Man was born to be free, and everywhere he is
in chains. Jean Jaque Rousseau

The masses of people follow each other blindly, “like a woman who was driving through a very dense fog. The only objects that she could see clearly were the taillights of the car ahead, so she decided to follow those lights to stay on the road. Suddenly, without warning, the taillights ahead came to a complete stop and she ran into the car she had been following. ‘Why didn’t you give some kind of signal that you were going to stop?’ she shouted angrily at the other driver. ‘Why should I?’ came the reply, ‘I am in my own garage!’”

As psychologist, Dr. Robert Anthony notes:

Dependency is slavery by mutual agreement. It is degrading for both the person who is dependent and the person who is being depended upon. Both parties are equally lacking in self-reliance, for such a relationship flourishes on



mutual exploitation...A sure sign of dependency is when you habitually look up to others as superior...The dependent individual is at the mercy of those around him.⁴

Conformity is one of the greatest psychological evils of humankind. The person caught in this destructive habit never does anything worthwhile with his life. He wants to be a great person, independent and do important things. But he can't. His motivation to always be approved of prevents him.⁵

Whenever Jim took the initiative and did something different, his parents told him, "Jim don't." When Jim's teacher asked his name, he said "Jim don't." Many follow the philosophy of "Jim don't." They accept the verdict of tradition, and refuse to step out of their comfort zone. People fight for freedom and then entangle themselves in conformity.

An Expanding World Vision

Noted author, Dr. Scott Peck, offers a broad view of religion. He defines it in terms of ***how an individual views the world***. In this sense, everyone, even an atheist, has a religion. No one can say, "I don't need any religion." It is impossible to be without one. He offers some examples of world views: Is the universe a chaotic place without meaning? Is it a place of competition? Is it a nurturing place?

If it is true that we all have a religion, why not investigate and discover which of the many world



views is the most reasonable and conducive to contentment, unity, and peace. To find and enter the mansion of truth, we must seek and knock. When we feel we have reached the peak, we begin to descend. Dr. Peck offers this insight:

To develop a religion or world view that is realistic, that conforms to the reality of the cosmos and our role in it...we must constantly revise and extend our understanding to include new knowledge...We must constantly enlarge our frame of reference.⁶

He then adds:

Spiritual growth is a journey out of the microcosm into an ever greater macrocosm...the learning of something new requires a giving up of the old self and a death of outworn knowledge. To develop a broader vision we must be willing to forsake, to kill, our narrower vision. In the short run it is more comfortable not to do this—to stay where we are, to keep using the same microcosmic map, to avoid suffering the death of cherished notions.⁷

Recognition of a new Redeemer and a new Revelation from God always requires an expanded vision.

Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Jesus referred to religion as a spiritual wine and to its form as the wine skin (Matt. 9:17). As time goes on, people get used to the taste of the old wine, and cannot easily adapt to the new. They resist



tasting the new spiritual wine just as children resist new foods. To try new beginnings, it takes courage and determination.

Controllers and Conformers

A king loved to eat eggplant. He couldn't get enough of it, and even had a servant whose only job was to prepare eggplant. The king often raved about it. "How fabulous this vegetable is! How divine it tastes! How elegant it looks! Eggplant is the best thing on earth!"

"You are certainly right," the servant replied.

That very day, the king ate so much eggplant he became ill. He moaned. "No more eggplant. I don't want to ever again see this food of hell. Eggplant is the most horrible vegetable."

"You're certainly right," replied the servant.

The king was startled to hear this. "Today, when I was talking about how magnificent the eggplant is, you agreed with me. Now that I'm talking about how terrible it is, you again agree with me. How do you explain this?"

"My lord," said the servant, "I am ***your*** servant, not the servant of the eggplant."

It seems many people are servants not of truth but of tradition, followers not of facts but of fantasy, worshippers not of reason and reality but of illusions and imitation. They allow chance, not choice, to determine their destiny.



What is the most persistent obstacle to human development? What prevents people, more than anything else, from achieving spiritual transformation and fulfillment, from attaining their full potential? Two characteristics always stand out: control and conformity. People for the most part love to be **both** controllers and conformers. These opposing tendencies are the two critical poles of a psychological profile called “the authoritarian personality.”

Perhaps 90 percent of people allow their lives and destinies to be controlled mainly by tradition, habit, custom, convenience, conformity, and conditioning; sources that eliminate or diminish thinking and choosing.

We do everything by custom, even believe by it; our very axioms, let us boast of free-thinking as we may, are oftenest simply such beliefs as we have never heard questioned. Thomas Carlyle

Men commonly think according to their inclinations, speak according to their learning and imbibed opinions, but generally act according to custom.

Francis Bacon

Astonishing as it may seem, controllers and conformers generate most of the world’s supply of miseries. As designed by the Creator, human beings are made to think and choose for themselves, to be neither controllers nor conformers. Whether an individual submits to a system of belief or ideology out of conformity, or finds himself at the mercy of a tyrant who controls his life, the result is the same: he experiences the anguish of submission, the stress of repression.



The foundations of the authoritarian personality are laid during the formative years by the way parents treat each other and their children. Unfortunately, up to now, religion has also played a decisive role in promoting the authoritarian personality. We know all too well of those who have waged wars in the name of love, who have opposed science in the name of truth, and have divided people in the name of God.

Since the authoritarians play a decisive and far-reaching role in the destiny of humankind, they deserve closer attention. Extensive research reveals a consistent profile. The authoritarians:

- Often view and judge events in simple—black and white—categories. (If you don't believe the way I do, you will go straight to hell.)
- Are rigid, inaccessible, and feel threatened by change, both in self and society.
- Dislike knowledge, yet seek labels and degrees as status symbols.
- See their own weakness in others; complain about other authoritarians who act like themselves.
- Cannot express their feelings freely.
- Seek safety by staying with the majority; want to know what others think; look down on racial and religious minorities.
- Are very cautious; resist even reasonable risk; are distrustful.
- Worship power, look down on the weak and the disadvantaged.



- Take pleasure in exerting control over people's lives. Everything must be done their way. They act like a dictator.
- Feel uneasy toward the mysterious, the unknown, and the ambiguous; need perfect clarity. Tradition and "tried and true" give them security.
- Are super patriotic, provincial, and unconcerned about the fate of other nations and peoples.
- Resist looking inward, base their worth on accumulations and status symbols.
- Rank high in conformity; they conform to custom, tradition, parents, priests, the majority, and those with status symbols higher than theirs.

It seems ironic that controllers are *also* conformists. In fact, conformity constitutes the hallmark of the authoritarian personality. The deficiency behind both symptoms—the need for control and conformity—is the lack of internal standards. The strong "ego" the authoritarians display is simply an attempt to conceal their true identity: a feeling of weakness and unworthiness. Several points are in order:

- Very few authoritarians display all the listed traits all the time and to an extreme. It is no wonder that most people laugh at a character like Archie Bunker, the perfect example of an authoritarian personality. They find a faint image of him in themselves, an image that subconsciously they know to be true but consciously find difficult to admit. Without knowing it, they laugh at themselves.



- The intention is not to imply that conformity has no place in human life, but that it should always be guided with reason and tempered with purpose. For instance, submission unto God is a virtue.
- The kind of education offered in our public schools and universities has little if any impact on controllers and conformers. Schooling simply crystallizes the existing tendencies, makes them more resistant to change. Authoritarian personalities are found abundantly in the ranks of the highly educated.
- Prejudice (racial, religious, ethnic, and gender) is the hallmark of an authoritarian personality.
- The authoritarian personality (the desire for control, inability to communicate, etc.) lies at the root of the pervasive family conflicts in our time. Those who try both to conform blindly to authority and to *be* the authority are also the main cause of wars and conflicts among nations as well as the widespread divisiveness within religion.
- The resistance of controllers and conformers (who are always in the majority) to new ideas is best demonstrated in the rejection and persecution of the kindest, wisest, and gentlest human beings the world has ever known: God's supreme Messengers and Redeemers. The consequence of this act alone to the destiny of humankind is beyond estimation.

The world has always been carried forward by the persistent efforts and sacrifices of the few who decline to join the ranks of both controllers and



conformers, who think for themselves, who respect the verdict of reason, who follow their own conscience and investigate the truth with freedom and detachment.

What can we learn from recognizing the epidemic spread of the authoritarian personality? We can learn that we too, without knowing it, may be among the majority who carry the attitude of control and conformity to the extreme, who let “the authorities” do their thinking for them. That we too may be among those who mistreat their loved ones without ever realizing it. For the way we think and act appear as natural to us as breathing. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes” (Prov. 21:2).

The first and most vital step towards transformation and self-growth is to stand humble before our own selves, to search our own souls to see if we truly respect other people’s right of freedom and self-government. Then we must try to loosen our attachment to conformity and the ways of past generations, to set aside the traditions, attitudes, and habits that stand in our way, and stop living the way others expect us to live. Then, with conscious knowledge and full awareness, we must design our own mansions of freedom, build them in harmony with ***our own needs, our own wisdom and understanding***, and not those of past generations alone. We should use the past, not as a path, but as a guidepost; not as an anchor, but as a beacon.

“There is no tyrant like custom, and no freedom where its edicts are not resisted.” If you must rely on conformity and submissiveness as your



primary resource for stability, then you are indeed the slave to a tyrant that dwells within you, and you will be inhibiting the freedom of those who claim to be your loved ones and crushing any chance you may have for your own independence.⁹

Dr. Wayne Dyer

In one of His Epistles, Bahá'u'lláh reveals the essence of sublime attributes such as wisdom, glory, love, detachment, understanding, courage, charity, faith, magnanimity, and knowledge. Then He concludes with this statement:

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh declares that we cannot attain justice by seeing through other people's eyes:

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.¹¹

And yet as Albert Einstein observes:

Small is the number of them that see with their own eyes and feel with their own hearts.



The Roots of Conformity

When we are children our parents are godlike figures to our child's eyes, and the way they do things seems the way they must be done throughout the universe.¹² Dr. Scott Peck

A Sunday school teacher asked her class, "Why are you Baptists?" Among the many answers given, she liked one the best. It came from a five-year old who said, "It is something that runs in my family, or something like that."

As infants we are not concerned about justice, freedom, democracy, or reason. What we need is love and safety. We want our parents to feed us, to keep us dry, to comfort us and to cuddle us. Gradually we acquire the special skills to get attention on demand. We learn that crying is a quick way of getting service, and smiling a sure way of pleasing the onlookers. We develop an unconscious fear of displeasing others, especially our parents. Few of us break away from this cycle of dependency. And if we try, we feel anxious, even guilty.

As we get older we are told to obey in order to receive recognition and approval, or to face the consequences. We soon discover that it is not worth going against the grain. Thus reinforcement and praise determine or control much of our attitudes and actions. If they are used in the light of awareness, reason, knowledge, and justice, then they will bear positive fruits, otherwise they produce conformers and controllers. Unfortunately, when it comes to life's major questions, such as faith and belief, few take time to go beyond their comfort zone, few



enter into the light of awareness, knowledge, and reason.

Thus in decision making, as a whole, feelings assume dominant role, and reason a submissive role; conformity leads, while independent investigation of truth follows. That is why, as a rule, Christian parents rear Christian children—Catholics raise Catholics, Protestants raise Protestants, and Mormons raise Mormons. That is why Jewish parents raise Jewish children and Muslim parents raise Muslim children, generation after generation. That is why children of “mixed marriages” have mixed feelings about religion, and often have a more open mind about religion. The two loyalties expand their minds.

To conclude, we all face two choices. We can either confine our souls in the comfort zone of conformity or exercise our God-given right of freedom. We can either allow the forces of despair and desolation to prevail or arise for the triumph of hope and peace. We can either remain complacent and dependent or use our talents to build a splendid society ruled by love and justice. God has given each of us a clear responsibility—to seek, choose, and strive—never to stand still. Apathy, despair, dependency, and conformity, stifle our energies and talents.

The future of the world lies in our hands. The choice we make now will determine whether we will live in peace or war, whether we will be doomed to defeat or elevated to triumph. “Every action of our lives strikes some chord that will vibrate in eternity.”

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom.¹³ Bahá'u'lláh



Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits

Heaven's Most Splendid Gift

God's wisdom is proved by its result.

Christ (Matt. 11:19)

Be...an ark on the ocean of knowledge...¹

Bahá'u'lláh

“To learn and never be filled is wisdom; to teach and never be weary is love.” The gate of heaven opens to the fortress of wisdom, and the fortress of wisdom opens to those who knock at the door of knowledge and truth. Wisdom always remains awake



and watchful; it cannot rest in the darkness of despair and unconcern. It is always hopeful, daring, and curious; it cannot dwell in the land of fear. Wisdom always hungers for knowledge; it cannot accept tradition for truth or submit to apathy or inaction. Like an eagle with open wings, it soars with a keen eye in search of truth.

The true beginning of wisdom is the desire to learn (Wisdom of Solomon 6:17). Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you (Matt. 7:7). Test everything. Test the spirits to see whether they are from God (I Thess. 2:25; I John 4:1). Be always on the watch [investigate] (Luke 21:25). Whoever is thirsty, let him come (Rev. 22:17).

Knowledge is Heaven's most splendid gift to humans. It must be sought and cherished with a fervent hope, a passionate desire, and an undying resolve. It is the lever that elevates the hearts to contentment and harmony with the whole universe. It is more precious than life itself. Indeed, without it there is no life:

...my people perish for want of knowledge...

Hosea 4:6

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

Christ (John 6:63)

Some people must “die” before they learn to accept or appreciate knowledge. This is how Dr. Raymond Moody, in his book *The Light Beyond*, describes the change of attitude in those who encounter near-death visions:



The short time they were exposed to the possibility of total learning made them thirst for knowledge when they returned to their bodies. Often, they embark on new careers or take up serious courses of study. None that I know of, however, have pursued knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Rather, they all feel that knowledge is important only if it contributes to the wholeness of the person. Once again, a sense of connectedness comes into play: knowledge is good if it helps make something whole.²

Dr. Moody then offers this example about a businessman who used to scorn knowledge:

Doctor, I have to admit to you that before this cardiac arrest, I had only contempt for scholars. I worked my way up with little schooling, and I worked hard. There is a university nearby and I used to think those professors were just lazy, doing nothing of any practical value...But while the doctors were saying I was dead, this person I was with, this light, the Christ, showed me a dimension of knowledge...That was a humbling experience for me. I don't scorn professors anymore. Knowledge is important. I read everything I can get my hands on: history, science, literature. I'm interested in it all. My wife fusses at me about my books in our room. When you have one of these experiences, you see that everything is connected.³

The Bahá'í Faith hails knowledge as “*a wing to human life*”; “*a veritable treasure*”; “*a source of glory, bounty, and joy*”; “*a wondrous gift of God.*”



But the light of knowledge needs a lamp by which to focus and manifest its glory. That lamp is a heart detached from preconceived notions, free from anything that may dim its light: attachment to traditional beliefs, fantasies, and false assumptions; fear of searching for new knowledge; self-satisfaction and pride; and concern for self-interest, such as “if I do this or that, what will others think?”

...the pure heart becometh the mirror of the beauty of truth.⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The heart—the ultimate jury—must be totally impartial to arrive at a just decision. ***When knowledge strikes a pure and just heart, the spark is the truth:***

...through knowledge shall the just be delivered.
Hosea 4:6

...thou...doth direct the path of ***the just***.
Isaiah 26:7

Blessed are ***the pure in heart***...For they shall see God.
Christ (Matt. 5:3,8)

The hearts of all children are of utmost purity. They are mirrors upon which no dust has fallen.⁵
‘Abdu’l-Bahá

I tell you that whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.
Luke 18:17



The Knowledge of God

The first and most essential and prized knowledge is not geometry, chemistry, or physics; it is the knowledge of God:

The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God...⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

True knowledge...is the knowledge of God...⁷

The Báb

The spirit that animateth the human heart is the knowledge of God...⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me... Jeremiah 9:24

The “knowledge of God” means not only acknowledging the oneness and supremacy of God but also knowing His purpose in creating us, the sublime destiny He has ordained for us, and the means of attaining that destiny. Knowing God is seeing everything through His eyes.

How can the “knowledge of God” be acquired or disclosed to humans? Through those who know Him the best, His Manifestations or Messengers, who are the “Object of all knowledge.”

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh



We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge...¹¹ Bahá'u'lláh

How Does God Transform Human Beings?

God simply changes the way people think. He exposes their minds to the light of His knowledge. It is an established fact that any change in human life originates in the mind. “As a man thinketh, so is he.”

When the lens of a camera opens, the light rushes in to imprint images on the film. The same is true with the heart. A good picture requires at least two conditions: the lens must open properly; the unexposed film must face the desired subjects. The same is true with the spirit.

The following examples show the difference between the thoughts that come from God and the thoughts that come from human beings; the images that originate in the natural world, and the images that originate in the spiritual:

Natural: I count first. I must love and serve myself.

Spiritual: I am part of a bigger whole. I must see everyone as part of me and myself as part of everyone else. I do not need to love myself less. I just need to love others more.

Natural: Pleasure is the chief goal in life.



Spiritual: God is the goal. Once I allow His images in me to unfold, my pleasures will expand and multiply. His hope will lift me to the heavens on high. Once my heart is stretched by that marvelous vision, it will never return to its original shape.

Natural: Happiness comes from serving myself.

Spiritual: True happiness comes when I serve myself and others in the light of God's knowledge.

Natural: Life is short. I will try to enjoy it and have as much "fun" as possible.

Spiritual: Spiritual fulfillment offers the deepest joy, the kind of "fun" that endures. Life is too precious to be invested in fun alone. I invest it for spiritual growth, for seeing that which "no eye hath seen." My span of life is brief here, but it continues into the hereafter. I am a gem on God's hand and rejoice in that knowledge. As long as His hand endures, so will the gem.

Natural: Man is a political animal.

Spiritual: Man is the glory of creation, the noblest of all beings; a being for whom God made the universe and "many mansions" in heaven.

Natural: Man is a body. What matters is what you see.

Spiritual: Man is a soul. His body is his home. What matters is what you *don't* see.



When an individual allows these spiritual images to enter his mind and soul, he becomes a new creature. He sees, thinks, feels, and acts differently. The whole process of transformation is as simple and yet as complicated as this; simple when “the ego” does not stand in the way; complicated, when it does. “The humble are the empty vessels God loves to fill.”

The complete and entire elimination of the ego would imply perfection—which man can never completely attain...¹² Shoghi Effendi

Attachment to the status quo or tradition, and the fear of exploring new frontiers of knowledge, pose further obstacles to transformation.

Reality or truth is one, yet there are many religious beliefs, denominations, creeds and differing opinions in the world today. Why should these differences exist? Because they do not investigate and examine the fundamental unity, which is one and unchangeable. If they seek reality itself, they will agree and be united; for reality is indivisible and not multiple. It is evident, therefore, that there is nothing of greater importance to mankind than the investigation of truth.¹³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Be not the slave of your own past—plunge into the sublime seas, dive deep, and swim far, so you shall come back with self-respect, with new power, with an advanced experience, that shall explain and overlook the old. Ralph Waldo Emerson

We can respect and even appreciate the past and the ways of our ancestors. We can love them for having chosen to go their own way. But to be



attached to having to live and think the way others before you did, because you showed up looking like them in form, is to deny yourself enlightenment. This is how people and their institutions have controlled others for thousands of years.¹⁴

Wayne Dyer

Many philosophers, humanists, educators, and politicians present wonderful ideas for changing the world, but they often fail to follow them in their own lives. ***Information alone does not lead to transformation.*** “A wise man of ancient China was noted for his wisdom and ability to solve problems. One day a merchant came to him seeking advice. It seems that the merchant had a problem in his accounting department. ‘I have six men and six abacuses, but my needs have expanded to the point where I need a 20 percent increase in output. I cannot afford the capital investment of another man and another abacus; and even if I could, one man would not be enough, and two men would be too much.’ The wise man pondered the problem for several days and finally summoned the merchant. ‘The solution to your problem,’ he told him, ‘is simple. Each of your present accounting staff must grow another finger on each hand. This will increase your abacus output exactly 20 percent and will solve your problem.’ The merchant smiled. His problem was solved. He started to leave, paused a moment, and looked at the wise old man. ‘Oh, Wise One,’ he said, ‘you have truly given me the solution to my problem. But...’ and he paused, ‘how do I get my people to grow extra fingers?’ The wise man puffed on his pipe. ‘That is a good question,’ he said. ‘But alas, I only make policy



recommendations. The details of execution are up to you.”

Bahá'ís believe that Bahá'u'lláh's message is the most timely, practical, and dynamic force on our planet. It transforms pessimism into optimism, weakness into strength, despair into a desire for perfection. It appeals to all peoples and is potent against all maladies. The following example of transformation is one of thousands that can be told about un-numbered communities across our planet, from the simplest villages to the most sophisticated cities:

About two years ago, after his son accidentally killed a member of the Daga people [Papau, New Guinea] in a car accident, Levi George fully expected that he and his own family would face death in a traditional “payback” killing.

Mr. George, a former official in the Milne Bay provincial planning office, spent a week in hiding after the accident. Finally, forced to return to work, he found a group of Daga waiting to see him—people that Mr. George had regarded as among the “worst known killers and sorcerers in the area.” He felt certain he was to be attacked and killed.

“To my surprise they smiled and walked towards me, extended their arms, and shook hands with me,” Mr. George recounted recently. “They said, ‘Brother, we are from the area of the dead boy. We came to tell you that you and your family must not be worried. We are brothers and sisters. We are Bahá'ís and we want to assure you and your children that there will be no payback killing.’”



To outsiders, the Daga people have long been known for tribal fighting and intimidating sorcery. By tradition, transgressions call for quick and often lethal vengeance.

Recently, however, reports of dramatic changes—such as this account by Mr. George—have begun to emerge. According to regional government officials and travelers to the Daga area, several of the tribes are acquiring a reputation for peace making and intertribal harmony.¹⁵

How Do People Perceive a New Religion?

People read in their Scriptures that they should seek, search, and knock, yet they resist the idea of investigating a new religion. They love new gadgets, but not new faiths. Why? New denominations (often concoctions of existing ones) are on offer at paltry prices or as giveaways. Supermarkets for beliefs constantly compete for customers. Some people are seduced by the free offers. But a new, independent faith, such as the Bahá'í Faith, threatens the believers' security by undermining their loyalty to well-established traditions.

Some people feel guilt at the thought of even looking at a new religion. They refuse to glance at a few pages or read a small pamphlet. They consider such a deviation a sin, a sign of a desire to break with the past, a symbol of disloyalty to the One they have loved and adored. They have little if any unawareness that their feelings of guilt is a result of their early training.



Others have a fear of being deceived. They have been taught that the devil is clever, conniving and crafty. He constantly roams the earth in search of new converts—those who are off guard if only for a few brief moments. Still others fear the loss of their faith. If one has the most precious pearl, why look elsewhere? These people forget the words of their Master that fear shows lack of faith:

Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?

Christ (Matt. 8:26)

They also forget the beautiful parable of Jesus spoken long ago: that only those with courage, only those with an enterprising spirit can enter the gates of heaven; the fearful receive nothing but punishment (Matt. 25:16-30).

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark. The real tragedy of life is when we are afraid of the Light.

Anonymous

The chief danger in life is to take too many precautions.

Alfred Adler

There are still others, who as a result of unpleasant encounters with their own faith, avoid all faiths. They view religion as a set of dogmatic, divisive, and arbitrary rules imposed on unthinking people. The word “hypocrisy” is often on their lips. Their earlier negative encounters with religion diminish their sensitivity and narrow their vision to new encounters, to new opportunities for spiritual growth.

The following images illustrate how people perceive or interpret a non-threatening, but novel reality:



How many images do you see in each of the two drawings? Some people see one, others two. Why? If you cannot see the two images, then look at the modified versions at the bottom of this page.

People also attribute qualities to each image on the basis of their past experience. “Suppose you saw only one picture at first, the way most people do. What would you have thought about someone who saw the other one? If you weren’t familiar with this type of experiment, if you didn’t particularly like the person, or if you happened to be feeling impatient that day, you might be tempted to call anyone who disagreed with you wrong or even crazy. It’s



Young Woman



Old Woman



possible that you could end up in a nasty argument over who was right, each of you pushing your own view, never recognizing or admitting that both interpretations are correct.”¹⁶

Psychologists maintain that each individual creates in his mind a unique reality in which he lives. That subjective reality—not the objective—determines how he behaves at a given moment. For each person, ***the created reality eventually becomes the absolute or a highly dependable reality.*** As psychologist Arthur Combs observes “Our perceptions of ourselves and the world are so real to us that we seldom pause to doubt them.” He believes that understanding the preceding fact holds the key to many human problems and conflicts:

Although this fact is obvious, the failure of people everywhere to comprehend it is responsible for much of human misunderstanding, maladjustment, conflict and loneliness.

Today, people’s image of religion is for the most part negative. The negative image comes mostly from seeing how little influence it exerts on believers’ lives, from observing an abundance of good words and a scarcity of good deeds. This is just the opposite of what believing is all about:

The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds...¹⁷ Bahá’u’lláh

By faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds.¹⁸

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



To some people religion means listening to a good sermon; to others going to church, synagogue, or a mosque once a week; and to still others just reading the Word everyday. Today, people's perception of religion mostly consists of grand speeches, theological theories, and divisive debates and arguments. They see it as an enterprise that produces mostly words, claims, counterclaims, and new denominations. They see a magnificent altar with no flames.

Anyone can build an altar; it requires a God to provide the flame.

Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits

If people for the most part hold a negative view of religion, how can they ever be encouraged to embark on a new spiritual journey? How can their trust be regained? How can their hunger for truth be restored? It can be restored by offering them "a new fruit," by inspiring a desire to put this truth, this ancient but ever-timely wisdom, to the test:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Christ (Matt. 7:16-18)

As an example, tasting a few bad apples may create this reality: avoid all apples. What can possibly reverse this reality? Tasting new apples. Words alone have little if any power to change an established



perception. Then how and why do people initiate an investigation of the Bahá'í Faith? At the outset, what restores their confidence more than anything else, is a direct encounter with Bahá'ís. The encounter communicates to them an attitude or perception precisely the opposite of what alienated them from their own faith and caused them to shy away from all faiths. Knowing a few people who display attitudes and actions contrary to their expectations challenges the validity of their position and gives them a reason to re-examine their negative feelings.

Only by observing how the Bahá'ís live, by seeing their openness to new ideas, their freedom from dogmatic and unexamined faith, their deep respect for other religions, races and cultures, their efforts to improve the socio-economic state of the world, their unity and diversity, their concern for a peaceful and healthy planet, their enthusiasm and radiant living, their spiritual composure, their positive perspective, and their sincerity, humility, and high moral standards—all these inspire them to stay on course, to pursue a grand ideal worthy of their time and talent, and to open their hearts and souls to the transforming power of the Word of God. The direct encounter inspires the dream of living in an enchanting world of peace and contentment crowned with a glowing purpose.

Some Indian braves were challenged to climb to the highest peak to see a sea beyond the mountains. Most of them brought back leaves or moss or a certain flower, or some kind of token to prove the height to which they had climbed; but one came back breathless without anything



except an expression of joy on his face, and the glory of vision in his eyes. All he said was, “I have seen the crystal sea,” and no one doubted it.

Louise McCraw

My ears had heard of you but now my eyes see you.

Job 42:5

Only after truth seekers have seen the Bahá’í life, only after their suspicion is suspended and their confidence restored, are they willing to examine the Bahá’í teachings seriously, and to judge Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation on its own merits, rather than simply on the merits of their Bahá’í friends.

The serene, silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of God.

Blaise Pascal

Bahá’í Scriptures

Not only does the fruit of the Bahá’í life inspire hope and strength, but also the rich harvest of the Bahá’í sacred Scriptures; words such as these from Bahá’u’lláh as inscribed on the Bahá’í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois:

The best beloved of all things in My sight is justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me.

My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure.

Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner.

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent.



I have made death a messenger of joy to thee.
Wherefore dost thou grieve?

Make mention of Me on My earth, that in My
heaven I may remember thee.

O rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst
are My trust; guard ye My trust.

All the prophets of God proclaim the same faith.
Religion is a radiant light and an impregnable
stronghold.

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of
one branch.

So powerful is unity's light that it can illumine
the whole earth.

Consort with the followers of all religions with
friendliness.

O Son of Being! Thou art My lamp and My
light is in thee.

O Son of Being! Walk in My statutes for love
of Me.

Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home
reunion with Me.

The light of a good character surpasseth the light
of the sun.¹⁹

The following passage, also from Bahá'u'lláh, further
demonstrates the nature and the inspirational power
of Bahá'í Scriptures:

O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold
fast that which is good. Strive to be shining
examples unto all mankind, and true reminders



of the virtues of God...Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches...Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavors be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss...

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...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.²⁰

Love is the dominating theme in most of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's works. In the thousands of letters that He addressed to individual Bahá'ís who wrote Him, He repeatedly admonished them to arise to new heights of unconditional love for all humanity:

Love is heaven's kindly light...Love...is the living link that uniteth God with man...Love is the most great law...the supreme magnetic force...Love is the spirit of life...²¹

The essence of Bahá'u'lláh's Teaching is all-embracing love, for love includeth every excellence of humankind. It causeth every soul to go



forward. It bestoweth on each one, for a heritage, immortal life.²²

Soon will your swiftly-passing days be over, and the fame and riches, the comforts, the joys provided by this rubbish-heap, the world, will be gone without a trace. Summon ye, then, the people to God...Be ye loving fathers to the orphan, and a refuge to the helpless, and a treasury for the poor, and a cure for the ailing. Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. Pay ye no heed to aversion and rejection, to disdain, hostility, injustice; act ye in the opposite way. Be ye sincerely kind, not in appearance only. Let each one of God's loved ones center his attention on this: to be the Lord's mercy to man; to be the Lord's grace. Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth...In this way, the light of divine guidance will shine forth, and the blessings of God will cradle all mankind; for love is light, no matter in what abode it dwelleth; and hate is darkness, no matter where it may make its nest.²³

Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side. Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature; look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord...

It behoveth the loved ones of the Lord to be the signs and tokens of His universal mercy...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...²⁴

Who are we that we should judge? How shall we know who, in the sight of God, is the most upright man? God's thoughts are not like our thoughts! How many men who have seemed saint-like to their friends have fallen into the greatest humiliation. Think of Judas Iscariot; he began well, but remember his end! On the other hand, Paul, the Apostle, was in his early life an enemy of Christ, whilst later he became His most faithful servant. How then can we flatter ourselves and despise others?

Let us therefore be humble, without prejudices, preferring others' good to our own! Let us never say, 'I am a believer but he is an infidel,' 'I am near to God, whilst he is an outcast.' We can never know what will be the final judgment!²⁵

Verily, it is better a thousand times for a man to die than to continue living without virtue.²⁶

From Apathy to Enthusiasm

A man was asked, "What is the difference between ignorance and apathy?" He responded "I don't know and I don't care." A common obstacle that prevents people of different persuasions from expanding their



spiritual horizons is apathy, an epidemic disease described as “the chronic fatigue syndrome of the soul:”

...the love of many [people] will grow cold.

Christ (Matt. 24:12)

At their initial exposure to the Bahá'í message, many people entertain thoughts of this kind: “One more religion. Why should I care? I am too busy. Why should I waste my time studying someone else's theology?” They see the Bahá'í Faith as another division within the vast domain of religion, as another set of arbitrary beliefs based on someone's interpretation.

But once these skeptics overcome their initial apathy and distrust and investigate the Bahá'í Faith, they are astonished by its logic, relevance, and inspirational powers. At that point they say “Why did it take me so long to regain my trust, to look into this faith, to discover its value and relevance to my life? This is so obvious! Why can't others see? The Bahá'í Faith is so logical, so sensible! Why did I not hear about it sooner? Why didn't someone tell me about it when I was younger?”

There is nothing so powerful as truth; and often nothing as strange.

Daniel Webster

Many of these seekers indicate that they found the Bahá'í Faith at a time when they had lost their faith and hope, or were on the verge of losing them. Going to a church or synagogue did not satisfy their spiritual hunger; for they could not relate to what was being taught or done in the name of religion.



After years of searching and wandering, they found that the Bahá'í Faith presented them with a new alternative—one in harmony with their hopes and dreams. At a critical juncture in their lives—a point of doubt and skepticism—the new faith offered them a glimmer of optimism, one that gradually developed into a new zest for life and a new hope for the world.

Hope is like the sun which, as we journey towards it, it casts the shadow of our burden behind us.

Samuel Smiles

Some people feel comfortable in their small cubicles, and avoid any encounter that may disturb the panorama of their sweet illusions:

We would rather be ruined than changed
We would rather die in our dread
Than climb the cross of the moment
and let our illusions die.

W. H. Auden

Some people lack confidence both in themselves and their Creator. They think they are too small for God's grace and boundless blessings. They can not believe that the Creator of the universe knows them and remembers them, and wants to give them His immortal bounties. They too are afraid of extending their hands or opening their hearts.

Once there was a kind seller of cookies. A little girl was watching him. She loved cookies, but had no money to buy them. The seller saw the longing in the little girl's eyes and asked her, "Do you want some cookies?" The girl nodded her head. "Hold out your hands," he said. But the little girl would not. "Hold out your hands," he repeated. Still she



did not move. When she got home, her mother asked, “Why didn’t you hold out your hands for the cookies?” “Because,” the little girl said, “his hands were bigger than mine.”

Dr. Dyer discusses the principle of “abundance and scarcity:” “Abundance is not something that we manufacture, but something that we accept and tune in to. If our mind believes in scarcity, expecting only a small portion of life’s abundance, then that is what our life experience will be. We receive that which we are willing to let in, and what we block is not from unavailability but from scarcity beliefs. When we conceptualize abundance and prosperity as something we are deserving of, we notice a significant shift occurring. First the thoughts about what we deserve change and then slowly our behavior changes...we expand what we focus upon.”²⁷

O MOVING FORM OF DUST!

I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me...At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.²⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

For the Lord, high as is he, cares for the lowly...

Psalms 138:6

Still others hunger for truth, contentment, and fellowship with God, yet do not hear the invitation call to the banquet. The loud and varied voices of our time muffle their ears and prevent them from hearing and heeding the Voice of the divine:



Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes [his fear or resistance to knock], I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. Christ (Rev. 3:20-21)

The invitation is extended once again to all those who wish to enter and see the banquet of the Kingdom:

Open the doors of your hearts...We, in truth, have opened unto you the gates of the Kingdom.²⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Many are so preoccupied with making a living that they forget about living. They do not hear a call as urgent, a warning as forceful and impassioned, an invitation as magnificent and rewarding as this:

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!... You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But ***you do not realize that you are poor***...I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich...and [buy] salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see...To him who overcomes [his apathy...] I will give right to sit with me on my throne...

Christ (Rev. 3:15-21)

The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty, and submit to the Will of the Lord...³⁰

Bahá'u'lláh



Tear asunder...the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful.³¹

Bahá'u'lláh

How can apathy be overcome?

Apathy can only be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal which takes the imagination by storm; secondly a definite intelligible plan for carrying that ideal into practice. Arnold Toynbee

Bahá'ís have already shown that the plan they pursue is not an unreachable dream, that with the divine Hand at work the real and ideal merge in a heavenly and magnificent pattern.

The power of ideals is incalculable. We see no power in a drop of water. But let it get into a crack in the rock and be turned to ice, and it splits the rock; turned into steam, it drives the pistons of the most powerful engines. Something has happened to it which makes active and effective the power that is latent in it.

Albert Schweitzer

To live in the presence of great truths, to be dealing with eternal laws, to be led by permanent ideals—that is what keeps a man patient when the world ignores him, and calm and unspoiled when the world praises him. Francis Peabody



Quotations from Biblical and Bahá'í Scriptures

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps [of search] burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that ***when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching [investigating] when he comes.*** I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready...

Christ (Luke 12:35-38)

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

Christ (Luke 12:32)

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth...

Christ (Matt. 5:3)

If you search with all your heart, I will let you find me...

Jeremiah 29:14

...when a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart...that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth.³²

Bahá'u'lláh

Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within



the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority.³³ Bahá'u'lláh

I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: "Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self," and if such a man should reply and say: "Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal," such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.³⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Man's highest station...is attained through faith in God in every Dispensation and by acceptance of what hath been revealed by Him...³⁵ The Báb

Beware lest the transitory things of human life withhold you from turning unto God, the True One. Ponder ye in your hearts the world and its conflicts and changes, so that ye may discern its merit and the station of those who have set their hearts upon it...³⁶ Bahá'u'lláh



I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me...At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me...While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.³⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Jeremiah, 33:3

Teach me thy way, O Lord.

Psalms 27:11

9

The Bahá'í Life

What is a Bahá'í? How does the Bahá'í life differ from any other?

To be a Bahá'í means to recognize Bahá'u'lláh as God's latest Messenger sent with a new Mission and a new Message to be accepted and honored. Being a Bahá'í means not only loving God and living a noble life, but also working for Bahá'u'lláh's universal ideals—oneness of humanity, oneness of religion, equality of men and women, the rights of the poor and disadvantaged, universal peace, and the elimination of ignorance, prejudice, and fanaticism. In sum, to be a Bahá'í means to be in harmony with God's will for our age.



To be a Bahá'í simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it...¹

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Many of those who declare their faith in Bahá'u'lláh seem to have already been in tune with His universal ideals even before knowing His name. It is not uncommon to hear such seekers or believers remark: “As soon as I started studying the Bahá'í Faith, I recognized the truth of its Mission, and its relevance to our time. It seems as though I have always believed in Bahá'u'lláh's universal ideals. The doctrine of ‘exclusive salvation’ never appealed to me. I considered it simply a misinterpretation or misjudgment, for it seemed unreasonable to believe that God, the Loving Creator, loved some of His children more than the others, that He sought to save only one people, that He sent only one Savior, and that all the other religions were either false, or at best not good enough. Strange as it may seem, I was already a Bahá'í in heart without knowing it, a silent believer long before declaring my belief in Bahá'u'lláh, long before giving voice to my faith.”

And in a way these seekers are right in their thinking. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá assures us, a person may be a Bahá'í “even if he has never heard the name of Bahá'u'lláh.” Once he hears the name, the story takes a new turn, because being a Bahá'í requires more than pursuing one's own noble wishes, more than being in sympathy with the Bahá'í ideals, even more than living a virtuous life. Bahá'u'lláh's teachings reach far beyond the concerns of the



individual. Being a Bahá'í means not only trusting one's own pure vision but enriching and enhancing that vision by the divine Wisdom, not only following one's own spiritual instincts but guiding those instincts by the divine injunctions. Being a Bahá'í means not only edifying and uplifting one's own self but society as well; not only being on fire but "setting the *world* on fire," not only believing in the social and spiritual ideals proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh but also transforming the ideal into the actual: building the heavenly Kingdom.

Such a glorious achievement requires cooperation and active involvement. Consequently, participation in the Bahá'í social life is complementary to the pursuit of virtues, which simply guide the life of the individual. Without intimate cooperation, without sharing and exchanging ideas, seldom can any social change of great consequence come about.

Every Bahá'í accepts the responsibility and the privilege of sharing his faith, knowledge, and beliefs with others: those unaware of the advent of the new Revelation. For if an idea is good, if it is conducive to the enrichment of the human spirit, to the advancement of society, to peace and prosperity, then it must be shared with *all* seekers of truth, it must be planted in every pure heart:

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the Light.

Christ (Luke 8:16)



Proclaim with both thy pen and tongue My Cause. Cry out and summon the people to Him Who is the Sovereign Lord of all worlds...²

Bahá'u'lláh

One of the loftiest and deepest joys of recognizing Bahá'u'lláh is realized when one becomes a beacon of heavenly light to the seekers of truth, a pioneer in the building of the new world order, in spreading the new knowledge to the multitudes of seekers as yet unaware of Bahá'u'lláh's advent.

In summary: to be a Bahá'í begins with the recognition of Bahá'u'lláh's station. This is then followed by a willingness to live by His Words and a desire to honor His Wisdom. It is as simple—and as challenging—as this.

Since this chapter intends to emphasize the noble life of a Bahá'í, let us now turn to the study of the attributes or virtues that direct and inspire the life of a believer in Bahá'u'lláh, both in his relation to himself and others.

Ethical Values Never Change

Religion—every religion—comprises two sets of values: ethical (justice, love, charity...) and social (marriage, divorce, dietary laws...). The former never change, the latter often do. The spiritual life of a true Bahá'í is characterized by the same virtues that distinguish a true follower in any of the other great Faiths.

Jesus said that loving God and loving people are the greatest commandments. In the Bahá'í Faith,



love receives the same honor and retains the same status. The following are a few quotations from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding love:

In the world of humanity the greatest king and sovereign is love.³

Love is the greatest law in this vast universe of God!⁴

The essence of Bahá'u'lláh's Teaching is all-embracing love, for love includeth every excellence of humankind. It causeth every soul to go forward. It bestoweth on each one...immortal life.⁵

Love is heaven's kindly light...the living link that uniteth God with man...Love is the most great law...Love is the spirit of life...⁶

Until love takes possession of the heart, no other divine bounty can be revealed in it.⁷

All the sacred Scriptures teach and honor the same noble deeds, the same divine attributes. The laws of love, honesty, and charity never change; they stand as immortal as the stars of heaven.

This brief quotation from the Torah, spoken to humankind some 3,500 years ago, is an immortal prescription for a full and abundant spiritual life:

What then, O Israel, does the Lord your God ask of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to conform to all his ways, to love him and to serve him with all your heart and soul.

Deuteronomy 10:12



The spiritual laws serve as essential links to the harmonious functioning of both the individual and society—guiding us towards harmony with our own nature. Destitute of virtues, deprived of noble acts of love, compassion, concern, charity, and sanctity, humans turn into the basest of beings, society into a state of absolute apathy and despair, the world into an abode of darkness.

Yet as fixed as the spiritual laws are, they do evolve, constantly seeking new modes or ways of expression. Every new Redeemer invests the spiritual heritage of the world with a new and ever-advancing Spirit—one attuned to an ever-evolving age.

Harmony Between Faith and Deed

True faith consists of both knowledge and action. Neither knowing and loving God and His Messengers, nor living by the divine Law can, in itself, suffice. From Love comes the inspiration for living, and from living the test of loving. As the light of faith becomes brighter or fades, so does the clarity of God's reflection in the soul. To believe and not to live is not to believe.

Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds.⁸

Bahá'u'lláh



The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds...⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

If you want to enter life, obey the commandments. Christ (Matt. 19:17)

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James 2:17

If you love me, you will obey what I command. Christ (John 14:15)

If I speak in the tongues of...angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong...
I Corinthians 13:1

Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favor at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

“Living the Law” is a sure evidence or expression of loving the Law-Giver. How can the believer prove his sincerity save by honoring his beliefs? “Faith without works is like a bird without wings; though she may hop about on the earth, she will never fly to heaven. But when both are joined together, then doth the soul mount up to her eternal rest.”

Faith is not merely praying
Upon your knees at night;
Faith is not merely straying
Through darkness into light;



Faith is not merely waiting
For glory that may be.
Faith is the brave endeavor,
the splendid enterprise,
The strength to serve, whatever
Conditions may arise.

It's not dying for faith that's so hard, it is living
up to it. W. Thackeray

God delights in altars on which no fire is
burned, but around which virtues dance. Plato

It is recorded that a friend once said to Pascal:
“I wish I had your belief, so that I might live
your life.” To which Pascal was swift to reply:
“If you lived my life you would soon have my
belief.” J. Davis

How can one have faith without good deeds? How
can there be rain without clouds? How can a dead
seed or carcass be alive?

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith
without deed is dead. James 2:26

To think that faith without good deeds can have life
of its own is only an illusion. Can one have faith
without being faithful?

Show me your faith without deeds...You believe
there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe
that—and shudder. James 2:18-19

As stated, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá defines *faith* as, “first,
conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of
good deeds.”¹¹



Today, in religious circles there is an overemphasis on faith at the expense of good deeds. It is often said that, “Faith is not earned; it is a gift given by the grace of God,” or “Heaven is a free gift; it is not earned or deserved.” *Everything* is a gift from God. Our very existence is the gift of God.

Undue emphasis on the idea of “being saved by grace alone” has tarnished not only the glory of faith but of good deeds as well. It has diminished the value of effort and volition as a means of attracting divine blessings. It has led to the conclusion that the only requirement for being “saved” is to “believe” the truth, and to say “yes.” The implication is clear. Since a gift is always given freely, one’s actions play little if any role in the final outcome. This has made the job of believing attractive to the doubting masses, but at the expense of diminishing the splendors of faith.

Although faith is a gift from God, it can reveal its splendors only through noble deeds; otherwise it is an illusion. Faith and effort are inseparable partners—they sustain each other. Faith is the fire and deed the altar. Faith is the light and deed the lamp. Without the altar and the lamp, there is no fire and there is no light.

A Sunday school teacher had just finished her lesson on forgiveness and wanted to test the children to make sure they had learned their lesson. So she asked, “Can anyone tell me what we must do to obtain forgiveness of sin?” A little boy’s hand went up. “We’ve got to sin first!” he declared proudly.



Distinction in Deeds

A Bahá'í is known by distinction in noble deeds, not by name:

I desire distinction for you. The Bahá'ís must be distinguished from others...But this distinction must not depend upon wealth...For you I desire spiritual distinction...You must become distinguished for loving humanity...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 acquiring the bestowals of God.¹² 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Only when we realize that we are in essence spiritual beings concealed in bodies, rather than physical beings concerned with passing pleasures, are we motivated to turn our energies towards spiritual excellence.

Within each of us lies a hidden gem. Only by polishing our souls can we reveal the concealed glory and uniqueness.

It is doing something better than other people that makes us unique. Yet a surprising number of people still see individuality as a surface thing. They wear garish clothes, dye their hair strange, color and decorate their skin with tattoos to make some kind of social statement. They believe that mediocrity will somehow gain new



credentials from exterior cosmetics. But an ordinary guy who has dyed his hair purple or orange is nothing more than the same person with a funny-looking head. Donald Smith

Dr. J. E. Esslemont, author of a classic introductory book on the Bahá'í Faith, writes:

When asked on one occasion: “What is a Bahá'í?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “To be a Bahá'í simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood.” On another occasion He defined a Bahá'í as “one endowed with all the perfections...”¹³

Then, does to be a Bahá'í mean to be perfect? Not at all. No one is, or can ever be, perfect—except, of course, a divine Manifestation, the One sheltered under the shadow of divine Wisdom.

Human perfection varies from divine perfection. On our level, perfection means *developing our potential to the farthest bounds of possibilities. In this sense, every human being can become perfect.* When it comes to spiritual distinctions, we should set our goal as high as the heavens. Somerset Maugham said, “It is a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it.” Therefore, “Let us go on unto perfection...” (Heb. 6:1).

Aside from the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, whose greatness and nobility transcend our comprehension, we are given a divine Gift—‘Abdu’l-Bahá—unparalleled in the spiritual history of the world, a supreme



Exemplar, One whose deeds and aspirations, whose ideals and devotions stand reachable, within the grasp of our will and desire. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was perfection made visible, a pearl of consummate charm and beauty—flawless, radiant, pure. But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s perfections did not come simply through His own unaided efforts. As His name (Servant of Glory) signifies, He lived under the shadow of His Father’s Glory—the Glory of God—Bahá’u’lláh. For us, the best possible course is to try to walk in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s way, to emulate His example.

Absolute perfection stands beyond our reach, but “near perfection” is as close as our determination and desire. We stand between the realm of light and the domain of darkness. With only one step, we can enter either.

O SON OF LOVE!

Thou art but one step away from the glorious heights above and from the celestial tree of love. Take thou one pace and with the next advance into the immortal realm and enter the pavilion of eternity.¹⁴

Bahá’u’lláh

Sometimes we see so many ways to God, we become confused and abandon our responsibility to search. We see the vast world in utter confusion. We feel too small to make a difference. Discouraged, we do nothing. A man in his suicide note stated that if anyone, along the way to his rendezvous with death, looked at him and smiled, he would not pursue his plan. Unfortunately no one did. Everyday we have opportunities to perform many “little, unremembered acts of kindness.” As the surge of a



vast ocean comes from little drops of water that blend and bind together, so does the spiritual elevation of the world arise from countless caring acts and thoughts offered in a spirit of love and a vision of oneness. These acts, like lighted candles, turn the gloomy night into a festive feast. The tendency to underestimate the supreme power of little noble deeds is a grave illusion.

One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens.¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

“Little self-denials, little honesties, little passing words of sympathy, little nameless acts of kindness, little silent victories over favorite temptations—these are the silent threads of gold which, when woven together, gleam out so brightly in the pattern of life that God approves.”

Taking the first step is always the most demanding, the most trying. But once taken, it releases and sets in motion all the forces of light and life, forces that rush to our aid, to make the act of growing an enchanting encounter.

Until one is committed,
there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back,
always ineffectiveness.
Concerning acts of initiative...
there is one elementary truth
the ignorance of which kills countless ideas
and splendid plans:
That the moment one definitely commits oneself
then Providence moves too.
All sorts of things occur to help one



that would otherwise never have occurred.
A whole stream of events issues from the decision...
which no man could have dreamt
would come his way. Goethe

What is the first step? It is to purify one's motives. It is as simple—and yet as trying—as that. Once motives are purified and liberated from the bounds of ego, from selfish ends or interests, they release and set in motion all the spiritual powers from within and without.

A sincere desire to do one's best, a willingness to transcend one's prejudices, is a fitting foundation for faith in divine Wisdom, and nothing short of this can constitute a basis on which to build one's everlasting destiny. Bahá'u'lláh invites us to manifest "the signs of God."

Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds. Strive that ye may be enabled to manifest to the peoples of the earth the signs of God, and to mirror forth His commandments. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.¹⁶

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the perfect exemplar and authorized interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, invites each of us to become "a center of attraction" to others:



Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a center 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 behavior, 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.¹⁷

The Promise of Reciprocity

God created us out of love:

I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

God continuously sustains His love for us by sending His great Messengers and Teachers, who endure every adversity and suffering for our sake. How can we appreciate this love? By welcoming and loving those Messengers. They speak not from themselves, but from God. Loving them is the same as loving God; ignoring them is the same as ignoring God.

In psychology, the most reasonable and acceptable means of managing behavior, or applying discipline, is called *logical and natural consequences*. What is the best way of treating a child who keeps abusing a toy? To take it away from him. What is the best



remedy for a person who drinks and drives? To take the car away from him. What is the best remedy for a healthy and strong person who refuses to work? To let him taste poverty and hunger. This may seem cruel, but is supporting him at the expense of others not more cruel? What is the best response to a teenager who keeps abusing the phone? To take that privilege away from him. Using logical and natural consequences is justice in its simplest, purest, and highest form. No doubt we can find exceptions to this rule, as we can find to every rule. Yet the general principle, wherever practical, holds true.

Let us apply this principle to our relationship with God. Let us see what our Creator has done for us, what we should do in return, and what will happen if we don't. Suppose out of your love for a friend, you accept forty years of imprisonment and exile and every possible humiliation and suffering (this is what Bahá'u'lláh went through). Now suppose you send your son to visit that friend to tell him your story. Your son travels a long distance, finds the house, and knocks on the door. But instead of welcoming your son and offering him the warmest and kindest words of gratitude, your friend ignores him, pretends not to know him, and shuts the door on him. How would you feel? And how would you respond? Would you call him and thank him? Would you send him a gift and a thank-you card? Or would you get angry and say to yourself, "He did not deserve my love. From now on I will leave him alone"? According to the principle of logical and natural consequences, the most reasonable response is to leave him alone. This is how our Creator



promises to treat us. Compare God to the sun. What is the best punishment for a person who ignores or resents your kindness and keeps insisting, “Don’t open the windows; I don’t like the sun; let me live in darkness”? To let him live in darkness; his punishment is a natural consequence of his choice. That is what happens to those who reject or ignore God’s Messengers. They lose all the benefits that come from believing. This is sheer justice. For God is **both** kind and fair, **both** loving and just.

The following examples demonstrate the promise of reciprocity:

With the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
Christ (Matt. 7:2)

...you shall be treated as you have treated others...
Obadiah 15

God will verily do unto them that which they themselves are doing...¹⁹
Bahá'u'lláh

Do you expect to receive a reward other than that which ye have earned by your deeds?
Qur’án 27:90

Whatsoever a man soweth, that he shall reap also.
Galatians 6:7

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
II Corinthians 9:6

To motivate us, our Creator promises to treat us according to the principle of natural and logical consequences. For instance, He asks:



- Do you want Me to love you? Then love Me:

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.²⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

We love because He first loved us. I John 4:19

In any way that men love Me in that same way they find My love... Bhagavad Gita 4:1

- Do you want Me to remember you? Then remember Me:

O SON OF BEING!

Make mention of Me on My earth, that in My heaven I may remember thee...²¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Remember Me, then, and I will remember you. Qur'án 2:152

He, verily, will...remember everyone that remembereth Him.²² Bahá'u'lláh

- Do you want to attain victory? Then make My Cause victorious:

Arise for the triumph of My cause, that while yet on earth thou mayest obtain the victory.²³ Bahá'u'lláh

He, verily, will aid everyone that aideth Him...²⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

- Do you want Me to think highly of you? Then think highly of Me:

Thy sight is My sight, do thou see therewith, that in thine inmost soul thou mayest testify



unto My exalted sanctity, and I within Myself
may bear witness unto an exalted station for
thee.²⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Those who honor Me I will honor.

I Samuel 2:30

- Do you want to discover the mysteries of My greatness? Then magnify and glorify My cause:

Magnify My cause that I may reveal unto
thee the mysteries of My greatness and shine
upon thee with the light of eternity.²⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

- Do you wish to be lifted up? Then humble yourself before God:

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He
will lift you up.

James 4:10

- Do you wish to live in God? Then “die” in Him by destroying your selfish desires:

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself...
that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally
live in thee.²⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

- Do you want Me to be pleased with you? Then please others:

O MY FRIENDS!

Walk ye in the ways of the good pleasure of
the Friend, and know that His pleasure is in
the pleasure of His creatures.²⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

- Do you wish to find God? Then search for Him:

Thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with
all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29



Those who seek Me find Me. Proverbs 8:17

- Do you want to be rich in the next Kingdom? Then give away of your wealth in this kingdom:

O SON OF MAN!

Bestow My wealth upon My poor, that in heaven thou mayest draw from stores of unfading splendor and treasures of imperishable glory.²⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Give, and it will be given to you...For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Christ (Luke 6:38)

- Do you wish to be treated with mercy? Then treat others with mercy:

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.

Christ (Matt. 5:7)

Pass no judgment, and you will not be judged.

Christ (Matt. 7:1)

- Do you wish God to keep His covenant, then keep your covenant:

Be true to your covenant with Me; I will be true to my covenant with you... Qur'án 2:38

- Do you wish to be acknowledged? Then acknowledge God's Messengers and Teachers:

Whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.

Christ (Luke 12:8)

- Do you wish the Lord to be with you? Then be with the Lord:



The Lord is with you when you are with Him.
II Corinthians 15:2

Return unto me, and I will return unto you...
Malachi 3:7

- Do you wish to receive an answer, then call Him:
He shall call Me, and I will answer him...
Psalms 91:15

- Do you wish “wisdom” to love you? Then love wisdom:
I love those who love me... Proverbs 8:17

- Do you want to be forgotten on the day of judgment? Then forget about that day:
Taste then the consequences of forgetting this day [of judgment]. We now forget you.
Qur’án 32:14

- Do you wish to forget your soul? Then forget God:
And be not like those who forget God; and He made them forget their own souls!
Qur’án 59:19

- Do you wish to be rejected? Then reject the knowledge of God.
Because thou hath rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee... Hosea 4:6

- If you wish to be treated with contempt, then treat God with contempt:
Those who despise Me shall be treated with contempt.
I Samuel 2:30



- Do you wish to be denied? Then deny God's Messengers and Teachers:

He that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. Christ (Luke 12:9)

- Do you wish God's supreme Messenger be ashamed of you? Then be ashamed of Him:

Whoever is ashamed of Me and Mine, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him, when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and the holy angels. Christ (Luke 9:26)

- Do you wish God to forsake you? Then forsake Him:

If you forsake Him, He will forsake you.
II Corinthians 15:2

- Do you wish God to forget you? Then forget His supreme Savior and Messenger of the age:

God will verily...forget them even as they have ignored His Presence in His day. Such is His decree unto those that have denied Him, and such will it be unto them that have rejected His signs.³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

- Do you wish to find the door to the heavenly banquet open? Then open your heart:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
Christ (Rev. 3:20-21)



All these quotations on the principle and promise of reciprocity lead us to this critical conclusion: ***The time to knock is now, during our earthly life:***

Knock, and it shall be opened unto you...

Christ (Matt. 7:7)

Otherwise, this is what may happen later:

“Sir! Sir!” they said. “Open the door for us!” But he replied, “I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.” Therefore keep watch [investigate]...

Christ (Matt. 25:11-13)

The same principle applies to our relationships with people. We breathe whatever fragrance we spread. If we spread kindness, we receive kindness; if we spread prejudice, we receive prejudice. If we look for other people’s faults, they will look for our faults:

Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed.³¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Christ declared this promise:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 6:14-15

He also offered this prayer:

Forgive us the wrong we have done, as we have forgiven those who have wronged us.

Matthew 6:12



Noted psychologist Dr. Wayne Dyer offers a personal story that confirms the message of mutual forgiveness. He states that, when he was a child, his father abandoned him. At some point, Dr. Dyer decided to find him. But his father, who feared child custody payments, would not allow him. This desperate and futile search left Dyer helpless and hopeless. At last, the news came that his father had died. With much persistence he found the grave in a far away place. When he arrived on the grave, he felt a sudden surge of spiritual power. At that instant, he lost all sense of anger and despair. With the help given him, he was able to bathe his father in love and forgiveness. That experience, he believes, changed everything in his life. Doors that had remained closed to him began to open. He experienced the profoundest spiritual transformation. Forgiveness, he believes, was the key that opened to him countless blessings.

Let me now share a personal experience to further confirm God's promise of reciprocity. Many years ago, I was severely mistreated by someone. Later I encountered an opportunity to show my inner feelings to the person who had oppressed me. Not only did I extend forgiveness to him but love as well. Sometime later I had a dream. I saw a vast circle, like a rainbow, above me. Along the circle appeared these two messages: "Your sins are forgiven. Your wishes will come true." The messages were inscribed in the handwriting of the person I had forgiven. For my attitude, I was doubly rewarded. The second message offered me another gift. Perhaps we should all be grateful to those who mistreat us. They are



not our enemies but helping friends. They hold one of the three keys to forgiveness!

We are oppressed

We forgive the oppressor

God forgives us

Quotations on Virtues

God's Word, which manifests His awesome glory and power, is His immortal and preeminent gift to humankind. It is the clearest evidence of His truth, the hallmark of His divine distinction:

That which is preeminent above all other gifts...is the gift of Divine Revelation. Every bounty conferred by the Creator upon man, be it material or spiritual, is subservient unto this. It is, in its essence, and will ever so remain, the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. It is God's supreme testimony, the clearest evidence of His truth, the sign of His consummate bounty, the token of His all-encompassing mercy, the proof of His most loving providence, the symbol of His most perfect grace.³² Bahá'u'lláh

A compilation of the Bahá'í Scriptures on virtues—the attributes of a soul in harmony with divine Wisdom—would comprise several volumes. In the next few pages only a few gleanings from Bahá'u'lláh's prolific works are offered as guides to living, as examples of virtues adored in the Bahá'í



Scriptures. (The titles are added by the author of this book.)

***Becoming a Source
of All Goodness***

It is Our wish and desire that every one of you may become a source of all goodness unto men, and an example of uprightness to mankind. Beware lest ye prefer yourselves above your neighbors. Fix your gaze upon Him Who is the Temple of God amongst men. He, in truth, hath offered up His life as a ransom for the redemption of the world. He, verily, is the All-Bountiful, the Gracious, the Most High. If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name's sake and as a token of your love for My manifest and resplendent Cause. We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good-pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving-kindness and fellowship. Thus counselleth you the All-Knowing, the Faithful. We shall always be with you; if We inhale the perfume of your fellowship, Our heart will assuredly rejoice, for naught else can satisfy Us.³³

***Service Through
Noble Deeds***

O people of God! Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will...sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through



pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and goodly behavior. Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of this Cause, and a saintly character will reinforce its power. Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá!³⁴

Meeting the Abased and the Poor

If ye meet the abased or the down-trodden, turn not away disdainfully from them, for the King of Glory ever watcheth over them and surroundeth them with such tenderness as none can fathom except them that have suffered their wishes and desires to be merged in the Will of your Lord, the Gracious, the All-Wise. O ye rich ones on the earth! Flee not from the face of the poor that lieth in the dust, nay rather befriend him and suffer him to recount the tale of the woes with which God's inscrutable Decree hath caused him to be afflicted. By the righteousness of God! Whilst ye consort with him, the Concourse on high will be looking upon you, will be interceding for you, will be extolling your names and glorifying your action. Blessed are the learned that pride not themselves on their attainments; and well is it with the righteous that mock not the sinful, but rather conceal their misdeeds, so that their own shortcomings may remain veiled to men's eyes.³⁵

Service

Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor. Bend your energies to



whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds.³⁶

Good Character

A good character is, verily, the best mantle for men from God. With it He adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By My life! The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof. Whoso attaineth unto it is accounted as a jewel among men...Well is it with him who is adorned with the saintly attributes...³⁷

Courtesy

We, verily, have chosen courtesy, and made it the true mark of such as are nigh unto Him. Courtesy is, in truth, a raiment which fitteth all men, whether young or old. Well is it with him that adorneth his temple therewith, and woe unto him who is deprived of this great bounty.³⁸

Honesty and Chastity

Say: He is not to be numbered with the people of Bahá who followeth his mundane desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth. He is My true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause.



Such a man is, assuredly, of Me...And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such a one indeed is the creation of spotless chastity. Thus instructeth you the Pen of the Ancient of Days, as bidden by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.³⁹

Backbiting

That seeker should, also, regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.⁴⁰

The Golden Rule

Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for any one the things ye would not desire for yourselves. This is My best counsel unto you, did ye but observe it.⁴¹

Be Shining Examples

O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the



pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavors be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.⁴²

You Were Created to Love

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 rancor. Take pride not in love for yourselves but 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.⁴³

Loving God

O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration, Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose habitation is my goal, Whose praise is my hope, Whose providence is my companion, Whose



love is the cause of my being, Whose mention is my solace, Whose nearness is my desire, Whose presence is my dearest wish and highest aspiration, I entreat Thee not to withhold from me the things Thou didst ordain for the chosen ones among Thy servants. Supply me, then, with the good of this world and of the next.

Thou, truly, art the King of all men. There is no God but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.⁴⁴

10

History and Administration

The Herald

The Bahá'í Era began in 1844, with the declaration of a young man called the Báb (the Gate). The Báb was born in Shíráz, in southern Persia, in 1819. He declared His mission in 1844 and was martyred in 1850, at the age of 31.

The Báb said He had been called to an exalted and glorious Mission: to proclaim the dawning of a new day in the spiritual history of the world, the long-cherished-and-awaited ***Day of the Lord***, the approach of the age of restoration and renewal, when “all things are made new” (Revelation 21:5).



Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him then who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord.¹

The Báb

The Báb's Message spread swiftly, like the glimmerings of dawn, to summon the seekers of the Kingdom and to prepare them for the rising of the Sun. Before long, the light of the Lord would unveil its countenance to shine with unmatched glory and dazzling splendor.

The Báb's Message threatened the establishment. Religious and political leaders alike set out to destroy Him. His triumph meant the decline of their powers. They were the same kind of fanatical and self-righteous people to whom Jesus came, and they felt and acted in the same manner.

During His brief ministry on earth, in spite of imprisonment and exile, the Báb revealed an abundance of Scriptures, unveiled mysteries, offered new hope and knowledge, and paved the way for the advent of a divine Teacher who would disclose even greater treasures of truth.

Although an independent Messenger, the Báb served primarily as *the Gate* to Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. His prime mission, like that of John the Baptist, was not to found a new Faith but to awaken the seekers of truth, and to prepare them for the advent of the long-expected world Savior and Redeemer.

The Báb repeatedly asked His followers to be ready, to be receptive to the call of the next Redeemer, and to give Him their full allegiance. The Báb knew



that the advent of Bahá'u'lláh would pose a severe test to His own followers:

Take ye heed, therefore, lest ye deprive yourselves of attaining the presence of Him Who is the Manifestation of God...and be ye careful lest ye be deterred from attaining unto the ocean of His good-pleasure...²

The Báb praised Bahá'u'lláh in the most exquisite and enchanting terms, expressing His utter humility toward Him. The following passage shows how the Báb viewed Himself in relation to Bahá'u'lláh:

Consecrate Thou, O my God, the whole of this Tree [the Báb] unto Him, that from it may be revealed all the fruits created by God within it...By Thy glory! I have not wished that this Tree should ever bear any branch, leaf, or fruit that would fail to bow down before Him...And shouldst Thou behold, O my God, any branch, leaf, or fruit upon Me that hath failed to bow down before Him, on the day of His Revelation, cut it off, O My God, from that Tree, for it is not of Me, nor shall it return unto Me.³

To show His humility, the Báb likened Himself to a ring on Bahá'u'lláh's hand. The metaphor is the quintessence of beauty and simplicity:

I myself am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest—glorified be His mention! He turneth it as He pleaseth...⁴

The humility expressed by the Báb towards Bahá'u'lláh is comparable to that expressed by John the Baptist towards Jesus:



After me comes one who is mightier than I. I am not fit to unfasten his shoes... Mark 1:7

As the Scriptures reveal, Elijah was to appear twice, once before the first advent of Jesus—a prophecy fulfilled by John the Baptist—and again before the second advent, a time distinguished and described as “the great day of the Lord:” “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5). The Báb’s advent thus accorded with the preceding prophecy, fulfilling the promise of the Scriptures that a Messenger would again herald the dawn of the New Age.

The new Revelation began in Shíráz, a city in southern Persia—a country prophesied in the Scriptures to become the seat of God’s throne in the last days: “I will set my throne in Elam...saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 49:38).

The teachings of the Báb challenged, threatened, and soon began to uproot the established dogmas and superstitions of the day, leading to turmoil and opposition throughout the land. As a result of the collaboration of the religious leaders and the state, exactly as in the time of Jesus, the Báb was imprisoned, exiled, and eventually executed. His ministry lasted slightly over six years.

The Founder

About two and a half years after the Báb’s martyrdom, Bahá’u’lláh received the first intimation of His Revelation. He declared Himself the One promised by all the great religions of the past. In an Epistle



to the king of Persia, He describes His spiritual transformation by the divine power:

O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not.⁵

He compared Himself to a frail leaf stirred by the Lord:

This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list...His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me.⁶

One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: “Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Erelong will God raise up the treasures



of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name...⁷

Bahá'u'lláh, born into one of the most distinguished families in 19th-century Persia, and was expected to follow in the footsteps of His illustrious father. Instead of living the princely life, He endured and accepted a life of anguish and affliction, of tests and trials. He chose 40 years of imprisonment and exile in place of earthly joys and riches. A humble life in prison held more glories for Him than the pomp of kings; poverty excelled the pursuit of a princely life, and self-sacrifice surpassed “the ease and pleasures of a passing day.”

Like His Herald, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh encountered severe opposition and oppression from the onset of His ministry to the very end, especially from those who feared the loss of their powers. And in spite of the grave danger to His life, Bahá'u'lláh declined to live in concealment. Instead of escaping afflictions, He welcomed them; instead of mourning, He rejoiced; instead of grieving, He gloried and exulted. To a cruel, cunning, and powerful religious leader, who had tortured and put to death some of the most distinguished disciples of the new Faith, Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

Thinkest thou that We fear thy cruelty? Know thou and be well assured that from the first day...We offered up Our souls, and Our bodies... in the path of God, the Exalted, the Great, and We glory therein amongst all created things...⁸

The masses, the religious leaders, and the state combined their efforts and powers against Bahá'u'lláh.



They said, “This man wishes to suppress and destroy the religion, the law, the nation and the empire.”⁹ But the persecution of the new Faith in the land of its origin could not obscure the radiance or suppress the love and devotion of its determined believers; on the contrary, the oppression and cruelty intensified the ever-spreading flame of faith among the heroic followers. It also activated the dormant curiosities of the masses, strengthening the determination and enflaming the desire of the multitudes of devoted seekers athirst for truth.

The oppressors had to find a new solution—banishment. They banished Bahá’u’lláh from city to city, and from country to country, each time hoping that the next destination would prove fatal, would at last stifle or extinguish Bahá’u’lláh’s overwhelming and ever-expanding influence. But it was a vain hope. Exile, like a wind, carried His message to the lands beyond.

At last, His adversaries found an “ideal” city—one that they thought would unquestionably contain the influence of the charming and persuasive prisoner. The city was ‘Akká, “a solitary desert,” an extremely desolate and remote place in the Holy Land, governed by the most deadly elements. So they banished Bahá’u’lláh for the fourth time, but they failed again. Bahá’u’lláh’s influence could not be contained; it continued to spread with an ever-increasing tempo. He prevailed over all adversities, all suppressions and oppositions.

In response to the efforts of His oppressors, Bahá’u’lláh wrote:



Though the forces of the nations be arrayed against Him, though the kings of the earth be leagued to undermine His Cause, the power of His might shall stand unshaken.¹⁰

In a talk given in Chicago in 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’u’lláh’s Son and appointed interpreter of His teachings, described the suffering as well as the mission of Bahá’u’lláh:

For the betterment of the world Bahá’u’lláh endured all the hardships, ordeals and vicissitudes of life, sacrificing His very being and comfort, forfeiting His estates, possessions and honor—all that pertains to human existence—not for one year, nay, rather, for nearly fifty years. During this long period He was subjected to persecution and abuse, was cast into prison, was banished from His native land, underwent severities and humiliation and was exiled four times. He was first exiled from Persia to Baghdad, thence to Constantinople, thence to Rumelia and finally to the great prison-fortress of ‘Akká in Syria, where He passed the remainder of His life. Every day a new oppression and abuse was heaped upon Him until He winged His flight from the dungeon to the supreme world and returned to His Lord. He endured these ordeals and difficulties in order that this earthly human world might become heavenly, that the illumination of the divine Kingdom should become a reality in human hearts, that the individual members of mankind might progress...and the happiness of the world of humanity be assured.¹¹



Although a prisoner and in exile, Bahá'u'lláh enjoyed unexampled freedom and honor during His later days in 'Akká. People marveled at His powers to overcome His enemies, to rise above all obstacles. They said: "This man is a prince, not a prisoner."

After Bahá'u'lláh's exile to the Holy Land, many came to recognize the significance of the move. It fulfilled the myriads of Scriptural prophecies pointing to the Holy Land as the seat of the Lord of the last days, as "the solitary place" that shall "rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1), and to the Valley of Achor as "a door of hope" (Hosea 2:15), and as "a resting place" for all those who seek God (Isaiah 65:10). They noted with wonder and awe that the prophecies had been fulfilled, not by Bahá'u'lláh's own choosing, but by the cunning of His adversaries, who had planned and plotted to extinguish His light.

Was it chance or destiny that Bahá'u'lláh should have been sent to the Promised Land as a prisoner, not of His own free Will but by the will of those who had sought to destroy Him and everything He stood for? Is this how God chooses to fulfill His promises? Regarding the blessedness of the Holy Land, Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

This Holy Land hath been mentioned and extolled in all the sacred Scriptures. In it have appeared the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones. This is the wilderness in which all the Messengers of God have wandered, from which their cry, "Here am I, here am I, O my God" was raised. This is the promised Land in which He Who is the



Here on the slopes of Mt. Carmel, Bahá'u'lláh (meaning ***Glor**y of the **L**ord*) pitched His tent with the utmost glory and grandeur, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy that Carmel (literally, ***the Vineyard of the L**ord*) "shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God" (Isaiah 35:1-2). Bahá'u'lláh's sojourn in the Vineyard of the Lord further fulfilled and made evident the purpose of Jesus' prophetic



words, pointing to the advent of the Lord of the Vineyard in the last days (Matt. 21:33-40).

Jesus' prophecy reached full realization when the remains of Bahá'u'lláh's martyred Herald, the Báb, were laid to rest on the slopes of Mt. Carmel. For He, too, had assumed a title similar to that of Bahá'u'lláh, namely *Rabb*, meaning *the Lord*.

In the following passages, Bahá'u'lláh exalts Carmel, also known as the Mountain of the Lord, in the most majestic and moving terms:

Rejoice, for God hath in this Day established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the dayspring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it with him that circleth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory...Seize thou the Chalice of Immortality in the name of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, and give thanks unto Him, inasmuch as He, in token of His mercy unto thee, hath turned thy sorrow into gladness, and transmuted thy grief into blissful joy.¹³

Bahá'u'lláh also glorified Christ in the most moving terms:

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things...Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him.¹⁴

Note Bahá'u'lláh's compassion for the sufferings Jesus endured, and also the supreme titles by which He glorified the Son of God:



Reflect how Jesus, *the Spirit of God*, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, *the Essence of Being* and *Lord of the visible and invisible*, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head.¹⁵

The Exemplar

Example has more followers than reason. We unconsciously imitate what pleases us, and approximate to the characters we most admire.

The gap between the ideal and the real often is too wide to be bridged by the workings of the mind: concrete examples are required. Sometimes a simple story that demonstrates a noble act of service, can do more to stir and inspire the human spirit than countless pages of pronouncements.

Bahá'u'lláh left not only the supreme legacy of His Words but also a Son—'Abdu'l-Bahá—who gave life to the Words by living them with absolute and unfailing devotion, who transformed the ideal into the real, who served as the perfect Model or Exemplar for the teachings of the new Revelation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá—Servant of Glory—served as a perfect Exemplar, as a link between the reachable and the unreachable, between the actual and the ideal, as the model of purity and nobility for all humanity.

In the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we can find the limits of human potential—the farthest bounds to which the human mind can soar. In Him we can discern God's image fully unfolding the divine by casting off



every trace of darkness; we can see the spirit perfect and saintly, hallowed and heavenly; we can see the self set ablaze with love and rapture, utterly humbled before God and man; we can see the heart made holy and radiant, the spirit sanctified with service, forgiveness, patience, and pain; we can see the flesh made subservient to the spirit, the human soul reaching out to the divine; we can discern the human in an angelic image, as the purest and most wondrous fruit of creation, as the mirror of providence, as the source of every virtue, as the loftiest and most splendid fulfillment of the words, “Blessed be God, the most exalted Creator.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá fulfilled this divine directive more than any other human being:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Christ (Matt. 5:48)

Never before has such a legacy been conferred upon the world. To know the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Servant of Glory, or even to glimpse His grandeur, is an achievement filled with unimagined dramas and ecstasies, a task worthy of anyone’s endeavors. It portrays simply and plainly the full profile of the human potential, the exalted destiny ordained for us if we but turn to the Light, and attune our souls to the supreme Power.

The Guardian

The Báb paved the way for the coming of Bahá’u’lláh; Bahá’u’lláh brought the teachings of the new age; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá exemplified the teachings and offered interpretations and clarifications. One major task



remained: the building of Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order. 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away in 1921, and in His Will and Testament appointed Shoghi Effendi, His grandson, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi served the new Revelation in many ways. Perhaps his most significant contribution was to fashion the Bahá'í administration, to form and offer a model of Bahá'u'lláh's social order.

During his time as the Guardian of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi nourished Bahá'u'lláh's embryonic World Order, which matured at an ever-increasing pace. The Bahá'í community reached the point of embodying in itself the chief components of Bahá'u'lláh's new World Order, setting a pattern for the world's *future* Order. Further, the twin tasks of interpretation and revelation reached their final phase of evolution. Only the expansion or execution of the Plan remained to continue under the guiding hands of a supreme institution—one whose powers and responsibilities Bahá'u'lláh Himself had specified.

One reason the Bahá'í Faith has remained undivided is this: both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá left a will appointing the one to serve after them.*

*The presentation of the Bahá'í history made here was quite brief. If you wish to pursue this topic further, consult the following references: *God Passes By*, 412 pages. It presents a comprehensive history of the first century of the Bahá'í Faith. *The Dawn Breakers*, 685 pages. It contains a rather detailed account of the life of the Báb and some of His followers. *Release the Sun*, 250 pages, and *Hour of the Dawn*, 212 pages. These books offer basically a summary of *The Dawn Breakers*. *Bahá'u'lláh, the King of*



A New Religious Order

In previous dispensations, because of lack of educational means and resources, believers had to depend on priests and pastors for spiritual enlightenment, but such a dependency is no longer needed. To harmonize the world with the spirit of the age, Bahá'u'lláh takes the responsibility away from priests and pastors and places it on every believer. To serve humankind for the love of God is a privilege that is extended equally to all people.

The administrative affairs of the Bahá'í Faith are delegated to elected bodies at various levels—local, national, and international. Local Spiritual Assemblies work under their National Spiritual Assembly, and National Spiritual Assemblies function under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body of the Bahá'í Faith.

Today is the day of union and this age is the age of harmony...“Verily, God loveth those who are working in His path in groups, for they are a solid foundation.”¹⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Glory, 539 pages. It presents a detailed account of the life of Bahá'u'lláh and some of His followers. *Robe of Light*, 230 pages, and *Day of Glory*, 206 pages. These books offer a brief history of Bahá'u'lláh's life and some of His followers. *Vignettes from the Life of Abdu'l-Bahá*, 238 pages. It offers many inspiring stories about the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith*, 251 pages. It presents a rather detailed account of the life of Shoghi Effendi. *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, four volumes. They contain a record of many significant events in the Bahá'í history.



Shortly after Shoghi Effendi's passing, the responsibility of leadership in the Bahá'í Faith devolved upon a universal assemblage, that supreme elected institution called by Bahá'u'lláh ***The Universal House of Justice***. Its members represent and receive the full support of the entire Bahá'í community, encompassing over two hundred countries and territories throughout the globe.

Bahá'u'lláh describes the functions of the Universal House of Justice in these terms:

The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of the people. They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the daystars of authority in His countries.

O people of God! That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world. Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the House of Justice that the members thereof may act according to the needs and requirements of the time. They that, for the sake of God, arise to serve His Cause, are the recipients of divine inspiration from the unseen Kingdom. It is incumbent upon all to be obedient unto them. All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice, but acts of worship must be observed according to that which God hath revealed in His Book.¹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh promises to inspire and guide the Universal House of Justice:



It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them. God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth, and He, verily, is the Provider, the Omniscient.¹⁸

The leadership and guidance of the Universal House of Justice will continue through the remaining years of the Bahá'í dispensation, prophesied by Bahá'u'lláh to last no less than a thousand years.

The Bahá'í administration provides many avenues for those willing to serve. Every Bahá'í, however meager his talents, can find many opportunities to use his energies for the betterment of his community and in service to humankind.

Perhaps the most vital and distinctive feature of Bahá'u'lláh's administrative order is consultation carried out in a spirit of justice, compassion, and understanding. Bahá'u'lláh regards consultation as a key to solving not only social, but also individual problems.

Consultation must take place in the light of the knowledge of God; the divine teachings must always serve as guiding principles to the unfolding of truth, to the making of decisions.

Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.¹⁹

Bahá'u'lláh



It is incumbent upon everyone to observe God's holy commandments, inasmuch as they are the wellspring of life unto the world. The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion and the canopy of world order is upraised upon the two pillars of reward and punishment.²⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

Elections for the spiritual assemblies always take place with reverence; no canvassing, propaganda, competition, or nomination is allowed. Though unfamiliar to many, such a system not only bears better fruits, it also preserves the dignity so often lacking in current competitive democratic systems.

Democracy is the ideal form of governance, but not in its present form. Democracy is presently based on a “win-lose” principle, in which “one party gets what he wants whereas the other comes up short.” Most games offer the most clear-cut examples of a win-lose principle. Power is the distinctive feature of this system of problem solving. The Bahá'í system is based on a “win-win” principle. It regards the best interests of *all* individuals involved, including those who may be remotely affected. Therefore everyone is a winner. Truth and justice determine the outcome rather than lawyers, strategies, or loopholes in the law.

Finally, in the Bahá'í Faith, monetary contributions are made privately and voluntarily, and only by Bahá'ís. No contributions are accepted from other people for the promotion or maintenance of the Bahá'í Faith.



The following article, written by John Huddleston, formerly Chief of the Budget and Planning Division of the International Monetary Fund, summarizes some of the main features of the Bahá'í Administration.

Bahá'í Administration an Alternative to Conventional Politics

Democracy today is undoubtedly the prevailing political system of the world. This is a sign of the growing maturity of humanity because democracy involves the people in the conduct of their own community affairs.

Democracy provides protection for the rights of individuals through such principles as equality before the law and the rule of law, free public discussion and accountability of government...

Nevertheless, there is much evidence that the democratic political system is holding humanity back from the solution of urgent global issues—peace, environment, poverty, trade, finance, crime, and the advancement of civilization... Democracy tends:

- To parochialism: putting the national interest before the global interest, and local interest before national interest.
- To short-term vision: focusing generally on the next election.
- To division and conflict: struggling for political power.



- To disregard the rights of minorities. (It took the American democracy nearly 200 years to give equal rights to its black citizens.)

The Bahá'í administrative order is an alternative model adapted to the global challenges of our time. It is used by the Bahá'í community for its own internal affairs, but has the potential to evolve into a global system for all humanity.

The basic structure of the Bahá'í administrative order consists of a hierarchy of elected assemblies at the local, national, and world level. The Bahá'í community has 175 National Spiritual Assemblies and over 17,000 Local Spiritual Assemblies in more than 200 independent countries and large dependencies.

The supreme body, called the Universal House of Justice, gives guidance and direction to the whole world community and thereby protects the welfare of society as a whole as well as that of minority groups.

At the same time, the maximum feasible amount of responsibility is delegated to the lower levels to make government human-sized and participatory. The system is simple; it can be applied in any community.

The elected bodies are paralleled by appointed bodies of counselors...Such boards have no administrative function but rather act as teachers and protectors, independently observing and advising on the spiritual health and welfare of the community.



The electoral system has both direct and indirect elements. The Local Spiritual Assembly is elected annually at a local convention by direct secret ballot of all adult members of the community. The National Spiritual Assembly is similarly elected annually at a national convention consisting of delegates elected on a regional basis by the national community.

The Universal House of Justice is elected every five years by an international Convention composed of the members of all the National Spiritual Assemblies.

Each body has nine members, and, to be valid, each ballot cast must list nine names. Minorities are favored in the case of tied election. All qualified adults have a sacred duty to vote.

Nominations, forming of parties, and campaigning are strictly forbidden. Eliminating these features tends to reinforce a sense of unity. They preclude the emergence of egotistical leaders, who so often are a cause of corruption.

At all levels of the Bahá'í administrative structure, consultation is practiced with a view to increasing the probability of arriving at the best decision.

The *first* principle of Bahá'í consultation is universal participation to benefit from the widest range of experience and wisdom. It is the responsibility of all members, not just the chairperson, to see that everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute. Every member is encouraged to speak frankly, with calmness and courtesy.



The **second** principle is detachment and objectivity. The discussion should follow a logical sequence, prayer to set the tone and perspective, and then the normal steps of scientific inquiry: determining the exact nature of the problem, ascertaining the relevant facts, agreeing on the spiritual or administrative principles involved, a full and frank discussion, voting on a resolution, and finally putting the resolution into effect.

All should feel that the ideas put forward belong to the community, and not to the person who first presented them. Indeed, a participant may well speak against his or her original suggestion if a superior suggestion subsequently emerges from the discussion.

The **third** principle of Bahá'í consultation is the need for unity in carrying out decisions. Decisions can be made by majority vote, but Bahá'ís are encouraged to strive for those approved unanimously.

If a decision is made by majority vote, a person in the minority should wholeheartedly support the implementation of the decision. He should not campaign to stop it, as this would only cause dissension and undermine the unity of the community, which is held to be far more essential than avoiding a possible short-term mistake.

If proper consultation procedures have been followed, the chance that a mistake has been made will be low. In any case, such mistakes can be reversed if further consultation is brought



about as a result of proper appeal procedures, first through the body that made the decision and then, if that fails to bring satisfaction, through higher bodies.

To summarize, the Bahá'í administrative order recognizes the value of the individual, puts emphasis on unity, diversity of experience, a global vision, the objective search for truth, and ethical principles, and at the same time, on equality and universal participation.

The Bahá'í community has a great deal of experience with such a system on a global scale. It is offered to humanity as a workable way in tune with the needs of our time.²¹

11

Planting the Seed of Our Destiny

The Seed Grows in the Heart of the World

Revealed truth is first ridiculed, later resisted,
and finally accepted as self-evident. Schopenhauer

Truth...lies in the depth, where few are willing
to search for it. Goethe

The year is 1844. A young man called the Báb proclaims the onset of a New Age in the spiritual evolution of humanity. He declares He has come to prepare the way for the coming of a Teacher greater than Himself. The young Messenger is rejected, reviled, and at last executed.



The year is 1863. A nobleman, called Bahá'u'lláh proclaims Himself the expected Redeemer of the world promised by the Báb and all the great Messengers of the past. He calls Himself the Glory of the Lord, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Hosts, Christ come in the Glory of the Father.

Bahá'u'lláh is rejected, exiled, and imprisoned. Yet His influence spreads, His word inspires, His charm captivates. "In the long run, truth is aided by nothing so much as by opposition."

Bahá'u'lláh brings a new order for society and a new hope and vision for the soul. After four decades of teaching, He fulfills His earthly Mission and moves on to the next Kingdom, exerting His influence from the spiritual realm, nourishing the seed of faith He has sown in the heart of the world, helping it to grow and flourish, from a lowly seed to a sheltering and shading Tree.

At first, while the tender Tree is growing and gaining roots, the hungry masses hesitate to approach it, perhaps because of estrangement, fear, or uncertainty. This is how people usually respond to the unknown and the unfamiliar. "Truth always lags behind, limping along on the arm of time. Truth is often strange, stranger than fiction."

Great spirits have always found violent opposition from mediocrities.

Einstein

All great truths began as blasphemies.

Bernard Shaw



Eventually, curiosity draws people near the forgotten or forsaken Tree. After tasting its fruit and finding it pure, fresh, and fragrant, they begin to flock to the Heavenly Vineyard, seeking to satisfy their hunger, spreading the seeds of certitude, and sharing them with others. Their efforts results in a decisive growth in the divine Tree; it attains full fruition and gains wide acceptance and recognition. The glory of truth is revealed by time. “Time, whose tooth gnaws away at everything else, is powerless against truth.”

Truth never need fear the light. Sunlight falling on a dead log may hasten the process of decay, but sunlight falling on a living tree makes it grow and become luxuriant. Benjamin Franklin

Now we are at the end of the first stage and at the beginning of the second—the end of the period of obscurity and the beginning of recognition. People are just beginning to recognize the magnificent power and potential of the Heavenly Vineyard. The fruit is being passed around and shared by those athirst for knowledge, those seeking to nourish their souls and expand their visions. Christ foresaw this:

Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.”

Mark 4:30-32



The Seed Grows In the Heart of the Soul

We have seen how the seed takes root in the heart of the world; let us now see how it takes root in the heart of the soul—how the seeker moves from unbelief to belief, from doubt to certitude.

The seeker of truth begins his search by first studying the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, to see if they are true, timely, and relevant. After examining and testing the teachings, and finding them acceptable, he then tries to test the Teacher. Behind every Revelation stands a Revelator whose sincerity and validity must be put to the test.

But, paradoxical as it may seem, the ultimate evidence and the most reliable proof of a Messenger is His very Message, or “Thoughts.” “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” (Prov. 23:7). The Message reflects the Messenger, even as the fruit reflects the tree, and the tree the seed. Accordingly, good fruits can come *only* from a good tree. Such a reasoning not only appeals to the mind, but also receives Scriptural support:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Christ (Matt. 7:16-17)

Some Christians remember Jesus and revere Him more for His miracles than for His teachings, and consequently when they think about His return, they picture Him in the aura of the supernatural.



Yet, such a mystical conception is contrary to the spirit of the Scriptures.

The story of the advents of the great Messengers and Redeemers reveals, on the one hand, the irrelevance of miracles to their Mission, and establishes, on the other, the distinct relevance of the Message and its high position in the hierarchy of proofs. How could a Noah, a Moses, or an Abraham distinguish Himself from the masses of humankind? By what standards did Jesus distinguish Himself from His contemporaries? And for what reason did the people ultimately believe in Him? Did they believe simply because of His miracles? Certainly not.

If miracles were the true mark of Jesus' distinction and the reason behind His pervasive influence, then His contemporaries would be, or should have been, the first to accept and adore Him. For they stood face to face, not only with the miracles, but also with the Source of the miracles. Yet history indicates that Jesus' contemporaries were not the first to accept Him, but the first to reject Him. Not only the records of history, but the testimony of the Scriptures as well, prove the ineffectiveness of miracles: "Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him" (John 12:37).

The recognition of a Redeemer requires receptivity. It begins and ends with the heart. Miracles simply serve to astound and to entertain the curious; they seldom reach or touch the non-receptive hearts, unless they grow in intensity to exert overwhelming pressure and to cast terror in the hearts of those who have no desire for heavenly bread.



The rejection of Messengers by their contemporaries, the very generation exposed to the miracles, has consistently occurred throughout human history. Only the succeeding generations discern the divine in the seemingly poor and lowly Saviors.

We should glorify everything that God's Messengers do. We should not deny, but rather delight in their miraculous powers. We may use them to inspire, to awaken, or to ignite interest, but must refrain from counting them as proofs.

God's Messengers and Redeemers have the power to perform the most astonishing miracles. We have, for instance, records of healing miracles performed by both Christ and Bahá'u'lláh. The believers who experienced or witnessed them were deeply touched and inspired. We too can be inspired by learning about them. But the most astonishing evidence of the Messengers' divine distinction comes not from their miracles, but from their Word; not from saving sick bodies, but from saving lost souls; not from giving fleeting life to a few, but from bestowing eternal life to countless generations.

If miracles were to serve as the chief mark of a Messenger's Mission, then those unable to see the miracles would be at a clear disadvantage. Instead of judging for themselves, they would have to trust someone else's eyes, simply take his word for the truth and his wisdom and judgment for granted.

Unlike miracles, the Message reveals itself equally and impartially to all seekers of truth. It is a miracle as eternal as humanity itself, a wonder that endures, a testimony that can be tested by anyone at any time.



Using miracles as proofs poses another problem: if the reports of miracles by the believers were to be considered the touchstone of truth, then it would be almost impossible to tell the difference between a God-sent Savior and the myriads of self-proclaimed occultists who have also left records of mighty miracles, sometimes even mightier than those attributed to Jesus and the other great Messengers and Teachers. How would one know who is right and who is wrong? It is far from God's Wisdom to send great magicians as His messengers or saviors to humanity.

Of course, God could increase the frequency and intensity of His miracles to the point that no one could deny Him. But that would be contrary to His Wisdom. He wants us to seek Him, to know Him, and to love Him with absolute freedom, without any coercion. As the intensity and frequency of miracles increase, so will the degree of pressure to submit.

To understand religion, we must abide by the rules of reason. "Let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18). God has granted us rational powers with which to judge and guide the course of our destiny. If we disregard the dictates of reason, we reduce religion to mere superstition and fanaticism. We make blind faith, instead of knowledge and enlightenment, the basis of divine Faith. We disarm the seeker of truth, deactivate his or her mind, saying, "Don't think, don't reason, simply believe another believer's testimony; be rational except in relation to religion; expect reasonableness from *scientific* truth, but not from *divine* Truth." Such



is the attitude that has caused the dignity of belief in the divine to decline, the view that has caused religion to stand against science, the assumption that has suppressed independent search and enlightenment.

Bahá'ís acknowledge miracles, but do not consider them a reliable touchstone of truth, or a reasonable standard by which to judge a divine Redeemer. Bahá'í history contains numerous examples of miracles performed by the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Those examples offer valuable insight into the history of the new Revelation, but not an evidence of its divine origin.

Dr. Houston Smith of Harvard in his classic work, *The Religions of Man*, presents a similar view on the irrelevance of miracles to the Mission and the ultimate triumph of God's Messengers:

The Gospel accounts are filled with praise for his actions. Their pages, especially those of Mark, are crowded with miracles. There is no question but that these impressed the people tremendously. We err, however, if this is where we place our emphasis. For one thing, it was not where Jesus placed his. ***He never used miracles as a means to convince. Not once did he try to amaze, overrule, or bludgeon people into believing in him by waving a magic wand***—part of the meaning of his Temptation in the Wilderness lies precisely in his rejection of such approaches as devices of the devil. Almost all his extraordinary deeds were performed quietly, apart from the



crowds and as a demonstration of the power of faith. Moreover, other writings of the times contain accounts of miracles in profusion. The fact that we may not believe these other accounts does not affect the fact that the people of the time certainly believed them; but this did not cause them to consider those who worked these other miracles to be divine. They simply assumed that they possessed occult powers, which is not the same thing at all. [Emphasis added.]¹

After refuting miracles as a distinguishing mark of a Messenger, Dr. Smith goes on to present three standards or proofs by which Jesus distinguished Himself from the occult. These standards are:

- What He *did*.
- What He *said* and *how* He said it.
- What He *was*.

And how did Jesus meet the three standards?

- He went about doing good.
- He taught nobility, love, mercy, forgiveness; and He spoke with authority in a unique and novel language.
- He not only taught and expressed love, He *was* love.

Though seemingly different, the three marks of the distinction of a divine Teacher are, in essence, but one: the first two (what He *does*, and *says*) grow out of the third (what He *is*). Doing and saying are simply the outward or visible expressions of *being*.



Choosing Your Destiny has sought to examine, though briefly, all three standards of divine distinction. To prove the point to yourself, you may wish to go through the book once again with the specific intention of applying the three standards to Bahá'u'lláh as the Source (what He *was*), and to His Fruits (what He *did*, and what He *said*). You may wish to compare Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, with respect to each standard, with any or all of the other great Revelations you already regard as divine. Such an examination is in perfect harmony with both the spirit of the Scriptures and the specific guidance provided by Jesus Himself: that a Messenger should be judged by His fruits (Matt. 7:16-18).

In addition to learning about what Bahá'u'lláh was, did, and said, you can apply a few other standards by which to test Him even further. One is to study the prophecies from the Scriptures and their fulfillment in His life. Upon entering this sphere, you will find it to be one of the richest sources of evidence. You will note that the chief events in the lives of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are predicted in the most clear words in hundreds of scriptural prophecies by not just one but several of the world's great religions. For instance, you may be astonished to note that the exact year of the second advent of Jesus is predicted in biblical Scriptures at least sixteen times. You will also note that the same exact year is confirmed in the Scriptures of other religions as well. The predicted year was 1844 A.D., when thousands and thousands throughout the world expected the return of Christ. And that year (1844) of course marked the beginning of the Bahá'í Era, the year in which



the Báb was called to His Mission, when He proclaimed the dawn of the great Day of the Lord. You can find a brief description of these prophecies in a paperback such as *Thief in the Night*, 304 pages, by William Sears, or a rather detailed description of these prophecies, covering some 1,300 pages in three volumes: *I Shall Come Again, Lord of Lords*, and *King of Kings* by the present author.

The spectrum of prophecies fulfilled in the lives of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh is so vast and so clear as to seem utterly incredible. You can pursue these only with patience in the next stage of your search. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words, quoted earlier, should stand as a guidepost throughout your whole journey of the search for truth: "Only have faith, patience and courage—this is but the beginning...surely you will succeed, for God is with you."²

Still another alternative open to you for testing the fruits of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission is to examine the pattern of Bahá'í life, to see how Bahá'u'lláh's teachings are implemented, how the ideal meets the real. Bahá'í Summer Schools provide excellent opportunities for such an examination, an ideal place for seeing Bahá'u'lláh's ideals put to work, for finding the Bahá'í life in full bloom. Bahá'í "firesides" held in many communities constitute another medium for studying and examining Bahá'u'lláh's teachings in small and informal surroundings.

The paths of search are as diverse as the seekers. Each seeker must find and follow the way that suits his or her own needs best. The critical point in search is the recognition of the validity of Bahá'u'lláh's



claim. Once such an awareness is attained, the seeker may well consider himself or herself a Bahá'í.

Such is the way the believers in Bahá'u'lláh have found and followed Him. This is how every religion has evolved, how the Bahá'í Faith has moved from obscurity to recognition, has advanced from a humble beginning to become the second most widely spread religion in the world. This is how the teachings of a seemingly lone prisoner and exile have spread to the farthest reaches of the earth—to over two hundred countries and territories—transforming the hearts and minds of millions, including those who have never before heard nor seen in print the words ***Bahá'í*** and ***Bahá'u'lláh***.

By studying Bahá'u'lláh's life and teachings, you have taken the first step in your search for truth: you have planted the Seed of Knowledge and Awareness. To bring your search to fruition, you need to take ***the next essential step***, namely to nourish and support the Seed by knowing the Sower, by enriching your knowledge about Him who claims to be the Lord of the Harvest, the Lord of the Vineyard, Bahá'u'lláh Himself. This can best be accomplished by further examination of His own Scriptures, by the testing of His own Words. Sources suitable for your search and available in English are: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, and *The Book of Certitude*. You may also wish to consult *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*.

Whether you accept Bahá'u'lláh as a divine Teacher and Messenger, reject Him altogether, or continue your search for further evidence is a decision between



you and your conscience. No one can, or will, force you to change your mind. You are the master of your own destiny and accountable to yourself, to society, and to your Creator. But it is well to remember this: if you continue your search, but fail to recognize Bahá'u'lláh, you will at least have expanded your spiritual perspective. But if you *fail* to search, ***you have allowed chance to choose your destiny***, to determine your everlasting future; you have rejected an opportunity with which nothing can ever compare, a bounty beyond your vision, a gift as immortal as God Himself.

To seek and to search is a divine commandment. To disobey the commandment is to be cut from its very Source, a Source of Guidance reachable only through seeking, searching, and striving (Matt. 7:7-9).

Such is the irresistible nature of truth that all it asks, and all it wants is the liberty of appearing. The sun needs no inscription to distinguish it from darkness.

But the seeking must be pursued with unfailing sincerity and devotion. The Seed of Faith grows out of the Seed of Reason, the Seed of Reason out of the Seed of Knowledge, and the Seed of Knowledge out of a pure and fertile soul athirst for truth and abounding in virtues: purity from preconceived notions, freedom from conformity, detachment from worldly concerns, openness, justice, humility, courage, perseverance, and trust in God.

This is the meaning of the parable: the seed is the word of God...Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they



hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. Christ (Luke 8:11-15)

O my brother! A divine Mine only can yield the gems of divine knowledge, and the fragrance of the mystic Flower can be inhaled only in the ideal Garden, and the lilies of ancient wisdom can blossom nowhere except in the city of a stainless heart.³ Bahá'u'lláh

In a rich soil, its plants spring forth abundantly by permission of its Lord, and in that soil which is bad, they spring forth but scantily. Qur'án 7:57

The difference between a Redeemer stirred by the Will of the All-Knowing, and an impostor pretending sincerity and seeking fame and honor by laying claim to the exalted and unreachable rank of divinity, is like the difference between the splendor of the sun with all its glory and grandeur and absolute darkness with its utter emptiness. Yet the difference cannot be discerned unless the heart of the seeker is cleansed from all earthly attachments and attuned to the divine melody.

A little veil, as small as the eyelid, can dim the most luminous lights of heaven; what then can ensue when the veils of apathy, tradition, conformity,



distrust, and attachment to the world impose themselves upon the human heart?⁴ Without openness and sincere and dedicated efforts, no truth can ever be found. Only those with faith, trust, patience, and courage can hope to complete the journey of the search for truth.

The lesson which life repeats constantly is: You are always nearer the divine than you think. The great opportunity is where you are. Do not despise your own place and hour.

Now is the time to plant the Seed of your Destiny, a time that after your soul's departure from this world, will never come again. Here is the place of preparation where every soul must rise from the self to the divine, from the earthly to the heavenly. The harvest shall be reaped later—in the next realm, when the season of separation from the physical form arrives. Bahá'u'lláh's inspiring words are a fitting conclusion to this chapter:

O wayfarer in the path of God! Take thou thy portion of the ocean of His grace, and deprive not thyself of the things that lie hidden in its depths. Be thou of them that have partaken of its treasures. A dewdrop out of this ocean would, if shed upon all that are in the heavens and on the earth, suffice to enrich them with the bounty of God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. With the hands of renunciation draw forth from its life-giving waters, and sprinkle therewith all created things, that they may be cleansed from all man-made limitations and may approach



the mighty seat of God, this hallowed and resplendent Spot.⁵

* * *

This is the Day in which the Ocean of knowledge hath lifted up its Voice and hath brought forth its pearls. Would that ye knew it!...I swear by God! The Essence of knowledge exclaimeth and saith: Lo! He Who is the Object of all knowledge is come and through His advent the sacred Books of God, the Gracious, the Loving, have been embellished. Every revelation of grace, every evidence of goodly gifts emanateth from Him and unto Him doth it return.⁶

* * *

The Promised One hath appeared...all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced...to meet Him is better for you than all that whereon the sun shineth, could ye but know it.⁷

* * *

O concourse of priests!...Prefer ye to be silent, whilst every stone and every tree shouteth aloud: "The Lord is come in His great glory!"⁸

* * *

This Wronged One [Bahá'u'lláh] calleth aloud for the sake of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away. Verily God can well afford to dispense with all things, whether of the past or of the future.⁹

* * *



The generations that have gone on before you—whither are they fled? And those round whom in life circled the fairest and the loveliest of the land, where now are they? Profit by their example, O people, and be not of them that are gone astray.

Others ere long will lay hands on what ye possess, and enter into your habitations. Incline your ears to My words, and be not numbered among the foolish.

For every one of you his paramount duty is to choose for himself that on which no other may infringe and none usurp from him. Such a thing—and to this the Almighty is My witness—is the love of God, could ye but perceive it.

Build ye for yourselves such houses as the rain and floods can never destroy, which shall protect you from the changes and chances of this life. This is the instruction of Him Whom the world hath wronged and forsaken.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

* * *

The days of your life are far spent, O people, and your end is fast approaching. Put away, therefore, the things ye have devised and to which ye cleave, and take firm hold on the precepts of God, that haply ye may attain that which He hath purposed for you, and be of them that pursue a right course. Delight not yourselves in the things of the world and its vain ornaments, neither set your hopes on them. Let your reliance be on the remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. He will, ere long, bring to naught all the things ye possess.¹¹ Bahá'u'lláh



* * *

I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal. In this wise hath the divine favor been fully vouchsafed unto you and unto them that are in heaven and on earth. All praise to God, the Lord of all Worlds.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

12

The Principles of Mutual Choice and Mutual Treatment

Mutual Choice

Sacred Scriptures declare that the choice between God and human beings is mutual. Both sides must reach out for each other. To attain the knowledge and love of God, and that of His Messengers and Redeemers, two cycles must be set in motion: the human, and the heavenly. The first cycle begins with a desire for truth like a thirsty child asking for water. The sincere desire of a truth seeker sets in motion a second cycle that attracts God's blessings



in mysterious ways. God throws secret lights on the path of the searching souls. The following passages point mostly to the heavenly cycle:

A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. Christ (John 3:27)

...no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” Christ (John 6:65)

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. Christ (John 6:44)

You did not choose me, but I chose you. Christ (John 15:16)

If you search with all your heart, I will let you find Me... Jeremiah 2:14

...it is He Who leadeth those who have received illumination and seek the way of righteousness.¹
The Báb

We cause whomsoever We desire to be admitted into the gardens of our most holy, most sublime Paradise.²
The Báb

He delivered me because He delighted in me. Psalms 18:19

He guideth whom He will to a straight path. Qur’án 2:142

...the footsteps of everyone have slipped ***except such as God hath protected through His tender mercy and numbered with those who have recognized Him...***³
Bahá'u'lláh

Whom God doth guide—he is on the right path. Qur’án 7:178



...ye have deprived yourselves of the good-pleasure of your Lord, ***except those whom their Lord hath endowed with knowledge...***⁴ The Báb

Even if We did send unto them angels, and the dead did speak unto them, and We gathered together all things before their very eyes, they will not believe, unless God willeth. Qur'án 6:111

To whomsoever God bestoweth no light, will have no light. Qur'án 24:40

For many are invited, but few are chosen.

Christ (Matt. 22:14)

Why are only a few chosen? Because God's choice depends on human choice. Would He choose a soul that would not seek Him, that would not care for His "many mansions" in His "celestial city"?

The gates that open on the Placeless stand wide ...yet all but a few remain bereft of this celestial city, and even of these few, none but the smallest handful hath been found with a pure heart and sanctified spirit.⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

The heart is like a stone. As soon as it is polished, it reflects the light:

The One true God may be compared unto the sun and the believer unto a mirror. No sooner is the mirror placed before the sun than it reflects its light.⁶ The Báb

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Christ (Matt. 5:8)

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father... Christ (Matt. 7:21)



What is God's will? That we should search for Him, that we set in motion the first cycle:

Be always on the watch [search], and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

Christ (Luke 21:36)

...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time...

Hebrews 9:28

Can a treasure be found without searching?

...the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hidden in a field...

Christ (Matt. 13:44)

Although we must search for God, ultimately it is God who chooses His guests for His heavenly Kingdom. Suppose you plan to hold the banquet of the century, the most magnificent festival imaginable. Who would you invite? Would you put on your list the names of guests who didn't care you even existed? Would you invite anyone who gossiped behind your back? Would you invite any careless guests who would come in unsuitable, filthy, or smelly clothes? Would you invite any drunkard, any guest who would rather go to a bar than to your banquet? If you would not, then why should God? Please ponder this point in your heart until its truth illuminates your conscience.

Why is this point so significant? Because it is a well-kept secret, known only to a few. Because most people live with the illusion that without doing anything, other than sitting and waiting, they will find all the doors of the Kingdom wide open to them. Nothing has hampered human approach to God more than this illusion.



Entering God's Kingdom is the most supreme honor, the most glorious gift that heaven may bestow on human beings. To see if we are worthy of this honor and gift, God tests us in countless ways, all the day of our lives. He tests our love, humility, and devotion.

...that each soul may be tested by the touchstone of God, that the true may be known and distinguished from the false.⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Even gold passes through the assayer's fire, and more precious than perishable gold is faith which has stood the test. I Peter 1:7

What is the first step on the spiritual journey? How can a seeking soul set the first cycle of mutual choice in motion? Praying with absolute devotion and passionate desire is always the first and most attainable step. Would God ignore any sincere prayers?

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Christ (Matt. 7:9-11)

Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Jeremiah 33:3

Test your faith by this standard: Do you really believe that if you pray to God with all your heart and soul, He will hear and respond to your heart's desire, that He will give you signs and clues to



lead you to His glorious Kingdom, that He will lift the veil of separation from your soul? If you do, then start a special cycle of praying and pleading. Isn't entering God's everlasting banquet worthy of every endeavor?

Christ predicted that at His coming, the gift of faith will be quite scarce. If you lack faith that your request to recognize the Glory of God and to enter His everlasting Kingdom will be honored, does not your failure to pray and plead indicate that you may be one of the many about whom the following prophecy was uttered?

At that time many will turn away from the faith...
Christ (Matt. 24:10)

Being accepted into God's Kingdom has a price that must be paid. The lover must follow the example of the Beloved:

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.
Christ (Mark 8:34)

And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. Christ (Matt. 10:38)

What is the price of nearness to God? Placing God first. Love for truth must be so intense that the lover offers even his very life to acquire it, even as the Beloved offered His life:

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives...
I John 3:16



The worthiest offer to make to God is to sacrifice the ego at the altar of truth.

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Christ (John 12:24-25)

A willingness to investigate, to devote time and talent is the first test of the humility and health of an ego. It is the first sign of the sincerity of a true seeker. A person who fails this simple test, will fail every other test. A lack of desire for truth inevitably leads to a terminal disease called ignorance. That disease always ends in spiritual death.

My people perish for want of knowledge.

Hosea 4:6

Through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.

Proverbs 11:9

God knocks at our hearts, but never knocks them down. He calls, but never shouts. Hearing His Voice requires careful listening; it needs a quiet, uncluttered conscience, a watchful mind.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Christ (Rev. 3:20)

An abundance of rain from the heaven of knowledge, a fresh breeze of enthusiasm, a continual resistance to the winds of tests, a firm footing in the ground of persistence, and a blazing radiance from a pure



and loving heart—all these ripen the fruits of our soul, make them mellow, sweet, fragrant, and tender. But it is God, the Lord of the vineyard, who goes to the garden, picks the fruits, and fills the basket for His banquet.

“Saving souls” by force, trying to convert people by pressure, violates God’s exclusive right: choosing the guests for His banquet. All that is required of us is to inform, enlighten, assist, and inspire. The rest is up to the receiver of knowledge and the grace of God. Like a gardener, our task is to plant a seed, water it, nourish it, protect it from the wind, and then wait, pray, and wish for a miracle.

We should make every effort to share our knowledge and to answer questions according to the rules of reason. We should manifest unconditional respect, love, patience, and courtesy, and constantly pray for the grace of God. Growth always comes from the seed. The harvest is collected by the heavenly Gardener.

It is at this point that many violate God’s right. Not only they do the planting, they also want to do the harvesting before the plant is ripe. Such a violation leads to failure, disappointment, and the loss of the dignity of believing.

Just as we cannot force an apple to ripen, we cannot drag a soul into the heavenly Kingdom. Just as we cannot force a body to be physically fit, we cannot make a soul spiritually fit for everlasting life.

Failing to understand this most fundamental principle has damaged the dignity of religion, the honor of faith, the supreme glory of being invited to



God's Kingdom. It has altered the true image of religion. It has turned the banquet of beauty and joy into a prison of pressure and fear. It has turned the glorious palace of the Kingdom into a ruined jail-house through which unwilling and apathetic people must be dragged and detained.

Pressure comes from lack of faith and a failure to understand God's design of creation. It implies a desire for power and control over the spiritual destiny of others. Winning souls at any price is just as bad, if not worse than making money at any price. It is an act of dishonesty. It is taking away both the right of the individual (to grow from within), and the right of God (to pick and choose).

Mutual Treatment

Many verses in Chapter 9 were offered to show that God will treat us the way we treat Him:

For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. Christ (Luke 6:38)

God will verily do unto them that which they themselves are doing...⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

The full meaning of the principle of mutual treatment will become known to us fully in the next kingdom. Until then, we can only imagine its implications. The parable of the Kingdom (Matt. 25:1-13) portrays the most graphic picture of this principle. According to this parable, ten maidens—five of them wise, five of them foolish—were waiting for Christ, the Bridegroom, to come. They



wished to become the maids of honor at His wedding banquet. How did they differ? The wise maidens came well prepared with enough oil of faith and wisdom to last them through the night. The foolish maidens came unprepared. As time advanced through the night, they lost their light, the spirit of their faith and wisdom. While in the darkness of the night they had gone to get more oil, the Bridegroom arrived and took the five prepared maidens into His heavenly banquet.

What happened to the foolish ones? They returned too late for the wedding banquet and found all its doors closed. What did they do? They knocked, pleaded, and implored. What did the Bridegroom do? Did He accept their pleas? Did He open the doors? No! They had not done their homework. They had not kept their faith. They had not kindled the “lamp of their spirit” with the “oil of wisdom.”⁹ They had not kept their courage. They had not kept their minds open. When the Bridegroom called and pleaded with them to enter His banquet during their earthly lives, they ignored His call. Why should He now respond to *their* call and *their* pleading? Keeping the doors of His banquet closed is pure justice.

They performed their acts of devotion for the sake of God, hoping that He might enable them to join the righteous in Paradise. However, when the gates of Paradise were flung open to their faces, they declined to enter.¹⁰ The Báb

Christ’s beautiful and touching parable reveals many celestial mysteries. It should be memorized and pondered by anyone who wishes to enter the



banquet of heaven. It should be pondered until its secrets are revealed, until the truth seekers can see with their soul's eyes that the choice between God and His creatures is always mutual, until they recognize that responding to God's Messengers and Redeemers is by far the most critical choice in this world, that this choice should never be relegated to chance, never be left to the dictates of tradition or demands of conformity, and never be submitted to one's partner, parent, priest, or pastor.

This rule is so strict that even if someone manages to enter the banquet only by formality and name rather than by the spirit, he will not be able to stay:

But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. "Friend," he asked, "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are invited, but few are chosen. Christ (Matt. 22:11-14)

God does not wish to drag anyone into His presence. Jesus used a very strong metaphor to discourage His followers from presenting His pearls of wisdom to ungrateful, unappreciative, and undeserving people:

Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces. Christ (Matt. 7:6)

Bahá'u'lláh confirms that same eternal message, that same prime principle:



O SON OF DUST!

The wise are they that speak not unless they obtain a hearing, even as the cup-bearer, who proffereth not his cup till he findeth a seeker, and the lover who crieth not out from the depths of his heart until he gazeth upon the beauty of his beloved.¹¹ Bahá'u'lláh

The purpose of offering these instructions is to prevent zealous believers from exerting the slightest pressure on ungrateful and apathetic people. It is deviation from this fundamental law that has partly destroyed the dignity of religion.

Perhaps the most exclusive hallmark of being human is freedom of conscience—it is the freedom of choosing the path of our spiritual journey. Choosing our destiny is our mark of distinction. Without it, we are no better than pigs and porcupines, monkeys and mosquitoes. Why then try to remove this divine mark of distinction? Why should anyone interfere with the design of creation?

Sacred Scriptures teach us that in the next Kingdom people will plead with God for a chance to return to this world for another opportunity, to prepare themselves for His heavenly banquet. Are their pleas accepted? Never. This is *our* time and territory; that is *God's* time and territory. Here the choice is ours; there the choice is His. He pleads with us here; we plead with Him there. By embracing His latest Redeemer and Teacher during our *mortal* life, He will allow us into His banquet, and He will embrace us during our *immortal* life. We invite Him here into our hearts; He invites us there into His heaven.



Whatever one gaineth in the life to come is but
the fruit of this faith.¹² The Báb

Will we have the same chance there as we have
here? Will the door to the banquet always remain
open?

...many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not
be able to. Christ (Luke 13:24)

What is our prime purpose in this life? To plant the
seeds of heavenly life, which will bear fruits for all
eternity, to save our souls from the everlasting pains
of remoteness from God.

Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day
offereth you, and deprive not yourselves...of His
grace.¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your
soul may live...Seek the Lord while he may be
found... Isaiah 55:3,6

Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no
more.¹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

To everything there is a season, a time for every
purpose under heaven...a time to plant, and a time
to pluck what is planted... Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Behold, now is the day of salvation!
II Corinthians 6:2

The purpose of coming into this world is to prepare
and purify our soul for God.

...free thyself from the veils of idle fancies and
enter into My court, *that thou mayest be fit for
everlasting life and worthy to meet Me.*¹⁵
Bahá'u'lláh



This purpose is so sublime, so consequential and critical, we should plead with God every moment of our lives to make us worthy of that supreme honor. To be heard, the pleading must come from the very depths of our souls. Only then will He respond to our call. Only then will He unmask His face and allow us into His presence.

We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favor of that grace.¹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with *all* their heart.

Psalms 119:2

You will find him, if indeed you search with *all* your heart and soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29

If you search with *all* your heart, I will let you find Me...

Jeremiah 2:14

Sacred Scriptures declare that the seed of spiritual life germinates from the Word of God. As the sun and the rain generate life, so does the heavenly Word. To bloom, we must bask our souls in the light of “the Sun of Utterance,” and wash our hearts in the living waters of the divine Word.

The Sun of Utterance beameth forth in this day, above the horizon of bounty...Purge and sanctify your...hearts, and your ears, and your eyes with the living waters of the utterance of the All-Merciful, and set, then, your faces towards Him. By the righteousness of God! Ye shall hear all things proclaim: “Verily, He the True One is come. Blessed are they that judge with



fairness, and blessed they that turn towards Him!"¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

To acquire the glorious gift of everlasting life, we must keep in touch with God through His Word.

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The **words** that I speak to you **are spirit**, and **they are life**. Christ (John 6:63)

Give attention to my **words**; incline your ear to my **sayings**. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart. For **they are life** to those who find them...

Proverbs (4:20-22)

God's Word is endowed with infinite powers. It is so potent, so creative, it can instantly transform the human heart—the hardest substance in the universe. His Word has the potential to turn, in an instant, deep despair into everlasting hope, doubt into enduring faith, and cynicism and sadness into abundant joy. His Word has been the generating power behind all the great civilizations since the dawn of time.

Magnified be Thy name, O my God! I testify that if Thy servants were to turn towards Thee with the eyes Thou didst create in them and with the ears wherewith Thou didst endow them, they would all be carried away by a single word sent down from the right hand of the throne of Thy majesty. That word alone would suffice to brighten their faces, and to assure their hearts, and to cause their souls to soar up to the atmosphere of Thy great glory, and to ascend into the heaven of Thy sovereignty.¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh



The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked.¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

The Word of God is so powerful, it created the universe:

...the irresistible Word of God which is the Cause of the entire creation...²⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

God's Word is His ultimate testimony to human-kind, the most convincing proof of His presence, the most supreme sign of His authority, the most blazing evidence of His glory.

That which is preeminent above all other gifts, is incorruptible in nature, and pertaineth to God Himself, is the gift of Divine Revelation. Every bounty conferred by the Creator upon man, be it material or spiritual, is subservient unto this. It is, in its essence, and will ever so remain, the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. It is God's supreme testimony, the clearest evidence of His truth, the sign of His consummate bounty, the token of His all-encompassing mercy, the proof of His most loving providence, the symbol of His most perfect grace. He hath, indeed, partaken of this highest gift of God who hath recognized His Manifestation in this Day.²¹

Bahá'u'lláh



Our Creator does not want to be an uninvited guest. The honor of inviting Him is ours; the pleasure of accepting is His. But He does make every effort to unlock the closed heart through His mighty Word. He exerts His power by His Pen.

All praise be to the one true God—exalted be His glory—inasmuch as He hath, through the Pen of the Most High, unlocked the doors of men's hearts.²²

Bahá'u'lláh

How does God lift our souls out of apathy and lead us to His heavenly banquet? How does He motivate us? How does He unlock our hearts with His Pen? He uses every imaginable motivation. The following 15 are among the most common:

- He announces with love
- He invites with love
- He encourages with love
- He reasons with love
- He admonishes with love
- He urges and pleads with love
- He questions with love
- He informs and reminds with love
- He prays with love
- He expresses pity with love
- He rebukes with anger and love
- He swears by God
- He commands with authority
- He threatens with punishment
- He promises generous rewards and blessings



As you can see, God uses every means of motivation and encouragement short of lifting us and carrying us into His Kingdom. And yet few respond to any of His urgent calls. What does this say about human nature? That from the power of God's inspiring and motivating Word even the mountains may "fall down in fragments:"

And yet how much harder than these mountains their hearts must be to have remained unmoved!²³

The Báb

The quotations presented in the next chapter demonstrate how God uses His Word to open our hearts, to transform our souls. They indicate how He helps us conquer apathy, doubt, and fear; how He elevates us to purpose, peace, and passion for life; how He creates an earnest desire for truth; how He inspires certainty, self-sacrifice, and courage.

The selections offered show the depth of God's love for human beings. They indicate how earnestly He wishes to guide us into His heavenly Kingdom. They present the many methods of persuasion He uses to move us from the dark of unbelief and ignorance to the light of faith and knowledge, from the comfort zone of apathy and worldly affections to His glorious presence.

13

How Does God Motivate Human Beings?

This chapter presents 15 ways in which God awakens, motivates, and persuades us to exchange our selfish desires for celestial aspirations, to subordinate our immediate concerns to eternal comforts. The first step for doing this is to acknowledge His latest Redeemer, the One He sends for *our* age. Without this acknowledgment, we remain ignorant of God's plan and purpose both for our own personal life and for human destiny.

Added together, the 15 incentives or appeals become so powerful they can set any sincere soul ablaze. They can awaken any seeker of truth who has any desire to arise and behold the majestic dawn; they



can elevate anyone who cherishes the glorious dreams of entering God's everlasting Kingdom.

Before reading them, ponder the following points:

- It is impossible to deny the divine station of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh simply on logical grounds. If you continue your investigation, you will be astonished by the weight of evidence pointing to their divine distinction. To validate this point, read the application of statistical laws to the prophecies of the second Advent fulfilled by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as described in *Lord of Lords*. This evidence alone should convince you of the supreme station of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Read also *The Glory of the Son*, and *The Glory of the Father*. These two volumes compare the evidence for Christ and Bahá'u'lláh and show both their oneness and their divine distinction.
- Those who fail to recognize the supreme station of Bahá'u'lláh always do so for reasons other than lack of evidence. Usually they encounter some emotional obstacles.
- Human beings can be convinced a thousand times and more, but unless they are emotionally prepared, no transformation can take place. The rejection of all the great Messengers and Redeemers of the past at the dawning of their advent proves the overwhelming powers of emotions in human life.
- To change our emotions, we must turn to God. Only through His supreme power can we overcome our spiritual handicaps and become worthy of His presence.



- Use the many quotations offered in this chapter to connect your soul to God and to draw from His unfailing powers and blessings. Only then can you experience spiritual transformation.
- Consider this chapter as a separate book, included here, not for information, but only for spiritual transformation. Divide the chapter in anyway you like. In a given day, read all the quotations under one topic, or read one or two quotations from each of the 15 topics. Repeat this again and again to demonstrate your earnest desire to your Creator that you are indeed sincere, that you have an earnest longing to recognize this greatest of all secrets, this most splendid treasure—the Glory of God—who remains as yet unknown to the masses of humankind.



Inviting

Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.
Christ (Rev. 22:17)

Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

All the favors of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by



the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.²

Bahá'u'lláh

The hands of bounty have borne round the cup of everlasting life. Approach, and quaff your fill.³

Bahá'u'lláh

This is the Day whereon the rushing waters of everlasting life have gushed out of the Will of the All-Merciful. Haste ye, with your hearts and souls...⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him then who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord.⁵

The Báb

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Christ (Rev. 3:20)

The one true God is My witness! This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you. Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

O peoples of the earth! Verily the resplendent Light of God hath appeared in your midst, invested with this unerring Book, that ye may be guided



aright to the ways of peace and, by the leave of God, step out of the darkness into the light and onto this far-extended Path of Truth...⁷ The Báb

The Best-Beloved is come...All the favors of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

He Whose advent hath been foretold in the heavenly Scriptures is come, could ye but understand it. The world's horizon is illumined by the splendors of this Most Great Revelation. Haste ye with radiant hearts and be not of them that are bereft of understanding.⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord...
Jeremiah 50:5



Encouraging

Do not be afraid...see the salvation of the Lord...
Moses (Exodus 14:13)

Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come...He will come and save you."
Isaiah 35:4



Have no fear, little flock; for your Father has chosen to give you the Kingdom.

Christ (Luke 12:32)

O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. Suffer not your labors to be wasted through the vain imaginations which certain hearts have devised. Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll. With the utmost unity, and in a spirit of perfect fellowship, exert yourselves, that ye may be enabled to achieve that which beseemeth this Day of God.¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Say: O peoples of the earth! By the righteousness of God! Whatever ye have been promised in the Books of your Lord, the Ruler of the Day of Return, hath appeared and been made manifest. Beware lest the changes and chances of the world hold you back from Him Who is the Sovereign Truth. Ere long will everything visible perish and only that which hath been revealed by God, the Lord of lords, shall endure.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Abandon the things current amongst men and hold fast unto that which God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, hath enjoined upon you. The day is fast approaching when all the treasures of the earth shall be of no profit to you. Unto this beareth witness the Lord of Names, He Who



proclaimeth: Verily, no God is there besides Him, the Sovereign Truth, the Knower of things unseen.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

That which is conducive to the regeneration of the world and the salvation of the peoples and kindreds of the earth hath been sent down from the heaven of the utterance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. Give ye a hearing ear to the counsels of the Pen of Glory. Better is this for you than all that is on the earth.¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

O FLEETING SHADOW!

Pass beyond the baser stages of doubt and rise to the exalted heights of certainty. Open the eye of truth, that thou mayest behold the veilless Beauty and exclaim: Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators!¹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF LOVE!

Thou art but one step away from the glorious heights above and from the celestial tree of love. Take thou one pace and with the next advance into the immortal realm and enter the pavilion of eternity. Give ear then to that which hath been revealed by the pen of glory.¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

O OFFSPRING OF DUST!

Be not content with the ease of a passing day, and deprive not thyself of everlasting rest. Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from thy mortal cage wing thy flight unto the paradise of the Placeless.¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh



O MY FRIEND!

Thou art the day-star of the heavens of My holiness, let not the defilement of the world eclipse thy splendor. Rend asunder the veil of heedlessness, that from behind the clouds thou mayest emerge resplendent and array all things with the apparel of life.¹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh



Reasoning

“Present your case,” says the Lord. “Bring forth your strong reasons...”

Isaiah 41:21

Do ye imagine that He [Bahá'u'lláh] seeketh His own interests, when He hath, at all times, been threatened by the swords of the enemies; or that He seeketh the vanities of the world, after He hath been imprisoned in the most desolate of cities? Be fair in your judgment and follow not the footsteps of the unjust.¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Consider those who rejected the Spirit [Jesus] when He came unto them with manifest dominion. How numerous the Pharisees who had secluded themselves in synagogues in His name, lamenting over their separation from Him, and yet when the portals of reunion were flung open and the divine Luminary shone resplendent from the Dayspring of Beauty, they disbelieved in God, the Exalted, the Mighty. They failed to attain His presence, notwithstanding that His advent had



been promised them in the Book of Isaiah as well as in the Books of the Prophets and the Messengers. No one from among them turned his face towards the Dayspring of divine bounty except such as were destitute of any power amongst men. And yet, today, every man endowed with power and invested with sovereignty prideth himself on His Name. Moreover, call thou to mind the one who sentenced Jesus to death. He was the most learned of his age in his own country, whilst he who was only a fisherman believed in Him. Take good heed and be of them that observe the warning.¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

What would it profit man, if he were to fail to recognize the Revelation of God? Nothing whatever. To this Mine own Self, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the All-Wise, will testify.²⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

Christ (Matt. 16:26)



Admonishing

Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.

Ecclesiastes 4:13

But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a



foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great. Christ (Luke 6:49)

He is truly wise whom the world and all that is therein have not deterred from recognizing the light of this Day, who will not allow men's idle talk to cause him to swerve from the way of righteousness. He is indeed as one dead who, at the wondrous dawn of this Revelation, hath failed to be quickened by its soul-stirring breeze. He is indeed a captive who hath not recognized the Supreme Redeemer, but hath suffered his soul to be bound, distressed and helpless, in the fetters of his desires.

O My servants! Whoso hath tasted of this Fountain hath attained unto everlasting Life, and whoso hath refused to drink therefrom is even as the dead.²¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Know thou that...purification is regarded as the most acceptable means for attaining nearness unto God and as the most meritorious of all deeds. Thus purge thou thine ear that thou mayest hear no mention besides God, and purge thine eye that it behold naught except God, and thy conscience that it perceive naught other than God, and thy tongue that it proclaim nothing but God, and thy hand to write naught but the words of God, and thy knowledge that it comprehend naught except God, and thy heart that it entertain no wish save God, and in like manner purge all thine acts and thy pursuits that thou mayest be nurtured in the paradise of pure love...²²

The Báb



Moreover, take ye good heed not to be reckoned among those of the past who were invested with knowledge, yet by reason of their learning waxed proud before God...²³ The Báb

Beware that ye do not deprive yourselves of the grace of God, that ye do not bring to naught your works, and do not repudiate the truth of this most manifest, this lofty, this shining, and glorious Revelation. Judge ye fairly the Cause of God, your Creator, and behold that which hath been sent down from the Throne on high, and meditate thereon with innocent and sanctified hearts. Then will the truth of this Cause appear unto you as manifest as the sun in its noon-tide glory.²⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE!

Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire!²⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

O FRIENDS!

Abandon not the everlasting beauty for a beauty that must die, and set not your affections on this mortal world of dust.²⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

O MY SERVANT!

Abandon not for that which perisheth an everlasting dominion, and cast not away celestial sovereignty for a worldly desire. This is the river of everlasting life that hath flowed from the



well-spring of the pen of the merciful; well is it with them that drink!²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.²⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

My eternity is My creation, I have created it for thee. Make it the garment of thy temple. My unity is My handiwork; I have wrought it for thee; clothe thyself therewith, that thou mayest be to all eternity the revelation of My everlasting being.²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh



Announcing

In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will



sing before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to
judge the earth. Psalms 96:11-13

...the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

Christ (Matt. 3:2)

He, verily, is come with His Kingdom, and all
the atoms cry aloud: “Lo! The Lord is come in
His great majesty!”³¹ Bahá'u'lláh

O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth!
There hath appeared what hath never previously
appeared. He Who, from everlasting, had con-
cealed His Face from the sight of creation is
now come.³² Bahá'u'lláh

The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is
the sealed Wine of His name. Happy is the man
that turneth unto Him, and drinketh his fill, and
exclaimeth: “Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of
the signs of God!”³³ Bahá'u'lláh

Lo! He is come in the sheltering shadow of
Testimony, invested with conclusive proof...
Blessed is the man who turneth towards Him...³⁴
Bahá'u'lláh

Followers of the Gospel...behold the gates of
heaven are flung open. He that had ascended
unto it is now come. Give ear to His voice call-
ing aloud over land and sea, announcing to all
mankind the advent of this Revelation...³⁵
Bahá'u'lláh

Behold how He hath come down from the heaven
of His grace, girded with power and invested
with sovereignty. Is there any doubt concerning
His signs?³⁶ Bahá'u'lláh



The time foreordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled.³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh



Promising and Rewarding

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...” Christ (Matt. 25:34)

If ye choose to follow Me, I will make you heirs of My Kingdom...³⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

I am coming soon...Him who overcomes...I will also write on him my new name...I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. Christ (Rev. 3:11-13,21)

...better is guidance for him who is guided than all the things that exist on earth, for by reason of this guidance he will, after his death, gain admittance into Paradise, whereas by reason of the things of the world below, he will, after his death, receive his deserts.³⁹ The Báb

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life... Christ (John 5:24)



O My servants! Whoso hath tasted of this Fountain hath attained unto everlasting Life...⁴⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle's eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. For this reason it hath been decreed that in this earthly life the full measure of the glory of his own station should remain concealed from the eyes of such a believer.⁴¹

Bahá'u'lláh

We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revelation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die.⁴²

Bahá'u'lláh

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.⁴³

Bahá'u'lláh

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven...

Christ (Luke 6:23)



Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: “Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!”⁴⁴

Bahá'u'lláh



Reminding and Informing

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes... Proverbs 21:2

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes... Proverbs 16:2

Among those to whom it will never occur that they might merit the displeasure of God...there will be many who will become the personification of the nethermost fire itself, when they fail to embrace His [Bahá'u'lláh's] Cause; while among the lowly servants whom no one would imagine to be of any merit, how great the number who will be honored with true faith and on whom the Fountainhead of generosity will bestow the robe of authority. For whatever is created in the Faith of God is created through the potency of His Word.⁴⁵

The Báb

But many who are first will be last, and the last first. Christ (Matt. 19:30)



How great the number of people who deck themselves with robes of silk all their lives, while clad in the garb of fire, inasmuch as they have divested themselves of the raiment of divine guidance and righteousness; and how numerous are those who wear clothes made of cotton or coarse wool throughout their lives, and yet by reason of their being endowed with the vesture of divine guidance and righteousness, are truly attired with the raiment of Paradise and take delight in the good-pleasure of God. Indeed it would be better in the sight of God were ye to combine the two...⁴⁶

The Báb

The learned men of Christendom are held to be learned by virtue of their safeguarding the teaching of Christ, and yet consider how they themselves have been the cause of men's failure to accept the Faith and attain unto salvation! Is it still thy wish to follow in their footsteps?⁴⁷

The Báb

Throughout your lives ye follow your religion in order to attract the good-pleasure of God, yet on the Last Day ye shut yourselves out from God and turn away from Him Who is your Promised One.⁴⁸

The Báb

Only a few have as yet quaffed from this peerless, this soft-flowing grace of the Ancient King. These occupy the loftiest mansions of Paradise, and are firmly established upon the seats of authority.⁴⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came



unto His own, and His own received Him not.

John 1:10-11

O FRIENDS!

Verily I say, whatsoever ye have concealed within your hearts is to Us open and manifest as the day; but that it is hidden is of Our grace and favor, and not of your deserving.⁵⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me; for it behooveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be loved alone and above all that is.⁵¹

Bahá'u'lláh

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me...⁵²

Bahá'u'lláh



Rebuking

He [the Promised One] shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people... Isaiah 2:4

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.” But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in



the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke...

Christ (Rev. 3:15-19)

O MOVING FORM OF DUST!

I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me. The sword of thy rebellion hath felled the tree of thy hope. At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.⁵³

Bahá'u'lláh

Gracious God! how strange the way of this people! They clamor for guidance, although the standards of Him Who guideth all things are already hoisted. They cleave to the obscure intricacies of knowledge, when He, Who is the Object of all knowledge, shineth as the sun. They see the sun with their own eyes, and yet question that brilliant Orb as to the proof of its light. They behold the vernal showers descending upon them, and yet seek an evidence of that bounty. The proof of the sun is the light thereof, which shineth and envelopeth all things. The evidence of the shower is the bounty thereof, which reneweth and investeth the world with the mantle of life.⁵⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

Christ (Mark 7:9)



What hath befallen you, O people of the Book? Will ye not fear the One true God, He Who is your Lord, the Ancient of Days?...Hath your learning deluded you by reason of your impiety? Take ye heed then, for verily your God, the Lord of Eternal Truth, is with you and in very truth is watchful over you...⁵⁵ The Báb

**O YE THAT ARE LYING AS DEAD
ON THE COUCH OF HEEDLESSNESS!**

Ages have passed and your precious lives are well-nigh ended, yet not a single breath of purity hath reached Our court of holiness from you. Though immersed in the ocean of misbelief, yet with your lips ye profess the one true faith of God. Him whom I abhor ye have loved, and of My foe ye have made a friend. Notwithstanding, ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you. Were ye but to open your eyes, ye would, in truth, prefer a myriad griefs unto this joy, and would count death itself better than this life.⁵⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF DESIRE!

The learned and the wise have for long years striven and failed to attain the presence of the All-Glorious; they have spent their lives in search of Him, yet did not behold the beauty of His countenance. Thou without the least effort didst attain thy goal, and without search hast obtained the object of thy quest. Yet, notwithstanding, thou didst remain so wrapt in the veil of self, that thine eyes beheld not the beauty of



the Beloved, nor did thy hand touch the hem of His robe. Ye that have eyes, behold and wonder.⁵⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

**O YE THAT ARE FOOLISH,
YET HAVE A NAME TO BE WISE!**

Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.⁵⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

O YE SEEMING FAIR YET INWARDLY FOUL!

Ye are like clear but bitter water, which to outward seeming is crystal pure but of which, when tested by the divine Assayer, not a drop is accepted. Yea, the sun beam falls alike upon the dust and the mirror, yet differ they in reflection even as doth the star from the earth: nay, immeasurable is the difference!⁵⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

...you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

Christ (Matt. 23:27)

O LOVERS OF WORLDLY DESIRE!

Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the Beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor



hath the breeze of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion.⁶⁰ Bahá'u'lláh



Pitying

O the pity! that man should deprive himself of this goodly gift, this imperishable bounty, this everlasting life. It behooveth him to prize this food that cometh from heaven, that perchance, through the wondrous favors of the Sun of Truth, the dead may be brought to life, and withered souls be quickened by the infinite Spirit. Make haste, O my brother, that while there is yet time our lips may taste of the immortal draught, for the breeze of life, now blowing from the city of the Well-Beloved, cannot last, and the streaming river of holy utterance must needs be stilled, and the portals of the Ridván [paradise] cannot for ever remain open...This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away. God, verily, is independent of him and of that which he may see and witness.⁶¹

Bahá'u'lláh



The eye of My loving-kindness weepeth sore over you, inasmuch as ye have failed to recognize the One upon Whom ye have been calling in the daytime and in the night season, at even and at morn.⁶² Bahá'u'lláh

The sweet savors of holiness are breathing and the breath of bounty is wafted, yet ye are all sorely afflicted and deprived thereof. Alas for you and for them that walk in your ways and follow in your footsteps!⁶³ Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The bird seeketh its nest; the nightingale the charm of the rose; whilst those birds, the hearts of men, content with transient dust, have strayed far from their eternal nest, and with eyes turned towards the slough of heedlessness are bereft of the glory of the divine presence. Alas! How strange and pitiful; for a mere cupful, they have turned away from the billowing seas of the Most High, and remained far from the most effulgent horizon.⁶⁴ Bahá'u'lláh



Praying

Take ye heed, watch and *pray*. Mark 13:33

Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon



all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man. Christ (Luke 21:34-36)

...whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Christ (Matt. 21:22)

I entreat Thee, O Thou Who art my Companion and my Best-Beloved, to lift the veil that hath come in between Thee and Thy servants, that they may recognize Thee with Thine own eye and rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. No God is there beside Thee, the Most Exalted, the Self-Sufficing, the Self-Exalting, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

Praise be unto Thee, for Thou art, in truth, the Lord of earth and heaven.⁶⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Enable Thy servants, O my God, to discover the things Thou didst desire for them in Thy Kingdom. Acquaint them, moreover, with what He Who is the Origin of Thy most excellent titles hath, in His love for Thee, been willing to bear for the sake of the regeneration of their souls, that they may haste to attain the River that is Life indeed, and turn their faces in the direction of Thy Name, the Most Merciful. Abandon them not to themselves, O my God! Draw them, by Thy bountiful favor, to the heaven of Thine



inspiration. They are but paupers, and Thou art the All-Possessing, the ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.⁶⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Draw them nearer, O my God, unto the scene of Thine effulgent glory...Cleave asunder, O my Lord, the veils that shut them out from Thee, that they may behold Thee shining above the horizon of Thy oneness and shedding Thy radiance from the dawning-place of Thy sovereignty.⁶⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

We beseech God that He may graciously vouchsafe His grace unto all men, and enable them to attain the knowledge of Him and of themselves.⁶⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Pray to be forgiven, O people, for having failed in your duty towards God, and for having transgressed against His Cause, and be not of the foolish. He it is Who hath created you; He it is Who hath nourished your souls through His Cause, and enabled you to recognize Him Who is the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Knowing. He it is Who hath unveiled to your eyes the treasures of His knowledge, and caused you to ascend unto the heaven of certitude—the certitude of His resistless, His irrefutable, and most exalted Faith.⁶⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. Psalms 145:18



Swearing and Declaring God as Witness

You judge by human standards...I am not alone.
I stand with the Father, who sent me...I am one
who testifies for myself; my other witness is the
Father, who sent me. Christ (John 8:15-18)

Thy Lord, verily, is a witness unto what I say.⁷⁰
Bahá'u'lláh

God, verily, is a sufficient witness...⁷¹
Bahá'u'lláh

O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth,
is My witness!⁷² Bahá'u'lláh

To this He Who is the Lord of all creation
beareth Me witness.⁷³ Bahá'u'lláh

The Lord beareth witness unto that which I
declare.⁷⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

I swear by Him Who hath called Me into being,
I can discover no trace of sinfulness in Myself,
nor have I followed aught but the Truth; and
unto Me God is sufficient witness.⁷⁵ The Báb

Verily this is the true Faith of God, and suffi-
cient witness are God and such as are endowed
with the knowledge of the Book.⁷⁶ The Báb

I have no control over what profiteth Me or
harmeth Me, but as My Lord pleaseth. Indeed



God is Self-Sufficient and He, My Lord, standeth
supreme over all things.⁷⁷ The Báb

By God! This is He Who hath at one time
appeared in the name of the Spirit [Christ]...⁷⁸
Bahá'u'lláh

By the righteousness of the One true God, He
is none other than the sovereign Truth Who hath
been made manifest through the power of
Truth.⁷⁹ The Báb

I swear by the most sacred Essence of God
that but one line of the Words uttered by Him
[Bahá'u'lláh] is more sublime than the words
uttered by all that dwell on earth.⁸⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

By the righteousness of God, my Well-Beloved!
I have never aspired after worldly leadership.
My sole purpose hath been to hand down unto
men that which I was bidden to deliver by God,
the Gracious, the Incomparable, that it may
detach them from all that pertaineth to this
world, and cause them to attain such heights
as neither the ungodly can conceive, nor the
froward imagine.⁸¹ Bahá'u'lláh

By the righteousness of Mine own Self! Great,
immeasurably great is this Cause! Mighty, in-
conceivably mighty is this Day! Blessed indeed
is the man that hath forsaken all things, and
fastened his eyes upon Him Whose face hath
shed illumination upon all who are in the heavens
and all who are on the earth.⁸² Bahá'u'lláh



O BRETHREN!

Be forbearing one with another and set not your affections on things below. Pride not yourselves in your glory, and be not ashamed of abasement. By My beauty! I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again.⁸³

Bahá'u'lláh

O CHILDREN OF VAINGLORY!

For a fleeting sovereignty ye have abandoned My imperishable dominion, and have adorned yourselves with the gay livery of the world and made of it your boast. By My beauty! All will I gather beneath the one-colored covering of the dust and efface all these diverse colors save them that choose My own, and that is purging from every color.⁸⁴

Bahá'u'lláh



Questioning

O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?

Christ (Luke 9:41)

Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe?⁸⁵

Bahá'u'lláh



O SON OF THE WONDROUS VISION!

I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought a beloved other than Me?⁸⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?

Christ (Luke 12:56)

He is now come. Wherefore are ye downcast and dejected?⁸⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

O REBELLIOUS ONES!

My forbearance hath emboldened you and My long-suffering hath made you negligent, in such wise that ye have spurred on the fiery charger of passion into perilous ways that lead unto destruction. Have ye thought Me heedless or that I was unaware?⁸⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF SPIRIT!

I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.⁸⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

How long wilt thou soar in the realms of desire?⁹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh



O SON OF MAN!

Many a day hath passed over thee whilst thou hast busied thyself with thy fancies and idle imaginings. How long art thou to slumber on thy bed? Lift up thy head from slumber, for the Sun hath risen to the zenith, haply it may shine upon thee with the light of beauty.⁹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

O WEED THAT SPRINGETH OUT OF DUST!

Wherefore have not these soiled hands of thine touched first thine own garment, and why with thine heart defiled with desire and passion dost thou seek to commune with Me and to enter My sacred realm? Far, far are ye from that which ye desire.⁹²

Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The spirit of holiness beareth unto thee the joyful tidings of reunion; wherefore dost thou grieve? The spirit of power confirmeth thee in His cause; why dost thou veil thyself? The light of His countenance doth lead thee; how canst thou go astray?⁹³

Bahá'u'lláh



Urging and Pleading

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.

Isaiah 55:6

Say, O concourse of divines [religious leaders]! Be fair in your judgment, I adjure you by God. Produce then whatever proofs and testimonies ye



possess, if ye are to be reckoned among the inmates of this glorious habitation.⁹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Do the sons recognize the Father, and acknowledge Him, or do they deny Him, even as the people aforetime denied Him (Jesus)?⁹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Say: We, in truth, have opened unto you the gates of the Kingdom. Will ye bar the doors of your houses in My face?⁹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Where is the man of insight who will behold the Words of God with his own eyes and rid himself of the opinions and notions of the peoples of the earth?⁹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. Hebrews 3:15



Warning and Threatening

Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, The world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of the Lord is against all nations...

Isaiah 34:2

Behold, I have foretold you all things.

Christ (Mark 13:23)

Say: There is no place of refuge for you, no asylum to which ye can flee, no one to defend or to protect you in this Day from the fury of



the wrath of God and from His vehement power, unless and until ye seek the shadow of His Revelation.⁹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Ye, and all ye possess, shall pass away. Ye shall, most certainly, return to God, and shall be called to account for your doings in the presence of Him Who shall gather together the entire creation...⁹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

...if ye believe in Me, ye will provide good for your own souls, and if ye believe not in Me, nor in that which God hath revealed unto Me, ye will suffer yourselves to be shut out as by a veil.¹⁰⁰ The Báb

This mortal life is sure to perish; its pleasures are bound to fade away and ere long ye shall return unto God, distressed with pangs of remorse, for presently ye shall be roused from your slumber, and ye shall soon find yourselves in the presence of God and will be asked of your doings.¹⁰¹ The Báb

Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful, ye cannot, if ye be of them who judge fairly. The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance



of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-compelling, the Almighty.

What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Erelong, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead.¹⁰² Bahá'u'lláh

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. John 3:36

...whoever does not believe will be condemned.
Christ (Mark 16:16)

...whoever does not believe stands condemned already...
Christ (John 3:18)

If ye follow the Cause of God, We will forgive you your sins, and if ye turn aside from Our command, We will, in truth, condemn your souls in Our Book, unto the Most Great Fire.¹⁰³
The Báb

No man can obtain everlasting life, unless he embraceth the truth of this inestimable, this wondrous, and sublime Revelation.¹⁰⁴ Bahá'u'lláh



Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth's loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne.¹⁰⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

O CHILDREN OF FANCY!

Know verily, that while the radiant dawn breaketh above the horizon of eternal holiness, the satanic secrets and deeds done in the gloom of night shall be laid bare and manifest before the peoples of the world.¹⁰⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

O OPPRESSORS ON EARTH!

Withdraw your hands from tyranny, for I have pledged Myself not to forgive any man's injustice. This is My covenant which I have irrevocably decreed in the preserved tablet and sealed it with My seal of glory.¹⁰⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

O YE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD!

Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity followeth you, and grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not that which ye have committed hath been effaced in My sight. By My beauty! All your doings hath My pen graven with open characters upon tablets of chrysolite.¹⁰⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF BEING!

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.¹⁰⁹

Bahá'u'lláh



Commanding

...His command is everlasting life. John 12:50

Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28

Be always on the watch [search]...that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

Christ (Luke 21:36)

...seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Christ (Matt. 7:7)

O people of the Gospel! They who were not in the Kingdom have now entered it, whilst We behold you, in this day, tarrying at the gate. Rend the veils asunder by the power of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bounteous, and enter, then, in My name My Kingdom. Thus biddeth you He Who desireth for you everlasting life...¹¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation...¹¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh



Your sciences shall not profit you in this day,
nor your arts, nor your treasures, nor your glory.
Cast them all behind your backs, and set your
faces towards the Most Sublime Word...¹¹²

Bahá'u'lláh

Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home,
reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not.
This is that which hath been destined for thee in
Our kingdom above and Our exalted Dominion.¹¹³

Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF BEING!

With the hands of power I made thee and with
the fingers of strength I created thee; and within
thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be
thou content with it and seek naught else, for
My work is perfect and My command is binding.
Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.¹¹⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF LIGHT!

Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit.
This is of the essence of My command, there-
fore turn unto it.¹¹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

You shall love the Lord your God with all your
heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the first and great commandment.

Christ (Matt. 22:37-38)

This is My commandment, that you love one
another as I have loved you. Christ (John 15:12)

O SON OF MAN!

Transgress not thy limits, nor claim that which
beseemeth thee not. Prostrate thyself before the
countenance of thy God, the Lord of might and
power.¹¹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh



Multiple Incentives

Some passages contain multiple incentives. The following is an example. It commands, admonishes, informs, reasons, and finally warns. Added together, the multiple incentives in the following passage gain a power perhaps beyond any other found in sacred Scriptures:

Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful. Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires, inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: “Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self,” and if such a man should reply and say: “Inasmuch as all men



have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal,” such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.¹¹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Let us now divide up the previous paragraph to identify each of its incentives or appeals:

Command:

Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful.¹¹⁸

Admonish:

Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires.¹¹⁹

Inform:

...inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified.¹²⁰



Question and Reason:

Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure?¹²¹

Warn:

If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: “Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self,” and if such a man should reply and say: “Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal,” such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.¹²²

* * *

Why does God use so many motivators? Why does He appeal in so many ways to our hearts and souls? Simply because of His supreme love for His creatures.

God desireth that all men should be guided aright...¹²³

The Báb

The Lord...is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

II Peter 3:9

For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you...Says the Lord...

Isaiah 54:10



God's investment in human beings is beyond anyone's estimation. Within the soul of every person He has placed His greatest gifts and most precious possessions.

Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge.¹²⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

My claim on thee is great, it cannot be forgotten. My grace to thee is plenteous, it cannot be veiled. My love has made in thee its home, it cannot be concealed. My light is manifest to thee, it cannot be obscured.¹²⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

God is our supreme Lover who wants to be also our supreme Beloved.

I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought a beloved other than Me?¹²⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

He wants us to reach out for His choicest fruits.

Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits, wherefore hast thou turned away and contented thyself with that which is less good? Return then unto that which is better for thee in the realm on high.¹²⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

He wants us to experience abundant and enduring joy.

Rejoice in the gladness of thine heart, that thou mayest be worthy to meet Me and to mirror forth My beauty.¹²⁸ Bahá'u'lláh



There is yet another reason why God uses so many incentives and appeals in so many ways. As God is loving, so is He just. His justice demands that people must be told in every possible way the consequences of their deeds, especially the ultimate destiny of those who accept or deny His Redeemers. God completes His testimony. He leaves no excuses for anyone who hears His message:

Say: By the righteousness of the Almighty! The measure of the favors of God hath been filled up, His Word hath been perfected, the light of His countenance hath been revealed, His sovereignty hath encompassed the whole of creation, the glory of His Revelation hath been made manifest, and His bounties have rained upon all mankind.¹²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal.¹³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

We have the choice to say no to God; He has the right to say no to us. We have the choice to close our hearts to Him; He has the right to close His Kingdom to us. Would it be fair if this rule were not upheld? Would God be just if He allowed every denier into His Kingdom?

Please reread all the motivators quoted in this chapter and ponder their meaning until their powers touch your soul. God communicates with us through words. He gave us the gift of understanding, thinking, and speaking for that reason. His words are



our very life and spirit. Without them, we remain spiritually dead:

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Christ (John 6:63)

God's Word testifies to His greatness and glory, to His supremacy and authority. It shines as brightly as the sun against lighted lamps. It is so powerful, it eclipses every other light:

Verily, the Day is come, and My Lord hath made Me to shine forth with a light whose splendor hath eclipsed the suns of utterance.¹³¹ Bahá'u'lláh

If we fail to read and heed His words, if we fail to connect our soul with His, if we fail to seek Him and pray to Him with earnest desire, we remain deprived of spiritual life.

Can we expect answers to prayers not offered?

He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him...and show him My salvation.

Psalms 91:15-16

If we pray, will He not guide us to His Kingdom?

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

Psalms 32:8

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6



Can we expect results without means, without efforts?

For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you.¹³²

Bahá'u'lláh

What are “the means” that set the cycle of blessings in motion, that result in the outpouring of the grace of God?

- Searching patiently and persistently for truth with a watchful and pure heart.
- Reflecting and meditating with an open and critical mind.
- Praying and pleading with God to become worthy of His grace and glory.

14

The Final Invitation

Prayers for Seeking Divine Guidance

And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. Christ (Matt. 21:22)

O Thou Who art the Lord of all names and the Maker of the heavens! I beseech Thee...to make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out from Thy beauty, and a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence.



O Thou the Desire of the world and the Beloved of the nations! Thou seest me turning toward Thee, and rid of all attachment to anyone save Thee, and clinging to Thy cord, through whose movement the whole creation hath been stirred up. I am Thy servant, O my Lord...Behold me standing ready to do Thy will and Thy desire, and wishing naught else except Thy good pleasure. I implore Thee...to do with Thy servant as Thou wilt and pleasest. By Thy might which is far above all mention and praise! Whatsoever is revealed by Thee is the desire of my heart and the beloved of my soul. O God, my God! Look not upon my hopes and my doings, nay rather look upon Thy will that hath encompassed the heavens and the earth. By Thy Most Great Name, O Thou Lord of all nations! I have desired only what Thou didst desire, and love only what Thou dost love...

Make my prayer, O my Lord, a fountain of living waters whereby I may live as long as Thy sovereignty endureth, and may make mention of Thee in every world of Thy worlds.

O Thou in separation from Whom hearts and souls have melted, and by the fire of Whose love the whole world hath been set aflame! I implore Thee by Thy Name through which Thou hast subdued the whole creation, not to withhold from me that which is with Thee, O Thou Who rulest over all men! Thou seest, O my Lord, this stranger hastening to his most exalted home beneath the canopy of Thy majesty and within



the precincts of Thy mercy; and this transgressor seeking the ocean of Thy forgiveness; and this lowly one the court of Thy glory; and this poor creature the orient of Thy wealth. Thine is the authority to command whatsoever Thou willest. I bear witness that Thou art to be praised in Thy doings, and to be obeyed in Thy behests, and to remain unconstrained in Thy bidding.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

* * *

O Thou Whose face is the object of the adoration of all that yearn after Thee, Whose presence is the hope of such as are wholly devoted to Thy will, Whose nearness is the desire of all that have drawn nigh unto Thy court, Whose countenance is the companion of those who have recognized Thy truth, Whose name is the mover of the souls that long to behold Thy face, Whose voice is the true life of Thy lovers, the words of Whose mouth are as the waters of life unto all who are in heaven and on earth!

I beseech Thee, by the wrong Thou hast suffered and the ills inflicted upon Thee by the hosts of wrongful doers, to send down upon me from the clouds of Thy mercy that which will purify me of all that is not of Thee, that I may be worthy to praise Thee and fit to love Thee.

Withhold not from me, O my Lord, the things Thou didst ordain for such of Thy handmaidens as circle around Thee, and on whom are poured continually the splendors of the sun of Thy beauty and the beams of the brightness of Thy



face. Thou art He Who from everlasting hath succored whosoever hath sought Thee, and bountifully favored him who hath asked Thee.

No God is there beside Thee, the Mighty, the Ever-Abiding, the All-Bounteous, the Most Generous.²

Bahá'u'lláh

The Final Invitation

Sacred Scriptures teach us that we should make ourselves worthy of God, fit for His Kingdom. But how can we do this? First by cultivating a desire for God, and then by acting to confirm and reinforce the desire.

Let us begin with the first one: desire. How is it possible to cultivate desire? Surprisingly, the best way is to start with action. Perhaps the two most critical actions are reading and praying. This idea comes from our Creator Himself; that is exactly what He asks us to do. Consider the following instructions from Jesus to Christians to help them recognize Him on His return:

Be on your guard and ***watch*** and ***pray***, for you do not know when the time will come.

Christ (Mark 13:33)

Keep awake then and ***watch*** at all times; ***praying*** that you may have the full strength and ability and be accounted worthy...to stand in the presence of the Son of man.

Christ (Luke 21:36)

What does “Watch!” mean? It means to be awake and aware. How can a person be truly awake and



aware? By seeking knowledge. Can a person be watchful if he or she ignores the news of the coming of a great Redeemer from God? There is an abundance of literature proving beyond any doubt that Christ has indeed returned. Can you be watchful if you fail to examine the evidence?

Here is a specific and practical plan of action for you and every other sincere seeker of truth to carry out Christ's instructions about searching and praying:

Take time to read a little every day. Make knowing and loving God the crowning point of your life's mission. Can you be loyal to your family if you fail to spend time with them? Then how can you be loyal to God if you put Him last in your life? Seeking knowledge is the first and most essential step for creating a desire to approach God, yet many fail to take this one simple step.

All blessings are divine in origin, but none can be compared with this power of intellectual investigation and research, which is an eternal gift producing fruits of unending delight.³

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

People recognize this universal principle—the need for action—in every facet of their lives, except in their relation to God. They know that to be fit, they must exercise; to be loyal to their friends, they must call them; to earn a living they must work. Yet when it comes to their relationship with God, they forget this most essential step. Why do they forget? Why do they make this exception? This is a great mystery. I hope someone will come up with an answer; it would be nice to know.



At the time of this writing, there are three wonderful seekers in our community who have been coming to our Bahá'í meetings for an average of three years, and yet they have not reached the point of recognizing and acknowledging Bahá'u'lláh. They like the Bahá'í Faith, but they have not fallen in love with it. What these seekers have in common is this: they do not show much thirst for knowledge, they do not take time to benefit from the vast resources of the Bahá'í literature, and they fail to immerse themselves in the vast ocean of the Bahá'í Scriptures.

Recently one of them said, "I feel like a hypocrite to come to Bahá'í meetings, but fail to reach a decision." He then talked about a dream he once had. "I found myself," he said, "in a church in front of a group of people. I had an uneasy feeling about them. I knew something was wrong, something terrible was going to happen. Suddenly there was an explosion; the people and the church vanished. Then a brilliant light shone." He had a general idea about what the dream meant, but was unsure. Dreams are often symbolic and difficult to interpret. Some dreams are of course meaningless; a few carry significant messages. This dream, I said, may contain a message. I told him: "A temple or church symbolizes religion. At the end of each religious cycle, the Spirit leaves the old temple and enters a new one. In God's sight, when a new Redeemer comes the old church disappears."

And the street of the city [of God] was pure gold, like transparent glass. ***But I saw no temple in it***, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Revelation 21:21-22



The Lord God Almighty symbolizes Bahá'u'lláh and the Lamb symbolizes the Báb, who sacrificed Himself for Bahá'u'lláh. The word Bahá'u'lláh means “the light and glory of God.” In this age, a new Light has dawned, and everything else has spiritually disappeared. Christ promised Christians that He would be with them always to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). At that point His Spirit left the church.

The dream had created an awareness in the soul of this seeker. He knew he must do something, he must move, but wasn't sure how. I helped him transfer his new awareness into action. I told him: “You spend so many hours every day in so many ways. Is it too much to give the last ten minutes of each day to God?” He said, “No.” I then suggested to him to start reading *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* for ten minutes every night before going to bed. “You have” I said, “mountains of studies to do for your university courses. You are always short of time. But if you care for God, you must take a little piece of each day and give it to Him. It is in moments of decision that your eternal destiny is shaped. If that destiny matters to you, you must decide and take action.”

“You have no control over your feelings,” I said, “but you can control your actions. God will treat us the way we treat Him. If you do not act to advance towards Him, He will not act either. Always remember God's promise that He will treat us the way we treat Him.”

Then I explained the second most essential step in the journey of the search for truth: praying. “After



reading the *Gleanings* for ten minutes,” I suggested, “turn to God and pray with all your heart and soul to guide you, to let you know if Bahá’u’lláh is indeed the One He claims to be; ask Him to give you more clues and signs, if it is in harmony with His Wisdom.”

He found my suggestions quite reasonable and practical, and determined to commit himself to both reading and praying.

Let me encourage every seeker of truth to follow the same course, to take these two simple steps as long as it takes to reach a conclusion. God has promised to guide us only if we turn to Him and act. Why should He offer His Kingdom to anyone who does not work for it? That Kingdom is so precious, so divine, so supreme and glorious, that if we got even a glimpse of it, we would give a thousand lives to acquire it. Why then should He offer it to someone who would rather see the glamour of Hollywood than the glory of Heaven? Why should He give His Kingdom to a person who spends time for everything except God? Is it fair and reasonable to allow selfish, closed-minded, fearful, prejudiced, complacent, or worldly people enter His magnificent and everlasting Kingdom?

To repeat: make this little commitment for great blessings: spend the last few minutes of your day—at least ten minutes—reading Bahá’u’lláh’s work. Then spend a few more minutes praying earnestly and pleading with God to guide you in His way. Ask Him to give you a sign, a clue that will lead you to His Presence.



Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom.⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Seize the time, therefore, ere the glory of the divine springtime hath spent itself, and the Bird of Eternity ceased to warble its melody, that thy inner hearing may not be deprived of hearkening unto its call. This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away. God, verily, is independent of him and of that which he may see and witness.⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Part IV

Brief Quotations From Bahá'í Scriptures

It is the Spirit who gives life...The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

Christ (John 6:63)

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish...

Christ (John 10:27-28)

All praise be to the one true God—exalted be His glory—inasmuch as He hath, through the Pen of the Most High, unlocked the doors of men's hearts. Every verse which this Pen hath revealed is a bright and shining portal that discloseth the glories of a saintly and pious life, of pure and stainless deeds.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

15

Living in Harmony With God

Setting One's Hope in God Alone

Withhold not from yourselves the grace of God and His mercy. Whoso withholdeth himself therefrom is indeed in grievous loss.² Bahá'u'lláh

Beware lest the transitory things of human life withhold you from turning unto God, the True One.³ Bahá'u'lláh

Wouldst thou have Me, seek none other than Me; and wouldst thou gaze upon My beauty,



close thine eyes to the world and all that is therein; for My will and the will of another than Me, even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart.⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator...⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Knowing God

True knowledge...is the knowledge of God, and this is none other than the recognition of His Manifestation in each Dispensation.⁶ The Báb

Loving God

Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love. This, truly, is the seclusion that befitteth you, could ye but know it.⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Make my love thy vesture and thy shield remembrance of Me, and thy provision reliance upon God...⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Walk in My statutes for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Demonstrating the Love of God

But for the tribulations which are sustained in Thy path, how could Thy true lovers be recognized; and were it not for the trials which are



borne for love of Thee, how could the station of such as yearn for Thee be revealed?¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Though my body be pained by the trials that befall me from Thee, though it be afflicted by the revelations of Thy Decree, yet my soul rejoiceth at having partaken of the waters of Thy Beauty, and at having attained the shores of the ocean of Thine eternity. Doth it beseem a lover to flee from his beloved, or to desert the object of his heart's desire? Nay, we all believe in Thee, and eagerly hope to enter Thy presence.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Trusting God and Submitting One's Self to God

The Source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.¹²

Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships, who lament not over anything that befalleth them, and who tread the path of resignation...¹³

Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed the insatiate soul who casteth away his selfish desires for love of Me and taketh his place at the banquet table which I have sent down from the heaven of divine bounty for My chosen ones.¹⁴

Bahá'u'lláh



Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.¹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings.¹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Heeding God's Counsels

Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.¹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Happy are they that observe God's precepts; happy are they that have recognized the Truth; happy are they that judge with fairness in all matters and hold fast to the Cord of My inviolable Justice.¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Thanking God

Know thou, that I have wafted unto thee all the fragrances of holiness, have fully revealed to thee My word, have perfected through thee My bounty and have desired for thee that which I have desired for My Self. Be then content with My pleasure and thankful unto Me.¹⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Render ye thanksgiving unto God that perchance He may deal mercifully with you.²⁰

The Báb



Meeting God

Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee.²¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Be light and untrammelled as the breeze, that ye may obtain admittance into the precincts of My court, My inviolable Sanctuary.²² Bahá'u'lláh

Seeking the Help of God

...whoever standeth firm and steadfast in this holy, this glorious, and exalted Revelation, such power shall be given him as to enable him to face and withstand all that is in heaven and on earth.²³ Bahá'u'lláh

Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Beneficent.²⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Knowing God's Purpose in Creating Humankind

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His presence.²⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God.²⁶ Bahá'u'lláh



Appreciating the Word of God

The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable...The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked...It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things.²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame...²⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

16

Living in Harmony With One's Self

Gaining the Spiritual Gift

Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy.¹

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

While possessing physical life, he should lay hold of the life spiritual...Then is man worthy of the title man; then will he be “after the image and likeness of God...”²

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



Rejoicing

All the sorrow and grief that exist come from the world of matter—the spiritual world bestows only the joy!³

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The people must be so attracted to you that they will exclaim, “What happiness exists among you!” and will see in your faces the lights of the kingdom; then in wonderment they will turn to you and seek the cause of your happiness.⁴

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill.⁵

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Let not the world and its vileness grieve you. Happy is he whom riches fill not with vain-glory, nor poverty with sorrow.⁶

Bahá’u’lláh

Not Being Content With Worldly Comforts

Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be not content with that which perisheth.⁷

Bahá’u’lláh

Be not content with the ease of a passing day...⁸

Bahá’u’lláh

Coping With Adversity

Rely upon God. Trust in Him. Praise Him, and call Him continually to mind. He verily turneth trouble into ease, and sorrow into solace, and toil into utter peace. He verily hath dominion over all things.⁹

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



Clinging to Patience

He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

He will, certainly, repay all them that endure with patience and put their confidence in Him.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Be patient, for thy Lord is patient.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

Understanding the Purpose of Tests and Trials

Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones.¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him...the greatest men have suffered most.¹⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Do not grieve at the afflictions and calamities that have befallen thee. All calamities and afflictions have been created for man so that he may spurn this mortal world—a world to which he is much attached. When he experienceth severe



trials and hardships, then his nature will recoil and he will desire the eternal realm—a realm which is sanctified from all afflictions and calamities.¹⁵

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Recognizing the True Purpose and Worth of Earthly Possessions

Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom.¹⁶

Bahá’u’lláh

In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed.¹⁷

Bahá’u’lláh

If the whole earth were to be converted into silver and gold, no man who can be said to have truly ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude would deign to regard it, much less to seize and keep it.¹⁸

Bahá’u’lláh

Recognizing the True Standards of Glory and Distinction

...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 center 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 behavior, 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.¹⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

In the darkness of the world be ye radiant flames...²⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Exchanging Fancy for Reality

O friend, the heart is the dwelling of eternal mysteries, make it not the home of fleeting fancies...²¹ Bahá'u'lláh

...when a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy.²² Bahá'u'lláh

...they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly—their ears from idle talk, their minds from vain imaginings...²³ Bahá'u'lláh



Conquering the Self

Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein.²⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Concern yourselves with the things that benefit mankind, and not with your corrupt and selfish desires.²⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion.²⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

...no veil is greater than egotism and no matter how thin that covering may be, yet it will finally veil man entirely and prevent him from receiving a portion from the eternal bounty.²⁷

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Purifying the Heart

The pure heart is the one that is entirely cut away from self.²⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

We must make the soil of our hearts receptive and fertile by tilling in order that the rain of divine mercy may refresh them and bring forth roses and hyacinths.²⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The more pure and sanctified the heart of man becomes, the nearer it draws to God...³⁰

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



...the heart is the throne, in which the Revelation of God the All-Merciful is centered... “Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me, and is faithful to My Cause.”³¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Adorning One's Self With Noble Deeds and Attributes

Be fair to yourselves and to others, that the evidence of justice may be revealed, through your deeds, among Our faithful servants.³²

Bahá'u'lláh

Be ye a refuge to the fearful; bring ye rest and peace to the disturbed...be a healing medicine for those who suffer pain...³³

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech.³⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

O ye loved ones of God! Drink your fill from the well-spring of wisdom, and soar ye into the atmosphere of wisdom, and speak forth with wisdom and eloquence.³⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of the world of humanity. Without truthfulness, progress and success in all of the worlds of God are impossible for a soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also become realized.³⁶

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer to the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge...³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Appreciating Divine Blessings

A dewdrop out of the fathomless ocean of My mercy I have shed upon the peoples of the world...³⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you. Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.³⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

17

Living in Harmony With Others

Living by the Law of Love

Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love.² 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Think ye of love and good fellowship as the delights of heaven, think ye of hostility and hatred as the torments of hell.³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá



Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God.⁴

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Love is the source of all the bestowals of God. Until love takes possession of the heart, no other divine bounty can be revealed in it.⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Seeing the Best in Others

Never speak disparagingly of others, but praise without distinction.⁶

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Thus it is incumbent upon us, when we direct our gaze toward other people, to see where they excel, not where they fail.⁷

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Should any heap his blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange...should he be thorns, be ye his roses...⁸

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Following the Golden Rule

...choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.⁹

Bahá’u’lláh

Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee...¹⁰

Bahá’u’lláh

Beware lest ye prefer yourselves above your neighbors.¹¹

Bahá’u’lláh



Being Just

Say: Observe equity in your judgment; ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man's station.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

Be vigilant, that ye may not do injustice to any one, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed. Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path.¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

Forgiving

If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin.¹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

...forgive the sinful, and never despair his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be.¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

...let your adorning be forgiveness and mercy...¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

Being Generous

O ye rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess.¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh



...well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves.¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Admonishing and Guiding Others

Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and good-will. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments.²⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

...it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth...²¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Being Courteous

Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy and is attired with the vesture of uprightness. Whoso is endued with courtesy hath indeed attained a sublime station.²²

Bahá'u'lláh

Being Humble

Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.²³

Bahá'u'lláh



...take ye good heed not to be reckoned among those of the past who were invested with knowledge, yet by reason of their learning waxed proud before God...²⁴ The Báb

Not Saddening Others

Beware lest ye offend any heart, lest ye speak against anyone in his absence, lest ye estrange yourselves from the servants of God.²⁵

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Beware lest ye harm any soul, or make any heart to sorrow; lest ye wound any man with your words, be he known to you or a stranger, be he friend or foe. Pray ye for all; ask ye that all be blessed, all be forgiven...Beware, beware, lest ye offend the feelings of another, even though he be an evil-doer, and he wish you ill.²⁶

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Avoiding Animosity

If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name’s sake...²⁷

Bahá’u’lláh

Illumine and hallow your hearts; let them not be profaned by the thorns of hate or the thistles of malice.²⁸

Bahá’u’lláh

Blessed are such as hold fast to the cord of kindliness and tender mercy and are free from animosity and hatred.²⁹

Bahá’u’lláh



Not Finding Faults

If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others.³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

O COMPANION OF MY THRONE!

...Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed.³¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Honoring One's Parents

Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the hearts of your fathers and mothers. Follow ye the path of Truth which indeed is a straight path. Should anyone give you a choice between the opportunity to render a service to Me and a service to them, choose ye to serve them, and let such service be a path leading you to Me.³²

Bahá'u'lláh

18

Selections from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Talk on Bahá’u’lláh’s Mission And His Epistles to the Kings

The following is from one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks delivered in 1912 in many cities across the United States and Canada:

July 5, 1912

Talk delivered at 309 West 78th Street
New York City

You are very welcome, very welcome, all of you!
In the divine Holy Books there are unmistakable prophecies giving the glad tidings of a certain Day in which the Promised One of all the Books would appear, a radiant dispensation be



established, the banner of the Most Great Peace and conciliation be hoisted and the oneness of the world of humanity proclaimed...

Consider to what a remarkable extent the spirituality of people has been overcome by materialism ...Although some attend churches and temples of worship and devotion, it is in accordance with the traditions and imitations of their fathers... They have become accustomed to passing a certain length of time in temple worship and conforming to imitations and ceremonies. The proof of this is that the son of every Jewish father becomes a Jew and not a Christian; the son of every Muslim becomes a follower of Islam; the son of every Christian proves to be a Christian; the son of every Zoroastrian is a Zoroastrian, etc. Therefore, religious faith and belief is merely a remnant of blind imitations...

Every nation is holding to its traditional religious forms. The light of reality is obscured. Were these various nations to investigate reality, there is no doubt they would attain to it. As reality is one, all nations would then become as one nation. So long as they adhere to various imitations and are deprived of reality, strife and warfare will continue and rancor and sedition prevail. If they investigate reality, neither enmity nor rancor will remain, and they will attain to the utmost concord among themselves.

During the years when the darkness of heedlessness was most intense in the Orient...Bahá'u'lláh appeared. He...brought the dawn of the light of



reality. Through Him various nations became united because all desired reality...they found that all men are the servants of God, the posterity of Adam, children of one household and that the foundations of all the Prophets are one...

Therefore, between Moses and Jesus there is no variation or conflict. They are in perfect unity, but between the Jew and the Christian there is conflict...if the Christian and Jewish peoples investigate the reality underlying their Prophets' teachings, they will become kind in their attitude toward each other and associate in the utmost love, for reality is one and not dual or multiple. If this investigation of reality becomes universal, the divergent nations will ratify all the divine Prophets and confirm all the Holy Books. No strife or rancor will then remain, and the world will become united. Then will we associate in the reality of love...

Fifty years ago Bahá'u'lláh sent Epistles to all the kings and nations of the world, at a time when there was no mention of international peace. One of these Epistles was sent by Him to the president of the American democracy. In these communications He summoned all to international peace and the oneness of the human world. He summoned mankind to the fundamentals of the teachings of all the Prophets. Some of the European kings were arrogant. Among them was Napoleon III. Bahá'u'lláh wrote a second Epistle to him, which was published thirty years ago. The context is this: "O Napoleon! Thou hast become haughty indeed. Thou



hast become proud. Thou hast forgotten God. Thou dost imagine that this majesty is permanent for thee, that this dominion is abiding for thee. A letter have we sent unto thee for acceptance with the greatest love; but, instead, thou hast shown arrogance. Therefore, God shall uproot the edifice of thy sovereignty...Thou shalt find humiliation hastening after thee because thou didst not arise for that which was enjoined upon thee..."

This Epistle was revealed in the year 1869, and after one year the foundations of the Napoleonic sovereignty were completely uprooted.

Among these Epistles was a very lengthy one to the Shah of Persia. It was printed and spread throughout all the countries. This Epistle was revealed in the year 1870. In it Bahá'u'lláh admonished the Shah of Persia to be kind to all his subjects, summoning him to dispense justice, counseling him to make no distinction between the religions, charging him to deal equally with Jew, Christian, Muslim and Zoroastrian and to remove the oppression prevailing in his country.

At that time the Jews were greatly oppressed in Persia. Bahá'u'lláh especially recommended justice for them, saying that all people are the servants of God, and in the eye of the government they should be equally estimated. "If justice is not dealt out, if these oppressions are not removed and if thou dost not obey God, the foundations of thy government will be razed, and thou shalt become...as nothing. Thou shouldst gather all the



learned men, and then summon Me...I will then advance proofs and evidences as to My validity. I will manifest My proof and anything that you may ask. I am ready. But if no attention is paid to this book, thou, like unto the kings who became nonexistent, shalt likewise become nonexistent.” The Shah did not answer this Epistle...Then God destroyed the foundations of his sovereignty.

Among those to whom Bahá'u'lláh wrote was the Sultan of Turkey. In it He arraigned him, saying, “Verily, thou didst incarcerate and make Me a prisoner. Dost thou imagine that imprisonment is a loss to Me, that imprisonment is a humiliation for Me? This imprisonment is a glory for Me because it is in the pathway of God. I have not committed a crime. It is for the sake of God that I have received this ordeal. Therefore, I am very happy; I am exceedingly joyous. But...God will send thee a punishment; thou shalt receive retribution. Erelong thou shalt observe how ordeals shall descend upon thee like rain, and thou shalt become nonexistent.” And even so it was.

Likewise, He sent messages to the other kings and crowned heads of the earth, summoning all of them to love, equity, international peace and the oneness of humanity in order that mankind might become unified and agreed; that strife, warfare and sedition should pass away; that bitterness and enmity might cease and all arise to serve the one God.



In brief, two kings arose against Bahá'u'lláh: the Shah of Persia and the Sultan of Turkey. They imprisoned Him in the fortress of 'Akká in order to extinguish His light and exterminate His Cause. But Bahá'u'lláh while in prison wrote severe letters of arraignment to them. He declared that imprisonment was no obstacle to Him. He said, "This imprisonment will prove to be the means of the promotion of My Cause. This imprisonment shall be the incentive for the spreading of My teachings. No harm shall come to Me because I have sacrificed My life, I have sacrificed My blood, I have sacrificed My possessions, I have sacrificed all and for Me this imprisonment is no loss." And just as He declared, so it came to pass. In prison He hoisted His banner, and His Cause spread throughout the world. It has reached America. Now the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is extending to all nations of the earth. You go to Asia, and wherever you travel you will find Bahá'ís. You go to Africa, Europe; there you will find the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. In America it is just beginning to grow and spread.

These two kings could not do anything to withstand Bahá'u'lláh, but God through Him was capable of destroying both of them. I, too, was in prison. God removed the chains from my neck and placed them around the neck of 'Abdu'l-Hamíd [Sultan of the Ottoman Empire]. It was done suddenly—not a long time, in a moment as it were. The same hour that the Young Turks declared liberty, the Committee of



Union and Progress set me free. They lifted the chains from my neck and threw them around the neck of ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd. That which he did to me was inflicted upon him. Now the position is precisely reversed. His days are spent in prison just as I passed the days in prison at ‘Akká, with this difference: that I was happy in imprisonment. I was in the utmost elation because I was not a criminal. They had imprisoned me in the path of God. Every time I thought of this, that I was a prisoner in the pathway of God, the utmost elation overcame me. ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd is now suffering punishment for his deeds. Because of the sins he committed, he is now in prison. This is retribution for his acts. Every hour he is mortified anew and his ignominy revived. He is in the utmost sorrow and disappointment while I am in perfect happiness. I was happy that—praise be to God!—I was a prisoner in the Cause of God, that my life was not wasted, that it was spent in the divine service. Nobody who saw me imagined that I was in prison. They beheld me in the utmost joy, complete thankfulness and health, paying no attention to the prison.¹

Part V

Appendices

Appendix I

Bahá'í Scriptures Available in English

Bahá'u'lláh's Works

Seek ye out the book of Jehovah and read...

Isaiah 34:16

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

The most complete and comprehensive reference on Bahá'u'lláh's Works available in English. This book, which is a compilation from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, covers a wide spectrum of precepts ranging from the purpose of man's creation, his



duty and destiny, to the manifold mysteries of divine Wisdom.

Prayers and Meditations
By Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh has left a rich repository of prayers pertaining to every human hope and aspiration, dream or desire. Thus, in this dispensation, the seekers of serenity, guidance, and inspiration can select and recite prayers and meditations revealed and blessed by the Pen of the Redeemer of the age, the revealer of divine Purpose.

Bahá'u'lláh has also written many prayers expressing His own supplication and servitude before God. Such prayers offer an intimate knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's own self—His indomitable spirit, His unswerving love for the Creator and for humanity, His steadfastness in His claim, His determination before the onrush of adversities, His absolute trust in God, and His loving counsel to all those athirst for truth.

The Hidden Words
of Bahá'u'lláh

No other of Bahá'u'lláh's works so succinctly offers the reader as complete and as representative a sample of the ethical fruits of the new Revelation as *The Hidden Words*. It is a small book filled with gems, a treasure-house of celestial Wisdom, a divine guide to the unfoldment and ennoblement of the human spirit.



All the requirements for attaining purity and self-fulfillment are stated in the most exquisite and lofty language. Everything that the soul must seek or surrender, everything that a spiritual seeker must know or must do to direct the course of his or her spiritual destiny is concisely and clearly revealed and set forth by the pen of the Supreme Messenger—the Revealer of hidden wisdom and divine mysteries.

***The Seven Valleys
and the Four Valleys***

Perhaps the most mystical of Bahá'u'lláh's works available in English. It unfolds and enumerates the stages of seeker's journey towards God; revealing, in a language at once poetic and perplexing, his potential for attaining perfection and nobility, and his sublime and celestial destiny, if he but turns to the light instead of darkness, seeks the gems of divine wisdom instead of the perishable joys of flesh, and undertakes to tread the long but wondrous and enchanting path of purification and illumination.

***Epistle to the
Son of the Wolf***

Addressed to a cruel and cunning Muslim clergyman who, along with his father, inflicted death, distress, and torment on some of Bahá'u'lláh's most beloved and most distinguished disciples. Though addressed to a symbol of denial, it is a call to humanity as a whole. This weighty volume covers and clarifies many illuminating and inspiring arrays of precepts.



The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh

Contains some of Bahá'u'lláh's Epistles or Tablets addressed to the kings and rulers of the world, to its religious leaders, and to humanity in general. These Tablets comprise Bahá'u'lláh's most emphatic words on His claim and on His station as the supreme Savior of humankind, the King of Kings, the Glory of the Lord, the Desire of the Nations, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of the Vineyard, Christ returned in the Glory of the Father, the Inaugurator of the Cycle of Fulfillment, and the Promised One of all ages and religions.

The Book of Certitude*

This book responds to questions raised by a seeker of truth. It unseals "the sealed Wine of mysteries," and unveils the symbolism and the essence of all the scriptures of the past, indicates how the seeker of truth can rise above the prevailing perplexity and confusion, how he or she can move from doubt to certitude, and from unbelief to belief.

It offers proofs of divine Revelation, portrays in a moving language man's refusal to accept and acknowledge, in every age, the gift of divine Guidance, and conveys in a unique tone and style the dramatic story of the unfoldment of the perennial Faith of God, the unveiling of the eternal Truth.

*Also known as *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*.



Other Bahá'í Writings Available in English

By Bahá'u'lláh:

The Most Holy Book

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh

By the Báb:

Selections from the Writings of the Báb

By 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

Some Answered Questions

Foundations of World Unity

The Secret of Divine Civilization

Paris Talks

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Promulgation of Universal Peace

A Traveller's Narrative

Appendix II

Other Works By This Author

- *One God, Many Faiths; One Garden, Many Flowers*, 294 pages. This book offers an in-depth study of the Bahá'í teachings. It responds to many questions people ask about the Bahá'í Faith. If you are interested in continuing your investigation of the Bahá'í Faith and are willing to read at least half the book, ask the publisher for a free copy. In the United States, call 1-800-949-1863.
- *Heaven's Most Glorious Gift*, about 250 pages. This is the sequel to *One God, Many Faiths; One Garden, Many Flowers*.



- ***Does Your Fish Bowl Need Fresh Water?*** about 250 pages. This book presents proofs of the afterlife and scientific evidence for God's presence in the universe.
- ***I Shall Come Again***, about 500 pages. This book is the first of a six volume series about the proofs of the Bahá'í Revelation. It presents many prophecies about the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith. You will find it quite convincing. If you are investigating the Bahá'í Faith and are interested in proofs and prophecies and are willing to read at least half the book, ask the publisher for a free copy. In the United States and Canada call: 1-800-949-1863.
- ***Lord of Lords***, and ***King of Kings***, each about 400 pages. These are the second and the third in the six-volume series of proofs and prophecies. They present hundreds of specific prophecies about the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. You will be astonished to see the Bible's detailed prediction of the major events and the basic facts of the Bahá'í Faith. It is hard to imagine anyone would read these books and not be convinced of the station of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.
- ***Seek and Ye Shall Find***, about 200 pages. This book responds to questions Christians may ask about the Bahá'í Faith.
- ***The Glory of the Son***, about 120 pages. Before knowing the true evidence for another religion, we should know the true evidence for our own—the one on which we base our everlasting destiny.



If we do not know why we believe in our own faith, how can we know why we should believe in another faith? *The Glory of the Son* offers a brief summary of all the reasons Jesus gave to substantiate His claim. This is a book every Christian should read. It is also of value to those of Jewish faith who have a desire to know the evidence for the glory of the Son.

- ***The Glory of the Father***, about 180 pages. This is the sequel to *The Glory of the Son*. It applies the same standards to Bahá'u'lláh as *The Glory of the Son* does to Jesus Christ.
- ***Come Now, Let Us Reason Together***, about 150 pages. It responds to questions and objections raised by a pastor against the Bahá'í Faith.
- ***A Messenger of Joy***, 93 pages. This is probably the most positive book ever written on the after-life. It has an uplifting message for all those who fear death, who have lost a loved one, who are experiencing the symptoms of old age or suffering from a serious illness. It is written in the style of *The Prophet* by the renowned author Kahlil Gibran.
- ***Destiny is a Choice***, about 60 pages. This small book addresses these questions: Why do so many people fail to choose their destiny? Why do they leave this most fundamental of all choices in their lives to chance, to convenience, or to an unknown ancestor who lived and died long ago? Why do so many ignore, repress, postpone, forget, or avoid this most critical of all decisions?



This book shows that the failure to address this question has been extremely costly, not only to individuals who have failed to take the responsibility, but also to the collective destiny of humankind throughout all ages.

- ***The News Every Christian Should Know***, about 50 pages. This small book invites Christians to investigate the Advent of Bahá'u'lláh as their promised Savior and Redeemer.

Appendix III

Sources for Information and Literature

1. To receive information or a recorded message on the Bahá'í Faith, call: 1-800-228-6483.
2. Visit these Bahá'í Web Sites:
 - www.bahai.org
 - www.onecountry.org
 - www.bahai-library.org
3. Check the white and yellow pages for the Bahá'í Faith or a community listing.
4. To receive free literature on the Bahá'í Faith, call us at: 1-800-949-1863.
5. To receive a free catalog of Bahá'í books or to order Bahá'í books in the United States, call Bahá'í Distribution Service: 1-800-999-9019, or write to:

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United States

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Wilmette, IL 60091
USA

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34. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 143.
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Chapter 18

1. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 220-225.

On Winds of Destiny

We are like seeds planted in a garden. Our goal is to grow and manifest ourselves. Every day we reveal a little more of the world within and experience a little more of the destiny that awaits us.

No two destinies are alike. Consider just one aspect of the author's life—his numerous encounters with death:

1. One night when he was a baby, while asleep outdoors, he rolled and gently fell into a pond. Everyone was sound asleep except the family dog, Fidel, who got his parents up in time to save him.
2. Another night a kerosene heater caused a fire in his bedroom. A resident living in a separate part of the house awoke during the night and detected the fire. The author was saved from a room filled with smoke.



3. One night, while asleep, a terrible storm caused the roof of his bedroom to collapse. Heavy lumps of brick fell around his pillow, but none touched him.
4. Once he was attacked by the family dog, Tiger, afflicted with rabies. He received scratches but no treatment. His shirt may have saved him by serving as a shield.
5. In one incident he lost so much blood, it is incredible that he survived without receiving a blood transfusion.
6. During an operation, he was given too much ether, an anesthetic used years ago. The nurse later told him: "We were close to losing you."
7. Some European countries use separate gas stoves to heat their baths. While he was taking a shower in Milan, Italy, the flame in the stove died and the gas continued to pour into the air with no detectable odor. At a critical time, when he was becoming breathless, the host came in to check if everything was ok! Saved again!
8. Another time he had a terrible reaction to a drug. The reaction was so severe that after it was alleviated, he dropped into a sleep and dreamed that he was about to enter a new country without a passport!
9. While driving, he stopped for an oncoming train, but then changed his mind. The train was extremely close. He pressed on the accelerator to make it across. The car barely crossed the



tracks and then stalled. The time was so short, he would not have got out of his car in time.

10. Yet another time he was extremely sick. He had many dreams that pointed to an imminent death. A friend called from a far away city to inquire about his health. When asked why she had called, she said, “While praying I heard a voice saying, ‘Hugh’s life is in danger!’”

Now draw up a similar list of your own close brushes with death, or those of your family.

Were these all coincidences or was there an invisible protective hand shaping the course of events? Can there be “accidents” in a perfectly designed universe?

Acknowledgment

This work is adorned with anecdotes and selections from many sources, especially from books of quotations. I wish to express my gratitude and acknowledge my debt to the writers whose works have been cited. To name them all would take several pages. When I found a passage that excelled my talent, I used it. Why should readers struggle through the mediocre when perfection is at hand?

The Changing Face of the Cloud

The physical world is a cloud that conceals the splendor of the spiritual. Our goal is to break through the clouds and join with the greater lights beyond. If we fail to reach out for our divine destiny, we remain in darkness.



Our physical form has little if any significance. It is entrusted to us as a garment for just a little while and then taken back. The light within is everlasting, but the cloud—our physical form—keeps changing.

A few pictures from the author's album show the changing form of his clouds:

