

The Ocean of His Utterances

by Howard Colby Ives

1963/1977

**An advanced study course in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh
Using the books of Bahá'u'lláh, Ábdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi**

As compiled by and with the remarks of Howard Colby Ives

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The first emanation of the Almighty"

Its importance. Its study. Its effect. Its power.

"The Word of God is the source of all good, all power and all wisdom."

Ábdu'l-Bahá

Preface to the 1977 Edition

[2017 Re-formatted to PDF document, spell checked, recovered lost text except one portion, notes enclosed in [] by Ernie Jones]

In this edition of the Ocean of His Utterances the Readings have been incorporated into the study guide so that all of the material is in one continuous text. The quotations from the writings have been indented and labeled so that they stand apart from the commentary by Howard Colby Ives. The quotations from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh have been typed in script.

This edition is a retyping of the material typed by Muriel Ives Barrow Newhall in 1963 when a copy of the study guide was given to her by a friend. In this previous edition all readings were typed in one volume, while the remarks by Howard Colby Ives were in another volume. We have proof read all quotations against the original texts and have striven for accuracy. Should any questions be raised we urge you to go to the source material as the best remedy to doubt. The reading lists have been included at the beginning of each chapter for those who wish to refer to the published texts.

Our gratitude to June Levine and Nicolena Miller whose efforts contributed to this edition.

Reginald G. Barrow/ Laguna Beach, CA / 1977

Preface to the 1995 Edition

This edition of The Ocean of His Utterances has been typed into a word processor, to facilitate the reproduction and distribution of this material for classes and communities wishing to use this deepening course. It may also be noted that the machine readable editions of the writings, published as Refer Twin Manifestations, Refer Ábdu'l-Bahá, and Refer Shoghi Effendi have been used to obtain the quotations for the last four chapters, as well as some passages in the earlier chapters. One can identify those passages which were extracted, since the identification placed at the end of the passage by the Refer software has been retained. Due to the removal of duplicate quotations from the Refer databases, the citation at the end of an extracted passage may not be the same as the original citation. Passages in Bahá'í World Faith or Gleanings may have come originally from Promulgation of Universal Peace or The Kitab-I-Aqdas.

The typing of chapters one to eight by Nya Luc Leapold in 1992, and the proof reading by the youth class of the Douala community in 1995 contributed to this edition. Members of the youth class of Douala in 1995 were:

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THE OCEAN OF HIS UTTERANCES

An Advanced Study Course In the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh

"O peoples of the world! Cast away in my name that transcendeth all other names, the things ye possess, and immerse yourselves in this ocean in whose depths lay hidden the pearls of wisdom and of utterance, an ocean that surgeth in my name, the All-Merciful." Gl. pg. 33

INTRODUCTION:

The object of this course of reading and study, of the holy utterance of the Divine Revelation of this day of God, is a very practical and inspiring one. It is simply this, that we may thereby be induced to take the first few steps towards the unveiling of the sublime potentialities lying dormant in the true self.

"An effort is needed that we may annihilate the animal condition that the meaning of the human may become manifest." - Seven Valleys.

In this day, as never before, the true nature of man is revealed, his origin, purpose and destiny explained, and the techniques of the steps necessary for the tearing away of the mask of the lower, animal self disclosed.,

That man is composed of two natures, a lower and a higher, has always been recognized to some extent. The ancient Greek and Roman mysteries dealt with this enigma; our modern theologies are based upon it. Such well-known phrases as `conviction of sin', `conversion', `conquest of self', and many others, presuppose its acceptance. '

But all of these, though marking the deepest aspirations of the race over thousands of years, have been marred by human ignorance, superstitions and prejudice. Upon them have been built orders of priestcraft, cults of vague, unscientific mysticism and too often organizations of selfish powers and cruelty which, in spite of much inherent truth and values, have in the course of the centuries, relegated them to comparative oblivion.

Nevertheless there is a supreme and sublime truth underlying these aspirations and gropings. All of the prophets have taught it; many of the words of Jesus Christ implied it "Ye must be perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." "Your life is more than meat", "Let the dead bury their dead". "He that is born of the spirit is spirit." These are examples-many more could be cited. In fact His whole life is a trumpet call for man to slough off the false, transient, delusive self that he may live the true life of reality, freedom and eternity.

But because man, until this Day, has been in the stage of immaturity, the reality of the matter has been hidden under parables and symbols. That is to say it has been a mystery hidden from the eye and soul of man because he had not attained to the maturity necessary for its understanding and application. "God screens us from premature ideas" - though they stare us in the face, we do not see them. But with the Manifestation of God, in the perfect Mirror of Bahá'u'lláh, with the example of the Perfect Man,

Ábdu'l-Bahá, and with the establishment of the Guardianship and the House of Justice which pre-supposes the possibility of relatively perfect men to organize and administer the kingdom of God on earth, all that has heretofore been 'whispered in closets' is now 'shouted on the housetops', and there is 'nothing hidden which is now concealed from the seeking, sincere, severed and self-renouncing soul.

This course of reading and study is designed for those who are intellectually convinced of the truth involved in the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, who have accepted him as the Manifestation of God the Father foretold by Christ; who wish to probe further into the hidden mysteries of God as revealed in utterances, books, tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá, and are willing to pay the price of sacrifice of the lower self in order that the true self, the divine self, 'The Self of God, 'may manifest.

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is a divine mine whence endless wealth of spiritual realm is to be dug. Endless are these tremendous promises to those who fulfill conditions necessary for their attainment.

IS NOT THE GOAL WORTHY THE STRIVING?

Can there be anything more important than this wisdom, this solution of all problems of life, so overwhelming in this crisis of human destiny? When the portals of true knowledge are opened to us should anything deter us from entering? Is any price too great to pay for this understanding which makes the path of life clear before us and enables us 'to pass from sorrow to happiness, to return from sadness to joy, and changes depression and dejection to gladness and cheerfulness?'

May the assistance of the invisible attend every sincere heart. The goal set before us is nothing less than the eternal life of the spirit; the life of ideal happiness and peace; the life of freedom and love; citizenship and service in God's Kingdom on earth and preparation for boundless, ancient and eternal life.

BOOK LIST FOR READINGS

Title Abbreviation

Books by Bahá'u'lláh

Gleanings from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh GI

Hidden Words HW

Kitab-I-Iqan (Book of Certitude) IQAN

Prayers and Meditations P&M

Compilations

Bahá'í Scriptures BS

Bahá'í World Faith BWF

The Divine Art of Living DAL

Books by Ábdu'l-Bahá

Divine Philosophy DP

Foundations of world unity FWU

Promulgation of Universal Peace PUP

Some Answered Questions SAQ

Tablets of Ábdu'l-Bahá TAB

Wisdom of Ábdu'l-Bahá WOA

Books by Shoghi Effendi

Bahá'í Administration BA

The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh DISPEN

World Order of Bahá'u'lláh WOB

Notes:

BS, Bahá'í Scriptures, edited by Horace Holley and published by the Bahá'í Publishing Committee 1923, was replaced by publishing the Bahá'í World Faith in 1943.

Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those in the original citing have been retained from the 1922 edition, reprinted as one volume in 1943.

Citations for extracted quotations may refer to a source other than the source originally cited. This is due to the fact that duplicates have been removed from the computer database, and passages in Gleanings or Bahá'í World Faith have come from other sources.

Permission to quote from the above copyrighted books has been granted by the Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONDUCTING THE DEEPENING

1. To avoid wandering off the path of the study course, comments will be welcomed on the readings, but will be avoided when directed to the comments.
2. A short pause for reflection will be observed after each reading from scriptures or prayers.
3. Each participant will read in turn unless for any reason (s)he wishes not to do so. The study outline commentary will be read by one individual to assist in identifying them, and to avoid confusion between comments and quotations.
4. We suggest that each participant review the material and concepts covered between classes, and that a short period at the start of each session be devoted to sharing any insights and observations made between sessions.
5. The reading lists have been compiled into a separate document, so that each student may have one, should there not be resources to print the entire deepening for each student.

The Mysteries of God



Lesson I

"Ponder this in thine heart, that the sweet gales of divine knowledge blowing from the meads of mercy, may waft upon thee the fragrance of the Beloved's utterances, and cause thy soul to attain the Ridvan of understanding." IQAN pg. 149

With the above quotation in mind, study the following;

1 PUP pg. 221-223 Is it not astonishing...in the cause of God (226-228) . 2 PUP pg. 183 He has created us. . .encircle you all. (188-189)

3 PUP pg. 192 The mysteries of the holy books...unsealed these mysteries. (197)

4 PUP pg. 460-461 Furthermore man sees ...there can be no doubt. (464-465)

5 WAB pg. 162-3 Bahá'u'lláh says there is a sign...in touch with God.

6 PUP pg. 272-4 Even so is the springtime ...favor of the mercy of God. (278-280)

7 PUP pg. 86-87 Therefore you must... (89-91) ... within the germinating seed.

8 HW P#15, P#16, P#18, P#69.

9 PUP pg. 27-28 Human the highest...scientific enlightenment. (29-31)

10 IQAN pg. 57-8 God conferred upon that essence...divine power.

11 IQAN pg. 175, We have variously...quench their thirst.

Prayer P&M pg. 114-115 Last three paragraphs.

Please Note: Unless these readings are studied carefully, satisfactory results will be greatly minimized.

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those cited originally from the earlier (1922) edition have been retained.

Is it not astonishing that although man has been created for the knowledge and love of God, for the virtues of the human world, for spirituality, heavenly illumination and eternal life, nevertheless, he continues ignorant and negligent of all this? Consider how he seeks knowledge of everything except knowledge of God. For instance, his utmost desire is to penetrate the mysteries of the lowest strata of the earth. Day by day he strives to know what can be found ten meters below the surface, what he can discover within the stone, what he can learn by archaeological research in the dust. He puts forth arduous labors to fathom terrestrial mysteries but is not at all concerned about knowing the mysteries of the Kingdom, traversing the illimitable fields of the eternal world, becoming informed of the divine realities, discovering the secrets of God, attaining the knowledge of God, witnessing the splendours of

the Sun of Truth and realizing the glories of everlasting life. He is unmindful and thoughtless of these. How much he is attracted to the mysteries of matter, and how completely unaware he is of the mysteries of Divinity! Nay, he is utterly negligent and oblivious of the secrets of Divinity. How great his ignorance! How conducive to his degradation! It is as if a kind and loving father had provided a library of wonderful books for his son in order that he might be informed of the mysteries of creation, at the same time surrounding him with every means of comfort and enjoyment, but the son amuses himself with pebbles and playthings, neglectful of all his father's gifts and provision. How ignorant and heedless is man! The Father has willed for him eternal glory, and he is content with blindness and deprivation. The Father has built for him a royal palace, but he is playing with the dust; prepared for him garments of silk, but he prefers to remain unclothed; provided for him delicious foods and fruits, while he seeks sustenance in the grasses of the field.

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

You must come into the knowledge of the divine Manifestations and Their teachings through proofs and evidences. You must unseal the mysteries of the supreme Kingdom and become capable of discovering the inner realities of things. Then shall you be the manifestations of the mercy of God and true believers, firm and steadfast in the Cause of God. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 226-228)

Science is the investigation of the mysteries of the phenomenal world. Religion, the life of the spirit of man, is the investigation of the mysteries of the world of Reality, that casual world lying back of phenomena of which the outer world is merely a 'sign' - a symbol.

The scientist accepts this hypothesis unquestioningly although he rarely approaches it from the angle which Bahá'u'lláh urges, which is the reason why the scientist tends to a materialistic conception of the universe. Yet fundamentally it is the same attitude with both the materialist and the spiritist, for both accept the outer, the visible, the phenomenal as indicative, significant, of the inner, the invisible, the nominal. Both accept the hidden mystery; the scientist goes after it. He knows, as John Fiske said many years ago, that behind all phenomena lies a 'mystery which we can neither solve nor elude.' But he does not, for that reason, dismantle his laboratories and cease research. But the tendency of the typical religionist is to do that very thing.

The physician recognizes a 'symptom' and seeks the cause. The astronomer seeking a cause for the perturbations of the planet Uranus because he knows there must be a cause, discovers, uncovers, the planet Neptune. The Physicist probes again and finds the atom; still hungry for knowledge he probes

again and finds the electron, and yet again and finds something defying analysis in any physical terms. Someone defined it as 'nothing going very fast.' Eddington refers to the materialistic physicist as a 'cipher expert'. He adds, 'We may decipher our cryptogram but the result is a message in an unknown language!

How different is the attitude of the typical religionist. He, too often, concludes that in believing something he has somehow fulfilled all the requirements which God lays upon his soul. It is as if the physician contented himself with believing in the circulation of the blood never probed the corollaries of that belief which led to discoveries of bacteria, infection, transfusion of blood, and countless others.

Bahá'u'lláh has brought us back to fundamentals. He tells us that "for everything there is a sign" which points God-ward; it is possible to understand those 'signs' and find within every atom an illuminating sun that we may "comprehend the essence of these divine mysteries and grasp the purpose of God."

-Iqan-pg. 57

It is assured that these mysteries may be probed. We are definitely commanded to investigate them. Note the contrast between divine susceptibility and human susceptibility.

PUP pg. 222

'Divine susceptibility emanates from the breaths of the Holy Spirit and the effulgence of merciful attributes.' Human susceptibilities are like the ocean tossed by every wind. Divine susceptibility is like its depths, unaffected by surface conditions and is where the divers find pearls. You will probably recognize the difference in what people believe to be indicative of the religious and spiritual life. Some are apt to base their belief and consequent actions upon superficial things, upon indications rather than causes; upon symptoms rather than disease; upon 'signs' rather than upon the divine mystery lying behind the sign. They do not take seriously Bahá'u'lláh's injunction to 'see with the eye of God and hear with His ear'. They do not read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the revealed word of God for this Day, nor, in fact, of any revelation. Yet this is unquestionably the Day for the 'independent investigation of truth'. Nothing is to be accepted because someone else told us so. And the rewards of happiness, wisdom, usefulness and eternity of spirit that to neglect it is to deprive ourselves of that wisdom, tranquility and detachment which alone can make this transient life understood and bearable.

READING #2 PUP pg. 183

... He has created us in this radiant century, a century longed for and expected by all the sanctified souls in past periods. It is a blessed century; it is a blessed day. The philosophers of history have agreed that this century is equal to one hundred past centuries. This is true from every standpoint. This is the century of science, inventions, discoveries and universal laws. This is the century of the revelation of the mysteries of God. This is the century of the effulgence of the rays of the Sun of Truth. Therefore, you must render thanks and glorification to God that you were born in this age. Furthermore, you have listened to the call of Bahá'u'lláh. Your nostrils are perfumed with the breezes of the paradise of Abha. You have caught glimpses of the light from the horizon of the Orient. You were asleep; you are awakened. Your ears are attentive; your hearts are informed. You have acquired the love of God. You have attained to the knowledge of God. This is the most great bestowal of God. This is

the breath of the Holy Spirit, and this consists of faith and assurance. This eternal life is the second birth; this is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God has destined this station for you all. He has prepared this for you. You must appreciate the value of this bounty and engage your time in mentioning and thanking the True One. You must live in the utmost happiness. If any trouble or vicissitude comes into your lives, if your heart is depressed on account of health, livelihood or vocation, let not these things affect you. They should not cause unhappiness, for Bahá'u'lláh has brought you divine happiness. He has prepared heavenly food for you; He has destined eternal bounty for you; He has bestowed everlasting glory upon you. Therefore, these glad tidings should cause you to soar in the atmosphere of joy forever and ever. Render continual thanks unto God so that the confirmations of God may encircle you all. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 188-189)

READING #3 PUP pg 192

The mysteries of the holy books have become explained in the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh. Before He appeared these mysteries were not understood. Bahá'u'lláh opened and unsealed these mysteries.

The Bahá'í teachings make all the holy books intelligible to us. We now have scientific meanings instead of the old religious terms.

READING #4 PUP pg. 460

Furthermore man sees in the world of dreams. He travels in the east he travels in the west, although his body is stationary, his body is here. It is that reality in him which makes the journey while the body sleeps. There is no doubt that a reality exists other than the outward physical reality. Again for instance a person is dead, is buried in the ground. Afterward you see him in the world of dreams and speak with him although his body is interred in the earth. Who is the person you see in your dreams, talk to and who also speaks with you? This again proves that there is another reality different from the physical one which dies and is buried. Thus it is certain that in man there is a 'reality' which is not the physical body. Sometime the body becomes weak but that other reality is in its own normal state. The body goes to sleep, becomes as one dead but that reality is moving about, comprehending things, expressing them and is even conscious of itself.

This other and inner reality is called the heavenly body, the ethereal form which corresponds to this body. This is the conscious reality which discovers the inner meaning of things, for the outer body of man does not discover anything. The inner, ethereal reality grasps the mysteries of existence, discovers scientific truths and indicates their technical application. It discovers electricity, produces the telegraph, the telephone and opens the door to the world of arts. If the outer material body did this, the animal would likewise be able to make scientific and wonderful discoveries for the animal shares with man all the physical powers and limitations. What then is that power which penetrates the realities of existence and which is not to be found in the animal? It is the inner reality which comprehends things throws light upon the mysteries of life and being, discovers the heavenly kingdom, unseals the mysteries of God and differentiates man from the brute. Of this there can be no doubt.

The study of the mysteries of God and His creation are as necessary, and as productive of practical results, as the scientist's study of the mysteries underlying natural phenomenon. Mystery has no relation to mysticism, in the sense which that word is generally used and understood. Mysticism a word which should not enter Bahá'í terminology, for the experience of God in the soul experienced by the mystic should be common place with the Bahá'ís, and only to be experienced by plumbing the depths of the teachings.

READING #5 WAB pg.. 162-163 (Paris Talks, pg. 174-175)

Bahá'u'lláh says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is possible for a man to do two things at one time - he can not both speak and 'meditate'.

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

You can not apply the name 'man' to any being void of this faculty of meditation; without it he would be a mere animal, lower than the beast.

The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine Inspiration, through it receives heavenly food.

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself, in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things in themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see.

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

'Meditate profoundly, that the secret of things unseen may be revealed unto you.' IQAN pg. 8

Meditate on the word with the mind a blank. This is not reasoning nor speculating. We must have the word to concentrate on. Emanation from the Holy Utterance, the word, is creative. How? The creative word creates capacity. The Holy Spirit, the Fire of the Burning Bush, burns up all that is not of itself. Capacity attracts the Supreme concourse.

READING #6 PUP pg.. 272-274

Even so is the spiritual springtime when it comes. When the holy, divine Manifestations or Prophets appear in the world, a cycle of radiance, an age of mercy dawns. Everything is renewed. Minds, hearts and all human forces are reformed, perfections are quickened, sciences, discoveries and investigations are stimulated afresh, and everything appertaining to the virtues of the human world is revitalized.

Consider this present century of radiance, and compare it with the past centuries. What a vast difference exists between them! How minds have developed! How perceptions have deepened! How discoveries have increased! What great projects have been accomplished! How many realities have become manifest! How many mysteries of creation have been probed and penetrated! What is the cause of this? It is through the efficacy of the spiritual springtime in which we are living. Day by day the world attains a new bounty. In this radiant century neither the old customs nor the old sciences, crafts, laws and regulations have remained. The old political principles are undergoing change, and a new body politic is in process of formation. Nevertheless, some whose thoughts are congealed and whose souls are bereft of the light of the Sun of Reality seek to arrest this development in the world of the minds of men. Is this possible?

In the unmistakable and universal reformation we are witnessing, when outer conditions of humanity are receiving such impetus, when human life is assuming a new aspect, when sciences are stimulated afresh, inventions and discoveries increasing, civic laws undergoing change and moralities evidencing uplift and betterment, is it possible that spiritual impulses and influences should not be renewed and reformed? Naturally, new spiritual thoughts and inclinations must also become manifest. If spirituality be not renewed, what fruits come from mere physical reformation? For instance, the body of man may improve, the quality of bone and sinew may advance, the hand may develop, other limbs and members may increase in excellence, but if the mind fails to develop, of what use is the rest? The important factor in human improvement is the mind. In the world of the mind there must needs be development and improvement. There must be reformation in the kingdom of the human spirit; otherwise, no result will be attained from betterment of the mere physical structure.

In this new year new fruits must be forthcoming, for that is the provision and intention of spiritual reformation. The renewal of the leaf is fruitless. From the reformation of bark or branch no fruit will come forth. The renewal of verdure produces nothing. If there be no renewal of fruit from the tree, of what avail is the reformation of bark, blossom, branch and trunk? For a fruitless tree is of no special value. Similarly, of what avail is the reformation of physical conditions unless they are concomitant with spiritual reformations? For the essential reality is the spirit, the foundation is the spirit, the life of man is due to the spirit; the happiness, the animus, the radiance, the glory of man - all are due to the spirit; and if in the spirit no reformation takes place, there will be no result to human existence.

Therefore, we must strive with life and heart that the material and physical world may be reformed, human perception become keener, the merciful effulgence manifest and the radiance of reality shine. Then the star of love shall appear and the world of humanity become illumined. The purpose is that the world of existence is dependent for its progress upon reformation; otherwise, it will be as dead. Consider: If a new springtime failed to appear, what would be the effect upon this globe, the earth? Undoubtedly it would become desolate and life extinct. The earth has need of an annual coming of spring. It is necessary that a new bounty should be forthcoming. If it comes not, life would be effaced. In the same way the world of spirit needs new life, the world of mind necessitates new animus and development, the world of souls a new bounty, the world of morality a reformation, the world of divine effulgence ever new bestowals. Were it not for this replenishment, the life of the world would become effaced and extinguished. If this room is not ventilated and the air freshened, respiration will cease after a length of time. If no rain falls, all life organisms will perish. If new light does not come, the darkness of death will envelop the earth. If a new springtime does not arrive, life upon this globe will

be obliterated.

Therefore, thoughts must be lofty and ideals uplifted in order that the world of humanity may become assisted in new conditions of reform. When this reformation affects every degree, then will come the very Day of the Lord of which all the prophets have spoken. That is the Day wherein the whole world will be regenerated. Consider: Are the laws of past ages applicable to present human conditions? Evidently they are not. For example, the laws of former centuries sanctioned despotic forms of government. Are the laws of despotic control fitted for present-day conditions? How could they be applied to solve the questions surrounding modern nations? Similarly, we ask: Would the status of ancient thought, the crudeness of arts and crafts, the insufficiency of scientific attainment serve us today? Would the agricultural methods of the ancients suffice in the twentieth century? Transportation in the former ages was restricted to conveyance by animals. How would it provide for human needs today? If modes of transportation had not been reformed, the teeming millions now upon the earth would die of starvation. Without the railway and the fast-going steamship, the world of the present day would be as dead. How could great cities such as New York and London subsist if dependent upon ancient means of conveyance? It is also true of other things which have been reformed in proportion to the needs of the present time. Had they not been reformed, man could not find subsistence.

If these material tendencies are in such need of reformation, how much greater the need in the world of the human spirit, the world of human thought, perception, virtues and bounties! Is it possible that that need has remained stationary while the world has been advancing in every other condition and direction? It is impossible.

Therefore, we must invoke and supplicate God and strive with the utmost effort in order that the world of human existence in all its degrees may receive a mighty impulse, complete human happiness be attained and the resuscitation of all spirits and emanations be realized through the boundless favor of the mercy of God. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 278-280)

Everything is renewed, minds as well.

READING #7 PUP pg. 86-87

Therefore, you must thank God that He has bestowed upon you the blessing of life and existence in the human kingdom. Strive diligently to acquire virtues befitting your degree and station. Be as lights of the world which cannot be hid and which have no setting in horizons of darkness. Ascend to the zenith of an existence which is never beclouded by the fears and forebodings of nonexistence. When man is not endowed with inner perception, he is not informed of these important mysteries. The retina of outer vision, though sensitive and delicate, may, nevertheless, be a hindrance to the inner eye which alone can perceive. The bestowals of God which are manifest in all phenomenal life are sometimes hidden by intervening veils of mental and mortal vision which render man spiritually blind and incapable, but when those scales are removed and the veils rent asunder, then the great signs of God will become visible, and he will witness the eternal light filling the world. The bestowals of God are all and always manifest. The promises of heaven are ever present. The favors of God are all-surrounding, but should the conscious eye of the soul of man remain veiled and darkened, he will be led to deny these universal signs and remain deprived of these manifestations of divine bounty. Therefore, we

must endeavor with heart and soul in order that the veil covering the eye of inner vision may be removed, that we may behold the manifestations of the signs of God, discern His mysterious graces and realize that material blessings as compared with spiritual bounties are as nothing. The spiritual blessings of God are greatest. When we were in the mineral kingdom, although we were endowed with certain gifts and powers, they were not to be compared with the blessings of the human kingdom. In the matrix of the mother we were the recipients of endowments and blessings of God, yet these were as nothing compared to the powers and graces bestowed upon us after birth into this human world. Likewise, if we are born from the matrix of this physical and phenomenal environment into the freedom and loftiness of the spiritual life and vision, we shall consider this mortal existence and its blessings as worthless by comparison.

In the spiritual world the divine bestowals are infinite, for in that realm there is neither separation nor disintegration, which characterize the world of material existence. Spiritual existence is absolute immortality, completeness and unchangeable being. Therefore, we must thank God that He has created for us both material blessings and spiritual bestowals. He has given us material gifts and spiritual graces, outer sight to view the lights of the sun and inner vision by which we may perceive the glory of God. He has designed the outer ear to enjoy the melodies of sound and the inner hearing wherewith we may hear the voice of our Creator. We must strive with energies of heart, soul and mind to develop and manifest the perfections and virtues latent within the realities of the phenomenal world, for the human reality may be compared to a seed. If we sow the seed, a mighty tree appears from it. The virtues of the seed are revealed in the tree; it puts forth branches, leaves, blossoms, and produces fruits. All these virtues were hidden and potential in the seed. Through the blessing and bounty of cultivation these virtues became apparent. Similarly, the merciful God, our Creator, has deposited within human realities certain latent and potential virtues. Through education and culture these virtues deposited by the loving God will become apparent in the human reality, even as the unfoldment of the tree from within the germinating seed. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 89-91)

Physical sight may be a veil to insight.

READING #8 HW P15, P16, P18, P69

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The time cometh, when the nightingale of holiness will no longer unfold the inner mysteries and ye will all be bereft of the celestial melody and of the voice from on high.

O ESSENCE OF NEGLIGENCE!

Myriads of mystic tongues find utterance in one speech, and myriads of hidden mysteries are revealed in a single melody; yet, alas, there is no ear to hear, nor heart to understand. (Persian Hidden Words, pages 15-16)

O YE DWELLERS IN THE HIGHEST PARADISE!

Proclaim unto the children of assurance that within the realms of holiness, nigh unto the celestial paradise, a new garden hath appeared, round which circle the denizens of the realm on high and the immortal dwellers of the exalted paradise. Strive, then, that ye may attain that station, that ye may unravel the mysteries of love from its wind-flowers and learn the secret of divine and consummate wisdom from its eternal fruits. Solaced are the eyes of them that enter and abide therein! (Persian Hidden Words, page 18)

O CHILDREN OF ADAM!

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. This is the day-star of wisdom and of divine mystery that hath shone above the horizon of the divine will. Blessed are they that turn thereunto. (Persian Hidden Words, page 69)

Life with freewill, on this plane, limits the time for us.

READING #9 PUP pg. 27-28

...human - the highest specialized organism of visible creation, embodying the qualities of the mineral, vegetable and animal plus an ideal endowment absolutely absent in the lower kingdoms - the power of intellectual investigation into the mysteries of outer phenomena. The outcome of this intellectual endowment is science, which is especially characteristic of man. This scientific power investigates and apprehends created objects and the laws surrounding them. It is the discoverer of the hidden and mysterious secrets of the material universe and is peculiar to man alone. The most noble and praiseworthy accomplishment of man, therefore, is scientific knowledge and attainment.

Science may be likened to a mirror wherein the images of the mysteries of outer phenomena are reflected. It brings forth and exhibits to us in the arena of knowledge all the product of the past. It links together past and present. The philosophical conclusions of bygone centuries, the teachings of the Prophets and wisdom of former sages are crystallized and reproduced in the scientific advancement of today. Science is the discoverer of the past. From its premises of past and present we deduce conclusions as to the future. Science is the governor of nature and its mysteries, the one agency by which man explores the institutions of material creation. All created things are captives of nature and subject to its laws. They cannot transgress the control of these laws in one detail or particular. The infinite starry worlds and heavenly bodies are nature's obedient subjects. The earth and its myriad organisms, all minerals, plants and animals are thralls of its dominion. But man through the exercise of his scientific, intellectual power can rise out of this condition, can modify, change and control nature according to his own wishes and uses. Science, so to speak, is the breaker of the laws of nature.

Consider, for example, that man according to natural law should dwell upon the surface of the earth.

By overcoming this law and restriction, however, he sails in ships over the ocean, mounts to the zenith in airplanes and sinks to the depths of the sea in submarines. This is against the fiat of nature and a violation of her sovereignty and dominion. Nature's laws and methods, the hidden secrets and mysteries of the universe, human inventions and discoveries, all our scientific acquisitions should naturally remain concealed and unknown, but man through his intellectual acumen searches them out of the plane of the invisible, draws them into the plane of the visible, exposes and explains them. For instance, one of the mysteries of nature is electricity. According to nature this force, this energy, should remain latent and hidden, but man scientifically breaks through the very laws of nature, arrests it and even imprisons it for his use.

In brief, man through the possession of this ideal endowment of scientific investigation is the most noble product of creation, the governor of nature. He takes the sword from nature's hand and uses it upon nature's head. According to natural law night is a period of darkness and obscurity, but man by utilizing the power of electricity, by wielding this electric sword overcomes the darkness and dispels the gloom. Man is superior to nature and makes nature do his bidding. Man is a sensitive being; nature is without sensation. Man has memory and reason; nature lacks them. Man is nobler than nature. There are powers within him of which nature is devoid. It may be claimed that these powers are from nature itself and that man is a part of nature. In answer to this statement we will say that if nature is the whole and man is a part of that whole, how could it be possible for a part to possess qualities and virtues which are absent in the whole? Undoubtedly the part must be endowed with the same qualities and properties as the whole. For example, the hair is a part of the human anatomy. It cannot contain elements which are not found in other parts of the body, for in all cases the component elements of the body are the same. Therefore, it is manifest and evident that man, although in body a part of nature, nevertheless in spirit possesses a power transcending nature; for if he were simply a part of nature and limited to material laws, he could possess only the things which nature embodies. God has conferred upon and added to man a distinctive power - the faculty of intellectual investigation into the secrets of creation, the acquisition of higher knowledge - the greatest virtue of which is scientific enlightenment. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 29-31)

Man's relation to nature and its laws.

READING #10 IQAN pg. 57 - 58

God conferred upon that essence of the spirit, who was known amongst the people as fatherless, the glory of Prophethood, and made Him His testimony unto all that are in heaven and earth.

Behold how contrary are the ways of the Manifestations of God, as ordained by the King of creation, to the ways and desires of men. As thou comest to comprehend the essence of these divine mysteries, thou wilt grasp the purpose of God, the divine Charmer, the Best-Beloved. Thou wilt regard the words and deeds of that almighty Sovereign as one and the same; in such wise that whatsoever thou dost behold in His deeds, the same wilt thou find in his sayings, and whatsoever thou dost read in His sayings, that wilt thou recognize in His deeds. Thus it is that outwardly such deeds and words are the fire of vengeance unto the wicked, and inwardly the waters of mercy unto the righteous. Were the eye of the heart to open, it would surly perceive that the words revealed from the heaven of the will of god

are at one with, and the same as, the deeds that have emanated from the Kingdom of divine power.

Bahá'u'lláh should never be identified with the Essence of Divinity Itself. See Disp. pg 22.

As to words and deeds, the Manifestation and God are one and the same.

Reading #11 IQAN pg. 175

We have variously and repeatedly set forth the meaning of every theme, that perchance every soul, whether high or low, may obtain, according to his measure and capacity, his share and portion thereof. Should he be unable to comprehend a certain argument, he may, thus, by referring unto another, attain his purpose. "That all sorts of men may know where to quench their thirst."

Everyone, regardless of position, education, class, etc., may understand. 'The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning ...' IQAN pg 211.

SUMMARY:

There is a 'heavenly science' as well as an earthly science. There is a science of the love of God as well as science of the love of earthly things. This science is possible of understanding and of applicability in life. The study of this science is what is meant by Ábdu'l-Bahá in His injunction to 'Investigate the mysteries.'

Prayer P&M pg 114-115

Thou knowest, O my Lord, that I am but one of Thy servants. I have tasted of the sweetness of Thy speech, and acknowledged Thy unity and Thy singleness, and set my face towards the Source of Thy most excellent names and the Day-Spring of Thy transcendent attributes, and wished to be enabled by Thee to immerse myself beneath the ocean of Thy oneness and to be submerged by the mighty waters of Thy unity.

Assist me, by Thy strengthening grace, O my Lord, to do what Thou didst will, and withhold not from me the things Thou dost possess. So enravish me with the wonders of Thine utterances that the noise and distraction of this world may be powerless to deter me from turning unto Thee, and may fail to shake my constancy in Thy Cause, or to distract my gaze from the horizon of Thy grace. Aid me, then, O my God, to do what pleaseth Thee, and to carry out Thy will. Write down for me, moreover, the good of this world and of the world which is to come, and ordain for me a seat of truth in Thy presence. Potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt, and to rule as Thou pleasest. No God is there but Thee, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious, the Most Great.

All-praise to Thee, O Lord of the worlds and the Object of the adoration of the entire creation! (Prayers and Meditations, pages 114-115)

The Heaven of Significances



Lesson II

Prayer To be selected by the students.

1 PUP pg. 455-456 All the text...mysteries of the kingdom. (459-460) 2 HW A#44

3 Gl pg. 62-63 So perfect and comprehensive...Hopelessness and failure.

4 GL pg. 317-318 All that the sages...Ancient of Days.

5 HW A#61

6 PUP pg. 325 (331) It is evident...darkness itself.

7 PUP pg. 149-150 In the beginning was the word...thousands more. (154-155)

8 Gl pg. 195 That which is preeminent...Manifestation in this day.

9 PUP pg. 223 (228) The door of divine knowledge...Holy Spirit.

10 PUP pg. 12 (14-15) Throughout the universe..fully revealed through them.

11 HW A#58

12 HW A#59

13 IQAN pg. 100-101 Nay, whatever is in the heavens...I am His Mystery.

14 IQAN pg. 140 We have demonstrated...fullest adornment.

15 IQAN pg. 175-176 This Bird of Heaven..mysteries of His spirit.

16 HW A#67

17 HW A#81

18 HW A#50 & #51

19 HW A#52

20 HW A#53

21 HW P#82

22 HW A#62

Prayer P&M pg. 114-115 Last three paragraphs.

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those originally cited in the

1922 edition have been retained.

Prayer

READING #1 PUP pg. 455-456

All the texts and teachings of the holy testaments have intrinsic spiritual meanings. They are not to be taken literally. I therefore, pray on your behalf that you may be given the power of understanding these inner real meanings of the holy scriptures and may become informed of the mysteries deposited in the words of the Bible so that you may attain eternal life and that your hearts may be attracted to the kingdom of God. May your souls be illumined by the light of the words of God and may you become repositories of the mysteries of God, for no comfort is greater and no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings. If a man understands the real meaning of poet's verses such as those of Shakespeare, he is pleased and rejoiced. How much greater his joy and pleasure when he perceives the reality of the holy scriptures and becomes informed of the mysteries of the kingdom!

'Words', said Tagore, 'are the ineffectual gestures of the dumb.' It is impossible for man to convey his fullest and deepest thought in words, for he is limited, not only by the different connotations which others attach to the same words, but also by his own inability to phrase in more or less inflexible syllables the finer grades of emotion and description. We do the best we can under the inevitable limitations imposed by language. This is the reason why language, as it develops with man's increasing desire for self-expression, accumulates a wealth of metaphor and symbolism. He is forced to extravagant expressions if he wishes to convey even a hint of the majesty of his thought. He compares a butterfly wing to a rainbow; he speaks of the hills clapping their hands; he hears the brook laugh; he speaks of the heavenly smile. These words are not intended to be interpreted literally. We do not mean exactly what we say but far more and yet far less. Far more if we have capacity and imagination, far less if we interpret the words literally. This ability to suggest grandeur, beauty, grace, simplicity and many other inexpressible things, is the very essence of poetry, and without such a possibility any relation would be absolutely inexpressible. For religion, that is the religious experience, is the entrance of the soul and spirit of man into a realm above the world of material experience. And if it is difficult to in words the higher emotions, ideals, philosophies, even on the material plane, how utterly impossible it becomes to express thoughts which relate to a world far surpassing this one. We are reduced to a terminology almost entirely composed of symbols, metaphors, hyperbole, images - by which we seek to hint of a beauty, a majesty, a satisfaction beyond anything this world can offer. We see how impossible this would be to anyone living and thinking entirely on the material plane. To such a soul words mean exactly what they say. Yes, but what do they say? Words in themselves do not reveal the speaker's full intent. They can not.

If it is essential that the chemist, the physicist, the astronomer devise a terminology and a set of symbols suitable to his scientific need, a terminology is needed which is a spiritual terminology to convey thoughts which 'may change this dark world into a rose garden through the spiritual bounties.'

The tragic problem facing the Manifestation of God, coming to a world immersed in materiality, is that He is forced to use the language of the people, limited by their capacity to understand, limited by their consistent mini- interpretation of His meaning, limited by their fixed connotation of such words as 'life', 'death', 'sin', 'heaven'; He is forced to use those terms but somehow He must find a way to convey meaning and inspiration which applies in a super material, super- worldly sense. In a world of darkness and ignorance He speaks of splendor and wisdom. He would teach the grandeur and beauty of the world of the spirit.

If it is difficult, impossible for us to convey a comparatively simple thought how shall even the Manifestation of God convey the pure word of God to us? Even a slight conception of the problem helps us to realize why the lives of the prophets must always be lives of sacrifice.

Inner significances of the word, referred to: (IQAN pg. 140)

'The Brides of inner meaning stepping from the chambers of words'

'The mystic and wondrous Bride ere this beneath the veiling of utterances.'

'Myriads of Mystic tongues find utterance in one speech.' 'Quaff from the tongue of the merciful the stream of Divine Mystery.'

'Take immortal cups- that thou mayest harken unto the mystic voice calling from the Realm of the Invisible.' 'Within every garden they will behold the mystic bride of inner meaning.'

Understanding is impossible to anyone living and thinking on the material plane. We must adjust to spiritual understanding instead of material comprehension.

READING # 2 - HW - A - #44

O SON OF THE THRONE! Thy hearing is My hearing, hear thou therewith. 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.

READING #3 -Gl. pg. 62-63

... So perfect and comprehensive is His creation that no mind nor heart, however keen or pure, can ever grasp the nature of the most insignificant of His creatures; much less fathom the mystery of Him Who is the Day Star of Truth, Who is the invisible and unknowable Essence. The conceptions of the devoutest of mystics, the attainments of the most accomplished amongst men, the highest praise which human tongue or pen can render are all the product of man's finite mind and are conditioned by its limitations. Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck upon the Sinai of their search at His forbidding voice, "Thou shalt never behold Me!"; whilst a myriad Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction, "Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend!" From time immemorial He hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence. Every attempt to attain to an understanding of His inaccessible Reality hath ended in complete

bewilderment, and every effort to approach His exalted Self and envisage His Essence hath resulted in hopelessness and failure. (Gleanings, pages 62-63)

READING #4 - Gl pg. 317-318

All that the sages and mystics have said or written have never exceeded, nor can they ever hope to exceed, the limitations to which man's finite mind hath been strictly subjected. To whatever heights the mind of the most exalted of men may soar, however great the depths which the detached and understanding heart can penetrate, such mind and heart can never transcend that which is the creature of their own conceptions and the product of their own thoughts. The meditations of the profoundest thinker, the devotions of the holiest of saints, the highest expressions of praise from either human pen or tongue, are but a reflection of that which hath been created within themselves, through the revelation of the Lord, their God. Whoever pondereth this truth in his heart will readily admit that there are certain limits which no human being can possibly transgress. Every attempt which, from the beginning that hath no beginning, hath been made to visualize and know God is limited by the exigencies of His own creation - a creation which He, through the operation of His own Will and for the purposes of none other but His own Self, hath called into being. Immeasurably exalted is He above the strivings of human mind to grasp His Essence, or of human tongue to describe His mystery. No tie of direct intercourse can ever bind Him to the things He hath created, nor can the most abstruse and most remote allusions of His creatures do justice to His being. Through His world-pervading Will He hath brought into being all created things. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His own exalted and indivisible Essence, and will everlastingly continue to remain concealed in His inaccessible majesty and glory. All that is in heaven and all that is in the earth have come to exist at His bidding, and by His Will all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being. How can, therefore, the creature which the Word of God hath fashioned comprehend the nature of Him Who is the Ancient of Days? (Gleanings, pages 317-318)

There are certain limits which no human being can possibly transgress. We cannot reach beyond the line between the Manifestation and the Primal Emanation - The word - 'seeking is forbidden'. The nearest we can get to God is the Primal Emanation - THE WORD - just as the nearest we can get to the sun is its rays.

READING # 5 HW - A - #6

O SON OF MAN!

Ascend unto My heaven, that thou mayest obtain the joy of reunion, and from the chalice of imperishable glory quaff the peerless wine. (Arabic Hidden Words, page 61)

Why do these personifications of wisdom and love apply the term 'heaven' to this spiritual realm of understanding? Because by entrance into this realm we are enabled to breathe an atmosphere of Truth, Love and Wisdom which, compared to the world of materiality is as heaven compared to hell, or like the world of the cultured man to that of the unborn babe.

This station is attained through what Ábdu'l-Bahá called the 'second birth'. He speaks of the 'sublimity of the world of mankind becoming apparent', 'thus you may attain the highest happiness, the life eternal, the glory everlasting, and become manifestations of the bestowals of God.'

This second birth comes with true recognition of the Revelation of God, brought by His Manifestation in the Day of Resurrection. Another means of entering this Heaven of Significances is through an ability to read 'The Creational Book.' This is what is meant by 'seeing with the eye of God and hearing with His ear.'

READING #6 -PUP -pg. 325

It is evident that the holy Manifestations and divine dawning points are necessary, for these blessed and glorious Souls are the foremost Teachers and Educators of mankind, and all human souls are developed through Them by the bounty of the Holy Spirit of God. During the ministry of Jesus Christ in Palestine He was surrounded by people of various nations, including the Jews, all of them living in the condition of extreme ignorance, bereft of the Word of God and darkened in consciousness. Christ educated these people and quickened them with the life of the Word so that they in turn became the instruments of educating the world, illumining the East and the West. Consider the wonderful effect of spiritual education and training. By it the fisherman Peter was transformed into the greatest of teachers. Spiritual education made the disciples radiant lamps in the darkness of the world and caused the Christians of the first and second centuries to become renowned everywhere for their virtues. Even philosophers bore testimony to this. Among them was Galen, the physician, who wrote a book upon the subject of the progress of the nations. He was a celebrated philosopher of the Greeks, although not a Christian. In his book he stated that religious beliefs exercise a tremendous influence upon civilization and that the world is in need of such belief. In proof of this, he said, in substance, "In our time there is a certain people called Christians, who, though neither philosophers nor scholastically trained, are superior to all others as regards their morality. They are perfect in morals. Each one of them is like a great philosopher in morals, ethics and turning toward the Kingdom of God." This is evidence from the testimony of an intelligent outside observer that spiritual education is the light of the world of humanity and that its absence in the world is darkness itself. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 331)

READING #7 PUP pg. 149-150

..."In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This statement is brief but replete with the greatest meanings. Its applications are illimitable and beyond the power of books or words to contain and express. Heretofore the doctors of theology have not expounded it but have restricted it to Jesus as "the Word made flesh," the separation of Jesus from God, the Father, and His descent upon the earth. In this way the individualized separation of the godhead came to be taught. The essential oneness of Father, Son and Spirit has many meanings and constitutes the foundation of Christianity. Today we will merely give a synopsis of explanation. Why was Jesus the Word? In the universe of creation all phenomenal beings are as letters. Letters in themselves are meaningless and express nothing of thought or ideal - as, for instance, a, b, etc.

Likewise, all phenomenal beings are without independent meaning. But a word is composed of letters and has independent sense and meaning. Therefore, as Christ conveyed the perfect meaning of divine reality and embodied independent significance, He was the Word. He was as the station of reality compared to the station of metaphor. There is no intrinsic meaning in the leaves of a book, but the thought they convey leads you to reflect upon reality. The reality of Jesus was the perfect meaning, the Christhood in Him which in the Holy Books is symbolized as the Word. "The Word was with God." The Christhood means not the body of Jesus but the perfection of divine virtues manifest in Him. Therefore, it is written, "He is God." This does not imply separation from God, even as it is not possible to separate the rays of the sun from the sun. The reality of Christ was the embodiment of divine virtues and attributes of God. For in Divinity there is no duality. All adjectives, nouns and pronouns in that court of sanctity are one; there is neither multiplicity nor division. The intention of this explanation is to show that the Words of God have innumerable significances and mysteries of meanings - each one a thousand and more. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 154-155)

READING #8 Gl pg. 195

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. (Gleanings, page 195)

READING # 9 - PUP - pg. 223

The door of divine knowledge has been opened by Bahá'u'lláh, for He has laid the foundation whereby man may become acquainted with the verities of heaven and earth and has bestowed the utmost confirmation in this day. He is our Teacher and Adviser; He is our Seer and the One clement toward us. He has prepared His gifts and vouchsafed His bounties, revealed every admonition and behest, prepared for us the means of eternal glory, breathed upon us the life-quickening breaths of the Holy Spirit, opened before our faces the doors of the paradise of Abha and caused the lights of the Sun of Truth to shine upon us. The clouds of mercy have poured down their precious rain. The sea of favor is swelling and surging toward us. The spiritual springtime has come. Infinite bounties and graces have appeared. What bestowal is greater than this? We must appreciate the divine generosity and act in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh so that all good may be stored up for us and in both worlds we shall become precious and acceptable to God, attain to everlasting blessings, taste the delicacy of the love of God, find the sweetness of the knowledge of God, perceive the heavenly bestowal and witness the power of the Holy Spirit. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 228)

READING # 10 - PUP - pg. 12

Throughout the universe the divine power is effulgent in endless images and pictures. The world of creation, the world of humanity may be likened to the earth itself and the divine power to the sun. This Sun has shone upon all mankind. In the endless variety of its reflections the divine Will is manifested. Consider how all are recipients of the bounty of the same Sun. At most the difference between them is that of degree, for the effulgence is one effulgence, the one light emanating from the Sun. This will express the oneness of the world of humanity. The body politic, or the social unity of the human world, may be likened to an ocean, and each member, each individual, a wave upon that same ocean. The light of the sun becomes apparent in each object according to the capacity of that object. The difference is simply one of degree and receptivity. The stone would be a recipient only to a limited extent; another created thing might be as a mirror wherein the sun is fully reflected; but the same light shines upon both.

The most important thing is to polish the mirrors of hearts in order that they may become illumined and receptive of the divine light. One heart may possess the capacity of the polished mirror; another, be covered and obscured by the dust and dross of this world. Although the same Sun is shining upon both, in the mirror which is polished, pure and sanctified you may behold the Sun in all its fullness, glory and power, revealing its majesty and effulgence; but in the mirror which is rusted and obscured there is no capacity for reflection, although so far as the Sun itself is concerned it is shining thereon and is neither lessened nor deprived. Therefore, our duty lies in seeking to polish the mirrors of our hearts in order that we shall become reflectors of that light and recipients of the divine bounties which may be fully revealed through them. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 14-15)

READING # 11 - HW - A #58

O SON OF MAN!

The temple of being is My throne; cleanse it of all things, that there I may be established and there I may abide.

Our understanding is according to the purity, cleansing and dusting of the mirror. Our effort is important and entails sacrifice of that which forbids us time for study and meditation of the Word.

READING # 12 - HW - A #59

O SON OF BEING!

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. The spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.

The heart is the actual recipient of the spiritual influx, the core of being, one of the aspects of the soul.
see Gl - pg. 185

READING #13 IQAN pg. 100-101

Nay, whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that most great Light. Methinks, but for the potency of that revelation, no being could ever exist. How resplendent the luminaries of knowledge that shine in an atom, and how vast the oceans of wisdom that surge within a drop! To a supreme degree is this true of man, who, among all created things, hath been invested with the robe of such gifts, and hath been singled out for the glory of such distinction. For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed. All these names and attributes are applicable to him. Even as He hath said: "Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery." (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 100-101)

READING # 14 - Iqan - pg. 140

...We have demonstrated that all things are the recipients and revealers of the splendours of that ideal King, and that the signs of the revelation of that Sun, the Source of all splendour, exist and are manifest in the mirrors of beings. Nay, were man to gaze with the eye of divine and spiritual discernment, he will readily recognize that nothing whatsoever can exist without the revelation of the splendour of God, the ideal King. Consider how all created things eloquently testify to the revelation of that inner Light within them. Behold how within all things the portals of the Ridvan of God are opened, that seekers may attain the cities of understanding and wisdom, and enter the gardens of knowledge and power. Within every garden they will behold the mystic bride of inner meaning enshrined within the chambers of utterance in the utmost grace and fullest adornment. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 140)

We are told that it is impossible for man to attain such a station that he will live more or less constantly in that realm in which he sees in all things evidence of the power, love, wisdom, beauty and guidance of God. He 'walks above the world by the power of the Greatest Name and beholds the Mysteries of God and knows that which none knows of.' (who knows not this heaven). This, Ábdu'l-Bahá says, is the paradise obtainable in this world. It transforms a sordid existence into a heaven of assurance and 'diffuses life with infinite joy'. The word 'heaven' is used with many meanings: 'The heaven of wisdom', 'the heaven of understanding', etc.

READING #15 - Iqan - pg. 175-176

This Bird of Heaven, now dwelling upon the dust, can, besides these melodies, utter a myriad songs, and is able, apart from these utterances, to unfold innumerable mysteries. Every single note of its unpronounced utterances is immeasurably exalted above all that hath already been revealed, and immensely glorified beyond that which hath streamed from this Pen. Let the future disclose the hour when the Brides of inner meaning, will, as decreed by the Will of God, hasten forth, unveiled, out of their mystic mansions, and manifest themselves in the ancient realm of being. Nothing whatsoever is possible without His permission; no power can endure save through His power, and there is none

other God but He. His is the world of creation, and His the Cause of God. All proclaim His Revelation, and all unfold the mysteries of His Spirit. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 175-176)

Yet revelation is limited by the conditions and capacity of the people.

READING # 16 HW A#67

O SON OF BEAUTY!

By My spirit and by My favor! By My mercy and by My beauty! All that I have revealed unto thee with the tongue of power, and have and have written for thee with the pen of might, hath been in accordance with the capacity and understanding, not with My state and the melody of My voice.

'Tongue of power', 'Pen of Might' - The Reality of the Manifestation speaking and writing.

READING #17 HW P#81

O MY SERVANT!

The basest of men are they that yield no fruit on earth. Such men are verily counted as among the dead, nay better are the dead in the sight of God than these idle and worthless souls.

Importance of the knowledge of the reality of things. 'yield no fruit on earth' -what fruit?

'Through it (knowledge of the realities of things) outward civilization progresses'

SAQ pg. 344

Therefore, the lowest of men are they who neglect the knowledge of the realities of things, thus make no contribution to the progress of civilization.

READING #18 HW A#50 & A#51

O SON OF MAN!

If adversity befall thee not in My path, how canst thou walk in the ways of them that are content with My pleasure? If trials afflict thee not in thy longing to meet Me, how wilt thou attain the light of thy love for My beauty?

O SON OF MAN!

My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou may become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

Proper attitude toward trials and obstacles.

READING # 19 HW A#52

O SON OF MAN!

Should prosperity befall thee, rejoice not, and should abasement come upon thee, grieve not, for both shall pass away and be no more.

Proper attitude toward success and failure.

READING #20 HW A#53

O SON OF BEING!

If poverty overtake thee, be not sad; for in time the Lord of wealth shall visit thee. Fear not abasement, for glory shall one day rest on thee.

Proper attitude toward wealth and poverty.

READING #21 HW A#62

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. (Arabic Hidden Words, page 62)

Admonition to waste no more time, inasmuch as immortality begins now.

SUMMARY:- 'Heaven of significances' - a symbol of that spiritual exaltation, upliftment above material thoughts and feelings, perceiving the mysteries of the other world in creation, everything on this plane being a shadow of that on the spiritual plane.

PRAYER P&M pg. 114-115

Thou knowest, O my Lord, that I am but one of thy servants. I have tasted of the sweetness of Thy speech, and acknowledged Thy singleness, and set my face towards the source of Thy most excellent names and the Day-Spring of Thy transcendent attributes, and wish to be enabled by Thee to immerse myself beneath the ocean of Thy oneness and to be submerged by the mighty waters of Thy unity. Assist me, by thy strengthening grace, O my Lord, to what thou didst will, and withhold not from me the things Thou dost possess. So enravish me with wonders of Thine utterances that the noise and distraction of this world may be powerless to deter me from turning unto thee, and may fail to shake my constancy in Thy cause, or to distract my gaze from the horizon of Thy grace. Aid me, then, O my God to do what pleasest Thee, and to carry out Thy will. Write down for me, moreover, the good of this world of the world which is to come, ordain for me a seat of truth in thy presence. Potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt, and to rule as Thou pleasest. No God is there but Thee, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious, the Most Great.

All praise to Thee, O Lord of the worlds and the object of the adoration of the entire creation!

The Two Natures of Man



Lesson III

- 1 BWF pg. 121 A sign of God.
 - 2 BWF pg. 315 Man's Relation to God
 - 3 BWF pg. 316-317 Soul, Mind and Spirit
 - 4 BWF pg. 318-321 Innate, inherited and acquired character.
 - 5 PUP pg. 57 Man has two powers...than the physical body. (60)
 - 6 PUP pg. 179-181 Man is submerged...joys of its eternal fruits? (184-186)
 - 7 PUP pg. 319-322 It is now the times...the life and love of God. (325-328)
 - 8 PUP pg. 411-413 It is evident fact...in the eternal realm. (417-418)
 - 9 PUP pg. 220-221 In the beginning of his human life...everlasting existence. (225-226)
 - 10 GL pg. 64-66 All praise to the unity of God...light and glory.
 - 11 GL pg. 77-78 All praise and glory...shadow of the tree of knowledge. 12 HW P#38
 - 13 HW P#39
 - 14 BWF pg. 382 Faith and Knowledge.
 - 15 GL pg. 206 The purpose underlying....whatsoever He willeth.
- Prayer P&M pg. 114-115 LXIX Last 3 paragraphs.

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those originally cited in the 1922 edition have been retained.

READING #1 BWF pg. 121 A Sign of God

Thou hast asked Me concerning the nature of the soul. Know verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will eventually return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths.

Ábdu'l-Bahá summed the matter in these words,

'Be it known that to know the reality or essence of the soul of man is impossible, for in order to know a thing one must comprehend it, and since a thing cannot comprehend itself, to know oneself in substance, or essence, is impossible. In order to obtain knowledge of any reality, or soul, or man, the student must study the manifestations, qualities, names and characteristics of man.'

Our modern anthropologists and psychologist agree perfectly with this assertion. Nothing is more generally acknowledged than the narrow limits of man's mental powers. It is even asserted that he uses no more than a fifth of his brain capability. Is it possible then for him, with the active fifth of his mentality to grasp the powers of the other four-fifths - to say nothing of the range of his emotional, imaginative, and complex physical nature?

Bahá'u'lláh, in the seven valleys (the valley of unity) points out that man to a degree possesses a quality of God in that he is 'the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden' and that outwardly man bears witness of the inward mysteries which, as a Divine gift, are deposited in him. So we must begin by assuming (with the authority of human science as well as divine revelation) that man, like every other phenomenal object, may be known only by his attributes and qualities. As is to be expected, however, the wisdom of the Mouthpiece of the Eternal Wisdom is far more enlightening and inspiring than the superficial investigations of the human mind. They base their investigations into man's reality and potentiality upon his inherent nobility.

READING #2 BWF pg. 315

Man's Relation to God The connection between God and the creatures is that of the creator to the creation; it is like the connection between the sun and the dark bodies of contingent beings, and is the connection between the maker and the things that he has made. The sun in its own essence is independent of the bodies which it lights, for its light is in itself and is free and independent of the terrestrial globe; so the earth is under the influence of the sun and receives its light, whereas the sun and its rays are entirely independent of the earth. But if there were no sun, the earth and all earthly beings could not exist.

The dependence of the creatures upon God is a dependence of emanation - that is to say, creatures emanate from God; they do not manifest Him. (1) The relation is that of emanation and not that of manifestation. The light of the sun emanates from the sun; it does not manifest it. The appearance through emanation is like the appearance of the rays from the luminary of the horizons of the world - that is to say, the holy essence of the Sun of Truth is not divided and does not descend to the condition of the creatures. In the same way, the globe of the sun does not become divided and does not descend to the earth. No, the rays of the sun, which are its bounty, emanate from it and illumine the dark bodies.

But the appearance through manifestation is the manifestation of the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruit from the seed; for the seed in its own essence becomes branches and fruits, and its reality enters into the branches, the leaves and fruits. This appearance through manifestation would be for God, the Most High, simple imperfection; and this is quite impossible, for the implication would be that the

Absolute Preexistent is qualified with phenomenal attributes. But if this were so, pure independence would become mere poverty, and true existence would become nonexistence, and this is impossible.

Therefore, all creatures emanate from God - that is to say, it is by God that all things are realized, and by Him that all beings have attained to existence. The first thing which emanated from God is that universal reality, which the ancient philosophers termed the "First Mind," and which the people of Baha call the "First Will." This emanation, in that which concerns its action in the world of God, is not limited by time or place; it is without beginning or end -beginning and end in relation to God are one. The preexistence of God is the preexistence of essence, and also preexistence of time, and the phenomenality of contingency is essential and not temporal, as we have already explained one day at table. (1)

Though the "First Mind" is without beginning, it does not become a sharer in the preexistence of God, for the existence of the universal reality in relation to the existence of God is nothingness, and it has not the power to become an associate of God and like unto Him in preexistence. This subject has been before explained.

The existence of living things signifies composition, and their death, decomposition. But universal matter and the elements do not become absolutely annihilated and destroyed. No, their nonexistence is simply transformation. For instance, when man is annihilated, he becomes dust; but he does not become absolutely nonexistent. He still exists in the shape of dust, but transformation has taken place, and this composition is accidentally decomposed. The annihilation of the other beings is the same, for existence does not become absolute nonexistence, and absolute nonexistence does not become existence. (Some Answered Questions, pages 202-204)

'This much can be stated, that the reality of man is a pure and unknown essence constituting a depository emanating from the Light of the Ancient Entity' (God) -Bahá'í Scrip. par 742

READING # 3 BWF pg. 316-317

Soul, Mind and Spirit

It has been before explained that spirit is universally divided into five categories: the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the spirit of faith, and the Holy Spirit.

The vegetable spirit is the power of growth which is brought about in the seed through the influence of other existences.

The animal spirit is the power of all the senses, which is realized from the composition and mingling of elements; when this composition decomposes, the power also perishes and becomes annihilated. It may be likened to this lamp: when the oil, wick and fire are combined, it is lighted; and when this combination is dissolved - that is to say, when the combined parts are separated from one another - the lamp also is extinguished.

The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul, and these two names - the human spirit and the rational soul - designate one thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul, embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits

discovers the realities of things and becomes cognizant of their peculiarities and effects, and of the qualities and properties of beings. But the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, polished and brilliant, is still in need of light. Until a ray of the sun reflects upon it, it cannot discover the heavenly secrets.

But the mind is the power of the human spirit. Spirit is the lamp; mind is the light which shines from the lamp. Spirit is the tree, and the mind is the fruit. Mind is the perfection of the spirit and is its essential quality, as the sun's rays are the essential necessity of the sun. (Some Answered Questions, pages 208-209)

Soul, the rational being, the rational soul, the human spirit - are one. The pure page of man's individuality becomes inscribed during his life's experiences with the record of events which our human terminology describes as good and evil. The gradual growth of this ability to distinguish between these is one of the meanings of the story of the Garden of Eden, man's expulsion from that infantile state of stainless innocence and his eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is an essential experience otherwise man would be a colorless automaton devoid of the power of choice and of the will to act on his choice. This power of choice and will to act is the highest function of man and is what distinguishes him from the animal.

Reading #4 BWF pg. 318-321

Innate, Inherited and Acquired Character

With regard to the innate character, although the divine creation is purely good, yet the varieties of natural qualities in man come from the difference of degree; all are excellent, but they are more or less so, according to the degree. So all mankind possess intelligence and capacities, but the intelligence, the capacity and the worthiness of men differ. This is evident.

For example, take a number of children of one family, of one place, of one school, instructed by one teacher, reared on the same food, in the same climate, with the same clothing, and studying the same lessons - it is certain that among these children some will be clever in the sciences, some will be of average ability, and some dull. Hence it is clear that in the original nature there exists a difference of degree and varieties of worthiness and capacity. This difference does not imply good or evil but is simply a difference of degree. One has the highest degree, another the medium degree, and another the lowest degree. So man exists; the animal, the plant and the mineral exist also -but the degrees of these four existences vary. What a difference between the existence of man and of the animal! Yet both are existences. It is evident that in existence there are differences of degrees.

The variety of inherited qualities comes from strength and weakness of constitution - that is to say, when the two parents are weak, the children will be weak; if they are strong, the children will be robust. In the same way, purity of blood has a great effect; for the pure germ is like the superior stock which exists in plants and animals. For example, you see that children born from a weak and feeble father and mother will naturally have a feeble constitution and weak nerves; they will be afflicted and will have neither patience, nor endurance, nor resolution, nor perseverance, and will be hasty; for the

children inherit the weakness and debility of their parents.

Besides this, an especial blessing is conferred on some families and some generations. Thus it is an especial blessing that from among the descendants of Abraham should have come all the Prophets of the children of Israel. This is a blessing that God has granted to this descent: to Moses from His father and mother, to Christ from His mother's line; also to Muhammad and the Bab, and to all the Prophets and the Holy Manifestations of Israel. The Blessed Beauty (1) is also a lineal descendant of Abraham, for Abraham had other sons besides Ishmael and Isaac who in those days migrated to the lands of Persia and Afghanistan, and the Blessed Beauty is one of their descendants.

Hence it is evident that inherited character also exists, and to such a degree that if the characters are not in conformity with their origin, although they belong physically to that lineage, spiritually they are not considered members of the family, like Canaan, (2) who is not reckoned as being of the race of Noah.

But the difference of the qualities with regard to culture is very great, for education has great influence. Through education the ignorant become learned; the cowardly become valiant. Through cultivation the crooked branch becomes straight; the acid, bitter fruit of the mountains and woods becomes sweet and delicious; and the five petaled flower becomes hundred petaled. Through education savage nations become civilized, and even the animals become domesticated. Education must be considered as most important, for as diseases in the world of bodies are extremely contagious, so, in the same way, qualities of spirit and heart are extremely contagious. Education has a universal influence, and the differences caused by it are very great.

Perhaps someone will say that, since the capacity and worthiness of men differ, therefore, the difference of capacity certainly causes the difference of characters. (1)

But this is not so, for capacity is of two kinds: natural capacity and acquired capacity. The first, which is the creation of God, is purely good - in the creation of God there is no evil; but the acquired capacity has become the cause of the appearance of evil. For example, God has created all men in such a manner and has given them such a constitution and such capacities that they are benefited by sugar and honey and harmed and destroyed by poison. This nature and constitution is innate, and God has given it equally to all mankind. But man begins little by little to accustom himself to poison by taking a small quantity each day, and gradually increasing it, until he reaches such a point that he cannot live without a gram of opium every day. The natural capacities are thus completely perverted. Observe how much the natural capacity and constitution can be changed, until by different habits and training they become entirely perverted. One does not criticize vicious people because of their innate capacities and nature, but rather for their acquired capacities and nature.

In creation there is no evil; all is good. Certain qualities and natures innate in some men and apparently blameworthy are not so in reality. For example, from the beginning of his life you can see in a nursing child the signs of greed, of anger and of temper. Then, it may be said, good and evil are innate in the reality of man, and this is contrary to the pure goodness of nature and creation. The answer to this is that greed, which is to ask for something more, is a praiseworthy quality provided that it is used suitably. So if a man is greedy to acquire science and knowledge, or to become compassionate, generous and just, it is most praiseworthy. If he exercises his anger and wrath against

the blood thirsty tyrants who are like ferocious beasts, it is very praiseworthy; but if he does not use these qualities in a right way, they are blameworthy.

Then it is evident that in creation and nature evil does not exist at all; but when the natural qualities of man are used in an unlawful way, they are blameworthy. So if a rich and generous person gives a sum of money to a poor man for his own necessities, and if the poor man spends that sum of money on unlawful things, that will be blameworthy. It is the same with all the natural qualities of man, which constitute the capital of life; if they be used and displayed in an unlawful way, they become blameworthy. Therefore, it is clear that creation is purely good. Consider that the worst of qualities and most odious of attributes, which is the foundation of all evil, is lying. No worse or more blameworthy quality than this can be imagined to exist; it is the destroyer of all human perfections and the cause of innumerable vices. There is no worse characteristic than this; it is the foundation of all evils. Notwithstanding all this, if a doctor consoles a sick man by saying, "Thank God you are better, and there is hope of your recovery," though these words are contrary to the truth, yet they may become the consolation of the patient and the turning point of the illness. This is not blameworthy. (Some Answered Questions, pages 212-216)

Man's characteristics are sharply divided. One group partakes of the animal nature of man, inherited from his past. The other partakes of his divine nature inherited from God. Every human being is possessed of this dual nature. The distinctive quality which separates him from the rest of creation is the power of choice as to which nature he shall cultivate, which he chooses to dominate his life.

READING #5 PUP pg. 57

Man has two powers; and his development, two aspects. One power is connected with the material world, and by it he is capable of material advancement. The other power is spiritual, and through its development his inner, potential nature is awakened. These powers are like two wings. Both must be developed, for flight is impossible with one wing. Praise be to God! Material advancement has been evident in the world, but there is need of spiritual advancement in like proportion. We must strive unceasingly and without rest to accomplish the development of the spiritual nature in man, and endeavor with tireless energy to advance humanity toward the nobility of its true and intended station. For the body of man is accidental; it is of no importance. The time of its disintegration will inevitably come. But the spirit of man is essential and, therefore, eternal. It is a divine bounty. It is the effulgence of the Sun of Reality and, therefore, of greater importance than the physical body. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 60)

READING #6 PUP pg. 179-181

Man is submerged in the affairs of this world. His aims, objects and attainments are mortal, whereas God desires for him immortal accomplishments. In his heart there is no thought of God. He has sacrificed his portion and birthright of divine spirituality. Desire and passion, like two unmanageable horses, have wrested the reins of control from him and are galloping madly in the wilderness. This is the cause of the degradation of the world of humanity. This is the cause of its retrogression into the

appetites and passions of the animal kingdom. Instead of divine advancement we find sensual captivity and debasement of heavenly virtues of the soul. By devotion to the carnal, mortal world human susceptibilities sink to the level of animalism.

What are the animals' propensities? To eat, drink, wander about and sleep. The thoughts, the minds of the animals are confined to these. They are captives in the bonds of these desires. Man becomes a prisoner and slave to them when his ultimate desire is no higher than his welfare in this world of the senses. Consider how difficult for man is the attainment of pleasures and happiness in this mortal world. How easy it is for the animal. Look upon the fields and flowers, prairies, streams, forests and mountains. The grazing animals, the birds of the air, the fishes neither toil nor undergo hardships; they sow not, nor are they concerned about the reaping; they have no anxiety about business or politics - no trouble or worry whatsoever. All the fields and grasses, all the meadows of fruits and grains, all the mountain slopes and streams of salubrious water belong to them. They do not labor for their livelihood and happiness because everything is provided and made possible for them. If the life of man be confined to this physical, material outlook, the animal's life is a hundred times better, easier and more productive of comfort and contentment. The animal is nobler, more serene and confident because each hour is free from anxiety and worry; but man, restless and dissatisfied, runs from morn till eve, sailing the seas, diving beneath them in submarines, flying aloft in airplanes, delving into the lowest strata of the earth to obtain his livelihood - all with the greatest difficulty, anxiety and unrest. Therefore, in this respect the animal is nobler, more serene, poised and confident. Consider the birds in the forest and jungle: how they build their nests high in the swaying treetops, build them with the utmost skill and beauty - swinging, rocking in the morning breezes, drinking the pure, sweet water, enjoying the most enchanting views as they fly here and there high overhead, singing joyously - all without labor, free from worry, care and forebodings. If man's life be confined to the elemental, physical world of enjoyment, one lark is nobler, more admirable than all humanity because its livelihood is prepared, its condition complete, its accomplishment perfect and natural.

But the life of man is not so restricted; it is divine, eternal, not mortal and sensual. For him a spiritual existence and livelihood is prepared and ordained in the divine creative plan. His life is intended to be a life of spiritual enjoyment to which the animal can never attain. This enjoyment depends upon the acquisition of heavenly virtues. The sublimity of man is his attainment of the knowledge of God. The bliss of man is the acquiring of heavenly bestowals, which descend upon him in the outflow of the bounty of God. The happiness of man is in the fragrance of the love of God. This is the highest pinnacle of attainment in the human world. How preferable to the animal and its hopeless kingdom!

Therefore, consider how base a nature it reveals in man that, notwithstanding the favors showered upon him by God, he should lower himself into the animal sphere, be wholly occupied with material needs, attached to this mortal realm, imagining that the greatest happiness is to attain wealth in this world. How purposeless! How debased is such a nature! God has created man in order that he may be a dove of the Kingdom, a heavenly candle, a recipient of eternal life. God has created man in order that he may be resuscitated through the breaths of the Holy Spirit and become the light of the world. How debased the soul which can find enjoyment in this darkness, occupied with itself, the captive of self and passion, wallowing in the mire of the material world! How degraded is such a nature! What an ignorance this is! What a blindness! How glorious the station of man who has partaken of the heavenly food and built the temple of his everlasting residence in the world of heaven!

The Manifestations of God have come into the world to free man from these bonds and chains of the world of nature. Although They walked upon the earth, They lived in heaven. They were not concerned about material sustenance and prosperity of this world. Their bodies were subjected to inconceivable distress, but Their spirits ever soared in the highest realms of ecstasy. The purpose of Their coming, Their teaching and suffering was the freedom of man from himself. Shall we, therefore, follow in Their footsteps, escape from this cage of the body or continue subject to its tyranny? Shall we pursue the phantom of a mortal happiness which does not exist or turn toward the tree of life and the joys of its eternal fruits? (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 184-186)

Knowledge through the intelligence of the rational soul, can penetrate mysteries, but it is limited. Innate knowledge, to be aware of all mysteries without search or investigation, is a conscious power embracing existing realities. This divine intellectual power is the special attribute of the Holy Manifestations. A share of this power comes to man through the Manifestation, by the Spirit of Faith.

How can we gain the Spirit of Faith? We gain faith, not through effort toward it, but through worthiness by obedience. Instead of seeking qualities we earn them through actions. Faith is not through man's effort - it is a bounty of God.

Faith and acts are different. Not through lack of Faith, but through weakness; man's actions are not according to his faith. This strength is gained through effort.

READING #7 PUP pg. 319-322

It is now the time in the history of the world for us to strive and give an impetus to the advancement and development of inner forces - that is to say, we must arise to service in the world of morality, for human morals are in need of readjustment. We must also render service to the world of intellectuality in order that the minds of men may increase in power and become keener in perception, assisting the intellect of man to attain its supremacy so that the ideal virtues may appear. Before a step is taken in this direction we must be able to prove Divinity from the standpoint of reason so that no doubt or objection may remain for the rationalist. Afterward, we must be able to prove the existence of the bounty of God - that the divine bounty encompasses humanity and that it is transcendental. Furthermore, we must demonstrate that the spirit of man is immortal, that it is not subject to disintegration and that it comprises the virtues of humanity.

Material virtues have attained great development, but ideal virtues have been left far behind. If you should ask a thousand persons, "What are the proofs of the reality of Divinity?" perhaps not one would be able to answer. If you should ask further, "What proofs have you regarding the essence of God?" "How do you explain inspiration and revelation?" "What are the evidences of conscious intelligence beyond the material universe?" "Can you suggest a plan and method for the betterment of human moralities?" "Can you clearly define and differentiate the world of nature and the world of Divinity?" - you would receive very little real knowledge and enlightenment upon these questions. This is due to the fact that development of the ideal virtues has been neglected. People speak of Divinity, but the ideas and beliefs they have of Divinity are, in reality, superstition. Divinity is the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, the manifestation of spiritual virtues and ideal powers. The intellectual proofs of Divinity are based upon observation and evidence which constitute decisive argument, logically proving the

reality of Divinity, the effulgence of mercy, the certainty of inspiration and immortality of the spirit. This is, in reality, the science of Divinity. Divinity is not what is set forth in dogmas and sermons of the church. Ordinarily when the word Divinity is mentioned, it is associated in the minds of the hearers with certain formulas and doctrines, whereas it essentially means the wisdom and knowledge of God, the effulgence of the Sun of Truth, the revelation of reality and divine philosophy.

Philosophy is of two kinds: natural and divine. Natural philosophy seeks knowledge of physical verities and explains material phenomena, whereas divine philosophy deals with ideal verities and phenomena of the spirit. The field and scope of natural philosophy have been greatly enlarged, and its accomplishments are most praiseworthy, for it has served humanity. But according to the evidence of present world conditions divine philosophy -which has for its object the sublimation of human nature, spiritual advancement, heavenly guidance for the development of the human race, attainment to the breaths of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the verities of God - has been outdistanced and neglected. Now is the time for us to make an effort and enable it to advance apace with the philosophy of material investigation so that awakening of the ideal virtues may progress equally with the unfoldment of the natural powers. In the same proportion that the body of man is developing, the spirit of man must be strengthened; and just as his outer perceptions have been quickened, his inner intellectual powers must be sensitized so that he need not rely wholly upon tradition and human precedent. In divine questions we must not depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith attained. Then and then only the reality of things will be revealed to us. The philosophers of Greece - such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and others -were devoted to the investigation of both natural and spiritual phenomena. In their schools of teaching they discoursed upon the world of nature as well as the supernatural world. Today the philosophy and logic of Aristotle are known throughout the world. Because they were interested in both natural and divine philosophy, furthering the development of the physical world of mankind as well as the intellectual, they rendered praiseworthy service to humanity. This was the reason of the triumph and survival of their teachings and principles. Man should continue both these lines of research and investigation so that all the human virtues, outer and inner, may become possible. The attainment of these virtues, both material and ideal, is conditioned upon intelligent investigation of reality, by which investigation the sublimity of man and his intellectual progress is accomplished. Forms must be set aside and renounced; reality must be sought. We must discover for ourselves where and what reality is. In religious beliefs nations and peoples today are imitators of ancestors and forefathers. If a man's father was a Christian, he himself is a Christian; a Buddhist is the son of a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian of a Zoroastrian. A gentile or an idolater follows the religious footsteps of his father and ancestry. This is absolute imitation. The requirement in this day is that man must independently and impartially investigate every form of reality.

The great question appertaining to humanity is religion. The first condition is that man must intelligently investigate its foundations. The second condition is that he must admit and acknowledge the oneness of the world of humanity. By this means the attainment of true fellowship among mankind is assured, and the alienation of races and individuals is prevented. ... The purport of our subject is that, just as man is in need of outward education, he is likewise in need of ideal refinement; just as the outer sense of sight is necessary to him, he should also possess insight and conscious perception; as he

needs hearing, at the same time memory is essential; as a body is indispensable to him, likewise a mind is requisite; one is a material virtue, the other is ideal. As human creatures fitted and qualified with this dual endowment, we must endeavor through the assistance and grace of God and by the exercise of our ideal power of intellect to attain all lofty virtues, that we may witness the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, reflect the spirit of the Kingdom, behold the manifest evidences of the reality of Divinity, comprehend irrefutable proofs of the immortality of the soul, live in conscious at-one-ment with the eternal world and become quickened and awake with the life and love of God. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 325-328)

READING #8 PUP pg. 411-413

It is an evident fact that the body does not conduct the process of intellection or thought radiation. It is only the medium of the grossest sensations. This human body is purely animal in type and, like the animal, it is subject only to the grosser sensibilities. It is utterly bereft of ideation or intellection, utterly incapable of the processes of reason. The animal perceives what its eye sees and judges what the ear hears. It perceives according to its animal senses, the scent of the nostril, the taste of the tongue. It comprehends not beyond its sense perceptions. The animal is confined to its feelings and sensibilities, a prisoner of the senses. Beyond these, in the finer higher processes of reasoning, the animal cannot go. For instance, the animal cannot conceive of the earth whereon it stands as a spherical object because the spherical shape of the earth is a matter of conscious reasoning. It is not a matter of sense perception. An animal in Europe could not foresee and plan the discovery of America as Columbus did. It could not take the globe map of the earth and scan the various continents, saying, "This is the eastern hemisphere; there must be another, the western hemisphere." No animal could know these things for the reason that they are referable to intellection. The animal cannot become aware of the fact that the earth is revolving and the sun stationary. Only processes of reasoning can come to this conclusion. The outward eye sees the sun as revolving. It mistakes the stars and the planets as moving about the earth. But reason decides their orbit, knows that the earth is moving and the other worlds fixed, knows that the sun is the solar center and ever occupies the same place, proves that it is the earth which revolves around it. Such conclusions are entirely intellectual, not according to the senses.

Hence, we know that in the human organism there is a center of intellection, a power of intellectual operation which is the discoverer of the realities of things. This power can unravel the mysteries of phenomena. It can comprehend that which is knowable, not alone the sensible. All the inventions are its products. For all of these have been the mysteries of nature. There was a time when the energy of electricity was a mystery of nature, but that collective reality which is manifest in man discovered this mystery of nature, this latent force. Having discovered it, man brought it into the plane of visibility. All the sciences which we now utilize are the products of that wondrous reality. But the animal is deprived of its operations. The arts we now enjoy are the expressions of that marvelous reality. The animal is bereft of them because these conscious realities are peculiar to the human spirit. All the traces are the outcoming of the perfections which comprehend realities. The animal is bereft of these.

Such evidences prove conclusively that man is possessed of two realities, as it were: a reality connected with the senses which is shared in common with the animal, and another reality which is conscious

and ideal in character. This latter is the collective reality and the discoverer of mysteries. That which discovers the realities of things undoubtedly is not of the elemental substances. It is distinct from them. For mortality and disintegration are the properties inherent in compositions and are referable to things which are subject to sense perceptions, but the collective reality in man, not being so subject, is the discoverer of things. Therefore, it is real, eternal and does not have to undergo changes and transformations. There are many other proofs concerning this vital subject, but I shall conclude with the words of Jesus Christ: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" and is acceptable in the Kingdom of God. This means that just as in the first birth the fetus comes forth from the matrix of the mother into the conditions of the human kingdom, even so the spirit of man must be born out of the matrix of naturalism, out of the baser nature, in order that he may comprehend the great things of the Kingdom of God. He must be born out of mother earth to find the everlasting life. And this collective reality, or spirit, of man, being born out of the world of nature, possessing the attributes of God, will continue to live forever in the eternal realm. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 417-418)

'Collective reality' means all-embracing reality.

See SAQ - pg. 228 That which determines man's destiny, which group of qualities he shall decide to mold his character around, is his will, or soul. Ábdu'l-Bahá gave a definition of soul: 'when we speak of the soul we mean the motive power of this physical body which lives under its entire control in accordance with its dictates.' - Divine Philosophy - pg. 120- 121.

According to the divine terminology soul is will, but 'will' has quite different connotations from these generally accepted. The dictionary definition of 'will' is to "resolve upon an action or course; to determine to do." In a certain sense there is not an essential difference, the active volition of the individual is called upon, but in divine terminology it is summoned to one comprehensive act, not an almost infinite series of volitions. This one act is a complete surrender of one's individual will to that of the will of the Manifestation of God. By the surrender of will, man automatically makes the choice between his animal nature and his divine nature, for the Manifestations of God have come into the world, not only to reveal God to man, but also to reveal the true station of man to himself. And in this great Revelation He explains, as never before, the technique by which that station is attained.

READING #9 PUP pg. 220-221

In the beginning of his human life man was embryonic in the world of the matrix. There he received capacity and endowment for the reality of human existence. The forces and powers necessary for this world were bestowed upon him in that limited condition. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially in the other. He needed ears; he obtained them there in readiness and preparation for his new existence. The powers requisite in this world were conferred upon him in the world of the matrix so that when he entered this realm of real existence he not only possessed all necessary functions and powers but found provision for his material sustenance awaiting him.

Therefore, in this world he must prepare himself for the life beyond. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom must be obtained here. Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so, likewise, the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world.

What is he in need of in the Kingdom which transcends the life and limitation of this mortal sphere? That world beyond is a world of sanctity and radiance; therefore, it is necessary that in this world he should acquire these divine attributes. In that world there is need of spirituality, faith, assurance, the knowledge and love of God. These he must attain in this world so that after his ascension from the earthly to the heavenly Kingdom he shall find all that is needful in that eternal life ready for him.

That divine world is manifestly a world of lights; therefore, man has need of illumination here. That is a world of love; the love of God is essential. It is a world of perfections; virtues, or perfections, must be acquired. That world is vivified by the breaths of the Holy Spirit; in this world we must seek them. That is the Kingdom of everlasting life; it must be attained during this vanishing existence.

By what means can man acquire these things? How shall he obtain these merciful gifts and powers? First, through the knowledge of God. Second, through the love of God. Third, through faith. Fourth, through philanthropic deeds. Fifth, through self-sacrifice. Sixth, through severance from this world. Seventh, through sanctity and holiness. Unless he acquires these forces and attains to these requirements, he will surely be deprived of the life that is eternal. But if he possesses the knowledge of God, becomes ignited through the fire of the love of God, witnesses the great and mighty signs of the Kingdom, becomes the cause of love among mankind and lives in the utmost state of sanctity and holiness, he shall surely attain to second birth, be baptized by the Holy Spirit and enjoy everlasting existence. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 225-226)

READING #10 GL pg. 64-66

All praise to the unity of God, and all-honor to Him, the sovereign Lord, the incomparable and all-glorious Ruler of the universe, who, from naught, hath brought into being the most refined and subtle elements of His creation, and who, rescuing His creatures from the abasement of remoteness and perils of ultimate extinction, hath received them into His kingdom of incorruptible glory. Nothing short of his all-encompassing grace, His all-pervading mercy, could have possibly achieved it. How could it, otherwise, have been possible for sheer nothingness to have acquired itself the worthiness and capacity to emerge from its state of non-existence into the realm of being?

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him - a capacity that must need be regarded as the generating impulse and primary purpose underlying the whole of creation... Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made a recipient of the glory of one of his attributes. Upon the reality of man however, He hath focused the radiance of all His names, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.

These energies with which the Day star of Divine bounty and source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however latent within him even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided

efforts, nor can it be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dust is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.

READING #11 GL pg. 77-78

All-praise and glory be to god who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of non-existence, and clothed it with the mantle of life. From among all created things He hath singled out for His special favor the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and invested it the unique capacity of knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of glory. This twofold distinction conferred upon him hath cleansed away from his heart the rust of every vain desire and made him worthy of the vesture with which his creature has designed to clothe him. It hath served to rescue his soul from the wretchedness of ignorance.

This robe with which the body and soul of man hath been adorned is the very foundation of his well-being and development. Oh, how blessed is the day when, aided by the grace and might of the one true God, man will have freed himself from the bondage and corruption of the world and all that is therein, and will have attained unto true and abiding rest beneath the shadow of the Tree of knowledge!

READING #12 HW P#38

O SON OF SPIRIT!

Burst thy cage asunder, and even as the phoenix of love soars into the firmament of holiness. Renounce thyself and, filled with the spirit of mercy, abide in the realm of celestial sanctity.

READING #13 HW P#39

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.

READING #14 BWF pg. 382 Faith and knowledge.

Regarding the 'two wings' of the soul: These signify wings of ascent. One is the wing of knowledge, the other of faith, as this is the means of ascent of the human soul to the lofty station of divine perfections.

Only a brief hint of the technique may be suggested but it is of utmost importance that this hint be followed by intensive study of the Creative word and deep meditation.

The task is to keep polishing this mirror until every trace of the lower self disappears and the true self,

the reality of man, the 'self of God' manifests itself with radiance and power.

READING #15 - GL - pg. 206

The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book nay, of every divinely-revealed verse, is to endure all men with righteousness and understanding, so peace and tranquillity may be firmly established amongst them. Whatsoever instilleth assurance into the hearts of men, whatsoever exalteth their station or promoteth their contentment, is acceptable in the sight of God. How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfill his high destiny, can attain! To what depths of degradation he can sink, depths which the meanest of creatures have never reached! Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of His grace. I beseech God that He may graciously enable every one of you to adorn himself, in this blessed Day, with the ornament of pure and holy deeds. He, verily, doeth whatsoever He willeth.

PRAYER P&M pg. 114-115

Thou knowest, O my Lord, that I am but one of Thy servants. I have tasted of the sweetness of Thy speech and acknowledged Thy unity and Thy singleness, and set my face towards the source of thy most excellent names and the Day-Spring of Thy transcendent attributes, and wished to be enabled by Thee to immerse myself beneath the ocean of Thy oneness and to be submerged by the mighty waters of Thy unity. Assist me, by Thy strengthening grace, O my Lord, to do what thou didst will, and withhold not from me the things thou dost possess. So enravish me with the wonders of Thine utterances that the noise and distraction of this world may be powerless to deter me from turning unto Thee, and may fail to shake my constancy in Thy Cause, or to distract my gaze from the horizon of thy grace. Aid me, then, O my God to do what pleaseth Thee, and to carry out Thy will. Write down for me, moreover, the good of this world and of the which is to come, and ordain for me a seat of truth in Thy presence. Potent art Thou to do what Thou willest, and to rule as Thou pleasest, no god is there but Thee, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious, the Most Great.

All praise to Thee, O Lord of the worlds and the object of the adoration of the entire creation!

The True Station of Man



Lesson IV

The True Station of Man

Lesson IV

Prayer P&M pg. 324-339 CLXXXIV

1 HW A#13

2 PUP pg. 296-299 No matter how much... in the Gospels. (302-305)

3 BWF pg. 67 O my servants! Could ye apprehend..Divine knowledge. .

4 PUP pg. 222-223 You must come... Cause of God. (227-228) [130]

5 PUP pg. 220-221 In the beginning...attained in this world. (225-226)

6 Gl pg. 214-215 The heights which ...themselves have been created.

7 Gl pg. 287 The purpose ... inmost selves.

8 Gl pg. 65-66 Having created the world ...reflect its light and glory.

9 Gl pg. 185-186 Wonder not...having drawn nigh unto His throne.

10 HW P#72,#73

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those originally cited in the 1922 edition have been retained.

PRAYER P & M pg. 324-339

Since Thou hast, O my God, established thyself upon the throne of Thy transcendent unity, and ascended the mercy seat of Thy oneness, it becometh Thee to blot out from the hearts of all beings whatsoever may keep them back from gaining admittance into the sanctuary of Thy Divine mysteries, and may shut them out from the tabernacle of Thy Divinity, that all hearts may mirror Thy beauty, and may reveal Thee, and that all created things may show forth the token of thy most august sovereignty, and shed the splendors of the light of Thy most holy governance, and that all who are in heaven and on earth may laud and magnify Thy unity, and give Thee glory, for having manifested Thy self unto them through Him who is the Revealer of Thy oneness.

Divest, the Thy servants, O my God, of the garments of self and desire or grant that the eyes of thy people may be lifted up to such heights that they will discern in their desires naught except the stirring

of the gentle winds of Thine eternal glory, and may recognize in their own selves nothing but the revelation of Thy merciful Self, that the earth and all that is therein may be cleansed of whatever is alien to Thee, or anything that manifesteth aught save Thy Self. All this can be fulfilled throughout Thy dominion by thy word of command, "Be", and it is! Nay, even swifter than this, and yet the people understand not.

Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou, O my Beloved! I swear by Thy glory! I recognize this very moment that Thou has granted all for which I have supplicated Thee in this blessed night which, as decreed by Thee, calleth to remembrance Him who was the Companion of Thy beauty and the Beholder of Thy face, ere I had been mentioned by Thee, or called into being within the court of Thy holiness. I perceive that Thou hast made all things to be the manifestations of Thy behest, and revelations of Thy handiwork, and the repositories of Thy knowledge, and the treasuries of thy wisdom. I recognize moreover, that were any of the revelations of Thy names and Thine attributes to be withheld, though it be the weight of the grain of mustard seed, from whatsoever hath been created by Thy power and begotten by Thy might, the foundations of Thine everlasting handiwork would thereby be made incomplete and the gems of Thy Divine wisdom would become imperfect. For the letters of negation, no matter how far they may be removed from the holy fragrances of thy knowledge, and however forgetful they may become of the wondrous splendors of the dawning light of Thy beauty, which are shed from the heaven of Thy majesty, must needs exist in Thy realm, so that the worlds which affirm Thee may thereby be exalted.

Thy might beareth me witness, O my well Beloved! The entire creation hath been called into being to exalt Thy triumph and to establish Thine ascendancy, and all the bounds that have been set by Thee are but the signs of Thy sovereignty, and proclaim the power of Thy might. How great, how very great, are the revelations of Thy wondrous power in all things! They are such PUP pg. 296-299 No matter how much... in the Gospels. (302-305) that the lowliest among Thy creatures hath been made by Thee a manifestation of Thy most august attribute, and the most contemptible token of Thy handiwork hath been chosen as a recipient of Thy most mighty name. Poverty as decreed by Thee, hath been made the means for the revelation of Thy riches, and abasement a path leading to Thy glory, and sinfulness a cause for the exercise of thy forgiveness. By them Thou hast demonstrated that to Thee belong Thy most excellent titles, and unto Thee pertain the wonders of thy most exalted attributes.

Since Thou hast purposed, O my God, to cause all created things to enter into the tabernacle of Thy transcendent grace and favor, and to waft over the entire creation the fragrances of the raiment of Thy glorious unity, and to look upon all things with the eyes of Thy bounty and thy oneness, I beseech Thee, therefore, by thy love, Which Thou has made to be the mainspring of the revelations of Thine eternal holiness, and the flame that gloweth within the hearts of such of Thy creatures as yearn towards Thee to create, this very moment for those of Thy people who are wholly devoted to Thee, and for such of Thy loved ones as love Thee, out of the essence of thy bounty and Thy generosity, and from the inmost spirit of Thy grace and Thy glory, Thy paradise of transcendent holiness, and to exalt it above everything except thee, and to sanctify it from aught else save Thyself. Create, moreover, within it O my God, out of the lights shed by Thy throne, handmaidens who will intone the melodies of Thy wondrous and most sweet invention, that they may magnify Thy name with such words as have not been heard by any of thy creatures, be they the inmates of Thy heaven or the dwellers of Thine earth, nor been comprehended by any of Thy people. unlock, then, the gates of this paradise to the faces of

Thy loved ones, that haply they may enter them in Thy name, and by the power of Thy sovereignty, that thereby the sovereign bounties vouchsafed by Thee unto thy chosen ones and the transcendent gifts granted unto Thy trusted ones be perfected, that they may extol thy virtues with such melodies as non can either intone or describe, and that none may fail to discern between Thy friends and Thy enemies, or to distinguish them that are devoted to Thee from such as stubbornly oppose Thee. Potent art Thou to do what Thou willest, and powerful and supreme art Thou over all things.

Exalted, immeasurably exalted art Thou, O my Beloved, above the strivings of any of Thy creatures however learned, to know Thee; exalted, immensely exalted art thou above every human attempt, no matter how searching, to describe Thee! For the highest thought of men, however deep their contemplation, can never hope to out soar the limitations imposed upon Thy creation, nor ascend beyond the state of the contingent world nor break the bounds irrevocably set for it by Thee. How can, then, a thing that hath been created by Thy will that overruleth the whole of creation, a thing that is itself part of the contingent world, have the power to soar into the holy atmosphere of thy knowledge, or reach unto the seat of Thy transcendent power? High, immeasurably high art Thou above the endeavors of the evanescent creature to soar unto the throne of Thine eternity or of the poor and wretched to attain the summit of Thine all-sufficing glory! From eternity Thou didst Thyself describe Thine own Self unto Thy Self, and extol, in Thine own Essence Thine Essence unto Thine Essence. I swear by Thy glory, O my Best-Beloved! Who is there besides Thee that can claim to know Thee, and who save Thyself can make befitting mention of Thee? Thou art He who, from eternity, abode in His realm, in the glory of His transcendent unity, and the splendors of His holy grandeur. Were any one except Thee to be deemed worthy of mention, in all the kingdoms of Thy creation, from the highest realms of immortality down to the level of this nether world, how could it, then be demonstrated that Thou art established upon the throne of Thy unity, and how could the wondrous virtues of Thy oneness and Thy singleness be glorified?

I bear witness, this very moment, to what Thou hast testified for Thine own self, ere Thou hast created the heavens and the earth, that Thou art God, and there is none other God besides Thee. Thou hast from everlasting been potent, through the Manifestations of Thy might, to reveal the signs of Thy power and Thou hast ever known, through the Day-Springs of thy knowledge the words of Thy wisdom. No one besides Thee has ever been found worthy to be mentioned before the Tabernacle of thy unity and none except Thy Self hath proved of himself capable of being praise within the hallowed court of Thy oneness.

Praise be to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast revealed Thy favors and Thy bounties; and glory be to Thee, that Thou hast manifested the Day-Star of Thy loving-kindness and Thy tender mercies. I yield Thee such thanks as can direct the steps of the wayward towards the splendors of the morning light of Thy guidance, and enable those who yearn towards Thee to attain the seat of the revelation of the effulgence of Thy beauty, I yield Thee such thanks as can cause the sick to draw nigh unto waters of Thy healing, and can help those who are far from Thee to approach the living fountain of Thy presence. I yield thanks as can divest the bodies of Thy servants of the garments of mortality and abasement, and attire them in the robes of Thine eternity and Thy glory, and lead the poor unto the shores of Thy holiness and all sufficient riches. I yield thee such thanks as can enable the Heavenly Dove to warble forth, upon the branches of the Lote-Tree of Immortality, her song,: "Verily Thou art God. No God is there besides Thee. From eternity Thou hast been exalted above the praise of aught else but Thee, and

been high above the description of any one except Thyself." I yield Thee such thanks as can cause the Nightingale of Glory to pour forth its melody in the highest heaven: " Ali (the Bab), in truth, is Thy servant whom Thou has singled out from among Thy Messengers and Thy chosen ones, and made Him to be the Manifestation of Thyself and all that pertaineth unto Thee, and that concerneth the revelation of Thine attributes and the evidences of Thy names." I yield Thee such thanks as can stir up all things to extol Thee, and to glorify Thine Essence, and unloose the tongues of all beings to magnify the sovereignty of Thy beauty.

READING #1 HW #13

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.

READING #2 PUP pg. 296-299 No matter how much... in the Gospels. (302-305)

No matter how much man may acquire material virtues, he will not be able to realize and express the highest possibilities of life without spiritual graces. God has created all earthly things under a law of progression in material degrees, but He has created man and endowed him with powers of advancement toward spiritual and transcendental kingdoms. He has not created material phenomena after His own image and likeness, but He has created man after that image and with potential power to attain that likeness. He has distinguished man above all other created things. All created things except man are captives of nature and the sense world, but in man there has been created an ideal power by which he may perceive intellectual or spiritual realities. He has brought forth everything necessary for the life of this world, but man is a creation intended for the reflection of divine virtues. Consider that the highest type of creation below man is the animal, which is superior to all degrees of life except man. Manifestly, the animal has been created for the life of this world. Its highest virtue is to express excellence in the material plane of existence. The animal is perfect when its body is healthy and its physical senses are whole. When it is characterized by the attributes of physical health, when its physical forces are in working order, when food and surrounding conditions minister to its needs, it has attained the ultimate perfection of its kingdom. But man does not depend upon these things for his virtues. No matter how perfect his health and physical powers, if that is all, he has not yet risen above the degree of a perfect animal. Beyond and above this, God has opened the doors of ideal virtues and attainments before the face of man. He has created in his being the mysteries of the divine Kingdom. He has bestowed upon him the power of intellect so that through the attribute of reason, when fortified by the Holy Spirit, he may penetrate and discover ideal realities and become informed of the mysteries of the world of significances. As this power to penetrate the ideal knowledges is superhuman, supernatural, man becomes the collective center of spiritual as well as material forces so that the divine spirit may manifest itself in his being, the effulgences of the Kingdom shine within the

sanctuary of his heart, the signs of the attributes and perfections of God reveal themselves in a newness of life, the everlasting glory and eternal existence be attained, the knowledge of God illumine, and the mysteries of the realm of might be unsealed.

Man is like unto this lamp, but the effulgences of the Kingdom are like the rays of the lamp. Man is like unto the glass, but spiritual splendors are like unto the light within the glass. No matter how translucent the glass may be, as long as there is no light within, it remains dark. Likewise, man, no matter how much he advances in material accomplishments, will remain like the glass without light if he is deprived of the spiritual virtues. Material virtues are like unto a perfect body, but this body is in need of the spirit. No matter how handsome and perfect the body may be, if it is deprived of the spirit and its animus, it is dead. But when that same body is affiliated with the spirit and expressing life, perfection and virtue become realized in it. Deprived of the Holy Spirit and its bounties, man is spiritually dead

Children, for instance, no matter how good and pure, no matter how healthy their bodies, are, nevertheless, considered imperfect because the power of intellect is not fully manifest in them. When the intellectual power fully displays its influences and they attain to the age of maturity, they are considered as perfect. Likewise, man, no matter how much he may advance in worldly affairs and make progress in material civilization, is imperfect unless he is quickened by the bounties of the Holy Spirit; for it is evident that until he receives that divine impetus he is ignorant and deprived. For this reason Jesus Christ said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By this Christ meant that unless man is released from the material world, freed from the captivity of materialism and receiving a portion of the bounties of the spiritual world, he shall be deprived of the bestowals and favors of the Kingdom of God, and the utmost we can say of him is that he is a perfect animal. No one can rightly call him a man. In another place He said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The meaning of this is that if man is a captive of nature, he is like unto an animal because he is only a body physically born—that is, he belongs to the world of matter and remains subject to the law and control of nature. But if he is baptized with the Holy Spirit, if he is freed from the bondage of nature, released from animalistic tendencies and advanced in the human realm, he is fitted to enter into the divine Kingdom. The world of the Kingdom is the realm of divine bestowals and the bounties of God. It is attainment of the highest virtues of humanity; it is nearness to God; it is capacity to receive the bounties of the ancient Lord. When man advances to this station, he attains the second birth. Before his first or physical birth man was in the world of the matrix. He had no knowledge of this world; his eyes could not see; his ears could not hear. When he was born from the world of the matrix, he beheld another world. The sun was shining with its splendors, the moon radiant in the heavens, the stars twinkling in the expansive firmament, the seas surging, trees verdant and green, all kinds of creatures enjoying life here, infinite bounties prepared for him. In the world of the matrix none of these things existed. In that world he had no knowledge of this vast range of existence; nay, rather, he would have denied the reality of this world. But after his birth he began to open his eyes and behold the wonders of this illimitable universe. Similarly, as long as man is in the matrix of the human world, as long as he is the captive of nature, he is out of touch and without knowledge of the universe of the Kingdom. If he attains rebirth while in the world of nature, he will become informed of the divine world. He will observe that another and a higher world exists. Wonderful bounties descend; eternal life awaits; everlasting glory surrounds him.

All the signs of reality and greatness are there. He will see the lights of God. All these experiences will be his when he is born out of the world of nature into the divine world. Therefore, for the perfect man there are two kinds of birth: the first, physical birth, is from the matrix of the mother; the second, or spiritual birth, is from the world of nature. In both he is without knowledge of the new world of existence he is entering. Therefore, rebirth means his release from the captivity of nature, freedom from attachment to this mortal and material life. This is the second, or spiritual, birth of which Jesus Christ spoke in the Gospels.

(READING #3 BWF pg. 67

O My servants!

Could ye apprehend with what wonders of My munificence and bounty I have willed to entrust your souls, ye would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves—a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being. Ye would find yourselves independent of all else but Me, and would perceive, with your inner and outer eye, and as manifest as the revelation of My effulgent

Name, the seas of My loving-kindness and bounty moving within you. Suffer not your idle fancies, your evil passions, your insincerity and blindness of heart to dim the luster, or stain the sanctity, of so lofty a station. Ye are even as the bird which soareth, with the full force of its mighty wings and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of the heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the earth below it, and, having been entrapped in the mesh of its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came. Powerless to shake off the burden weighing on its sullied wings, that bird, hitherto animate of the heavens, is now forced to seek a dwelling-place upon the dust. Wherefore, O My servants, defile not your wings with the clay of waywardness and vain desires, and suffer them not to be stained with the dust of envy and hate, that ye may not be hindered from soaring in the heavens of My divine knowledge. [GL # 153 CLIII]

My loving-kindness and bounty moving within you. Suffer not your idle fancies, your evil passions, your insincerity and blindness of heart to dim the luster, or stain the sanctity of so lofty a station. Ye are even as the bird that soareth, with the full force of its mighty wing and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the below it, and, having been entrapped by the mesh of its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came. Powerless to shake off the burden weighing on its sullied wings, that bird hitherto an inmate of the heavens is now forced to seek a dwelling place in the dust. Wherefore, O My servants, defile not your wings with the clay of waywardness and vain desires, and suffer them not to be stained with the dust of envy and hate, that ye may not be hindered from soaring in the heavens of My divine knowledge.

The unique position held by the believers lies largely in their ability, providing their self-dedication is sincere enough and their will strong enough, to visualize themselves in this state of God-likeness, and to bend every energy expressing in daily life the outward manifestations 'of those inward mysteries which, as a divine gift, are deposited within you.' The uniqueness of their position consists in their

acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh as the Logos, the Word of God And since He has unequivocally stated that man is capable of 'clothing himself with the characteristics of God' and commanded him to do so, those who believe in Him are bound to obey Him. ... 'You have no excuse to bring before God if you fail to live according to His command...' -PUP- pg. 466

But the effort toward this attainment is not made a matter of blind obedience. Far from it.

You must come into the knowledge of the divine manifestations and their teachings through proofs and evidences. You must unseal the mysteries of the supreme kingdom and become capable of discovering the inner realities of things. Then shall you be the manifestations of the mercy of God and true believers, firm and steadfast in the cause of God. [PUP #81] p 130]

The goal is made so supremely attractive; the path marked so plainly and the example of one who walked that path and attained that goal is held before us so alluring that an enthusiasm is generated, a determination logically evolved and a will strengthened which makes success certain if the seeker is steadfast in faith, meditates and prays much, studies the Creative Word daily and gives to others constantly the Bread of Life which he has received, for the channel must be kept open or else the supply from the reservoir will become clogged.

READING #4 PUP pg. 222-223 (227-228) [#81 p 130]

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

READING #5 PUP pg. 220-221

In the beginning of his human life man was embryonic in the world of the matrix. There he received capacity and endowment for the reality of human existence. The forces and powers necessary for this world were bestowed upon him in that limited condition. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially in the other. He needed ears; he obtained them there in readiness and preparation for his new existence. The powers requisite in this world were bestowed upon him in the world of the matrix, so that when he entered this world of real existence he not only possessed all necessary functions and powers but found provision for his material sustenance awaiting him.

Therefore, in this world he must prepare himself for the life beyond. That which he needs in the life of the kingdom he must obtain here. Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so likewise the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world.

Man's progress throughout all the 'worlds of God' depends upon his developing those spiritual organs and characteristics upon the possession of which his full and active life in those worlds is determined. The cultivation of the attitude of mind which assumes ones own potential ability to reveal those qualities of the Divine which the Creator has deposited within each of us, is the surest way to insure

their outward manifestation in daily life.

Another aspect of the unique position occupied by the sincere Bahá'í lies in the fact of his absolute conviction of the endless continuation of his individual existence throughout all 'the worlds of God.' This will be taken up more exhaustively in the next lesson but it has a direct bearing on man's achievement of his true station. For, since he has all eternity in which to make progress in this path, the only thing of immediate necessity is to begin.

Also, we are assured of assistance 'by the invisible powers'. 'Rest thou assured that the Eternal Outpourings shall descend upon thee and the confirmations of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh shall encircle thee.' Ábdu'l-Bahá Tablets

READING #6 Gl pg. 214-215

The heights which, through the most gracious favor of God, mortal man can attain, in this Day, are as yet unrevealed to his sight. The world of being hath never had, nor doth it yet possess the capacity for such a revelation. The day, however, is approaching when the potentialities of so great a favor will, by virtue of His behest, be manifested unto men. 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. He, verily, speaketh the truth, and summoneth all mankind to the way of Him who is the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.

All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. The Almighty beareth Me witness: To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy compassion and loving-kindness towards all people and kindreds of the earth. Say: O friends! Drink your fill from this crystal stream that floweth through the heavenly grace of Him who is the Lord of Names. Let others partake of its waters in My name, that the leaders of men in every land may fully recognize the purpose for which the Eternal Truth hath been revealed, and the reason for which they themselves have created.

The purpose for which man has been created is to attain the true station of manhood which is nothing less than a steadily advancing progress toward likeness to his Creator. This progress and attainment to this goal depends entirely upon the will of man. 'All that ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. GL - pg. 144

READING # 7 Gl pg. 287

The purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.

The purpose of the coming of the manifestation of God is to aid us in dispelling the darkness of the animal nature in order to reveal man's true nature which is inherently God-like. And also, to develop a binding unity amongst such men which shall carry forward the divine civilization, the kingdom of God on earth.

READING #8 Gl pg. 65-66

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him- a capacity that must need be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation... Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it the recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all His names and attributes, and made it the mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.

These energies with which the Day Star of Divine bounty and source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted by their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted from the face of the mirror, it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.

To return to the statement that a steadfast and unwavering conviction of your personal ability to attain to the high station of which you are potentially capable is essential to its success, Ábdu'l-Bahá makes a very important statement in speaking of immortality:

"The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, a cause of human debasement and low minds, a source of fear and abjection. It has been conducive to the dispersion and weakening of human thought, whereas the realization of existence and continuity has upraised man the sublimity of ideals, established the foundation of human progress, and stimulated the development of human virtues..." PUP - pg. 86

This is equally true of the conception of man as primarily influenced by his animal propensities, rather than by his divine qualities. In fact, it is true that any concept, firmly and consistently held, effects decisively our whole attitude, morals, life, and determines success or failure in every undertaking. Nothing will aid so powerfully in stimulating the conviction of our inherent potentialities of relative perfection as the constant study and meditation upon the words of Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá, for they constantly emphasize the nobility and grandeur of the reality of man. It is our task, then, to hold before our minds constantly the picture of ourselves as They paint it.

We are not necessarily subject to the habits of reaction to the events of daily life which in the pass have swayed us. It is quite possible for us to "become free from all the laws of nature." There is no obligation for us to allow impatience, worry, pride, fear, or any other of the thousand concepts which have made life miserable for us, to any longer effect us.

READING #9 G1 pg. 185-186

... "Wonder not, if my Best- Beloved be closer to me than my own self; wonder at this, that I, despite such nearness, should still be so far from Him." ... Considering what God hath revealed, that, "we are closer to man than his life-vein," the poet hath, in allusion to this verse, stated that though the revelation of my Best-Beloved hath so permeated my being that He is closer to than my life-vein, yet, notwithstanding my certitude of its reality and my recognition of my station, I am still so far removed from Him. By this , he meaneth that his heart, which is the seat of the All- Merciful and the throne wherein abideth the splendor of His revelation, is forgetful of its Creator, hath strayed from His path, hath shut out itself from His glory, and is stained with the defilement of earthly desires.

It should be remembered in this connection that the one true God is in Himself exalted beyond and above proximity and remoteness. His reality transcendeth such limitations. His relationship to His creatures knoweth no degrees. That some are near and others are far is to be ascribed to the Manifestations themselves.

That the heart is the throne, in which the Revelation of God the All-Merciful is centered, is attested by the holy utterances which we have formerly revealed. Among them is the saying: "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." How often hath the human heart, which is the recipient of the light of God and the seat of the revelation of the all-Merciful, erred from Him who is the source of that light and the Well spring of that revelation. It is the waywardness of the heart that removeth it far from God, and commandeth it to remoteness from Him. Those hearts, however, that are aware of His Presence, are close to Him, and are to be regarded as having drawn nigh unto His throne.

The one supreme act of man's will must be focused upon the surrender of his will to the Will of God as expressed in the words and example of the Manifestation in this Day.

Your true nature is not expressed in those qualities and characteristics which you share with the animal, but in those which you share with Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá.

READING #10 HW P#72-73

O MY SERVANT!

Thou art even as a finely tempered sword concealed in the darkness of its sheath and its value hidden from the artificer's knowledge. Wherefore come forth from the sheath of self and desire that thy worth may be made resplendent and manifest unto all the world.

O MY FRIEND!

Thou art the day-star of the heaven 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.

Immortality and Eternity



Lesson V

Study and meditate upon the following readings:

Prayer P&M pg. 197 -198 CXVI

1 HW A#32, #33, #63 -(Note different uses of the word 'Death')

2 HW P#44 (Note closing lines)

3 HW P#70 -"the realm of being" "the domain of Eternality" "the holy ecstasy" "freed from death"

4 HW P#55 "From the well-spring of detachment"

5 HW P#58 "The cup of eternal life which quickens the heart of the dead"

6 HW A#23 "To the eternal I call thee."

7 HW A#64 "My eternity is my creation, I have created it for thee."

8 SAQ pg. 234-236 Soul, mind and spirit.

9 SAQ pg. 277-279 Relation of soul and spirit to the body man.

10 PUP pg. 86 The conception of annihilation ...virtues will cease. (89)

11 PUP pg. 234-236 In the world of existence...spirit is the reality. (239-241)

12 SAQ pg. 280-282 Whole chapter.

13 SAQ pg. 259-262 Whole chapter (note the distinction between immortality and eternity.) Prayer P&M pg. 42-43 XXXIII

PRAYER P&M pg. 197

Purify, O my God, the hearts of Thy creatures with the power of Thy sovereignty and might, that Thy words may sink deep into them. I know not what is in their hearts, O my God, nor can tell the thoughts they think of Thee. Methinks that they imagine that Thy purpose in calling them to Thine all-highest horizon is to heighten the glory of Thy majesty and power. For had they been satisfied that Thou summonest them to that which will recreate their hearts and immortalize their souls, they would never have fled from Thy governance, nor deserted the shadow of the tree of Thy oneness. Clear away, then, the sight of Thy creatures, O my God, that they may recognize Him Who showeth forth the Godhead as One Who is sanctified from all that pertaineth unto them, and Who, wholly for Thy sake, is summoning them to the horizon of Thy unity, at a time when every moment of His life is beset with peril. Had His aim been the preservation of His own Self, He would never have left it at the mercy of

Thy foes.

I swear by Thy glory! I have accepted to be tried by manifold adversities for no purpose except to regenerate all that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth. Whoso hath loved Thee, can never feel attached to his own self, except for the purpose of furthering Thy Cause; and whoso hath recognized Thee can recognize naught else except Thee, and can turn to no one save Thee.

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. (Prayers and Meditations, pages 197-199)

READING #1 HW A#31, 32, 63 (note the different uses of the word 'death')

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 shall be called to give account of thy deeds.

O SON OF THE SUPREME!

I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore does thou grieve? I made the light to shed on thee its splendor. Why dost thou veil thyself therefrom?

O SON OF MAN!

The light hath shone on thee from the horizon of the sacred Mount and the spirit of enlightenment hath breathed in the Sinai of thy heart. Wherefore, 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. Thus death may not come upon thee, neither weariness nor trouble.

Note the different uses of the word 'death'. 'Death unheralded' - physical death - passing into the next life. "Death a messenger of joy" - passing into the glorious next life. "May death not come upon thee" - spiritual death or remoteness from God.

READING #2 HW P#44 (note closing lines)

O COMPANION OF MY THRONE!

Hear no evil and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh nor weep. 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 abasement for any one, that thine own abasement be not exposed. 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

"mortal frame" - this physical body. "eternal kingdom" - eternity.

READING #3 HW P#70

O SON OF WORLDLINESS! Pleasant is the realm of being, wert thou to attain there to; glorious is the domain of eternity, shouldst thou pass beyond the world of mortality; sweet is the holy ecstasy if thou drinkest of the mystic chalice from the hands of the celestial youth. Shouldst thou attain this station, thou wouldst be freed from destruction and death, from toil and sin.

"freed from destruction and death" - spiritual, not physical.

READING #4 HW P#55

O SON OF PASSION!

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches and in perfect peace advance into the realm of poverty; that from the wellspring of detachment thou mayest quaff the wine of immortal life.

READING #5 HW P#56

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

Wouldst thou seek the grace of the Holy Spirit, enter into fellowship with the righteous, for he hath drunk from the cup of eternal life at the hands of the immortal Cup-bearer and even as the true morn doth quick and illumine the hearts of the dead.

"cup of eternal life" - the Revelation of God which quickens the hearts of the spiritually dead.

"immortal Cup- bearer" - God's Manifestation.

READING #6 HW A#23

O SON OF THE SUPREME!

To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire and seek thine own?

"To the eternal I call thee" - To eternal life the Manifestation of God calls man.

READING #7 HW A#64

O SON OF MAN!

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. See Gleanings pg, 183.

The Book of God is wide open, and His Word is summoning mankind unto Him. No more than a mere handful, however, hath been found willing to cleave to His Cause, or to become the instruments for its promotion. These few have been endued with the Divine Elixir that can, alone, transmute into purest gold the dross of the world, and have been empowered to administer the infallible remedy for all the ills that afflict the children of men. No man can obtain everlasting life, unless he embraceth the truth of this inestimable, this wondrous, and sublime Revelation. (Gleanings, page 183)

The human spirit is immortal but not eternal without the conscious knowledge of the Manifestation of God. "This is life eternal (true existence) to know God through Jesus Christ whom He hath sent."
-Gospel of John.

See SAQ pg. 226 But if the human spirit will rejoice and be attracted to the Kingdom of God, if the inner sight becomes opened, and the spiritual hearing strengthened, and the spiritual feelings predominant, he will see the immortality of the spirit as clearly as he sees the sun, and the glad tidings and signs of God will encompass him. (Some Answered Questions, page 226)

The rather astonishing fact is, however, that the bone of contention and matter of doubt, even among the so-called believers in these prophets, is in the reality of this continuation of life, which the enlightened ones have always taken for granted. The emphasis is upon quality, temp, nature and route of the life lived here and now.

There is confusion regarding the terms "immortality" and "life eternal" These terms are not only distinct in meaning but their connotations are so different as to constitute a radically diverging line of thought. It is true that the endless continuance of the individual spirit, as a necessary and axiomatic postulate, is essential, for without that the very foundation of being is endangered, but, after all, the quality of the continuing life is vastly more important.

READING #8 SAQ pg. 243-244

... spirit is universally divided into five categories: the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the spirit of faith, and the Holy Spirit.

The vegetable spirit is the power of growth which is brought about in the seed through the influence of other existences.

The animal spirit is the power of all the senses, which is realized from the composition and mingling of elements; when this composition decomposes, the power also perishes and becomes annihilated. It may be likened to this lamp: when the oil, wick and fire are combined, it is lighted; and when this combination is dissolved - that is to say, when the combined parts are separated from one another - the lamp also is extinguished.

The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul, and these two names - the human spirit and the rational soul - designate one thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul, embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits

discovers the realities of things and becomes cognizant of their peculiarities and effects, and of the qualities and properties of beings. But the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, polished and brilliant, is still in need of light. Until a ray of the sun reflects upon it, it cannot discover the heavenly secrets.

But the mind is the power of the human spirit. Spirit is the lamp; mind is the light which shines from the lamp. Spirit is the tree, and the mind is the fruit. Mind is the perfection of the spirit and is its essential quality, as the sun's rays are the essential necessity of the sun.

This explanation, though short, is complete; therefore, reflect upon it, and if God wills, you may become acquainted with the details. (Some Answered Questions, pages 208-209)

Soul, Mind and Spirit.

READING #9 SAQ pg. 277-279

Some think that the body is the substance and exists by itself, and that the spirit is accidental and depends upon the substance of the body, although, on the contrary, the rational soul is the substance, and the body depends upon it. If the accident - that is to say, the body - be destroyed, the substance, the spirit, remains.

Second, the rational soul, meaning the human spirit, does not descend into the body - that is to say, it does not enter it, for descent and entrance are characteristics of bodies, and the rational soul is exempt from this. The spirit never entered this body, so in quitting it, it will not be in need of an abiding-place: no, the spirit is connected with the body, as this light is with this mirror. When the mirror is clear and perfect, the light of the lamp will be apparent in it, and when the mirror becomes covered with dust or breaks, the light will disappear.

The rational soul - that is to say, the human spirit - has neither entered this body nor existed through it; so after the disintegration of the composition of the body, how should it be in need of a substance through which it may exist? On the contrary, the rational soul is the substance through which the body exists. The personality of the rational soul is from its beginning; it is not due to the instrumentality of the body, but the state and the personality of the rational soul may be strengthened in this world; it will make progress and will attain to the degrees of perfection, or it will remain in the lowest abyss of ignorance, veiled and deprived from beholding the signs of God.

The progress of man's spirit in the divine world, after the severance of its connection with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the sincere prayers of other human souls, or through the charities and important good works which are performed in its name.

These infants are under the shadow of the favor of God; and as they have not committed any sin and are not soiled with the impurities of the world of nature, they are the centers of the manifestation of bounty, and the Eye of Compassion will be turned upon them. (Some Answered Questions, pages 239-240)

Relation of soul and spirit to the body of man.

READING #10 PUP pg. 86

The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, a cause of human debasement and lowliness, a source of human fear and abjection. It has been conducive to the dispersion and weakening of human thought, whereas the realization of existence and continuity has upraised man to sublimity of ideals, established the foundations of human progress and stimulated the development of heavenly virtues; therefore, it behooves man to abandon thoughts of nonexistence and death, which are absolutely imaginary, and see himself ever-living, everlasting in the divine purpose of his creation. He must turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul so that day by day and hour by hour he may advance upward and higher to spiritual perception of the continuity of the human reality. If he dwells upon the thought of nonexistence, he will become utterly incompetent; with weakened willpower his ambition for progress will be lessened and the acquisition of human virtues will cease. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 89)

Thoughts of death are degrading and pure imagination.

We will consider the proofs as offered in the Bahá'í Revelation on immortality, the meaning of that term. We should become so familiar with these proofs, and so filled with unfailing certitude of their evidence that we are able without any hesitation to answer any questions on the subject. There are four main proofs as detailed by Ábdu'l-Bahá but many side-lights offering corroborative evidence.

First: "The inner and essential reality of man is not composed of elements and therefore cannot be decomposed." PUP pg. 410

Second: No sign (evidence of existence) can come from a non-existent thing. SAQ pg. 261

Third : The changes or mutilation of the body have no effect upon the spirit of man. PUP pg. 253

Fourth: Total annihilation is impossible. It is unknown in the world of nature. The body is composed of elements subject to decomposition, but this has no relation, but this has no relation to the spirit. PUP pg. 84

This conclusion, that the spirit of man is ever-living and active, is inescapable to the accurate thinker. At any rate, all the burden of proof is on those who deny it. All the evidence we have is in its favor.

READING #11 PUP pg. 234-236

In the world of existence there is nothing so important as spirit, nothing so essential as the spirit of man. The spirit of man is the most noble of phenomena. The spirit of man is the meeting between man and God. The spirit of man is the animus of human life and the collective center of all human virtues. The spirit of man is the cause of the illumination of this world. The world may be likened to the body; man is the spirit of the body, because the light of the world is the human spirit. Man is the life of the world, and the life of man is the spirit. The happiness of the world depends upon man, and the happiness of man is dependent upon the spirit. The world may be likened to the lamp chimney,

whereas man is the light. Man himself may be likened to the lamp; his spirit is the light within the lamp. Therefore, we will speak of this spirit. The philosophers of the world are divided into two classes: materialists, who deny the spirit and its immortality, and the divine philosophers, the wise men of God, the true illuminati who believe in the spirit and its continuance hereafter. The ancient philosophers taught that man consists simply of the material elements which compose his cellular structure and that when this composition is disintegrated the life of man becomes extinct. They reasoned that man is body only, and from this elemental composition the organs and their functions, the senses, powers and attributes which characterize man have proceeded, and that these disappear completely with the physical body. This is practically the statement of all the materialists.

The divine philosophers proclaim that the spirit of man is ever-living and eternal, and because of the objections of the materialists, these wise men of God have advanced rational proofs to support the validity of their statement. Inasmuch as the materialistic philosophers deny the Books of God, scriptural demonstration is not evidence to them, and materialistic proofs are necessary. Answering them, the men of divine knowledge have said that all existing phenomena may be resolved into grades or kingdoms, classified progressively as mineral, vegetable, animal and human, each of which possesses its degree of function and intelligence. When we consider the mineral, we find that it exists and is possessed of the power of affinity or combination. The vegetable possesses the qualities of the mineral plus the augmentative virtue or power of growth. It is, therefore, evident that the vegetable kingdom is superior to the mineral. The animal kingdom in turn possesses the qualities of the mineral and vegetable plus the five senses of perception whereof the kingdoms below it are lacking. Likewise, the power of memory inherent in the animal does not exist in the lower kingdoms.

Just as the animal is more noble than the vegetable and mineral, so man is superior to the animal. The animal is bereft of ideality - that is to say, it is a captive of the world of nature and not in touch with that which lies within and beyond nature; it is without spiritual susceptibilities, deprived of the attractions of consciousness, unconscious of the world of God and incapable of deviating from the law of nature. It is different with man. Man is possessed of the emanations of consciousness; he has perception, ideality and is capable of discovering the mysteries of the universe. All the industries, inventions and facilities surrounding our daily life were at one time hidden secrets of nature, but the reality of man penetrated them and made them subject to his purposes. According to nature's laws they should have remained latent and hidden; but man, having transcended those laws, discovered these mysteries and brought them out of the plane of the invisible into the realm of the known and visible. How wonderful is the spirit of man! One of the mysteries of natural phenomena is electricity. Man has discovered this illimitable power and made it captive to his uses. How many of nature's secrets have been penetrated and revealed! Columbus, while in Spain, discovered America. Man has accurately determined that the sun is stationary while the earth revolves about it. The animal cannot do this. Man perceives the mirage to be an illusion. This is beyond the power of the animal. The animal can only know through sense impressions and cannot grasp intellectual realities. The animal cannot conceive of the power of thought. This is an abstract intellectual matter and not limited to the senses. The animal is incapable of knowing that the earth is round. In brief, abstract intellectual phenomena are human powers. All creation below the kingdom of man is the captive of nature; it cannot deviate in the slightest degree from nature's laws. But man wrests the sword of dominion from nature's hand and uses it upon nature's head. For example, it is a natural exigency that man should be a dweller upon the

earth, but the power of the human spirit transcends this limitation, and he soars aloft in airplanes. This is contrary to the law and requirement of nature. He sails at high speed upon the ocean and dives beneath its surface in submarines. He imprisons the human voice in a phonograph and communicates in the twinkling of an eye from East to West. These are things we know to be contrary to the limitations of natural law. Man transcends nature, while the mineral, vegetable and animal are helplessly subject to it. This can be done only through the power of the spirit, because the spirit is the reality. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 239-241)

But simply to live an endless life has no great attractions in itself. It is the "quality" of that life that counts, whatever the plane one is considering. One moment of high endeavor, of pure aspiration, of divine understanding, even on this material plane, far outweighs months and years of the routine of mere existence.

READING #12 SAQ pg. 280-282

You question about eternal life and the entrance into the Kingdom. The outer expression used for the Kingdom is heaven; but this is a comparison and similitude, not a reality or fact, for the Kingdom is not a material place; it is sanctified from time and place. It is a spiritual world, a divine world, and the center of the Sovereignty of God; it is freed from body and that which is corporeal, and it is purified and sanctified from the imaginations of the human world. To be limited to place is a property of bodies and not of spirits. Place and time surround the body, not the mind and spirit. Observe that the body of man is confined to a small place; it covers only two spans of earth. But the spirit and mind of man travel to all countries and regions -even through the limitless space of the heavens -surround all that exists, and make discoveries in the exalted spheres and infinite distances. This is because the spirit has no place; it is placeless; and for the spirit the earth and the heaven are as one since it makes discoveries in both. But the body is limited to a place and does not know that which is beyond it.

For life is of two kinds: that of the body and that of the spirit. The life of the body is material life, but the life of the spirit expresses the existence of the Kingdom, which consists in receiving the Spirit of God and becoming vivified by the breath of the Holy Spirit. Although the material life has existence, it is pure nonexistence and absolute death for the holy saints. So man exists, and this stone also exists, but what a difference between the existence of man and that of the stone! Though the stone exists, in relation to the existence of man it is nonexistent.

The meaning of eternal life is the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the flower receives the gift of the season, the air, and the breezes of spring. Consider: this flower had life in the beginning like the life of the mineral; but by the coming of the season of spring, of the bounty of the clouds of the springtime, and of the heat of the glowing sun, it attained to another life of the utmost freshness, delicacy and fragrance. The first life of the flower, in comparison to the second life, is death.

The meaning is that the life of the Kingdom is the life of the spirit, the eternal life, and that it is purified from place, like the spirit of man which has no place. For if you examine the human body, you will not find a special spot or locality for the spirit, for it has never had a place; it is immaterial. It has a connection with the body like that of the sun with this mirror. The sun is not within the mirror, but it has a connection with the mirror.

In the same way the world of the Kingdom is sanctified from everything that can be perceived by the eye or by the other senses - hearing, smell, taste or touch. The mind which is in man, the existence of which is recognized -where is it in him? If you examine the body with the eye, the ear or the other senses, you will not find it; nevertheless, it exists. Therefore, the mind has no place, but it is connected with the brain. The Kingdom is also like this. In the same way love has no place, but it is connected with the heart; so the Kingdom has no place, but is connected with man.

Entrance into the Kingdom is through the love of God, through detachment, through holiness and chastity, through truthfulness, purity, steadfastness, faithfulness and the sacrifice of life.

These explanations show that man is immortal and lives eternally. For those who believe in God, who have love of God, and faith, life is excellent - that is, it is eternal; but to those souls who are veiled from God, although they have life, it is dark, and in comparison with the life of believers it is nonexistence.

For example, the eye and the nail are living; but the life of the nail in relation to the life of the eye is nonexistent. This stone and this man both exist; but the stone in relation to the existence of man is nonexistent; it has no being; for when man dies, and his body is destroyed and annihilated, it becomes like stone and earth. Therefore, it is clear that although the mineral exists, in relation to man it is nonexistent.

In the same way, the souls who are veiled from God, although they exist in this world and in the world after death, are, in comparison with the holy existence of the children of the Kingdom of God, nonexistent and separated from God. (Some Answered Questions, pages 241-243)

Eternal life is here defined by implication. Life of the kingdom is synonymous with Eternal and Life of the spirit. Material life is non-existence compared with the life of the kingdom. The kingdom, Heaven, Life Eternal has no place but is connected with man.

READING #13 SAQ pg. 259-262

Having shown that the spirit of man exists, we must prove its immortality.

The immortality of the spirit is mentioned in the Holy Books; it is the fundamental basis of the divine religions. Now punishments and rewards are said to be of two kinds: first, the rewards and punishments of this life; second, those of the other world. But the paradise and hell of existence are found in all the worlds of God, whether in this world or in the spiritual heavenly worlds. Gaining these rewards is the gaining of eternal life. That is why Christ said, "Act in such a way that you may find eternal life, and that you may be born of water and the spirit, so that you may enter into the Kingdom."

The rewards of this life are the virtues and perfections which adorn the reality of man. For example, he was dark and becomes luminous; he was ignorant and becomes wise; he was neglectful and becomes vigilant; he was asleep and becomes awakened; he was dead and becomes living; he was blind and becomes a seer; he was deaf and becomes a hearer; he was earthly and becomes heavenly; he was material and becomes spiritual. Through these rewards he gains spiritual birth and becomes a new creature. He becomes the manifestation of the verse in the Gospel where it is said of the disciples that they "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" - that is to

say, they were delivered from the animal characteristics and qualities which are the characteristics of human nature, and they became qualified with the divine characteristics, which are the bounty of God. This is the meaning of the second birth. For such people there is no greater torture than being veiled from God, and no more severe punishment than sensual vices, dark qualities, lowness of nature, engrossment in carnal desires. When they are delivered through the light of faith from the darkness of these vices, and become illuminated with the radiance of the sun of reality, and ennobled with all the virtues, they esteem this the greatest reward, and they know it to be the true paradise. In the same way they consider that the spiritual punishment - that is to say, the torture and punishment of existence - is to be subjected to the world of nature; to be veiled from God; to be brutal and ignorant; to fall into carnal lusts; to be absorbed in animal frailties; to be characterized with dark qualities, such as falsehood, tyranny, cruelty, attachment to the affairs of the world, and being immersed in satanic ideas. For them, these are the greatest punishments and tortures.

Likewise, the rewards of the other world are the eternal life which is clearly mentioned in all the Holy Books, the divine perfections, the eternal bounties and everlasting felicity. The rewards of the other world are the perfections and the peace obtained in the spiritual worlds after leaving this world, while the rewards of this life are the real luminous perfections which are realized in this world, and which are the cause of eternal life, for they are the very progress of existence. It is like the man who passes from the embryonic world to the state of maturity and becomes the manifestation of these words: "Blessed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of Makers." The rewards of the other world are peace, the spiritual graces, the various spiritual gifts in the Kingdom of God, the gaining of the desires of the heart and the soul, and the meeting of God in the world of eternity. In the same way the punishments of the other world - that is to say, the torments of the other world - consist in being deprived of the special divine blessings and the absolute bounties, and falling into the lowest degrees of existence. He who is deprived of these divine favors, although he continues after death, is considered as dead by the people of truth.

The logical proof of the immortality of the spirit is this, that no sign can come from a nonexisting thing - that is to say, it is impossible that from absolute nonexistence signs should appear - for the signs are the consequence of an existence, and the consequence depends upon the existence of the principle. So from a nonexisting sun no light can radiate; from a nonexisting sea no waves appear; from a nonexisting cloud no rain falls; a nonexisting tree yields no fruit; a nonexisting man neither manifests nor produces anything. Therefore, as long as signs of existence appear, they are a proof that the possessor of the sign is existent.

Consider that today the Kingdom of Christ exists. From a nonexisting king how could such a great kingdom be manifested? How, from a nonexisting sea, can the waves mount so high? From a nonexisting garden, how can such fragrant breezes be wafted? Reflect that no effect, no trace, no influence remains of any being after its members are dispersed and its elements are decomposed, whether it be a mineral, a vegetable or an animal. There is only the human reality and the spirit of man which, after the disintegration of the members, dispersing of the particles, and the destruction of the composition, persists and continues to act and to have power.

This question is extremely subtle: consider it attentively. This is a rational proof which we are giving, so that the wise may weigh it in the balance of reason and justice. But if the human spirit will rejoice

and be attracted to the Kingdom of God, if the inner sight becomes opened, and the spiritual hearing strengthened, and the spiritual feelings predominant, he will see the immortality of the spirit as clearly as he sees the sun, and the glad tidings and signs of God will encompass him. (Some Answered Questions, pages 223-226)

Trace the distinction between "immortality" and "eternality". Paradise and hell of existence are found in all the worlds of God, whether in this world or in the heavenly spiritual worlds.

"He who is deprived of the Divine Favors, although he continues after death (physical) is considered as dead (spiritually) by the people of truth. BWF - pg. 325

To the prophets of God the words "life" and "death" have no relation to the physical body. In proportion to the spiritual development of those who have learned from it is also true. When we speak of the unborn babe as "alive" we have no mental concept of that "life" in the sense that the adult man conceives it. To him the babe is comparatively as one "dead". So to one who knows the full, illumined, creative, ecstatic "life" of the world of the spirit, as God's prophets have known it to a supreme degree and into which their followers have been ushered, that life of faith which knoweth no death and the existence which is crowned by immortality - is the only true life.

He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. As Jesus said, 'I am come that ye may have Life and have it more abundantly.'

Those who do not know that life, are in comparison with those with those who know it and live it, as truly dead. "Resurrection", then, is nothing but that experience of rising from the cage of the mortal body into the life of freedom and understanding, a life so much broader and fuller than that experienced by those who knew it not, as is the life of the adult compared with the "life" of the unborn babe This is the water of everlasting life of which Jesus spoke, the teachings and example of the Manifestation of God. This is the "Bread which cometh down from Heaven conferring Everlasting Life" of which Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá speak so often.

This "death" is the "hell", the "outer darkness", the "fire" referred to by all the Prophets of God. These terms are used as symbols of that absence from God, that darkness and agony which belongs to the immersion in the world of materiality, to describe which language offers no words. The world "resurrection" has another meaning, however. It is the trumpet-call of Revelation sounded in the heart of the universe, the rise of the Manifestation of God to proclaim His Cause. see IQAN pg. 116

If it is borne in mind that no fixed meaning can be ascribed to these symbolic words it will help greatly to their spiritual understanding. "To every word there are one and seventy meanings." IQAN pg. 225

Heaven, for instance, has many interpretations. This will be referred to more particularly in the next lesson. In the same way "eternality" has many meanings. So far as our experience of it goes it may be considered a relative term. Life as we know it is relative. No life is lived to its fullest. So "Eternal Life" is an ever-broadening, ever- deepening experience through-out all the worlds of God. Our job is to get on that path, the Path of Life.

Conclusion:

The Manifestation of God in this Day points out the method, the technique of attainment to that Path, how to travel it. The readings suggested give many hints and instructions.

1 Keep your on Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá as the perfect example. Study their words and example. Immerse yourselves in the Ocean of His Utterances.

2 Through prayer and meditation seek to eradicate every atom of the self, which "tempts every moment and spreads a new snare at every breath."

3 Watch carefully the little things of daily life. Seek, as for hidden treasure, opportunities for self-sacrifice.

These are the instructions we have all received. That life is impossible unless the life temporal is carried on constantly with increasing freedom from the attachment and entanglements of selfish interests.

IMMORTALITY we cannot escape.

ETERNALITY is ours for the taking, but the price we pay is the sacrifice of all that we have for the love of the Eternal Beloved.

PRAYER P&M pg. 42-43

Praise be unto Thee, O my God! Thou art He Who by word of His mouth hath revolutionized the entire creation, and by a stroke of His pen hath divided Thy servants one from another. I bear witness, O my God, through a word spoken by Thee in this Revelation all created things were made to expire, and through yet another word all such as Thou didst wish were, by thy grace and bounty, endued with new life.

I render Thee thanks, therefore, and extol Thee, in the name of all them that are dear to Thee, for that Thou hast caused them to be born again, by reason of the living waters which have flowed down from the mouth of Thy will. Since Thou hast quicken them by Thy bounteousness, O my God, make them steadfastly inclined, through Thy graciousness, towards Thy will; and since Thou didst suffer them to enter into Thy Tabernacle of thy Cause, grant by Thy grace that they may not be kept back from Thee.

Real Life and Death



Lesson VI

Prayer P&M pg. 160-161 XCVI

1 HW A#23, P#58, P#10

2 HW A#61 P#7

3 IQAN pg. 114-123 When the light ...endeavors will achieve.

4 IQAN pg. 22- 23 This wronged one..quickened by the infinite spirit. .

5 Gl pg. 195 In that which is preeminent...Manifestation in this Day.

6 Gl pg. 31 Arise and proclaim ...resurrection of all mankind.

7 Gl pg. 31- 32 This the paradise ...beauty of their Lord.

8 Gl pg. 45- 46 Say, is there any doubt ...wine that is life indeed.

9 Gl pg. 144-145 Give ear ...rejected the signs of God.

10 SAQ pg. 259-261 The rewards of this life...people of truth.

11 PUP pg. 297-299 Man is like unto this lamp...will be attained (303-305)

12 IQAN pg. 61- 69 And now concerning..... morn of true knowledge.

13 IQAN pg. 69- 72 And now with reference...referred to as clouds.

14 Gl. pg. 95 From the heaven of God's will...of the All-possessing.

Prayer P&M pg. 42-43 XXXIII

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those originally cited in the 1922 edition have been retained.

PRAYER P&M pg. 160

XCVI

Magnified, O Lord my God, be Thy Name, hereby the trees of the garden of Thy Revelation have been clad with verdure, and been made to yield the fruits of holiness during this Springtime when the sweet savors of Thy favors and blessings have been wafted over all things, and caused them to bring forth whatsoever had been preordained for them in the Kingdom of Thine irrevocable decree and the Heaven of Thine immutable purpose. I beseech Thee by this very Name not to suffer me to be far from the court of Thy holiness, nor debarred from the exalted sanctuary of Thy unity and oneness.

Ignite, then, O my God, within my breast the fire of Thy love, that its flame may burn up all else except my remembrance of Thee, that every trace of corrupt desire may be entirely mortified within me, and that naught may remain except the glorification of Thy transcendent and all-glorious Being. This is my highest aspiration, mine ardent desire, O Thou Who rulest all things, and in Whose hand is the kingdom of the entire creation. Thou, verily, doest what Thou choosest. No God is there beside Thee, the Almighty, the All- Glorious, the Ever-Forgiving. (Prayers and Meditations, pages 160-161)

READING #1 HW A#23, P#58, P#10

O SON OF THE SUPREME!

To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire and seek thine own? (Arabic Hidden Words, page 23)

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

Wouldst thou seek the grace of the Holy Spirit, enter into fellowship with the righteous, for he hath drunk the cup of eternal life at the hands of the immortal Cup-bearer and even as the true morn doth quicken and illumine the hearts of the dead.

O SON OF DESIRE!

Give ear unto this: Never shall mortal eye recognize the everlasting beauty, nor the lifeless heart delight in aught but in the withered bloom. For like seeketh like, and taketh pleasure in the company of its kind.

In the first two verses death is contrasted with life. Further light is thrown on the meaning of the first quotation by comparison with the third verse - that is just as the lovers of life seek the source of life, so those satisfied with death 'seek that which perisheth.' 'Like seeks like and hath affinity with its kind.'

READING #2 HW A#61, P#7

O SON OF MAN!

Ascend unto My heaven, that thou mayest obtain the joy of reunion, and from the chalice of imperishable glory quaff the peerless wine.

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.

The proximity of the two planes, Life and Death, is indicated and the passing from one to the other (from death to life) dependent upon one's own will and effort. "Take that step (of the soul) and enter eternity."

It is very plain that in these verses, as in all the Teachings, not only is the reference to spiritual life and

death of the body, but of still more importance, still deeper significance, this transformation from 'death unto life' may happen at any moment here and now and the way, method, technique by which this transformation is accomplished is indicated. "Give ear to that which hath been revealed by the Pen of Glory."

READING #3 IQAN pg. 114-123

When the light of Qur'anic Revelation was kindled within the chamber of Muhammad's holy heart, He passed upon the people the verdict of the Last Day, the verdict of resurrection, of judgment, of life, and of death. Thereupon the standards of revolt were hoisted, and the doors of derision opened. Thus hath He, the Spirit of God, recorded, as spoken by the infidels: "And if thou shouldst say, 'After death ye shall surely be raised again,' the infidels will certainly exclaim, 'This is nothing but manifest sorcery.'"(1) Again He speaketh: "If ever thou dost marvel, marvellous surely is their saying, 'What! When we have become dust, shall we be restored in a new creation?'"(2) Thus, in another passage, He wrathfully exclaimeth: "Are We wearied out with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation!"(3)

As the commentators of the Qur'an and they that follow the letter thereof misapprehended the inner meaning of the words of God and failed to grasp their essential purpose, they sought to demonstrate that, according to the rules of grammar, whenever the term "idha" (meaning "if" or "when") precedeth the past tense, it invariably hath reference to the future. Later, they were sore perplexed in attempting to explain those verses of the Book wherein that term did not actually occur. Even as He hath revealed: "And there was a blast on the trumpet, - lo! it is the threatened Day! And every soul is summoned to a reckoning, - with him an impeller and a witness."(1) In explaining this and similar verses, they have in some cases argued that the term "idha" is implied. In other instances, they have idly contended that whereas the Day of Judgment is inevitable, it hath therefore been referred to as an event not of the future but of the past. How vain their sophistry! How grievous their blindness! They refuse to recognize the trumpet-blast which so explicitly in this text was sounded through the revelation of Muhammad. They deprive themselves of the regenerating Spirit of God that breathed into it, and foolishly expect to hear the trumpet-sound of the Seraph of God who is but one of His servants! Hath not the Seraph himself, the angel of the Judgment Day, and his like been ordained by Muhammad's own utterance? Say: What! Will ye give that which is for your good in exchange for that which is evil? Wretched is that which ye have falsely exchanged! Surely ye are a people, evil, in grievous loss.

Nay, by "trumpet" is meant the trumpet-call of Muhammad's Revelation, which was sounded in the heart of the universe, and by "resurrection" is meant His own rise to proclaim the Cause of God. He bade the erring and wayward arise and speed out of the sepulchers of their bodies, arrayed them with the beauteous robe of faith, and quickened them with the breath of a new and wondrous life. Thus at the hour when Muhammad, that divine Beauty, purposed to unveil one of the mysteries hidden in the symbolic terms "resurrection," "judgment," "paradise," and "hell," Gabriel, the Voice of Inspiration, was heard saying: "Erelong will they wag their heads at Thee, and say, 'When shall this be?' Say: 'Perchance it is nigh.'"(1) The implications of this verse alone suffice the peoples of the world, were they to ponder it in their hearts. ...

Thou dost witness today how, notwithstanding the radiant splendor of the Sun of divine knowledge, all the people, whether high or low, have clung to the ways of those abject manifestations of the Prince of Darkness. They continually appeal to them for aid in unraveling the intricacies of their Faith, and, owing to lack of knowledge, they make such replies as can in no wise damage their fame and fortune. It is evident that these souls, vile and miserable as the beetle itself, have had no portion of the musk-laden breeze of eternity, and have never entered the Ridván of heavenly delight. How, therefore, can they impart unto others the imperishable fragrance of holiness? Such is their way, and such will it remain forever. Only those will attain to the knowledge of the Word of God that have turned unto Him, and repudiated the manifestations of Satan. Thus God hath reaffirmed the law of the day of His Revelation, and inscribed it with the pen of power upon the mystic Tablet hidden beneath the veil of celestial glory. Wert thou to heed these words, wert thou to ponder their outward and inner meaning in thy heart, thou wouldst seize the significance of all the abstruse problems which, in this day, have become insuperable barriers between men and the knowledge of the Day of Judgment. Then wilt thou have no more questions to perplex thee. We fain would hope that, God willing, thou wilt not return, deprived and still athirst, from the shores of the ocean of divine mercy, nor come back destitute from the imperishable Sanctuary of thy heart's desire. Let it now be seen what thy search and endeavors will achieve. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 114-123) [26 - 28]

The "Day of Judgement" has diverse meanings. It is the Day of the Manifestation in which all mankind is tested by their recognition, denial or indifference to Him. It is the time when men judge themselves whether they are responsive or indifferent to His call and to the heavenly teachings from whatever source they come.

"The abject beetle can never scent the fragrance of holiness" IQAN pg 117

"That the foulest beetle hath sought the perfume of the musk" IQAN pg 60

The beetle is supposed to have no olfactory organs, just as the bat is almost blind in daylight. Yet so powerful are these 'sweet savors of God' that 'the beetle hath sought the perfume of the musk and the bat the light of the sun'.

READING #4 IQAN pg. 22-24

This wronged One will cite but one of these instances, thus conferring upon mankind, for the sake of God, such bounties as are yet concealed within the treasury of the hidden and sacred Tree, that haply mortal men may not remain deprived of their share of the immortal fruit, and attain to a dewdrop of the waters of everlasting life which, from Baghdad, the "Abode of Peace," are being vouchsafed unto all mankind. We ask for neither meed nor reward. "We nourish your souls for the sake of God; we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks."⁽¹⁾ This is the food that conferreth everlasting life upon the pure in heart and the illumined in spirit. This is the bread of which it is said: "Lord, send down upon us Thy bread from heaven."⁽¹⁾ This bread shall never be withheld from them that deserve it, nor can it ever be exhausted. It groweth everlastingly from the tree of grace; it descendeth at all seasons from the heavens of justice and mercy. Even as He saith: "Seest thou not to what God likeneth a good word? To a good tree; its root firmly fixed, and its branches reaching unto heaven: yielding its fruit in all seasons."⁽²⁾

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 favours of the Sun of Truth, the dead may be brought to life, and withered souls be quickened by the infinite Spirit. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 22-23)

READING #5 G1 pg 195

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. (Gleanings, page 195)

The transformation from the lower to a higher form of life, which is so great that the former by comparison is like death is symbolized by the term 'resurrection'. The contrast between the two is symbolized by the term 'hell and heaven'. The choice which man makes is symbolized by the 'Day of judgment'. The path, the 'sirat' (bridge) is the Religion of God, the Revelation.

READING #6 G1 pg. 31

Arise, and proclaim unto the entire creation the tidings that He Who is the All-Merciful hath directed His steps towards the Ridvan and entered it. Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise. We have chosen thee to be our most mighty Trumpet, whose blast is to signalize the resurrection of all mankind. (Gleanings, page 31)

READING #7 G1 pg. 31-32

This is the Paradise on whose foliage the wine of utterance hath imprinted the testimony: "He that was hidden from the eyes of men is revealed, girded with sovereignty and power!" This is the Paradise, the rustling of whose leaves proclaims: "O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth! There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared. He Who, from everlasting, had concealed His Face from the sight of creation is now come." From the whispering breeze that wafteth amidst its branches there cometh the cry: "He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is made manifest. The Kingdom is God's," while from its streaming waters can be heard the murmur: "All eyes are gladdened, for He Whom none hath beheld, Whose secret no one hath discovered, hath lifted the veil of glory, and uncovered the countenance of Beauty."

Within this Paradise, and from the heights of its loftiest chambers, the Maids of Heaven have cried out and shouted: "Rejoice, ye dwellers of the realms above, for the fingers of Him Who is the Ancient of Days are ringing, in the name of the All-Glorious, the Most Great Bell, in the midmost heart of the heavens. The hands of bounty have borne round the cup of everlasting life. Approach, and quaff your

fill. Drink with healthy relish, O ye that are the very incarnations of longing, ye who are the embodiments of vehement desire!"

This is the Day whereon He Who is the Revealer of the names of God hath stepped out of the Tabernacle of glory, and proclaimed unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth: "Put away the cups of Paradise and all the life-giving waters they contain, for lo, the people of Baha have entered the blissful abode of the Divine Presence, and quaffed the wine of reunion, from the chalice of the beauty of their Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High." (Gleanings, pages 31-32)

READING #8 Gl pg. 45-46

Say: Is there any doubt concerning God? 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? Open ye your eyes, and consider His clear evidence. Paradise is on your right hand, and hath been brought nigh unto you, while Hell hath been made to blaze. Witness its devouring flame. Haste ye to enter into Paradise, as a token of Our mercy unto you, and drink ye from the hands of the All-Merciful the Wine that is life indeed.

Drink with healthy relish, O people of Bahá. Ye are indeed they with whom it shall be well. This is what they who have near access to God have attained. This is the flowing water ye were promised in the Qur'án, and later in the Bayán, as a recompense from your Lord, the God of Mercy. Blessed

are they that quaff it. O My servant that hath turned thy face towards Me! Render thanks unto God for having sent down unto thee this Tablet in this Prison, that thou mayest remind the people of the days of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the All-Knowing. Thus have We established for thee, through the waters of Our wisdom and utterance, the foundations of thy belief. This, verily, is the water whereon the Throne of thy Lord hath been raised. "His Throne had stood upon the waters." Ponder this in thine heart, that thou mayest comprehend its meaning. Say: Praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

READING #9 Gl pg. 144-145 [#76 LXXVI]

Give ear, O My servant, unto that which is being sent down unto thee from the Throne of thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most Great. There is none other God but Him. He hath called into being His creatures, that they may know Him, Who is the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. Unto the cities of all nations He hath sent His Messengers, Whom He hath commissioned to announce unto men tidings of the Paradise of His good pleasure, and to draw them nigh unto the Haven of abiding security, the Seat of eternal holiness and transcendent glory.

Some were guided by the Light of God, gained admittance into the court of His presence, and quaffed, from the hand of resignation, the waters of everlasting life, and were accounted of them that have truly recognized and believed in Him. Others rebelled against Him, and rejected the signs of God, the Most Powerful, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

READING #10 SAQ pg. 259-261 [#60 p 80]

The ultimate rewards, which consist in life everlasting, have been explicitly recorded in all the heavenly Scriptures. They are divine perfections, eternal bounty, and everlasting joy. The ultimate rewards are the gifts and perfections that man attains in the spiritual realms after his ascension from this world, while the existential rewards are those true and luminous perfections which are attained while still abiding in this world, and which are the cause of everlasting life. For the existential rewards are the advancement of existence itself and are analogous to the passage of man from the stage of the embryo to that of maturity and becoming the embodiment of the verse, [146] “Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators!” The ultimate rewards consist in spiritual bounties and bestowals, such as the manifold gifts of God that are vouchsafed after the ascension of the soul, the attainment of the heart’s desire, and reunion with Him in the everlasting realm. Similarly, ultimate retributions and punishments consist in being deprived of the special bounties and unfailing bestowals of God and sinking to the lowest degrees of existence. And whoso is deprived of these favours, though he continue to exist after death, is accounted as dead in the eyes of the people of truth.

READING #11 PUP pg. 297-299 [#99 p 172-3]

Man is like unto this lamp, but the effulgences of the Kingdom are like the rays of the lamp. Man is like unto the glass, but spiritual splendors are like unto the light within the glass. No matter how translucent the glass may be, as long as there is no light within, it remains dark. Likewise, man, no matter how much he advances in material accomplishments, will remain like the glass without light if he is deprived of the spiritual virtues. Material virtues are like unto a perfect body, but this body is in need of the spirit. No matter how handsome and perfect the body may be, if it is deprived of the spirit and its animus, it is dead. But when that same body is affiliated with the spirit and expressing life, perfection and virtue become realized in it. Deprived of the Holy Spirit and its bounties, man is spiritually dead.

Children, for instance, no matter how good and pure, no matter how healthy their bodies, are, nevertheless, considered imperfect because the power of intellect is not fully manifest in them. When the intellectual power fully displays its influences and they attain to the age of maturity, they are considered as perfect. Likewise, man, no matter how much he may advance in worldly affairs and make progress in material civilization, is imperfect unless he is quickened by the bounties of the Holy Spirit; for it is evident that until he receives that divine impetus he is ignorant and deprived. For this reason Jesus Christ said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” By this Christ meant that unless man is released from the material world, freed from the captivity of materialism and receiving a portion of the bounties of the spiritual world, he shall be deprived of the bestowals and favors of the Kingdom of God, and the utmost we can say of him is that he is a perfect animal. No one can rightly call him a man. In another place He said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The meaning of this is that if man is a captive of nature, he is like unto an animal because he is only a body physically born—that is, he belongs to the world of matter and remains subject to the law and control of nature. But if he is

baptized with the Holy Spirit, if he is freed from the bondage of nature, released from animalistic tendencies and advanced in the human realm, he is fitted to enter into the divine Kingdom. The world of the Kingdom is the realm of divine bestowals and the bounties of God. It is attainment of the highest virtues of humanity; it is nearness to God; it is capacity to receive the bounties of the ancient Lord. When man advances to this station, he attains the second birth. Before his first or physical birth man was in the world of the matrix. He had no knowledge of this world; his eyes could not see; his ears could not hear. When he was born from the world of the matrix, he beheld another world. The sun was shining with its splendors, the moon radiant in the heavens, the stars twinkling in the expansive firmament, the seas surging, trees verdant and green, all kinds of creatures enjoying life here, infinite bounties prepared for him. In the world of the matrix none of these things existed. In that world he had no knowledge of this vast range of existence; nay, rather, he would have denied the reality of this world. But after his birth he began to open his eyes and behold the wonders of this illimitable universe. Similarly, as long as man is in the matrix of the human world, as long as he is the captive of nature, he is out of touch and without knowledge of the universe of the Kingdom. If he attains rebirth while in the world of nature, he will become informed of the divine world. He will observe that another and a higher world exists. Wonderful bounties descend; eternal life awaits; everlasting glory surrounds him. All the signs of reality and greatness are there. He will see the lights of God. All these experiences will be his when he is born out of the world of nature into the divine world. Therefore, for the perfect man there are two kinds of birth: the first, physical birth, is from the matrix of the mother; the second, or spiritual birth, is from the world of nature. In both he is without knowledge of the new world of existence he is entering. Therefore, rebirth means his release from the captivity of nature, freedom from attachment to this mortal and material life. This is the second, or spiritual, birth of which Jesus Christ spoke in the Gospels.

The majority of people are captives in the matrix of nature, submerged in the sea of materiality. We must pray that they may be reborn, that they may attain insight and spiritual hearing, that they may receive the gift of another heart, a new transcendent power, and in the eternal world the unending bestowal of divine bounties.

Today the world of humanity is walking in darkness because it is out of touch with the world of God. That is why we do not see the signs of God in the hearts of men. The power of the Holy Spirit has no influence. When a divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest in the world of humanity, when divine instruction and guidance appear, then enlightenment follows, a new spirit is realized within, a new power descends, and a new life is given. It is like the birth from the animal kingdom into the kingdom of man. When man acquires these virtues, the oneness of the world of humanity will be revealed, the banner of international peace will be upraised, equality between all mankind will be realized, and the Orient and Occident will become one. Then will the justice of God become manifest, all humanity will appear as the members of one family, and every member of that family will be consecrated to cooperation and mutual assistance. The lights of the love of God will shine; eternal happiness will be unveiled; everlasting joy and spiritual delight will be attained.

... announceth Yahya to thee, who shall bear witness unto the Word from God, and a great one and chaste."(2) By the term "Word" is meant Jesus, Whose coming Yahya foretold. Moreover, in the

heavenly Scriptures it is written: "John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."(1) By John is meant Yahya.

Likewise, ere the beauty of Muhammad was unveiled, the signs of the visible heaven were made manifest. As to the signs of the invisible heaven, there appeared four men who successively announced unto the people the joyful tidings of the rise of that divine Luminary. Ruz-bih, later named Salman, was honoured by being in their service. As the end of one of these approached, he would send Ruz-bih unto the other, until the fourth who, feeling his death to be nigh, addressed Ruz-bih saying: "O Ruz-bih! when thou hast taken up my body and buried it, go to Hijaz for there the Day-star of Muhammad will arise. Happy art thou, for thou shalt behold His face!" [REFERENCE NOT FOUND]

READING #12 IQAN pg. 61- 69 [16]

And now concerning this wondrous and most exalted Cause. Know thou verily that many an astronomer hath announced the appearance of its star in the visible heaven. Likewise, there appeared on earth Aḥmad and Kázim, 51 those twin resplendent lights—may God sanctify their resting-place!

From all that We have stated it hath become clear and manifest that before the revelation of each of the Mirrors reflecting the divine Essence, the signs heralding their advent must needs be revealed in the visible heaven as well as in the invisible, wherein is the seat of the sun of knowledge, of the moon of wisdom, and of the stars of understanding and utterance. The sign of the invisible heaven must needs be revealed in the person of that perfect man who, before each Manifestation appeareth, educateth, and prepareth the souls of men for the advent of the divine Luminary, the Light of the unity of God amongst men.

And now, with reference to His words: "And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." These words signify that in those days men will lament the loss of the Sun of the divine beauty, of the Moon of knowledge, and of the Stars of divine wisdom. Thereupon, they will behold the countenance of the promised One, the adored Beauty, descending from heaven and riding upon the clouds. By this is meant that the divine Beauty will be made manifest from the heaven of the will of God, and will appear in the form of the human temple. The term "heaven" denoteth loftiness and exaltation, inasmuch as it is the seat of the revelation of those Manifestations of Holiness, the Daysprings of ancient glory. These ancient Beings, though delivered from the womb of their mother, have in reality descended from the heaven of the will of God. Though they be dwelling on this earth, yet their true habitations are the retreats of glory in the realms above. Whilst walking amongst mortals, they soar in the heaven of the divine presence. Without feet they tread the path of the spirit, and without wings they rise unto the exalted heights of divine unity. With every fleeting breath they cover the immensity of space, and at every moment traverse the kingdoms of the visible and the invisible. Upon their thrones is written: "Nothing whatsoever keepeth Him from being 52 occupied with any other thing"; and on their seats is inscribed: "Verily, His ways differ every day." They are sent forth through the transcendent power of the Ancient of Days, and are raised up by the exalted will of God, the most mighty King. This is what is meant by the words: "coming in the clouds of heaven."

In the utterances of the divine Luminaries the term "heaven" hath been applied to many and divers

things; such as the "heaven of Command," the "heaven of Will," the "heaven of the divine Purpose," the "heaven of divine Knowledge," the "heaven of Certitude," the "heaven of Utterance," the "heaven of Revelation," the "heaven of Concealment," and the like. In every instance, He hath given the term "heaven" a special meaning, the significance of which is revealed to none save those that have been initiated into the divine mysteries, and have drunk from the chalice of immortal life. For example, He saith: "The heaven hath sustenance for you, and it containeth that which you are promised"; 53 whereas it is the earth that yieldeth such sustenance. Likewise, it hath been said: "The names come down from heaven"; whereas they proceed out of the mouth of men. Wert thou to cleanse the mirror of thy heart from the dust of malice, thou wouldst apprehend the meaning of the symbolic terms revealed by the all-embracing Word of God made manifest in every Dispensation, and wouldst discover the mysteries of divine knowledge. Not, however, until thou consumest with the flame of utter detachment those veils of idle learning that are current amongst men, canst thou behold the resplendent morn of true knowledge. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 61-69)

In every instance heaven has a special meaning.

READING #13 IQAN pg. 69-72

Know verily that Knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Satanic. The one welleteth out from the fountain of divine inspiration; the other is but a reflection of vain and obscure thoughts. The source of the former is God Himself; the motive-force of the latter the whisperings of selfish desire. The one is guided by the principle: "Fear ye God; God will teach you;"(1) the other is but a confirmation of the truth: "Knowledge is the most grievous veil between man and his Creator." The former bringeth forth the fruit of patience, of longing desire, of true understanding, and love; whilst the latter can yield naught but arrogance, vainglory and conceit. From the sayings of those Masters of holy utterance, Who have expounded the meaning of true knowledge, the odour of these dark teachings, which have obscured the world, can in no wise be detected. The tree of such teachings can yield no result except iniquity and rebellion, and beareth no fruit but hatred and envy. Its fruit is deadly poison; its shadow a consuming fire. How well hath it been said: "Cling unto the robe of the Desire of thy heart, and put thou away all shame; bid the worldlywise be gone, however great their name."

The heart must needs therefore be cleansed from the idle sayings of men, and sanctified from every earthly affection, so that it may discover the hidden meaning of divine inspiration, and become the treasury of the mysteries of divine knowledge. Thus hath it been said: "He that treadeth the snow-white Path, and followeth in the footsteps of the Crimson Pillar, shall never attain unto his abode unless his hands are empty of those worldly things cherished by men." This is the prime requisite of whosoever treadeth this path. Ponder thereon, that, with eyes unveiled, thou mayest perceive the truth of these words.

We have digressed from the purpose of Our argument, although whatsoever is mentioned serveth only to confirm Our purpose. By God! however great Our desire to be brief, yet We feel We cannot restrain Our pen. Notwithstanding all that We have mentioned, how innumerable are the pearls which have remained unpierced in the shell of Our heart! How many the huris of inner meaning that are as yet concealed within the chambers of divine wisdom! None hath yet approached them; -huris, "whom no

man nor spirit hath touched before."(1) Notwithstanding all that hath been said, it seemeth as if not one letter of Our purpose hath been uttered, nor a single sign divulged concerning Our object. When will a faithful seeker be found who will don the garb of pilgrimage, attain the Ka'bih of the heart's desire, and, without ear or tongue, discover the mysteries of divine utterance?

By these luminous, these conclusive, and lucid statements, the meaning of "heaven" in the aforementioned verse hath thus been made clear and evident. And now regarding His words, that the Son of man shall "come in the clouds of heaven." By the term "clouds" is meant those things that are contrary to the ways and desires of men. Even as He hath revealed in the verse already quoted: "As oft as an Apostle cometh unto you with that which your souls desire not, ye swell with pride, accusing some of being impostors and slaying others."(2) These "clouds" signify, in one sense, the annulment of laws, the abrogation of former Dispensations, the repeal of rituals and customs current amongst men, the exalting of the illiterate faithful above the learned opposers of the Faith. In another sense, they mean the appearance of that immortal Beauty in the image of mortal man, with such human limitations as eating and drinking, poverty and riches, glory and abasement, sleeping and waking, and such other things as cast doubt in the minds of men, and cause them to turn away. All such veils are symbolically referred to as "clouds." (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 66-72)

READING #14 Gl pg 95

From the heaven of God's Will, and for the purpose of ennobling the world of being and of elevating the minds and souls of men, hath been sent down that which is the most effective instrument for the education of the whole human race. The highest essence and most perfect expression of whatsoever the peoples of old have either said or written hath, through this most potent Revelation, been sent down from the heaven of the Will of the All-Possessing, the Ever-Abiding God. (Gleanings, page 95)

The Teachings are filled with advices, adjurations, commands regarding the life of holy deeds, clothing one's self with the attributes of God, living a life of servitude and usefulness, working at one's trade, business, art, yet "walking above the world by the power of the Greatest Name.

It is this practical living of the higher life right in the middle of material distractions and temptations which alone proves our resurrection. "By this we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." -John 3:14

Great emphasis is laid upon deeds in the teachings, for thus alone is it possible to prove where our interests, our true life lies. If we are "the people of insight, of hearing and of heart" we must act like it. Ábdu'l-Bahá says it is easy to enter the kingdom of God but very difficult to stay there. This is another significance of the Day of Judgement. Every day our sincerity is tested by our deeds. Just as this Day is the "DAY of God" and all past "Days" the days of His prophets, so is the station of man in this Day higher and more demanding in any former Day.

The quality of deeds is indicated in innumerable places in the revealed Words for this Day. And by our deeds alone may it be demonstrated whether we are dead or alive; in heaven or hell; and have attained to the resurrection or not.

Praise be unto Thee, O my God! Thou art He Who by a word of His mouth hath revolutionized the entire creation, and by a stroke of His pen hath divided Thy servants one from another. I bear witness, O my God, that through a word spoken by Thee in this Revelation all created things were made to expire, and through yet another word all such as Thou didst wish were, by Thy grace and bounty, endowed with new life.

I render Thee thanks, therefore, and extol Thee, in the name of all them that are dear to Thee, for that Thou hast caused them to be born again, by reason of the living waters which have flowed down out of the mouth of Thy will. Since Thou didst quicken them by Thy bounteousness, O my God, make them steadfastly inclined, through Thy graciousness, towards Thy will; and since Thou didst suffer them to enter into the Tabernacle of Thy Cause, grant by Thy grace that they may not be kept back from Thee.

Unlock, then, to their hearts, O my God, the portals of Thy knowledge, that they may recognize Thee as One Who is far above the reach and ken of the understanding of Thy creatures, and immeasurably exalted above the strivings of Thy people to hint at Thy nature, and may not follow every clamorous impostor that presumeth to speak in Thy name. Enable them, moreover, O my Lord, to cleave so tenaciously to Thy Cause that they may remain unmoved by the perplexing suggestions of them who, prompted by their desires, utter what hath been forbidden unto them in Thy Tablets and Thy Scriptures.

Thou art well aware, O my Lord, that I hear the howling of the wolves which appear in Thy servants' clothing. Keep safe, therefore, Thy loved ones from their mischief, and enable them to cling steadfastly to whatsoever hath been manifested by Thee in this Revelation, which no other Revelation within Thy knowledge hath excelled.

Do Thou destine for them, O my Lord, that which will profit them. Illumine, then, their eyes with the light of Thy knowledge, that they may see Thee visibly supreme over all things, and resplendent amidst Thy creatures, and victorious over all that are in Thy heaven and all that are on Thy earth. Powerful art Thou to do Thy pleasure. No God is there but Thee, the All- Glorious, Whose help is implored by all men.

Praised be Thou, Who art the Lord of all creation. (Prayers and Meditations, pages 42-43)

The Gift of the Holy Spirit



Lesson VII

"Unless the soul of man is quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit... all his powers, efforts and accomplishments are in vain. - Star of the West - vol. iv - pg. 210

Prayer - To be selected by the students.

1 HW A#34

2 HW A#59

3 HW A#63

4 HW P#8

5 Gl pg. 66 Unto this subtle... substance of God Himself.

6 BWF pg. 370 The intermediary.

7 BWF pg. 369 Inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

8 BWF pg. 258-259 Another unity... acme of good fortune.

9 FWU pg. 51 Yet there is a third reality ...shall have no end.

10 BWF pg. 368-369 Turn to the Holy spirit.

11 PUP pg. 67 Let us now discover ...his intelligence and spirit. (70)

12 PUP pg. 326-327 In this second birth...life everlasting. (332-333)

13 PUP pg. 314-315 In the world of existence...presence of the Holy Spirit. (320-321)

14 PUP pg. 271 The point is this... powers more than human. (277)

Prayer - To be selected by the students.

PRAYER

Unless the soul of man is quickened by the Breaths of the Holy Spirit and becomes vivified by the Life of the Supreme Kingdom, all his powers, efforts and accomplishments are in vain... I am summoning you to the world of the kingdom... I wish for you Eternal happiness. I am praying to save mankind from the bondage of this mortal world. I wish you to escape from this hell of materialism. Be not occupied with material things. Have no anxiety about your affairs. You are under the protection of Bahá'u'lláh, in His service. Live in the spiritual world as I do. Think of nothing else.

I wish you to live in the world of the spirit...to see the Divine Reality in everything, to behold the

illumination of the world of the kingdom beyond and within the gloomy mask of this mortal existence. For the world of the kingdom is a world of Lights, a world of happiness, a world of accomplishment, the real and eternal world. Ábdu'l-Bahá - star of the west vol.4 pg 210

READING #1 HW A#34

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?

READING #2 HW A#59

O SON OF BEING!

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.

READING #3 HW A#63

O SON OF MAN!

The light hath shone on thee from the horizon of the sacred Mount and the spirit of enlightenment hath breathed in the Sinai of thy heart. Wherefore, 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 Thus may death not come upon thee, neither weariness nor trouble.

READING #4 HW P#8

O SON OF GLORY!

Be swift in the path of holiness, and enter the heaven of communion with Me. Cleanse thy heart with the burnish of the spirit, and hasten to the court of the Most High.

READING #5 Gl pg 66

...Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of the substance of God Himself. (Gleanings, page 66)

READING #6 BWF pg 370

THE INTERMEDIARY

Unless the Holy Spirit become intermediary, one cannot attain directly to the bounties of God. Do not overlook the obvious truths, for it is a self-evident fact that a child cannot be instructed without a teacher, and knowledge is a bounty from the bounties of God. The soil is not covered with grass and green without the rain of the cloud; therefore the cloud is the intermediary between the divine bounties and the soil. A body doth not develop and grow without the soul; therefore the soul is the medium of the spiritual life. (Bahá'í World Faith*, page 370)

The symbol of the Sun of Reality is the phenomenal sun. The symbol of the cold heart quickened by the heat and light of the sun is the phenomenal material world - the soil. The symbol of the Holy Spirit which is the medium between the sun of Reality and the cold, animalistic heart of man, the life-giving energy, are the rays of the sun. These rays of the sun of Reality are diffused, universal, constant. To them is due all that is of value in man, all that distinguishes him from the animal, the world of nature, the world of beastly qualities, whether in the realm of the intellect, business, statesmanship, morals or religion.

These Manifestations of God gather these rays and focus them upon the hearts of men (like a burning glass) and receptive hearts burst into flame of the Love of God. Unless this happens "all man's power, efforts and accomplishments are in vain" because his powers have no spiritual dynamic, his efforts are not wisely directed, have no unifying objective and his accomplishments, owing to this lack, are uncoordinated, limited to selfish ends and are hence futile and often disastrous.

READING #7 BWF pg 369

INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I now assure thee, O servant of God, that, if thy mind become empty and pure from every mention and thought and thy heart attracted wholly to the Kingdom of God, forget all else besides God and come in communion with the Spirit of God, then the Holy Spirit will assist thee with a power which will enable thee to penetrate all things, and a Dazzling Spark which enlightens all sides, a Brilliant Flame in the zenith of the heavens, will teach thee that which thou dost not know of the facts of the universe and of the divine doctrine. Verily, I say unto thee, every soul which ariseth today to guide others to the path of safety and infuse in them the Spirit of Life, the Holy Spirit will inspire that soul with evidences, proofs and facts and the lights will shine upon it from the Kingdom of God. Do not forget what I have conveyed unto thee from the breath of the Spirit. Verily, it is the shining morning and the rosy dawn which will impart unto thee the lights, reveal the mysteries and make thee competent in science, and through it the pictures of the Supreme World will be printed in thy heart and the facts of the secrets of the Kingdom of God will shine before thee. (Bahá'í World Faith*, page 369)

The evidence of the holy spirit is in the effect upon man's spirit.

READING #8 BWF pg 258-259

Another unity is the spiritual unity which emanates from the breaths of the Holy Spirit. This is greater than the unity of mankind. Human unity or solidarity may be likened to the body, whereas unity from the breaths of the Holy Spirit is the spirit animating the body. This is a perfect unity. It creates such a condition in mankind that each one will make sacrifices for the other, and the utmost desire will be to forfeit life and all that pertains to it in behalf of another's good. This is the unity which existed among the disciples of Jesus Christ and bound together the Prophets and holy Souls of the past. It is the unity which through the influence of the divine spirit is permeating the Bahá'ís so that each offers his life for the other and strives with all sincerity to attain his good pleasure. This is the unity which caused twenty thousand people in Persia to give their lives in love and devotion to it. It made the Bab the target of a thousand arrows and caused Bahá'u'lláh to suffer exile and imprisonment forty years. This unity is the very spirit of the body of the world. It is impossible for the body of the world to become quickened with life without its vivification. Jesus Christ -may my life be a sacrifice to Him! - promulgated this unity among mankind. Every soul who believed in Jesus Christ became revived and resuscitated through this spirit, attained to the zenith of eternal glory, realized the everlasting life, experienced the second birth and rose to the acme of good fortune. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 191-192)

The world of humanity is the body; the Holy Spirit is the animating power of the body. This is important. Bahá'u'lláh and all the Manifestations of God in every age teach that the spirit of man may be brought under the domination of the Spirit of God focused in His Manifestation. Never before has this been so clearly stated and explained as by Bahá'u'lláh.

READING #9 -FWU pg 51

Yet there is a third reality in man, the spiritual reality. Through its medium one discovers spiritual revelations, a celestial faculty which is infinite as regards the intellectual as well as physical realms. That power is conferred upon man through the breath of the Holy Spirit. It is an eternal reality, an indestructible reality, a reality belonging to the divine, supernatural kingdom; a reality whereby the world is illumined, a reality which grants unto man eternal life. This third, spiritual reality it is which discovers past events and looks along the vistas of the future. It is the ray of the Sun of Reality. The spiritual world is enlightened through it, the whole of the Kingdom is being illumined by it. It enjoys the world of beatitude, a world which had not beginning and which shall have no end. (Foundations of World Unity*, page 51)

The spiritual reality of man is acquired through breaths of the Holy Spirit. The path of this attainment is the sacrifice of the lower self to the self of God. It is the Path of Detachment from the desires of this world and submission to the bondage of the desire of God as expressed in the command of His Manifestation. Otherwise we are trying to serve two masters which, Jesus pointed out, is impossible: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

This dependence of the Gift of the Holy Spirit upon severance and self-sacrifice is insisted upon constantly throughout the Creative Word. Moreover, it is fully explained why it should be so. One might as well reasonably expect the child, still captive in the matrix, to discover and enter the world of

man, as to think it possible for man still captive to human standard concepts and desire to be able to enter and enjoy the world of spiritual Reality. "They who worship God must worship Him in spirit," said Jesus. That is to say, if you want to know how to worship God you must enter His world, go where He is, and "God is Spirit."

The graphic and practical realization of this as a spiritual law is all important if one would receive the Gift and live in the World.

READING #10 BWF pg 368-369

TURN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Know thou, that letter sent to thee by me, was only because of my perfect love for thee and my pity upon thee, for I had the desire that the fragrance of the Holy Spirit, which hath perfumed all regions and imbued the entire body of the world with the Spirit of Life, should pass over thee and abide with thee. Notwithstanding the high position it occupieth, still, with an eloquent tongue, through which the Spirit moveth, hearts are attracted and bosoms burn, it speaketh to the pure hearts and to the good and righteous souls in every spot of the earth. This is the powerful Spirit, the dazzling light, the brilliant star and the overwhelming and universal abundance. And, from its traces, spread and divulged everywhere, thou wilt know and realize its influence and comprehend its radiance. I ask God to expose thee to its fragrance, move thee by its breeze, enkindle thee by its coals of fire and illuminate thee by its brightness. Turn thyself wholly to it - thus thou shalt be enabled to ascertain its influence and power, the strength of its life and the greatness of its confirmation. Verily, I say unto thee, that if for the appearance of that Divine Essence thou desirest to have a definite proof, an indisputable testimony and a strong, convincing evidence, thou must prepare thyself to make thy heart empty and thine eye ready to look only toward the Kingdom of God. Then, at that time, the radiance of that widespread effulgence will descend upon thee successively, and that motion rendered thee by the Holy Spirit will make thee dispense with any other strong evidence that leadeth to the appearance of this Light, because the greatest and strongest proof for showing the abundance of the Spirit to the bodies is the very appearance of its power and influence in those bodies. (Bahá'í World Faith*, pages 368-369)

Ábdu'l-Bahá said: "You must live in the spiritual world constantly, as I do. We are living in the same kind of world that He did. It follows that we have no anxiety about our material affairs.

Severance is the cutting of the umbilical cord which attaches the soul (mind, conciseness, will) to limited and ephemeral things and affairs, and sets that conciseness and will free, in an infinitely larger, more beautiful and effective world. This is the Glorious liberty of the children of God of which the prophets spoke.

It is impossible to quote exhaustively and enlarge upon this theme as it deserves. A careful study of the Creative Word makes clear and justifies the said deductions. A clear understanding of this is necessary if that world is to be attained. Progress in that world is then assured. There must be no question as to the difficulty of adjusting these commands and advices to the needs of every-day life. We must be able to answer satisfactorily the natural questions that arise in minds still attached. It is always the mind that is attached. That is why understanding is the first essential. It is impossible to assume for one

moment that God (His Manifestation) should urge, entreat and command us to live in the world in which He has placed us. It is precisely because we have refused that glorious world of His that we have made such a shamble, such a tragic failure of this world.

READING #11 PUP pg 67

Let us now discover more specifically how he is the image and likeness of God and what is the standard or criterion by which he can be measured and estimated. This standard can be no other than the divine virtues which are revealed in him. Therefore, every man imbued with divine qualities, who reflects heavenly moralities and perfections, who is the expression of ideal and praiseworthy attributes, is, verily, in the image and likeness of God. If a man possesses wealth, can we call him an image and likeness of God? Or is human honor and notoriety the criterion of divine nearness? Can we apply the test of racial color and say that man of a certain hue - white, black, brown, yellow, red - is the true image of his Creator? We must conclude that color is not the standard and estimate of judgment and that it is of no importance, for color is accidental in nature. The spirit and intelligence of man is essential, and that is the manifestation of divine virtues, the merciful bestowals of God, the eternal life and baptism through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, be it known that color or race is of no importance. He who is the image and likeness of God, who is the manifestation of the bestowals of God, is acceptable at the threshold of God -whether his color be white, black or brown; it matters not. Man is not man simply because of bodily attributes. The standard of divine measure and judgment is his intelligence and spirit.

Therefore, let this be the only criterion and estimate, for this is the image and likeness of God. A man's heart may be pure and white though his outer skin be black; or his heart be dark and sinful though his racial color is white. The character and purity of the heart is of all importance. The heart illumined by the light of God is nearest and dearest to God, and inasmuch as God has endowed man with such favor that he is called the image of God, this is truly a supreme perfection of attainment, a divine station which is not to be sacrificed by the mere accident of color. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 70)

Baptism of the spirit is essential to the intelligence of man.

READING #12 PUP pg 326-327

...In this second birth he attains the world of the Kingdom. There he witnesses and realizes that the world of nature is a world of gloom, whereas the Kingdom is a world of radiance; the world of nature is a world of defects, the Kingdom is a realm of perfection; the world of nature is a world without enlightenment, the Kingdom of spiritual humanity is a heaven of illumination. Great discoveries and revelations are now possible for him; he has attained the reality of perception; his circle of understanding is illimitably widened; he views the realities of creation, comprehends the divine bounties and unseals the mystery of phenomena. This is the station which Christ has interpreted as the second birth. He says that just as ye were physically born from the mother into this world, ye must be born again from the mother world of nature into the life of the divine Kingdom. May you all attain this second, spiritual birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is

spirit."

I pray that the confirmation of God may descend upon you. May you all be born again from this mortal world into the realm of the Kingdom. May you clearly witness the signs of God, sense the virtues of the divine, attain the eternal bounties and perceive the reality of everlasting life. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 332-333)

Man's circle of understanding is illimitably widened and the mysteries of phenomena are unsealed. "He has attained the reality of perception." He becomes "freed from the sea of materialism."

READING #13 PUP pg 314-315

In the world of existence there are various bonds which unite human hearts, but not one of these bonds is completely effective. The first and foremost is the bond of family relationship, which is not an efficient unity, for how often it happens that disagreement and divergence rend asunder this close tie of association. The bond of patriotism may be a means of fellowship and agreement, but oneness of native land will not completely cement human hearts; for if we review history, we shall find that people of the same race and native land have frequently waged war against each other. Often in civil strife they have shed the same racial blood and destroyed the possessions of their own native kind. Therefore, this bond is not sufficient. Another means of seeming unity is the bond of political association, where governments and rulers have been allied for reasons of intercourse and mutual protection, but which agreement and union afterward became subject to change and violent hatred even to the extreme of war and bloodshed. It is evident that political oneness is not permanently effective.

The source of perfect unity and love in the world of existence is the bond and oneness of reality. When the divine and fundamental reality enters human hearts and lives, it conserves and protects all states and conditions of mankind, establishing that intrinsic oneness of the world of humanity which can only come into being through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is like unto the life in the human body, which blends all differences of parts and members in unity and agreement. Consider how numerous are these parts and members, but the oneness of the animating spirit of life unites them all in perfect combination. It establishes such a unity in the bodily organism that if any part is subjected to injury or becomes diseased, all the other parts and functions sympathetically respond and suffer, owing to the perfect oneness existing. Just as the human spirit of life is the cause of coordination among the various parts of the human organism, the Holy Spirit is the controlling cause of the unity and coordination of mankind. That is to say, the bond or oneness of humanity cannot be effectively established save through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the world of humanity is a composite body, and the Holy Spirit is the animating principle of its life.

Therefore, we must strive in order that the power of the Holy Spirit may become effective throughout the world of mankind, that it may confer a new quickening life upon the body politic of the nations and peoples and that all may be guided to the protection and shelter of the Word of God. Then this human world will become angelic, earthly darkness pass away and celestial illumination flood the horizons, human defects be effaced and divine virtues become resplendent. This is possible and real, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Today the greatest need of the world is the animating, unifying

presence of the Holy Spirit. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 320-321)

Through the Holy Spirit "Divine fellowship and world unity are attained." The Holy Spirit is the only power able to unite humanity.

READING #14 PUP pg 271

The point is this: that to gain control over physical bodies is an extremely easy matter, but to bring spirits within the bonds of serenity is a most arduous undertaking. This is not the work of everybody. It necessitates a divine and holy potency, the potency of inspiration, the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, Christ was capable of leading spirits into that abode of serenity. He was capable of guiding hearts into that haven of rest. From the day of His manifestation to the present time He has been resuscitating hearts and quickening spirits. He has exercised that vivifying influence in the realm of hearts and spirits; therefore, His resuscitating is everlasting.

In this century of the latter times Bahá'u'lláh has appeared and so resuscitated spirits that they have manifested powers more than human. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 277)

That spirit brings us under the bonds of serenity.

SUMMARY

By the attainment of the station of severance and self-sacrifice, and entering through this gate into the world of the kingdom, the world of the spirit of Holiness, this world into which God has ushered us becomes for the first time understandable, correlated, meaningful. Self-sacrifice is found to be a treasure. Detachment is discovered to be the path to undreamed of freedom. Loss of anxiety about our material affairs has proven to be the touchstone which makes those same affairs far less complicated and difficult.

The Kingdom of God on Earth



Lesson VIII

1 - Gl. pg. 32 This is the Day...the Most High.

2 - HW P#18

3 - Gl. pg. 31-32 Say: This is...vehement desire!

4 - HW A#68

5 - PUP pg. 186-187 The unity which is productive ...acme of good fortune (191-192) .

6 - WOB pg. 18-22 It behooves us...considerably abated.

7 - WOB pg. 64-67 Let them refrain...His blessed Name.

8 - Gl. pg. 15 Render thanks...He shed His tears.

9 - BA pg. 58-59 We have but to turn ...enduring achievement.

10 - WOB - pg. 16-17 I feel it...heaped upon it!

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those originally cited in the 1922 edition have been retained.

In our previous lessons we found that the world of phenomena the contingent world, conceals spiritual mysteries, the investigation of which, through the capacity of man to understand the divine teachings, leads him to the Heaven of significances. Entrance into this Heaven of Understanding transforms life because in that world man deals with all things and events on the plane of spirit, the plane of the supreme Concourse, the plane of the Manifestation of God. He is taught and encouraged by the higher intelligence of the Supreme World, by the example and Words of the Manifestation of God, and by the Power of this Word he tests all things and experiences his spiritual standard. Thus he is raised from the "death" of bondage to the world of illusion, the transitory, evanescent world, and comes under the bondage of the Holy Spirit, the Cosmic, guiding spirit of the Universe of Bahá'u'lláh.

READING #1 Gl pg. 32

This is the Day whereon He Who is the Revealer of the names of God hath stepped out of the Tabernacle of glory, and proclaimed unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth: "Put away the cups of Paradise and all the life-giving waters they contain, for lo, the people of Baha have entered the blissful abode of the Divine Presence, and quaffed the wine of reunion, from the chalice of the beauty of their Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High." (Gleanings, page 32)

This transition has become possible only because of the Divine Springtime has come; the revivifying spirit, focused in the Manifestation of God, has brought to man's spirit a life-giving power which transforms both the outer, phenomenal world, and the inner, dynamic, creative world of man.

READING #2 HW P#18

O YE DWELLERS IN THE HIGHEST PARADISE!

Proclaim unto the children of assurance that within the realms of holiness, nigh unto the celestial paradise, a new garden hath appeared, round which circle the denizens of the realm on high and the immortal dwellers of the exalted paradise. Strive, then, that ye may attain that station, that ye may unravel the mysteries of love from its wind-flowers and learn the secret of divine and consummate wisdom from its eternal fruits. Solaced are the eyes of them that enter and abide therein! (Persian Hidden Words, page 18)

This is the "new heaven and the new earth" spoken of by all the prophets. The heaven of past religions are rolled together like a scroll and an entirely new outlook spread before the understanding spirit of man.

READING #3 Gl pg.. 31-32

Say: This is the Paradise on whose foliage the wine of utterance hath imprinted the testimony: "He that was hidden from the eyes of men is revealed, girded with sovereignty and power!" This is the Paradise, the rustling of whose leaves proclaims: "O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth! There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared. He Who, from everlasting, had concealed His Face from the sight of creation is now come." From the whispering breeze that wafteth amidst its branches there cometh the cry: "He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is made manifest. The Kingdom is God's," while from its streaming waters can be heard the murmur: "All eyes are gladdened, for He Whom none hath beheld, Whose secret no one hath discovered, hath lifted the veil of glory, and uncovered the countenance of Beauty."

Within this Paradise, and from the heights of its loftiest chambers, the Maids of Heaven have cried out and shouted: "Rejoice, ye dwellers of the realms above, for the fingers of Him Who is the Ancient of Days are ringing, in the name of the All-Glorious, the Most Great Bell, in the midmost heart of the heavens. The hands of bounty have borne round the cup of everlasting life. Approach, and quaff your fill. Drink with healthy relish, O ye that are the very incarnations of longing, ye who are the embodiments of vehement desire!" (Gleanings, pages 31-32)

This "New Earth" is the kingdom of God which we were commanded by His Holiness Christ to watch for and pray for constantly. The father has come with His Most Mighty Power among the nations. He for whose coming we have been praying for 1900 years has appeared in a human Temple with Power and Dominion, His Holy angels with Him, and has set up His kingdom on earth. The constitution of this kingdom is non other than that governing the Supreme Concourse. It is the eternal law of God ruling in the higher worlds- all the progressive heavens of spiritual realm. This is what Jesus referred

to when He taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven."

The kingdom of God on earth is exactly what its name implies. It is a government, a kingdom, the laws of which are the codified commands of the Manifestation of God revealed by the vast literature of the Word, ad interpreted by the twin institutions of the Guardianship and International House of Justice.

These laws of the kingdom should be carefully studied. Although the Aqdas is not yet available in English, yet the Tablets Ishrakat, Paradise of the world, Tarazat, Glad Tidings and Tajalleyat, as well as the two Wills are at hand A working knowledge of their contents is most important if one wishes to get a clear picture of what the kingdom in its outer manifestation is like.

READING #4 HW A#68

O CHILDREN OF MEN!

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory. (Arabic Hidden Words, page 68)

The working efficiency of the government of the kingdom is carried on through the believers. Its citizens are "Those who reinforced by the power of the spirit, have consumed, with the fire of the love of God, all human traits and limitations, and have clothed themselves with the attributes of the most exalted beings."

Through faith in the Manifestation of God ad devoted love for Him they have become so transformed as to have entirely put off the old and mortal garment of selfish desires, ignoble aims and narrow horizons, and have become clothed with the new and immortal robe of universal love, cosmic vision and self-sacrificing decision and dedication to a world encompassing unity and eternal life.

READING #5 PUP pg. 186-187

The unity which is productive of unlimited results is first a unity of mankind which recognizes that all are sheltered beneath the overshadowing glory of the All-Glorious, that all are servants of one God; for all breathe the same atmosphere, live upon the same earth, move beneath the same heavens, receive effulgence from the same sun and are under the protection of one God. This is the most great unity, and its results are lasting if humanity adheres to it; but mankind has hitherto violated it, adhering to sectarian or other limited unities such as racial, patriotic or unity of self-interests; therefore, no great results have been forthcoming. Nevertheless, it is certain that the radiance and favors of God are encompassing, minds have developed, perceptions have become acute, sciences and arts are widespread, and capacity exists for the proclamation and promulgation of the real and ultimate unity of mankind, which will bring forth marvellous results. It will reconcile all religions, make warring

nations loving, cause hostile kings to become friendly and bring peace and happiness to the human world. It will cement together the Orient and Occident, remove forever the foundations of war and upraise the ensign of the Most Great Peace. These limited unities are, therefore, signs of that great unity which will make all the human family one by being productive of the attractions of conscience in mankind.

Another unity is the spiritual unity which emanates from the breaths of the Holy Spirit. This is greater than the unity of mankind. Human unity or solidarity may be likened to the body, whereas unity from the breaths of the Holy Spirit is the spirit animating the body. This is a perfect unity. It creates such a condition in mankind that each one will make sacrifices for the other, and the utmost desire will be to forfeit life and all that pertains to it in behalf of another's good. This is the unity which existed among the disciples of Jesus Christ and bound together the Prophets and holy Souls of the past. It is the unity which through the influence of the divine spirit is permeating the Bahá'ís so that each offers his life for the other and strives with all sincerity to attain his good pleasure. This is the unity which caused twenty thousand people in Persia to give their lives in love and devotion to it. It made the Bab the target of a thousand arrows and caused Bahá'u'lláh to suffer exile and imprisonment forty years. This unity is the very spirit of the body of the world. It is impossible for the body of the world to become quickened with life without its vivification. Jesus Christ -may my life be a sacrifice to Him! - promulgated this unity among mankind. Every soul who believed in Jesus Christ became revived and resuscitated through this spirit, attained to the zenith of eternal glory, realized the everlasting life, experienced the second birth and rose to the acme of good fortune. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 191-192)

The spirit dominating the government of the least of its citizens to the International House of Justice is the Holy spirit - which animates every part and member just as the spirit of the individual unifies and animates the human body. The Holy Spirit, then, is the true king of the kingdom of God actually functioning as the dominant power in the world of humanity.

READING #6 WOB pg. 18-22

It behooves us, dear friends, to endeavor not only to familiarize ourselves with the essential features of this supreme Handiwork of Bahá'u'lláh, but also to grasp the fundamental difference existing between this world- embracing, divinely-appointed Order and the chief ecclesiastical organizations of the world, whether they pertain to the Church of Christ, or to the ordinances of the Muhammadan Dispensation.

For those whose priceless privilege is to guard over, administer the affairs, and advance the interests of these Bahá'í institutions will have, sooner or later, to face this searching question: "Where and how does this Order established by Bahá'u'lláh, which to outward seeming is but a replica of the institutions established in Christianity and Islam, differ from them? Are not the twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship, the institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, the institution of the national and local Assemblies, the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, but different names for the institutions of the Papacy and the Caliphate, with all their attending ecclesiastical orders which the Christians and Moslems uphold and advocate? What can possibly be the agency that can safeguard

these Bahá'í institutions, so strikingly resembling, in some of their features, to those which have been reared by the Fathers of the Church and the Apostles of Muhammad, from witnessing the deterioration in character, the breach of unity, and the extinction of influence, which have befallen all organized religious hierarchies? Why should they not eventually suffer the self-same fate that has overtaken the institutions which the successors of Christ and Muhammad have reared?"

Upon the answer given to these challenging questions will, in a great measure, depend the success of the efforts which believers in every land are now exerting for the establishment of God's kingdom upon the earth. Few will fail to recognize that the Spirit breathed by Bahá'u'lláh upon the world, and which is manifesting itself with varying degrees of intensity through the efforts consciously displayed by His avowed supporters and indirectly through certain humanitarian organizations, can never permeate and exercise an abiding influence upon mankind unless and until it incarnates itself in a visible Order, which would bear His name, wholly identify itself with His principles, and function in conformity with His laws. That Bahá'u'lláh in His Book of Aqdas, and later Ábdu'l-Bahá in His Will - a document which confirms, supplements, and correlates the provisions of the Aqdas - have set forth in their entirety those essential elements for the constitution of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth, no one who has read them will deny. According to these divinely-ordained administrative principles, the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh - the Ark of human salvation - must needs be modeled. From them, all future blessings must flow, and upon them its inviolable authority must ultimately rest. For Bahá'u'lláh, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He, as well as Ábdu'l-Bahá after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth. Not only have they revealed all the directions required for the practical realization of those ideals which the Prophets of God have visualized, and which from time immemorial have inflamed the imagination of seers and poets in every age. They have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.

Should we look back upon the past, were we to search out the Gospel and the Qur'an, we will readily recognize that neither the Christian nor the Islamic Dispensations can offer a parallel either to the system of Divine Economy so thoroughly established by Bahá'u'lláh, or to the safeguards which He has provided for its preservation and advancement. Therein, I am profoundly convinced, lies the answer to those questions to which I have already referred. None, I feel, will question the fact that the fundamental reason why the unity of the Church of Christ was irretrievably shattered, and its influence was in the course of time undermined, was that the Edifice which the Fathers of the Church reared after the passing of His First Apostle was an Edifice that rested in nowise upon the explicit directions of Christ Himself. The authority and features of their administration were wholly inferred, and

indirectly derived, with more or less justification, from certain vague and fragmentary references which they found scattered amongst His utterances as recorded in the Gospel. Not one of the sacraments of the Church; not one of the rites and ceremonies which the Christian Fathers have elaborately devised and ostentatiously observed; not one of the elements of the severe discipline they rigorously imposed upon the primitive Christians; none of these reposed on the direct authority of Christ, or emanated from His specific utterances. Not one of these did Christ conceive, none did He specifically invest with sufficient authority to either interpret His Word, or to add to what He had not specifically enjoined.

For this reason, in later generations, voices were raised in protest against the self-appointed Authority which arrogated to itself privileges and powers which did not emanate from the clear text of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and which constituted a grave departure from the spirit which that Gospel did inculcate. They argued with force and justification that the canons promulgated by the Councils of the Church were not divinely-appointed laws, but were merely human devices which did not even rest upon the actual utterances of Jesus. Their contention centered around the fact that the vague and inconclusive words, addressed by Christ to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," could never justify the extreme measures, the elaborate ceremonials, the fettering creeds and dogmas, with which His successors have gradually burdened and obscured His Faith. Had it been possible for the Church Fathers, whose unwarranted authority was thus fiercely assailed from every side, to refute the denunciations heaped upon them by quoting specific utterances of Christ regarding the future administration of His Church, or the nature of the authority of His Successors, they would surely have been capable of quenching the flame of controversy, and preserving the unity of Christendom. The Gospel, however, the only repository of the utterances of Christ, afforded no such shelter to these harassed leaders of the Church, who found themselves helpless in the face of the pitiless onslaught of their enemy, and who eventually had to submit to the forces of schism which invaded their ranks.

In the Muhammadan Revelation, however, although His Faith as compared with that of Christ was, so far as the administration of His Dispensation is concerned, more complete and more specific in its provisions, yet in the matter of succession, it gave no written, no binding and conclusive instructions to those whose mission was to propagate His Cause. For the text of the Qur'an, the ordinances of which regarding prayer, fasting, marriage, divorce, inheritance, pilgrimage, and the like, have after the revolution of thirteen hundred years remained intact and operative, gives no definite guidance regarding the Law of Succession, the source of all the dissensions, the controversies, and schisms which have dismembered and discredited Islam.

Not so with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Unlike the Dispensation of Christ, unlike the Dispensation of Muhammad, unlike all the Dispensations of the past, the apostles of Bahá'u'lláh in every land, wherever they labor and toil, have before them in clear, in unequivocal and emphatic language, all the laws, the regulations, the principles, the institutions, the guidance, they require for the prosecution and consummation of their task. Both in the administrative provisions of the Bahá'í Dispensation, and in the matter of succession, as embodied in the twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh can summon to their aid such irrefutable evidences of Divine Guidance that none can resist, that none can belittle or ignore. Therein lies the distinguishing feature of the Bahá'í Revelation. Therein lies the strength of the unity of the Faith, of the validity of a

Revelation that claims not to destroy or belittle previous Revelations, but to connect, unify, and fulfil them. This is the reason why Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá have both revealed and even insisted upon certain details in connection with the Divine Economy which they have bequeathed to us, their followers. This is why such an emphasis has been placed in their Will and Testament upon the powers and prerogatives of the ministers of their Faith.

For nothing short of the explicit directions of their Book, and the surprisingly emphatic language with which they have clothed the provisions of their Will, could possibly safeguard the Faith for which they have both so gloriously labored all their lives. Nothing short of this could protect it from the heresies and calumnies with which denominations, peoples, and governments have endeavored, and will, with increasing vigour, endeavor to assail it in future. We should also bear in mind that the distinguishing character of the Bahá'í Revelation does not solely consist in the completeness and unquestionable validity of the Dispensation which the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá have established. Its excellence lies also in the fact that those elements which in past Dispensations have, without the least authority from their Founders, been a source of corruption and of incalculable harm to the Faith of God, have been strictly excluded by the clear text of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. Those unwarranted practices, in connection with the sacrament of baptism, of communion, of confession of sins, of asceticism, of priestly domination, of elaborate ceremonials, of holy war and of polygamy, have one and all been rigidly suppressed by the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh; whilst the rigidity and rigor of certain observances, such as fasting, which are necessary to the devotional life of the individual, have been considerably abated. (World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 18-22)

Difference between the Bahá'í Faith and Ecclesiastical Organizations.

The Holy Spirit is fully revealed in Bahá'u'lláh; active and expressive in the Center of the Covenant, Ábdu'l-Bahá, and functions throughout this Day of God, which is not followed by any night, through the Guardianship and the International House of Justice; through the National Spiritual Assemblies and the Local Spiritual Assemblies and finally through each and every citizen of the Kingdom. This is what makes him a citizen. He has drunk from the Cup of Life (the life of the spirit) passed by the Hand of the Divine Cup-bearer. His standards of judgement and action are based on Divine Standards and are entirely different and opposed to the standards of those not yet resurrected from the tomb of self.

The practical application of the principle involved is evident. Just as it is impossible for the adult man to adjust his ideas and ideals to the point of view of the unborn child, or to those of a child of five or ten years, so it is impossible for the child of the Kingdom to adjust his ideas and ideals to the souls still in the dungeon of the matrix of materiality.

How can those motivated by the Holy Spirit adopt or accept the policies, ideals, motives of those not so actuated? Hence the constant and emphatic expressions of Bahá'u'lláh and Ábdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi warning the believers, the citizens of the Kingdom of God, against any close association with the policies of the so-called leaders of either religious or political affairs.

READING #7 WOB pg. 64-67

Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits

of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill- founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve. Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Bahá'u'lláh, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men. It should be made unmistakably clear that such an attitude implies neither the slightest indifference to the cause and interests of their own country, nor involves any insubordination on their part to the authority of recognized and established governments. Nor does it constitute a repudiation of their sacred obligation to promote, in the most effective manner, the best interests of their government and people. It indicates the desire cherished by every true and loyal follower of Bahá'u'lláh to serve, in an unselfish, unostentatious and patriotic fashion, the highest interests of the country to which he belongs, and in a way that would entail no departure from the high standards of integrity and truthfulness associated with the teachings of his Faith.

As the number of the Bahá'í communities in various parts of the world multiplies and their power, as a social force, becomes increasingly apparent, they will no doubt find themselves increasingly subjected to the pressure which men of authority and influence, in the political domain, will exercise in the hope of obtaining the support they require for the advancement of their aims. These communities will, moreover, feel a growing need of the good-will and the assistance of their respective governments in their efforts to widen the scope, and to consolidate the foundations, of the institutions committed to their charge. Let them beware lest, in their eagerness to further the aims of their beloved Cause, they should be led unwittingly to bargain with their Faith, to compromise with their essential principles, or to sacrifice, in return for any material advantage which their institutions may derive, the integrity of their spiritual ideals. Let them proclaim that in whatever country they reside, and however advanced their institutions, or profound their desire to enforce the laws, and apply the principles, enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, they will, unhesitatingly, subordinate the operation of such laws and the application of such principles to the requirements and legal enactments of their respective governments. Theirs is not the purpose, while endeavouring to conduct and perfect the administrative affairs of their Faith, to violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution, much less to allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries.

It should also be borne in mind that the very extension of the activities in which we are engaged, and the variety of the communities which labor under divers forms of government, so essentially different

in their standards, policies, and methods, make it absolutely essential for all those who are the declared members of any one of these communities to avoid any action that might, by arousing the suspicion or exciting the antagonism of any one government, involve their brethren in fresh persecutions or complicate the nature of their task. How else, might I ask, could such a far-flung Faith, which transcends political and social boundaries, which includes within its pale so great a variety of races and nations, which will have to rely increasingly, as it forges ahead, on the good-will and support of the diversified and contending governments of the earth - how else could such a Faith succeed in preserving its unity, in safeguarding its interests, and in ensuring the steady and peaceful development of its institutions?

Such an attitude, however, is not dictated by considerations of selfish expediency, but is actuated, first and foremost, by the broad principle that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh will, under no circumstances, suffer themselves to be involved, whether as individuals or in their collective capacities, in matters that would entail the slightest departure from the fundamental verities and ideals of their Faith. Neither the charges which the uninformed and the malicious may be led to bring against them, nor the allurements of honours and rewards, will ever induce them to surrender their trust or to deviate from their path. Let their words proclaim, and their conduct testify, that they who follow Bahá'u'lláh, in whatever land they reside, are actuated by no selfish ambition, that they neither thirst for power, nor mind any wave of unpopularity, of distrust or criticism, which a strict adherence to their standards might provoke.

Difficult and delicate though be our task, the sustaining power of Bahá'u'lláh and of His Divine guidance will assuredly assist us if we follow steadfastly in His way, and strive to uphold the integrity of His laws. The light of His redeeming grace, which no earthly power can obscure, will if we persevere, illuminate our path, as we steer our course amid the snares and pitfalls of a troubled age, and will enable us to discharge our duties in a manner that would redound to the glory and the honor of His blessed Name. (World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 64-67)

That this presents a problem which each individual believer must settle for himself admits of no doubt. Will it not help in the solution of this problem if it be borne in mind constantly that, as a citizen of the kingdom he is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit which in this Great Day of His Manifestation in the temple of Man is actively functioning through the Local and National Assemblies and the International house of justice.

The sincere believers, then, should constantly re-orient themselves to this attitude and conviction. We are of the New Kingdom. The kingdoms of this world are rapidly disintegrating. Upon the complete unity of the believers, their entire submission to the Divine Plan as enunciated in the Creative Word and its activity in spreading the Teachings and so enlarging the borders of the Kingdom, depends its rapid growth and successful functioning.

READING #8 GL pg.. 15

..."Render thanks unto thy Lord, O Carmel. The fire of thy separation from Me was fast consuming thee, when the ocean of My presence surged before thy face, cheering thine eyes and those of all creation, and filling with delight all things visible and invisible. Rejoice, for God hath in this Day

established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the day spring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it with him that circleth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory, and recounteth that which the bounty of the Lord thy God hath showered upon thee. 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. He, verily, loveth the spot which hath been made the seat of His throne, which His footsteps have trodden, which hath been honored by His presence, from which He raised His call, and upon which He shed His tears. (Gleanings, pages 15-16)

READING #9 BA pg. 67-68

We have but to turn our eyes to the world without to realize the fierceness and the magnitude of the forces of darkness that are struggling with the dawning light of the Abha Revelation. Nations, though exhausted and disillusioned, have seemingly begun to cherish anew the spirit of revenge, of domination, and strife. Peoples, convulsed by economic upheavals, are slowly drifting into two great opposing camps with all their menace of social chaos, class hatreds, and world-wide ruin. Races, alienated more than ever before, are filled with mistrust, humiliation and fear, and seem to prepare themselves for a fresh and fateful encounter. Creeds and religions, caught in this whirlpool of conflict and passion, appear to gaze with impotence and despair at this spectacle of increasing turmoil. Such is the plight of mankind three years after the passing of Him from Whose lips fell unceasingly the sure message of a fast-approaching Divine salvation. Are we by our thoughts, our words, our deeds, whether individually or collectively, preparing the way? Are we hastening the advent of the Day He so often foretold?

None can deny that the flame of faith and love which His mighty hand kindled in many hearts has, despite our bereavement, continued to burn as brightly and steadily as ever before. Who can question that His loved ones, both in the East and the West, notwithstanding the insidious strivings of the enemies of the Cause, have displayed a spirit of unshakable loyalty worthy of the highest praise? What greater perseverance and fortitude than that which His tried and trusted friends have shown in the face of untold calamities, intolerable oppression, and incredible restrictions? Such staunchness of faith, such an unsullied love, such magnificent loyalty, such heroic constancy, such noble courage, however unprecedented and laudable in themselves, cannot alone lead us to the final and complete triumph of such a great Cause. Not until the dynamic love we cherish for Him is sufficiently reflected in its power and purity in all our dealings with our fellowmen, however remotely connected and humble in origin, can we hope to exalt in the eyes of a self-seeking world the genuineness of the all-conquering love of God. Not until we live ourselves the life of a true Bahá'í can we hope to demonstrate the creative and transforming potency of the Faith we profess. Nothing but the abundance of our actions, nothing but the purity of our lives and the integrity of our character, can in the last resort establish our claim that the Bahá'í spirit is in this day the sole agency that can translate a long cherished ideal into an enduring achievement. (Unfolding Destiny, pages 33-34)

Menace of Social Chaos. Characteristics of citizens of the kingdom of God

I feel it, however, incumbent upon me by virtue of the responsibility attached to the Guardianship of the Faith, to dwell more fully upon the essential character and the distinguishing features of that world order as conceived and proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. I feel impelled, at the present stage of the evolution of the Bahá'í Revelation, to state candidly and without any reservation, whatever I regard may tend to insure the preservation of the integrity of the nascent institutions of the Faith. I strongly feel the urge to elucidate certain facts, which would at once reveal to every fair-minded observer the unique character of that Divine Civilization the foundations of which the unerring hand of Bahá'u'lláh has laid, and the essential elements of which the Will and Testament of Ábdu'l-Bahá has disclosed. I consider it my duty to warn every beginner in the Faith that the promised glories of the Sovereignty which the Bahá'í teachings foreshadow, can be revealed only in the fullness of time, that the implications of the Aqdas and the Will of Ábdu'l-Bahá, as the twin repositories of the constituent elements of that Sovereignty, are too far-reaching for this generation to grasp and fully appreciate. I cannot refrain from appealing to them who stand identified with the Faith to disregard the prevailing notions and the fleeting fashions of the day, and to realize as never before that the exploded theories and the tottering institutions of present-day civilization must needs appear in sharp contrast with those God-given institutions which are destined to arise upon their ruin. I pray that they may realize with all their heart and soul the ineffable glory of their calling, the overwhelming responsibility of their mission, and the astounding immensity of their task.

For let every earnest upholder of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh realize that the storms which this struggling Faith of God must needs encounter, as the process of the disintegration of society advances, shall be fierce than any which it has already experienced. Let him be aware that so soon as the full measure of the stupendous claim of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh comes to be recognized by those time-honored and powerful strongholds of orthodoxy, whose deliberate aim is to maintain their stranglehold over the thoughts and consciences of men, this infant Faith will have to contend with enemies more powerful and more insidious than the cruellest torture-mongers and the most fanatical clerics who have afflicted it in the past. What foes may not in the course of the convulsions that shall seize a dying civilization be brought into existence, who will reinforce the indignities which have already been heaped upon it! (World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 16-17)

Distinguishing features of Bahá'í World Order.

'How pressing and sacred the responsibility that now weighs upon those who are already acquainted with the teachings! How glorious the task of those who are called upon to vindicate their truth and demonstrate their practicality to the unbelieving world' WOB pg. 24

'Ours is the duty to ponder these things in the heart, to strive to widen our vision, and to deepen our comprehension of this Cause, and to arise, resolutely and unreservedly, to play our part, however small, in this greatest drama of the world's spiritual history.' WOB pg. 26

The Meeting with God



Lesson IX

Prayer P&M pg. 72-73

1 IQAN pg. 99-100 The door of the knowledge...He is I, myself.

2 IQAN pg. 98 To every discerning...the world of the visible.

3 IQAN pg. 142-143 These Prophets...His all embracing Revelation.

4 GL pg. 49-50 As a token of His mercy...hath disbelieved in God.

5 IQAN pg. 177-178 Through their appearance ...of the divine being.

6 GL pg. 70 The Person of the Manifestation...indivisible and peerless.

7 GL pg. 167 The essence of belief...steadfast in their belief.

8 GL pg. 165-166 Wert thou to ponder... limited the conception of God.

9 HW P#22 Compare with GL pg. 64.

Prayer P&M pg. 32-33 XXVIII

PRAYER - P&M pg. 72-73

Glory be to Thee, O my God! Thou hearest Thine ardent lovers lamenting in their separation from Thee, and such as have recognized Thee wailing because of their remoteness from Thy presence. Open Thou outwardly to their faces, O my Lord, the gates of Thy grace, that they may enter them by Thy leave and in conformity with Thy will, and may stand before the throne of Thy majesty, and catch the accents of Thy voice, and be illumined with the splendors of the light of Thy face.

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. None can withstand the power of Thy sovereign might. From everlasting Thou wert alone, with none to equal Thee, and wilt unto everlasting remain far above all thought and every description of Thee. Have mercy, then, upon Thy servants by Thy grace and bounty, and suffer them not to be kept back from the shores of the ocean of Thy nearness. If Thou abandonest them, who is there to befriend them; and if Thou puttest them far from Thee, who is he that can favor them? They have none other Lord beside Thee, none to adore except Thyself. Deal Thou generously with them by Thy bountiful grace.

Thou, in truth, art the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. (Prayers and Meditations, pages 72-73)

For the highest and most excelling grace bestowed upon men is the grace of "attaining unto the Presence of God" (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 138)

Attainment unto the divine Presence is synonymous with Resurrection. See Iqan page 145

'The one who reads that which is revealed in this tablet from the direction of the Throne and doubts the reality of meeting his Lord, verily, he is of those who deny God, who causeth the mornings to break forth!' Bahá'í Scriptures para. 276

The meeting with God is essentially a merging of the thoughts, ideal purposes, desires, activities and will of the lover with the Beloved, of the seeker with the One sought, of the student with the Teacher, of man with the Manifestation of God.

READING #1 IQAN pg. 99-100

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying: "His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all" hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade. Even as He hath said: "There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and them; except that they are Thy servants, and are created of Thee." This is the significance of the tradition: "I am He, Himself, and He is I, myself." (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 99-100)

When the Name of God is mentioned with the connotation of knowing Him, understanding His Word, being taught by Him, drawing near unto Him, meeting with Him, etc., or in fact any mention whatever of God, it is the Manifestation which is always understood. For the Primal Essence, the First Cause, is unknowable.

'No one has known Him and no soul has found out His substance.'

READING #2 Iqan pg. 98

To every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress. Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. "No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision; He is the Subtle, the All-Perceiving."(1)

No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness. No sign can indicate His presence or His absence; inasmuch as by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 98)

READING #3 IQAN pg. 142-143

These Prophets and chosen Ones of God are the recipients and revealers of all the unchangeable attributes and names of God. They are the mirrors that truly and faithfully reflect the light of God. Whatsoever is applicable to them is in reality applicable to God, Himself, Who is both the Visible and the Invisible. The knowledge of Him, Who is the Origin of all things, and attainment unto Him, are impossible save through knowledge of, and attainment unto, these luminous Beings who proceed from the Sun of Truth. By attaining, therefore, to the presence of these holy Luminaries, the "Presence of God" Himself is attained. From their knowledge, the knowledge of God is revealed, and from the light of their countenance, the splendour of the Face of God is made manifest. Through the manifold attributes of these Essences of Detachment, Who are both the first and the last, the seen and the hidden, it is made evident that He Who is the Sun of Truth is "the First and the Last, the Seen, and the Hidden."⁽¹⁾ Likewise the other lofty names and exalted attributes of God. Therefore, whosoever, and in whatever Dispensation, hath recognized and attained unto the presence of these glorious, these resplendent and most excellent Luminaries, hath verily attained unto the "Presence of God" Himself, and entered the city of eternal and immortal life. Attainment unto such presence is possible only in the Day of Resurrection, which is the Day of the rise of God Himself through His all-embracing Revelation. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 142-143)

So when one turns his heart towards God in supplication, prayer, meditation or in the slightest thought, it should always consciously and determinedly be the Manifestation to Whom he turns.

READING #4 GL pg. 49-50

As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. (Gleanings, pages 49-50)

When the meeting with God is spoken of then it is the meeting with the Manifestation of God in His human temple which is meant; the acceptance of His words as the Words of God Himself.

READING #5 IQAN pg. 177-178

Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the divine Being. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 177-178)

READING #6 GL pg. 70

The Person of the Manifestation hath ever been the representative and mouthpiece of God. He, in truth, is the Day Spring of God's most excellent Titles, and the Dawning-Place of His exalted Attributes. If any be set up by His side as peers, if they be regarded as identical with His Person, how can it, then, be maintained that the Divine Being is One and Incomparable, that His Essence is indivisible and peerless? (Gleanings, page 70)

In the merging of spirits thus attained, man rises above the realm of material things into the Paradise of His meeting and approximates the 'station from which shone forth the dawn of his verses.' (Dawn Prayer). It is this meeting to which Bahá'u'lláh refers, 'The station of revelation and vision before the Throne of His Grandeur.' (Tablet Ishraqat) Bahá'u'lláh even identifies the Manifestation with the Unknowable Essence:

READING #7 GL pg. 167

he essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same. By this is meant that whatever pertaineth to the former, all His acts and doings, whatever He ordaineth or forbiddeth, should be considered, in all their aspects, and under all circumstances, and without any reservation, as identical with the Will of God Himself. This is the loftiest station to which a true believer in the unity of God can ever hope to attain. Blessed is the man that reacheth this station, and is of them that are steadfast in their belief. (Gleanings, page 167)

In fact the mind of man is utterly incapable of dealing with this tremendous subject.

READING #8 GL pg. 165-166 Wert thou to ponder in thine heart, from now until the end that hath no end, and with all the concentrated intelligence and understanding which the greatest minds have attained in the past or will attain in the future, this divinely ordained and subtle Reality, this sign of the revelation of the All-Abiding, All-Glorious God, thou wilt fail to comprehend its mystery or to appraise its virtue. Having recognized thy powerlessness to attain to an adequate understanding of that Reality which abideth within thee, thou wilt readily admit the futility of such efforts as may be attempted by thee, or by any of the created things, to fathom the mystery of the Living God, the Day Star of unfading glory, the Ancient of everlasting days. This confession of helplessness which mature contemplation must eventually impel every mind to make is in itself the acme of human understanding, and marketh the culmination of man's development.

Regard thou the one true God as One Who is apart from, and immeasurably exalted above, all created things. The whole universe reflecteth His glory, while He is Himself independent of, and transcendeth His creatures. This is the true meaning of Divine unity. He Who is the Eternal Truth is the one Power Who exerciseth undisputed sovereignty over the world of being, Whose image is reflected in the mirror of the entire creation. All existence is dependent upon Him, and from Him is derived the source of the sustenance of all things. This is what is meant by Divine unity; this is its fundamental principle.

Some, deluded by their idle fancies, have conceived all created things as associates and partners of God, and imagined themselves to be the exponents of His unity. By Him Who is the one true God! Such men have been, and will continue to remain, the victims of blind imitation, and are to be numbered with them that have restricted and limited the conception of God. (Gleanings, pages 165-166)

We are warned constantly against making 'partners with God.' It is as if we are being warned not to give our imaginations and superstitions free sway. Also, it must be remembered that to our limited intelligence and station of the Manifestation is as infinitely removed from our understanding as that of the Essence Itself. 'He is a sea upon which no one can sail...' Yet 'Were His servants to know Him as He is to be known, they would all sever themselves from everything, and would make themselves subject to Him, their King,...' Bahá'í Scripture par. 377-378

This hastening unto Him, this knowing Him as He may be known, this recognition of His Station as the Mouthpiece of the Unknowable Essence, this turning to Him in prayer, thought, meditation is the Meeting with God of which He speaks so often and so alluringly. To deny this possibility is to 'deny God, Who causeth the mornings to break.'

It is important that this meeting with God should be practically and vividly realized as an intellectual certainty. It is a simple matter after all. When we read Browning, Emerson, Shelly, Plato and some great passage strikes us which stirs us to the roots of our being, we enter, according to our capacity into the spirit of the author and truly meet him at his best, much more truly meets him than if we talked to him in the flesh. For here we associate with his higher self - his real and spiritual self. By that 'meeting' we are uplifted into a world of thought and emotion which, compared to our everyday material living in truly a heavenly realm. If this is true of an earthly genius what must be the effect upon our spirits of a similar meeting with the incarnate Spirit of God.

The perfect man, according to the terminology of the New Day, is he who enters into this companionship with God. It is none of the connotations with which our limited knowledge, our unlimited ignorance, associated with the work 'perfection' and 'goodness'. There is none good save God. The perfect man is he who unreservedly absolutely, sincerely and self-sacrificingly submits his will, his mind, his spirit to the spirit, Will and Law of God as revealed in the Words of His Prophet, Bahá'u'lláh. This does not mean that he becomes, in the eyes of his associates, a suddenly transformed being, identified with certain qualities that set him above and apart from the common herd. On the contrary he is often an abased rather than an exalted man. Nor is he in his own mind exalted to anything like his conception of perfection. Rather he is humbled to a condition bordering on nothingness.

His sole claim to perfection (which, of course, he never makes even in his most fleeing thought) is that

he has attained to the two-fold station of recognition of the Manifestation and obedience to His Law. 'Neither is acceptable without the other.' And because of this recognition and absolute obedience his character begins to take on the characteristics of God as expressed in the life of Ábdu'l-Bahá. He becomes the servant of the Glory of God, which servitude expresses itself in servitude to his fellow men. In every literal and practical sense he becomes as assistant of god upon the earth - he qualifies as a companion of His Throne.

This has little relation to what men conventionally call 'goodness'. The servant of God is not intent on being 'good'. He is intent only on submerging himself in the Ocean of His Utterances and in obedience to His Law. This attitude of subjection to the Will and Law of Bahá'u'lláh tends inevitably to tear away the veils of the animalistic ego and thus reveal the divine reality of the true man. The qualities of that reality therein manifest themselves as a result of that recognition and obedience. It is the relation of the mirror to the sun. How impossible for the mirror to reflect the sun when clouded with the rust or covered with a cloth. But take away such impediments and how naturally and surely the mirror manifests the attributes of the sun. Obedience to His Law is the polish which effects this.

'When actions are habitually and conscientiously adjusted to noble standard with no thought of the words that might herald them, then nobility becomes the accent of life. At such a degree of evolution one scarcely need try any longer to be good - all acts become the distinctive expression of nobility.'
Bahá'í Scripture Par. 822

'This turning the face towards God is the healing of the body, the mind and the soul. When this advancement toward God has become complete, one is able to overcome passion and desire, become protected from sin and transgression and be delivered from heedlessness. It will bestow eternal life and grant the imperishable gift. Bahá'í Scripture Par. 941

The supreme the inestimable gift to man in this Day lies in the fact that such a perfect Man has been given us as an example of what all servants can follow. Ábdu'l-Bahá is that embodied Perfection. He unreservedly acknowledged and obeyed Bahá'u'lláh, His head constantly at the Holy Threshold, His face never turned from the Face of God, His mirror never clouded with the rust of self. The goals of relative perfection is made clear in the teachings and the Example it provided.

To dwell on one's unworthiness and imperfections is as great a barrier to attainment as to dwell upon one's goodness and worthiness. We are not competent to judge of either. 'We are capable of neither good nor harm'. Any consideration of either is a species of egotism which still further clouds the mirror of the heart. We are concerned only with the recognition and obedience. The rest follows automatically and inevitably, never forgetting that we have all eternity in which to make the complete Journey from self to God. Our job is to get on the Path and stick steadfastly. 'Look not upon the creature (either oneself or others) look only to the Creator.'

READING #9 HW P22 (Compare with GL pg. 64)

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. (Persian Hidden Words, page 22)

PRAYER P&M pg. 32-33

Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! I bear witness that from eternity Thou wert exalted in Thy transcendent majesty and might, and wilt to eternity abide in Thy surpassing power and glory. None in the kingdoms of earth and heaven can frustrate Thy purpose; none throughout the realms of revelation and of creation can prevail against Thee. At Thy command Thou doest what Thou willest, and by the power of Thy sovereignty Thou rulest as Thou pleasest.

I implore Thee, O Thou Who causest the dawn to appear, by Thy Lamp which Thou didst light with the fire of Thy love before all that are in heaven and on earth, and whose flame Thou feedest with the fuel of Thy wisdom in the kingdom of Thy creation, to make me to be of those who have soared in Thine atmosphere, and surrendered their will to Thy decree.

I am all wretchedness, O my Lord, and Thou art the Most Powerful, the Almighty. Have pity upon me by Thy grace and bountiful favor, and graciously aid me to serve Thee and them that are dear to Thee. Potent art Thou to do as Thou willest. No God is there but Thee, the God of strength, of glory and wisdom. (Prayers and Meditations, pages 32-33)

Prayer and Meditation



Lesson X

The Ocean of His Utterances Prayer and Meditation

Prayer P&M pg. 4-5 II

1. HW P#79
2. HW A#16
3. GL pg. 321 Arise therefore ... atone for your past failure.
4. PUP pg. 241-242 Spirit has the influence ...it is necessary. (246-247)
5. GL pg. 133-134 Know thou, O fruit of My Tree ...the All-Wise.
6. WAB pg. 163-164 It is an axiomatic fact ... mysteries of the Spirit. (PT pg. 174-176)
7. IQAN pg. 52-53 Were you to ponder ...His realm of glory.
8. IQAN pg. 149 Ponder this in thine heart..knowledge and understanding.
9. IQAN pg. 181-182 Those words uttered ...in every age.
10. IQAN pg. 217 O brother, we should...towards the servants.
11. IQAN pg. 238 The wine of renunciation ...needs be observed.
12. GL pg. 295 Intone, O My Servant...the Source of power and wisdom.

PRAYER

Unto Thee be praise, O Lord my God! I entreat Thee, by Thy signs that have encompassed the entire creation, and by the light of Thy countenance that hath illuminated all that are in heaven and on earth, and by Thy mercy that hath surpassed all created things, and by Thy grace that hath suffused the whole universe, to rend asunder the veils that shut me out from Thee, that I may hasten unto the Fountain-Head of Thy mighty inspiration, and to the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation and bountiful favors, and may be immersed beneath the ocean of Thy nearness and pleasure.

Suffer me not, O my Lord, to be deprived of the knowledge of Thee in Thy days, and divest me not of the robe of Thy guidance. Give me to drink of the river that is life indeed, whose waters have streamed forth from the Paradise (Ridvan) in which the throne of Thy Name, the All-Merciful, was established, that mine eyes may be opened, and my face be illumined, and my heart be assured, and my soul be enlightened, and my steps be made firm.

Thou art He Who from everlasting was, through the potency of His might, supreme over all things, and, through the operation of His will, was able to ordain all things. Nothing whatsoever, whether in Thy heaven or on Thy earth, can frustrate Thy purpose. Have mercy, then, upon me, O my Lord, through Thy gracious providence and generosity, and incline mine ear to the sweet melodies of the birds that warble their praise of Thee, amidst the branches of the tree of Thy oneness.

Thou art the Great Giver, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. (Prayers and Meditations, pages 4-5)

'Man must live in a continual attitude of prayer. His mind an altar, his heart a sanctuary of prayer.'
DAL pg. 50

Prayer is an attitude of mind and heart; a deep spiritual passion at times, but a constant attitude, expressed in every act and word of life. This may sum up the Bahá'í teachings on this important subject. It is essential, however, to bring these teachings before the mind as the commands and advises of God given for the purpose of directing us to the Source of Power. The Creative Word revealed from God today on this all important subject explains the method, technique, scientific and rational, as well as its great importance and resulting power.

READING #1 HW P#79

O SON OF DESIRE!

How long wilt thou soar in the realms of desire? Wings have I bestowed upon thee, that thou mayest fly to the realms of mystic holiness and not the regions of satanic fancy. The comb, too, have I given thee that thou mayest dress My raven locks, and not lacerate My throat. (Persian Hidden Words, page 79)

Prayer is a means for developing power. This is an aspect of prayer usually entirely overlooked, seldom put to practical use and almost never to its full and constant use.

READING #2 HW A#16

O SON OF LIGHT!

Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is of the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it. (Arabic Hidden Words, page 16)

The essence of prayer is a conscious nearness to the Manifestation of God. This requires preparation of mind and heart. 'Effort should first be made to make attachment to God.' DAL pg. 52

And when Ábdu'l-Bahá was asked how this attachment was made, He said, 'study listen, try to understand.' The soil must be fertilized before the seed is sown. 'The worshipper must pray with detached spirit, surrender of the will, concentrated attention and magnetic spiritual passion.' 'The preparation for the prayerful attitude is detachment.' DAL pg. 58

There are three obligatory prayers, the use of which daily is laid upon all true believers as a command

from God. In the first two, certain postures are indicated. When Ábdu'l-Bahá was asked why these postures were necessary, he answered that thus the body is able to partake with the spirit in the beneficent results. It is certain that these prayers and postures are commanded by the Manifestation of God. Shoghi Effendi has spoken of their importance and reiterated the necessity of obedience. Those who over a period of years have obeyed this injunction will testify as to the invaluable results obtained.

These daily prayers as revealed by the Manifestation of God are not meant to be more than the key unlocking the treasure of Power. The worshipper becomes acquainted according to his capacity with the mysteries of power; the revealed prayers open to us the doors of the Court of Holiness. 'He hears with divine ears and beholds with God-like eyes.' That is the object of prayer - to draw near to the divine world and become a 'companion of God.'

This is why it is so vastly important to obey in every slightest detail the commands of Bahá'u'lláh regarding prayer as well as all the other commands. For He alone is able to introduce Man into this Realm of the Spirit; put into his hands the reins of Power and educate him in this communion regarding the knowledge of the results of human life.

With this obedience, which covers every detail such as posture, frequency etc., must go an inflexible determination of the will. 'Concentrated attention and magnetic spiritual passion.' 'Effort should be first made to make attachment of God.' 'The soil must need be fertilized before the seed is sown.' -This is to say just as in the search for material things the effort necessary is largely in proportion to their value, so in the search for spiritual wealth union with spiritual Power, it is not to be attained without supreme effort.

READING #3 GL pg. 321

Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, will attain unto his heart's desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of his Beloved. Bursting through his cage, he will, even as the bird of the spirit, wing his flight to his holy and everlasting nest.

Night hath succeeded day, and day hath succeeded night, and the hours and moments of your lives have come and gone, and yet none of you hath, for one instant, consented to detach himself from that which perisheth. Bestir yourselves, that the brief moments that are still yours may not be dissipated and lost. Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass, and your bodies shall be laid to rest beneath a canopy of dust. What can ye then achieve? How can ye atone for your past failure? (Gleanings, page 321)

Prayer, then, is plainly an attitude of mind, a conscious and determined direction of the Spirit. In this atmosphere, in which the consciousness is turned toward the World of Reality, toward the Supreme Concourse, towards God, we cannot refrain from expression in some form. That expression, regardless of the form it takes, is prayer. The forms it may take are many. The higher the expression, the less the

self is evident, the nearer the approach to God.

The lowest, most selfish form of prayer is supplication. 'True supplication to God must be actuated by love for God only.' DAL pg. 53

The animal human self has no place in the world of the spirit where God dwells. The highest form of prayer, considered as a conscious act, is Praise. One can hardly have failed to notice that all the revealed prayers echo with praise to God. And all close with affirmations implying man's dependence on and love for the Source and Goal of his spiritual being.

Among other forms which prayer takes are affirmation, communion, servitude, work, radiant acquiescence, thankfulness under all conditions. In fact there is hardly a single act of life which is not susceptible to transformation by the injection of the attitude of prayer.

READING #4 PUP pg. 241-242

Spirit has influence; prayer has spiritual effect. Therefore, we pray, "O God! Heal this sick one!" Perchance God will answer. Does it matter who prays? God will answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, illimitable. He answers the prayers of all His servants. He answers the prayer of this plant. The plant prays potentially, "O God! Send me rain!" God answers the prayer, and the plant grows. God will answer anyone. He answers prayers potentially. Before we were born into this world did we not pray, "O God! Give me a mother; give me two fountains of bright milk; purify the air for my breathing; grant me rest and comfort; prepare food for my sustenance and living"? Did we not pray potentially for these needed blessings before we were created? When we came into this world, did we not find our prayers answered? Did we not find mother, father, food, light, home and every other necessity and blessing, although we did not actually ask for them? Therefore, it is natural that God will give to us when we ask Him. His mercy is all-encircling.

But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us, and there is no answer to our prayer. His wisdom does not sanction what we wish. We pray, "O God! Make me wealthy!" If this prayer were universally answered, human affairs would be at a standstill. There would be none left to work in the streets, none to till the soil, none to build, none to run the trains. Therefore, it is evident that it would not be well for us if all prayers were answered. The affairs of the world would be interfered with, energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for which is in accord with divine wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly!

For instance, a very feeble patient may ask the doctor to give him food which would be positively dangerous to his life and condition. He may beg for roast meat. The doctor is kind and wise. He knows it would be dangerous to his patient so he refuses to allow it. The doctor is merciful; the patient, ignorant. Through the doctor's kindness the patient recovers; his life is saved. Yet the patient may cry out that the doctor is unkind, not good, because he refuses to answer his pleading. God is merciful. In His mercy He answers the prayers of all His servants when according to His supreme wisdom it is necessary. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 246-247)

READING #5 GL pg. 133-134

Know thou, O fruit of My Tree, that the decrees of the Sovereign Ordainer, as related to fate and predestination, are of two kinds. Both are to be obeyed and accepted. The one is irrevocable, the other is, as termed by men, impending. To the former all must unreservedly submit, inasmuch as it is fixed and settled. God, however, is able to alter or repeal it. As the harm that must result from such a change will be greater than if the decree had remained unaltered, all, therefore, should willingly acquiesce in what God hath willed and confidently abide by the same.

The decree that is impending, however, is such that prayer and entreaty can succeed in averting it.

God grant that thou who art the fruit of My Tree, and they that are associated with thee, may be shielded from its evil consequences.

Say: O God, my God! Thou hast committed into mine hands a trust from Thee, and hast now according to the good-pleasure of Thy Will called it back to Thyself. It is not for me, who am a handmaid of Thine, to say, whence is this to me or wherefore hath it happened, inasmuch as Thou art glorified in all Thine acts, and art to be obeyed in Thy decree. Thine handmaid, O my Lord, hath set her hopes on Thy grace and bounty. Grant that she may obtain that which will draw her nigh unto Thee, and will profit her in every world of Thine. Thou art the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful. There is none other God but Thee, the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.

Vouchsafe Thy blessings, O Lord, my God, unto them that have quaffed the wine of Thy love before the face of men, and, in spite of Thine enemies, have acknowledged Thy unity, testified to Thy oneness, and confessed their belief in that which hath made the limbs of the oppressors among Thy creatures to quake, and the flesh of the proud ones of the earth to tremble. I bear witness that Thy Sovereignty can never perish, nor Thy Will be altered. Ordain for them that have set their faces towards Thee, and for Thine handmaids that have held fast by Thy Cord, that which beseemeth the Ocean of Thy bounty and the Heaven of Thy grace.

Thou art He, O God, Who hath proclaimed Himself as the Lord of Wealth, and characterized all that serve Him as poor and needy. Even as Thou hast written: "O ye that believe! Ye are but paupers in need of God; but God is the All-Possessing, the All-Praised." Having acknowledged my poverty, and recognized Thy wealth, suffer me not to be deprived of the glory of Thy riches. Thou art, verily, the Supreme Protector, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. (Gleanings, pages 133-134)

The continuance in the attitude of prayer inevitably leads to meditation.

READING #6 WAB (PARIS TALKS) pg. 163-164

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

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

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

The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food.

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see.

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

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

Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man; they are like waves moving in the sea without result. But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the inner light and characterized with divine attributes, the results will be confirmed.

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

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

Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed -turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects -so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit. (Paris Talks*, pages 174-176)

Immersed in the Oceans of His Utterance, soaring in the atmosphere of His knowledge, working in the spirit of servitude, the Valley of Astonishment opens before us. How can we refrain from ecstatic gaze upon this world of the spirit. The world to which Bahá'u'lláh compares our material world as to 'the pupil in the eye of a dead ant.'

READING #7 IQAN pg. 52-53

Were you to ponder, but for a while, these utterances in your heart, you would surely find the portals of understanding unlocked before your face, and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled before your eyes. Such things take place only that the souls of men may develop and be delivered from the prison-cage of self and desire. Otherwise, that ideal King hath, throughout eternity, been in His Essence independent of the comprehension of all beings, and will continue, for ever, in His

own Being to be exalted above the adoration of every soul. A single breeze of His affluence doth suffice to adorn all mankind with the robe of wealth; and one drop out of the ocean of His bountiful grace is enough to confer upon all beings the glory of everlasting life. But inasmuch as the divine Purpose hath decreed that the true should be known from the false, and the sun from the shadow, He hath, therefore, in every season sent down upon mankind the showers of tests from His realm of glory. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 52-53)

READING #8 IQAN pg. 149

Ponder this in thine heart, that the sweet gales of divine knowledge, blowing from the meads of mercy, may waft upon thee the fragrance of the Beloved's utterance, and cause thy soul to attain the Ridvan of understanding. As the wayward of every age have failed to fathom the deeper import of these weighty and pregnant utterances, and imagined the answer of the Prophets of God to be irrelevant to the questions they asked them, they therefore have attributed ignorance and folly to those Essences of knowledge and understanding. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 149)

READING #9 IQAN pg. 181-182

Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance be not grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery. For it behooveth no man to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate their truth. For such, today, is the manner of the divines and doctors of the age, who occupy the seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice. Were these to ask the Light of Truth concerning those images which their idle fancy hath carved, and were they to find His answer inconsistent with their own conceptions and their own understanding of the Book, they would assuredly denounce Him Who is the Mine and Wellhead of all Knowledge as the very negation of understanding. Such things have happened in every age. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 181-182)

And thus meditation, 'all things are merged into nothingness before the Revelations of His Splendor.'

READING #10 IQAN pg. 217

O brother, we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God, that perchance we may be warned by the unmistakable counsels of the Book, and give heed to the admonitions recorded in the holy Tablets; that we may not cavil at the Revealer of the verses, that we may resign ourselves wholly to His Cause, and embrace wholeheartedly His law, that haply we may enter the court of His mercy, and dwell upon the shore of His grace. He, verily, is merciful, and forgiving towards His servants. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 217)

READING #11 IQAN pg. 238

The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words "One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" must needs be observed, (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 238)

The one path to the effective understanding and application of the Power of prayer is Love. If we truly love God (His Manifestation) we will wish to talk to Him. That is prayer. If we have a glimmer even, of the universal love so that our consciousness tends more and more to include all humanity in an understanding sympathy, that is prayer. If we recognize our work as service performed lovingly for others, that is prayer.

READING #12 GL pg. 295

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. (Gleanings, page 295)

The Science of the Love of God



_ Lesson XI

1. PUP pg. 271 In this century...phenomenal world. (277)
2. BS par 790
3. GL pg. 205 Illumine your hearts ...souls of all beings.
4. GL pg. 260-261 If the learned...hath wronged and forsaken.
5. PUP pg. 262-263 'When we observe...conducive to death. (268-269)
6. PUP pg. 183 We were not in ...which precedes asking. (188)
7. SAQ pg. 130 Faith, which is life eternal...not by effort and striving.
8. PUP pg. 183 He has created us...may encircle you all. (188-189)
9. DP pg. 139 By heavenly science...human life.
10. GL pg. 38 Arise O wayfarer ...righteous be gladdened.

PRAYER PUP pg. 270 O Thou kind God!... (276) ...the giver, the generous.

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those in the original citing have been retained from the 1922 edition, which was reprinted in one volume in 1943.

Note: BS, Bahá'í Scriptures, edited by Horace Holly and published by the Bahá'í Publishing Committee 1923, was replaced by publishing the Bahá'í World Faith in 1943.

READING #1 PUP pg. 271

In this century of the latter times Bahá'u'lláh has appeared and so resuscitated spirits that they have manifested powers more than human. Thousands of His followers have given their lives; and while under the sword, shedding their blood, they have proclaimed, "Ya Baha'u'l-Abha!" Such resuscitation is impossible except through a heavenly potency, a supernatural power, the divine power of the Holy Spirit. Through a natural and mere human power this is impossible. Therefore, the question arises: How is this resuscitation to be accomplished?

There are certain means for its accomplishment by which mankind is regenerated and quickened with a new birth. This is the second birth mentioned in the heavenly Books. Its accomplishment is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The resuscitation or rebirth of the spirit of man is through the science of the love of God. It is through the efficacy of the water of life. This life and quickening is the

regeneration of the phenomenal world. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 277)

The word science has acquired new connotations. No longer is it confined solely to the field of material things, it has extended its scope to include the whole field of men's activities - physical, mental, moral and spiritual. Many scientists have indelibly impressed this point of view upon the unprejudiced mind. The informed Bahá'í recognizes that it is the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and the divine Spirit of Love and Wisdom which He has breathed into the world which are responsible for this breadth of understanding. Too long have the meanings of the word 'love' been confined to the realms of emotion and sentiment. For the first time in the history of philosophy the phrase, the science of Love has been used. It is not too much to say that this is one of the most important discoveries that scientific investigation and inspiration has ever uncovered, for it has brought into the field of material research a searchlight which illumines the results of man's activities and gives them worth and meaning. In the worlds of Ábdu'l-Bahá, it 'reveals the secrets of the degrees of existence and the knowledge of the results of human life.' This expansion of the meaning of 'Love' is summarized by summarized by Ábdu'l-Bahá.

READING #2 BS par 790

Have full assurance that love is the mystery of the appearance of God; that love is the divine aspect of God; that love is spiritual grace; that love is the light of the Kingdom; that love is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of man. Love is the cause of the manifestations of truth in the material world. Love is the essential bond of union which exists between God and all things in their ultimate reality. Love is the source of the greatest happiness of the material and spiritual worlds. Love is the light by which man is guided in the midst of darkness. Love is the communication between truth and man in the realm of consciousness. Love is the means of growth for all who are enlightened.

Love is the highest law in this great universe of God. Love is the law of order between simple essences, whereby they are apportioned and united into compound substances in this world of matter.. Love is the essential and magnetic power that organizes the planets and the stars which shine in infinite space. Love supplies the impulse to that intense and unceasing meditation which reveals the hidden mysteries of the universe.

Love is the highest honor for all the nations of men. To that people in which God causes love to appear the Supreme Concourse, the angles of heaven, and the hosts of the kingdom of the Glorious One make salutation. When the hearts of a people are void of this Divine power - the love of God - they will descend to the lowest estate of mortals, they will wander in the desert of error, they will fall into the slough of despair and there is no deliverance for them. They become like worms which delight in grovelling in the earth.

O friends of God! be ye manifestations of the love of God and lamps of guidance in all horizons, shining by the light of love and harmony.

How beautiful is the shining of this shining!

Every one of these sublime sentences should be memorized and be the subject for meditation until some measure of understanding is achieved.

READING #3 GL pg. 205

...illumine your hearts with the light of His love. This is the key that unlocketh the hearts of men, the burnish that shall cleanse the souls of all beings. (Gleanings, page 205)

The necessity for a clear understanding, a workable knowledge, of what this point of view might mean to the individual in his conduct of life, and to society in its attempt to understand the laws which govern it, is evident. When the ancient writer of the Book of Proverbs said: 'A soft answer turneth away wrath while grievous words stir up anger,' he uttered a scientific truth, that is, a statement susceptible of proof through human experience. When Jesus commanded His disciples to guide their relationship with men by the formula: 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him and if he thirst give him to drink.' He brought that scientific dictum into the field of practical action. Is there any possible doubt that if, during the last 1900 years scientific investigation -tested by its application to human affairs - that has been applied in the fields of chemistry, biology, etc., the results in terms of human happiness and prosperity would have been vastly increased.

In this Day, owing solely to the broadening of the mind and soul of man through the Breaths of the Holy Spirit which Bahá'u'lláh has breathed upon us these gems of eternal Truth which past Prophets and sages have planted in the soil of humanity, have grown, blossomed and borne fruit. We have, for the first time in history, a clear pathway to true liberty, peace, composure, wisdom, and happiness.

READING #4 GL pg. 260-261

If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure. Were the earth to attain this station and be illumined with its light it could then be truly said of it: "Thou shall see in it no hollows or rising hills."

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. (Gleanings, pages 260-261)

The avenue by which the mind and spirit of man, his total consciousness, is led into an appreciation

and a practical working knowledge of this science is by an immeasurable broadening of his horizon of thought and experience. This is only accomplished, and can be accomplished only, by contact with an exponent of that broader life. Just as any student must come into mental and spiritual contact with a qualified teacher, backed by an utter confidence in his abilities as such in order to attain the desired knowledge and abilities, so must the eager student in the pathway of Reality seek, follow, love and trust his Teacher and Guide. By Him he is led into a new world of conciseness and he thenceforth adjusts his mental, moral, spiritual and even his physical life to these standards. His former standards are entirely forgotten.

The terminology of the Creative word uses the term 'second birth' in describing this tremendous experience. No better term could possibly be devised, for just as in the first birth the fetus exchanges the dark and narrow room in which he has lived for nine months for the light, expansive, active, colorful world of human life, so in the second birth that world of knowledge, experience, expansion and color so far in excess of ordinary human life that it is, in actual experience an entirely different and vastly greater world.

It would seem from a careful study of the Creative Word that this aspect of Love is an essential part of the Teachings. Love is an emotion, truly, but when applied to the problems of life the methods of science need to be used. That is the scope must be extended to our thinking and actions to include its activities in the realms of economics, sociology and politics, as well as in the relations of the human family.

READING #5 PUP pg. 262-263 (268-269)

When we observe the phenomena of the universe, we realize that the axis around which life revolves is love, while the axis around which death and destruction revolve is animosity and hatred. Let us view the mineral kingdom. Here we see that if attraction did not exist between the atoms, the composite substance of matter would not be possible. Every existent phenomenon is composed of elements and cellular particles. This is scientifically true and correct. If attraction did not exist between the elements and among the cellular particles, the composition of that phenomenon would never have been possible. For instance, the stone is an existent phenomenon, a composition of elements. A bond of attraction has brought them together, and through this cohesion of ingredients this petrous object has been formed. This stone is the lowest degree of phenomena, but nevertheless within it a power of attraction is manifest without which the stone could not exist. This power of attraction in the mineral world is love, the only expression of love the stone can manifest. Look now upon the next highest stage of life, the vegetable kingdom. Here we see that the plant is the result of cohesion among various elements, just as the mineral is in its kingdom; but, furthermore, the plant has the power of absorption from the earth. This is a higher degree of attraction which differentiates the plant from the mineral. In the kingdom of the vegetable this is an expression of love, the highest capacity of expression the vegetable possesses. By this power of attraction, or augmentation, the plant grows day by day. Therefore, in this kingdom, also, love is the cause of life. If repulsion existed among the elements instead of attraction, the result would be disintegration, destruction and nonexistence. Because cohesion exists among the elements and cellular attraction is manifest, the plant appears. When this attraction is dispelled and the ingredients separate, the plant ceases to exist.

Then we come to the animal world, which is still higher in degree than the vegetable kingdom. In it the power of love makes itself still more manifest. The light of love is more resplendent in the animal kingdom because the power of attraction whereby elements cohere and cellular atoms commingle now reveals itself in certain emotions and sensibilities which produce instinctive fellowship and association. The animals are imbued with kindness and affinity which manifests itself among those of the same species.

Finally, we reach the kingdom of man. Here we find that all the degrees of the mineral, vegetable and animal expressions of love are present plus unmistakable attractions of consciousness. That is to say, man is the possessor of a degree of attraction which is conscious and spiritual. Here is an immeasurable advance. In the human kingdom spiritual susceptibilities come into view, love exercises its superlative degree, and this is the cause of human life.

The proof is clear that in all degrees and kingdoms unity and agreement, love and fellowship are the cause of life, whereas dissension, animosity and separation are ever conducive to death. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 268-269)

That this attitude is foreign to all the preconceived notions of people around us offers no deterrent. One might as well expect the unborn babe to react to the stimuli experienced by the five year old child as to expect man, still functioning under the stimuli of the lower self, to understand, much less react to the stimuli of the twice-born man. This material difference is what denotes the children of the Kingdom.

READING #6 PUP pg. 183 (188)

We were not in the world of existence, but as soon as we were born, we found everything prepared for our needs and comfort without question on our part. He has given us a kind father and compassionate mother, provided for us two springs of salubrious milk, pure atmosphere, refreshing water, gentle breezes and the sun shining above our heads. In brief, He has supplied all the necessities of life although we did not ask for any of these great gifts. With pure mercy and bounty He has prepared this great table. It is a mercy which precedes asking. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 188)

READING #7 SAQ pg. 149

For faith, which is life eternal, is the sign of bounty, and not the result of justice. The flame of the fire of love, in this world of earth and water, comes through the power of attraction and not by effort and striving. (Some Answered Questions, page 130)

The children of the Kingdom - their gaze is fixed upon a New World Order, the moving principle of which is the Science of the Love of God.

READING #8 PUP pg. 183 (188-189)

He has created us in this radiant century, a century longed for and expected by all the sanctified souls

in past periods. It is a blessed century; it is a blessed day. The philosophers of history have agreed that this century is equal to one hundred past centuries. This is true from every standpoint. This is the century of science, inventions, discoveries and universal laws. This is the century of the revelation of the mysteries of God. This is the century of the effulgence of the rays of the Sun of Truth. Therefore, you must render thanks and glorification to God that you were born in this age. Furthermore, you have listened to the call of Bahá'u'lláh. Your nostrils are perfumed with the breezes of the paradise of Abha. You have caught glimpses of the light from the horizon of the Orient. You were asleep; you are awakened. Your ears are attentive; your hearts are informed. You have acquired the love of God. You have attained to the knowledge of God. This is the most great bestowal of God. This is the breath of the Holy Spirit, and this consists of faith and assurance. This eternal life is the second birth; this is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God has destined this station for you all. He has prepared this for you. You must appreciate the value of this bounty and engage your time in mentioning and thanking the True One. You must live in the utmost happiness. If any trouble or vicissitude comes into your lives, if your heart is depressed on account of health, livelihood or vocation, let not these things affect you. They should not cause unhappiness, for Bahá'u'lláh has brought you divine happiness. He has prepared heavenly food for you; He has destined eternal bounty for you; He has bestowed everlasting glory upon you. Therefore, these glad tidings should cause you to soar in the atmosphere of joy forever and ever. Render continual thanks unto God so that the confirmations of God may encircle you all. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 188-189)

This is the Kingdom whose citizens are ruled not by the prompting of the lower animal-kingdom self, but by the Self of God. This higher self is under the domination of the science of love applied to all his thoughts and actions. In the realm of morals this science works out as righteousness; in the realm of economics it results in equality of opportunity, philanthropy, social justice, altruism; in the realm of politics it inevitably tends to produce world order, world unity, world peace.

Finally it needs to be emphasized that the doors to the study and understanding of this science have been opened by the Manifestation of God. Ábdu'l-Bahá develops this theme in many ways and applies this method to all the fields of human thought and action. That within a reasonable span of years we shall see this science introduced into our educational systems is beyond doubt.

READING #9 DP pg. 139

By heavenly sciences I mean divine philosophy and spiritual teachings; by the songs and fragrances of the rose garden I mean the mysteries of the Kingdom of kingdoms, the secrets of the degrees of existence and the knowledge of the results of human life.

Already we may see the beginning of its appreciation, though under many names and in a pitifully insignificant measure, in some relations; the psychology of relations between children and parents, merchant and customer, etc.

It is for the Bahá'í to study this science with profound exactness and to assume its reality and practicability with the same naturalness and certainty that he does the law of gravity

'Let His Love be a storehouse of treasure for your souls.'

READING #10 GL pg. 38

Arise, O wayfarer in the path of the Love of God, and aid thou His Cause. Say: Barter not away this Youth, O people, for the vanities of this world or the delights of heaven. By the righteousness of the one true God! One hair of Him excelleth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. Beware, O men, lest ye be tempted to part with Him in exchange for the gold and silver ye possess. Let His love be a storehouse of treasure for your souls, on the Day when naught else but Him shall profit you, the Day when every pillar shall tremble, when the very skins of men shall creep, when all eyes shall stare up with terror. Say: O people! Fear ye God, and turn not away disdainfully from His Revelation. Fall prostrate on your faces before God, and celebrate His praise in the daytime and in the night season.

Let thy soul glow with the flame of this undying Fire that burneth in the midmost heart of the world, in such wise that the waters of the universe shall be powerless to cool down its ardor. Make, then, mention of thy Lord, that haply the heedless among Our servants may be admonished through thy words, and the hearts of the righteous be gladdened. (Gleanings, page 38)

PRAYER PUP pg. 270 (276)

O Thou kind God! In the utmost state of humility and submission do we entreat and supplicate at Thy threshold, seeking Thine endless confirmations and illimitable assistance. O Thou Lord! Regenerate these souls, and confer upon them a new life. Animate the spirits, inform the hearts, open the eyes, and make the ears attentive. From Thine ancient treasury confer a new being and animus, and from Thy preexistent abode assist them to attain to new confirmations.

O God! Verily, the world is in need of reformation. Bestow upon it a new existence. Give it newness of thoughts, and reveal unto it heavenly sciences. Breathe into it a fresh spirit, and grant unto it a holier and higher purpose.

O God! Verily, Thou hast made this century radiant, and in it Thou hast manifested Thy merciful effulgence. Thou hast effaced the darkness of superstitions and permitted the light of assurance to shine. O God! Grant that these servants may be acceptable at Thy threshold. Reveal a new heaven, and spread out a new earth for habitation. Let a new Jerusalem descend from on high. Bestow new thoughts, new life upon mankind. Endow souls with new perceptions, and confer upon them new virtues. Verily, Thou art the Almighty, the Powerful. Thou art the Giver, the Generous. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 276)

The Word of God



Lesson XII

1. READING #1 PUP pg. 149 The Books of... (154) ...and eternal truth.
2. READING #2 GL pg. 171-172 Certain traditions ...of a corrupt inclination.
3. READING #3 GL pg. 171 This is the Day ...may be pleased to reveal .
4. READING #4 PUP pg. 308 His revelation of the Word...Prophets of the past. (314)
5. READING #5 PUP pg. 148-150 The divine Manifestations...unity of mankind. (154-156)
6. READING #6 GL pg. 286-287 Through the power ...spent itself and vanished
7. READING #7 GL pg. 141-142 Every word that... apprehend this truth.
8. READING #8 IQAN pg. 192 Thus will these mysteries ...if ye know it not."
9. READING #9 IQAN pg. 211 The understanding ...and freedom of spirit.
10. READING #10 IQAN pg. 254-255 It is evident...meanings we can explain."
11. READING #11 IQAN pg. 217 O brother, we should ...towards His servants.
12. READING #12 BS par. 54 Glory be unto Thee...the Self-subsistent!

Note: BS, Bahá'í Scriptures, edited by Horace Holley and published by the Bahá'í Publishing Committee 1923, was replaced by publishing the Bahá'í World Faith in 1943.

Note: Pages for PUP in parentheses are the newer (1982) edition while those originally cited in the 1922 edition have been retained.

READING #1 PUP pg. 149

The Books of Bahá'u'lláh number more than one hundred. Each one is an evident proof sufficient for mankind; each one from foundation to apex proclaims the essential unity of God and humanity, the love of God, the abolition of war and the divine standard of peace. Each one also inculcates divine morality, the manifestation of lordly graces - in every word a book of meanings. For the Word of God is collective wisdom, absolute knowledge and eternal truth. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 154)

It is essential in this Day that the believers should be armed with certitude when asked to explain the terminology he uses. Such a phrase as the 'Word of God' for instance, has connotations carried over from past theologies which are entirely foreign and contradictory to the meanings tied up with it in the mind of the informed believer.

READING #2 GL pg. 171-172

Certain traditions of bygone ages rest on no foundations whatever, while the notions entertained by past generations, and which they have recorded in their books, have, for the most part, been influenced by the desires of a corrupt inclination. (Gleanings, page 171)

This statement is clear and direct, and every student of the evolution of our Bible has long ago come to the same conclusion. In the mind of the orthodox Christian, the literal interpretationist, the 'Word of God' means everything included in the King James version of the Old and New Testaments, taken at their face value, and with equal authority as of divine inspiration. More than this: Included with this is a more or less vaguely applied body of tradition, theological dogmas and unscientific exegesis which, in the course of centuries has resulted in the division of Christian believers into several hundred sects, all based upon this 'Word of God'. In the minds of the Moslem the phrase means all that included in the Qur'an and the traditions grown up around it, coupled, as with the Christian, with a vast body of exegesis, commentary etc. So it is with the Jewish understanding of 'The Words', limiting it to that body of Writings which they believe has descended through their particular Prophet from the Mouth and Will of God.

The most cursory examination of this state of affairs must result in the acknowledgment that the original Word of the Prophet of God has become so confused with the words of men that it is all but impossible to disentangle one from the other. Any attempt so to disentangle them by scholars, theologians and controversialists must, in the very nature of the case, only add further confusion.

A very different state of affairs is furnished, however, if we have a digest, a summary presentation, of all the fundamentals of the teachings of all the Prophets of the past, together with an explanation of their meaning adapted to our modern modes of thought and the needs of the times, by One qualified to speak with the same authority as the original Mouthpiece of the Divine Word.

READING #3 GL pg. 171

This is the Day when the loved ones of God should keep their eyes directed towards His Manifestation, and fasten them upon whatsoever that Manifestation may be pleased to reveal. (Gleanings, page 171)

This is the unassailable position of the informed and sincere believers in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

READING #4 PUP pg. 308

His revelation of the Word embodies completely the teachings of all the Prophets, expressed in principles and precepts applicable to the needs and conditions of the modern world, amplified and adapted to present-day questions and critical human problems. That is to say, the words of Bahá'u'lláh are the essences of the words of the Prophets of the past. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, page 314)

According to the divine terminology the 'Word of God' has two distinct meanings: First, The Logos; the Speaker of the Mount; the First Emanation of the Almighty; the Eternal Truth; the Mother Book; the

Word made Flesh; the Manifestation of God. "The Word of God. All things were made by Him' John 1

READING #5 PUP pg. 148-150

The divine Manifestations have been iconoclastic in Their teachings, uprooting error, destroying false religious beliefs and summoning mankind anew to the fundamental oneness of God. All of Them have, likewise, proclaimed the oneness of the world of humanity. The essential teaching of Moses was the law of Sinai, the Ten Commandments. Christ renewed and again revealed the commands of the one God and precepts of human action. In Muhammad, although the circle was wider, the intention of His teaching was likewise to uplift and unify humanity in the knowledge of the one God. In the Bab the circle was again very much enlarged, but the essential teaching was the same. The Books of Bahá'u'lláh number more than one hundred. Each one is an evident proof sufficient for mankind; each one from foundation to apex proclaims the essential unity of God and humanity, the love of God, the abolition of war and the divine standard of peace. Each one also inculcates divine morality, the manifestation of lordly graces - in every word a book of meanings. For the Word of God is collective wisdom, absolute knowledge and eternal truth. Consider the statement recorded in the first chapter of the book of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This statement is brief but replete with the greatest meanings. Its applications are illimitable and beyond the power of books or words to contain and express. Heretofore the doctors of theology have not expounded it but have restricted it to Jesus as "the Word made flesh," the separation of Jesus from God, the Father, and His descent upon the earth. In this way the individualized separation of the godhead came to be taught.

The essential oneness of Father, Son and Spirit has many meanings and constitutes the foundation of Christianity. Today we will merely give a synopsis of explanation. Why was Jesus the Word?

In the universe of creation all phenomenal beings are as letters. Letters in themselves are meaningless and express nothing of thought or ideal - as, for instance, a, b, etc. Likewise, all phenomenal beings are without independent meaning. But a word is composed of letters and has independent sense and meaning. Therefore, as Christ conveyed the perfect meaning of divine reality and embodied independent significance, He was the Word. He was as the station of reality compared to the station of metaphor. There is no intrinsic meaning in the leaves of a book, but the thought they convey leads you to reflect upon reality. The reality of Jesus was the perfect meaning, the Christhood in Him which in the Holy Books is symbolized as the Word.

"The Word was with God." The Christhood means not the body of Jesus but the perfection of divine virtues manifest in Him. Therefore, it is written, "He is God." This does not imply separation from God, even as it is not possible to separate the rays of the sun from the sun. The reality of Christ was the embodiment of divine virtues and attributes of God. For in Divinity there is no duality. All adjectives, nouns and pronouns in that court of sanctity are one; there is neither multiplicity nor division. The intention of this explanation is to show that the Words of God have innumerable significances and mysteries of meanings - each one a thousand and more.

The Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh are many. The precepts and teachings they contain are universal, covering every subject. He has revealed scientific explanations ranging throughout all the realms of human

inquiry and investigation - astronomy, biology, medical science, etc. In the Kitab-i-Iqan He has given expositions of the meanings of the Gospel and other heavenly Books. He wrote lengthy Tablets upon civilization, sociology and government. Every subject is considered. His Tablets are matchless in beauty and profundity. Even His enemies acknowledge the greatness of Bahá'u'lláh, saying He was the miracle of humanity. This was their confession although they did not believe in Him. He was eulogized by Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Muslims who denied His claim. They frequently said, "He is matchless, unique." A Christian poet in the Orient wrote, "Do not believe him a manifestation of God, yet his miracles are as great as the sun." Mirza Abu'l-Fadl has mentioned many poems of this kind, and there are numerous others. The testimony of His enemies witnessed that He was the "miracle of mankind," that He "walked in a special pathway of knowledge" and was "peerless in personality." His teachings are universal and the standard for human action. They are not merely theoretical and intended to remain in books. They are the principles of action. Results follow action. Mere theory is fruitless. Of what use is a book upon medicine if it is never taken from the library shelf? When practical activity has been manifested, the teachings of God have borne fruit.

The great and fundamental teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the oneness of God and unity of mankind. This is the bond of union among Bahá'ís all over the world. They become united among themselves, then unite others. It is impossible to unite unless united. Christ said, "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" This proves there were dissensions and lack of unity among His followers. Hence His admonition to unity of action.

Now must we, likewise, bind ourselves together in the utmost unity, be kind and loving to each other, sacrificing all our possessions, our honor, yea, even our lives for each other. Then will it be proved that we have acted according to the teachings of God, that we have been real believers in the oneness of God and unity of mankind. (Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 154-156)

Ábdu'l-Bahá sums it all in His response when asked His belief regarding Christ: 'By this, The Word, we mean the all comprehending Reality and the depository of the infinite divine characteristics.' - DP pg. 149 The second meaning of this phrase, The Word of God, so far as it relates to man's comprehension and the satisfaction of his intellectual and spiritual needs, are those traces left 'the Word made Flesh,' that is, written and spoken words as they fell from the lips or pen of the Manifestation of God.

READING #6 GL pg. 286-287

Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity, and the remembrance of His Name is able to set on fire the hearts of all men, and burn away the veils that intervene between them and His glory. 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. It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished.... (Gleanings, pages 286-287)

What we have, then, in this Day of Days, is a full and complete digest and explanation of all the Words of all the Prophets of the past so reduced and so annotated by the Manifestation of God Himself as to

be made applicable to every need of man in the conduct of his physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual life as to cover every contingency relating to his social, educational, legal and governmental exigencies.

The absolute necessity for the careful and passionate study of this Word is evident. No pains are too great, no time is more precious, no meditation too deep that is spent upon this literal Word of God. Is it any wonder that Shoghi Effendi says the true believer should spend upwards of two hours every day upon its study.

The Word is creative, rending veils, it creates capacity, as a fire burning pre-conceived ideas - 'an effacement of the conjectured' stated the Bab.

We are reminded that not only have we the Revelation of the Word in this Day but provision has been made for its explanation and adoption to all the needs of man in perpetuity. First, through the words and writing of Abdu'l- Baha and later through Shoghi Effendi and the International House of Justice successive generations have an infallible guide which will enable them to distinguish between truth and falsehood and to penetrate all the mysteries of the created world and bring them to light through the medium of arts, science.

READING #7 GL pg. 141-142

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. Through the mere revelation of the word "Fashioner," issuing forth from His lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce. This, verily, is a certain truth. No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the Revelation of this Name. In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before. Thus hath it been decreed in the Tablets of God, and none can comprehend it except them whose sight is sharp. In like manner, the moment the word expressing My attribute "The Omniscient" issueth forth from My mouth, every created thing will, according to its capacity and limitations, be invested with the power to unfold the knowledge of the most marvellous sciences, and will be empowered to manifest them in the course of time at the bidding of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Know thou of a certainty that the Revelation of every other Name is accompanied by a similar manifestation of Divine power. Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet. Well is it with them that apprehend this truth. (Gleanings, pages 141-142)

With the foregoing in mind, and corroborative quotations could be multiplied almost indefinitely, it is evident why Bahá'u'lláh exhorts us to implicit obedience to that Word and speaks so emphatically of its Power.

And yet, nothing greater than these verses hath ever appeared, nor will ever be made manifest in the world! (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 207)

Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity, (Gleanings, page 286)

Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. (Gleanings, pages 92-93)

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. (Gleanings, page 96)

...the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. ... The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change. (Gleanings, page 200)

Can there be a more urgent reason for the intensive study of this word? And for a determined call upon our will for its application to life?

Perhaps a final word as to the methods of study may be helpful. Marginal annotations referring to similar passages often explain each other. At times some of these passages may seem contradictory. This is because the student has not penetrated deeply enough. Paradoxical statements are inevitable when speaking of such heights. Bahá'u'lláh refers to this difficulty many times and speaks of pondering in the heart.

READING #8 IQAN pg. 192

Thus will these mysteries be unravelled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely through the assistance of God and the outpourings of His grace. "Ask ye, therefore, of them that have the custody of the Scriptures, if ye know it not." Qur'an 6:59 (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 192)

It is recommended that the seeker ask aid of those more deeply versed in knowledge of these mysteries.

READING #9 IQAN pg. 211

The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 211)

READING #10 IQAN pg. 254-255

It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a

guiding lamp and a beckoning light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: "God verily will test them and sift them." This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended. Thus it is recorded: "Every knowledge hath seventy meanings, of which one only is known amongst the people. And when the Qa'im shall arise, He shall reveal unto men all that which remaineth." He also saith: "We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain." (The Kitab-i-Iqan, pages 254-255)

It is made quite clear through many forceful and sublime utterances that knowledge of the Word through intensive and loving study is a touchstone by which the station, the sincerity, the self-sacrifice in the Path of God is tested.

The Word - its meaning is often difficult, but far from impossible to understand, sufficiently at least to guide the wayfarer to his eternal home. Hence God asks: How much patience, fortitude, and steadfastness do you bring to Me?

11. READING #11 IQAN pg. 217

O brother, we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God, that perchance we may be warned by the unmistakable counsels of the Book, and give heed to the admonitions recorded in the holy Tablets; that we may not cavil at the Revealer of the verses, that we may resign ourselves wholly to His Cause, and embrace wholeheartedly His law, that haply we may enter the court of His mercy, and dwell upon the shore of His grace. He, verily, is merciful, and forgiving towards His servants. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, page 217)

12. READING #12 BS par. 54

Glory be unto Thee, O Lord of the world and Desire of the nations, O Thou Who hast become manifest in the Greatest Name whereby the pearls of wisdom and utterance have appeared from the shells of the great sea of Thy knowledge, and the heavens of divine revelation have been adorned with the light of the appearance of the Sun of Thy countenance.

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

O my Lord! Thou beholdest them clinging to the rope of Thy grace and holding fast unto the hem of the mantle of Thy beneficence. Ordain for them that which may draw them nearer unto Thee, and withhold them from all else save Thee. I beg of Thee, O Thou King of existence and Protector of the seen and the unseen, to make whosoever ariseth to serve Thy Cause as a sea moving by Thy desire, as one ablaze with the fire of Thy Sacred Tree, shining from the horizon of the heaven of Thy Will. Verily Thou art the mighty One Whom neither the power of all the world nor the strength of nations can weaken. There is no God but Thee, the One, the Incomparable, the Protector, the Self-Subsistent. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 33-34)