



BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

THE DESIRE
OF
THE WORLD

THE DESIRE OF THE WORLD

Turn, O Lord my God, the darkness of their fancies into the brightness of certitude . . .

Bahá'u'lláh

THE DESIRE OF THE WORLD

Materials for the contemplation of God and His
Manifestation for this Day

Compiled

from the Words of Bahá'u'lláh

by

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Bahá'í Publishing Trust
New Delhi, India

Bahá'í Publishing Trust of India
F-3/6, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-I
New Delhi – 110 020, India

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First Edition 1982
Second Edition 2005

ISBN 81-7896-053-2

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eBook version 1.0

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TITLES OF GOD

GOD'S RELATION TO HIS MANIFESTATIONS

TITLES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The words uttered or recorded by God's Manifestations and which constitute the text of Their Revelations have been described in Bahá'í literature as the Creative Word of God. Describing the potency and influence of His Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh wrote: *"Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instil new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth."* He adds for further emphasis: *"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."* Further expounding this theme, we read in Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Carmel the following statement defining the impact of God's Holy Cause on the life of man on earth: *"Sanctified be the Lord of all mankind, at the mention of Whose name all the atoms of the earth have been made to vibrate, and the Tongue of Grandeur hath been moved to disclose that which had been wrapt in His knowledge and lay concealed within the treasury of His might."*

Like a connoisseur of the variety of flowers growing in God's Holy Garden, Amatu'l-Bahá graciously walks us through this Garden and draws our attention to the beauty of this patch, the charm of that bed, the refinement of that border, the prettiness of that flower pot, and the enchanting grace of the whole ensemble. She shares her insights with us, and sings in most melodious tunes the praise of the Creator of the Garden and the perfection of His unique handiwork.

Amatu'l-Bahá is in a unique position to perform this thrilling task. Brought up in a Bahá'í home, she was familiar with the sweep of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation from early childhood.

Her own studies of the literature of the Faith conferred a further distinction on her. And finally, having been chosen as Shoghi Effendi's consort, she was with him, and most probably sitting with him in the same room, when he was translating such basic texts as *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh* and *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, many selections of which have been culled and included in *The Desire of the World*.

It is hoped that the publication of this second edition of *The Desire of the World* will help its readers to draw nearer to the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh and derive the same delight that Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm must have relished as she collected for us this "spiritual bouquet" of passages from Bahá'u'lláh's immortal Writings.

— 'ALÍ NAKHJAVÁNÍ

FOREWORD

Over forty years ago¹ I wrote of the prayers of Bahá'u'lláh. When it was done I was overwhelmed with feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration; compared to what I felt, what I wanted to express, my voice was totally inadequate and insignificant! Now, after living so much more of my life, losing the dearest treasure the Bahá'ís possessed, their Guardian, passing through many wars, tasting so much sorrow, I raise my voice once again in an attempt to laud the prayers and praise of God Bahá'u'lláh has revealed—and once again am overcome with impotence and insignificance! But His words speak for themselves. Inevitably, for each one of us, those words are an intimate and personal message, conveying a quiet and private benediction, conferring a special grace and comfort on each individual soul.

So raise the cup and drink the elixir. Or plunge your hands into the treasure-chest and grasp its pearls. Or contemplate the firmament of Bahá'u'lláh's words and pass in wonder from star to star! The “resplendent glory” of His utterance was revealed for YOU.

NOTES

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, in his beautiful translations of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh from Persian and Arabic into English, capitalized all references to God and His Manifestations. Shoghi Effendi was the great-grandson of Bahá'u'lláh and grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His son, thus becoming the hereditary successor of both.

For ease of reading, all the selections from Bahá'u'lláh Himself are in normal type and enclosed in quotation marks, except where His words are quoted within the writer's commentary; in these instances Bahá'u'lláh's words are in italics.

A great many of the passages quoted are from Bahá'u'lláh's prayers; wherever a complete prayer has been included, the title A PRAYER has been added so that anyone wishing to memorize or read it can identify it as being complete and not an excerpt.

The term "people of Bahá" refers to those who have accepted Bahá'u'lláh.

"Day-Star" and "Day-Spring" are synonyms for "Sun".

The word "wine" is widely used in Sufi mysticism to symbolize the inebriation of the soul of man with the intoxicating wine of the love of God. Bahá'u'lláh also uses it in this same sense.

The country commonly referred to in the past as "Persia" is now usually called "Iran".

The number 9 is the numerical equivalent, according to the Abjad notation, of the name of Bahá'u'lláh; in other words, it stands for "Bahá" and was often used to symbolize His name.

Progressive Revelation

If one is ever to understand the meaning of Bahá'u'lláh's references to God on one hand and the "*Manifestations of His Divine Essence*"—the Prophets or Messengers of God, "*those luminous Gems of Holiness*", They Who are the "*Treasuries of Divine knowledge*", the "*Repositories of celestial wisdom*", the "*Embodiments of the Divine mysteries*", the "*Primal Mirrors*", the "*Essences of Detachment*", They Who are "*the Day-Springs of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names*" on the other, one must arrive at it by seeking an example: if one gazes at the sun, one can truly say, "This is the sun, I am in direct contact with the sun, I can feel its heat, though I cannot bear to even look into its light because it is the sun" and this would be quite true in meaning, whereas in fact it is not true because all we experience of the sun is through its rays which reach us so far from their source, albeit with such power that we say we are in contact with the sun. Suppose we ask this visible orb, this globe of rays, "Are you the sun?", it could truthfully reply, "I am the sun" because it is the perfect conveyor, the perfect vehicle of the sun's light and heat. But it could equally truthfully say, "No, I am not the sun at all, the sun is millions of miles away, fixed in its place, and you can never know it for you and it are incompatible, but through me, its rays, you know the sun, therefore, to you I am the sun." This explains the term "*Manifestations of the Sun of Truth*", Those Who are the Divine Exemplars of the Godhead.

God, Bahá'u'lláh states, ". . . 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 . . . They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory."

So profound is this mystic union that links the sun and the rays that Bahá'u'lláh testifies: "*Glory be to Thee, O my God! My face hath been set towards Thy face, and my face is, verily, Thy face, and my call is Thy call, and my Revelation Thy Revelation, and my self Thy Self, and my Cause Thy Cause, and my behest Thy behest, and my Being Thy Being, and my sovereignty Thy sovereignty, and my glory Thy glory, and my power Thy power.*" This is the aspect of identification.

But there is another equally profound aspect and that is the complete singleness of the Creator: "God," Bahá'u'lláh categorically declares, "*the unknowable Essence, the Divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress.*" The Manifestations of God, "*Who are the Quintessence of knowledge, are but the creation and instruments*" of His purpose. "*Far, far are They Who are related to Thee*", He testifies, "*above the conception of such relationship!*"

It was in this mysterious relationship of the ray to the sun that Jesus Christ declared "*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*", and that "*God spake unto Moses*". What does it mean except that the ray was connected with the sun, conveyed the sun's qualities, became the channel for the manifestation of the characteristics of the Godhead? Otherwise, states Bahá'u'lláh of God, "*From eternity Thou didst Thyself describe Thine own Self unto Thy Self, and extol, in Thine own Essence, Thine Essence unto Thine Essence.*" "*Unsearchable and high above the praise of men wilt Thou remain forever.*"

The unshakeable doctrine of the singleness of God having been enunciated, we come to its counterpoise—the oneness of all the Manifestations of God, those Divine Educators Who "in the school of the Prophets" teach God's children on earth— we, His humanity—how to live as beings possessed of immortal souls. If we ponder upon and grasp this other fundamental doctrine we will understand that all the world's great religions are what Bahá'u'lláh designates as "*these firmly established and mighty systems*" which "*have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated.*" In reality we are dealing with a single phenomenon which, He asserts, is "*the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future*"; if we look with the eye of truth we will see that all the Prophets of God are ". . . abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendour."

God, the sun; the Prophets, the rays; we men, the recipients of the light—all form an indissoluble relationship in the cosmos. The phenomenon of prophet-religion-divine education periodically recurs in the spiritual evolution of man's life on this planet. The Revelation these sanctified Messengers of God teach is "*exalted above the veils of plurality*", states Bahá'u'lláh; as the Cause of God is one "*the Exponents thereof also must needs be one and the*

same.” This mystery of singleness and plurality is best exemplified by the spring; spring is an ever-recurring, fixed season, so in a way all springs are Spring, but the specific spring of the year 1800 is quite a different thing from that of 1900, each having its own events and characteristics. As the equinox of spring renews life, so the advent of a Manifestation of God—a Divine springtime— confers special blessings and imparts a special impetus.

Bahá'u'lláh says, “. . . each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfils a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. . . . It is because of this difference in their station and mission that the words and utterances flowing from these Well Springs of Divine knowledge appear to diverge and differ. Otherwise . . . all their utterances are, in reality, but the expressions of one Truth.” In spite of this singleness They are, in His words, “one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation”. Anyone, He says, who makes the slightest difference between these Divine Messengers “hath indeed disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers”, because there is in reality no difference between “their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners”.

In such majestic terms Bahá'u'lláh makes clear the unity of all the Messengers of God; They are not only the most essential factor in the evolution of man on this planet, They are the motivating force of the ever-upward, ever-advancing development of the human race.

All the Prophets, Bahá'u'lláh writes, are “*the Revealers of the beauty of the All-Glorious*”. Beauty is one of the titles of God; but in this Dispensation the Manifestation of God has chosen it as a personal designation; He is the “*Blessed Beauty*”, the “*Ancient Beauty*”. To an ugly world full of hideous deeds, poisoned to the core by political and economic corruption, wallowing in dissension, strife and murder, wherein, in the name of scientific development, nature is being destroyed, and in the name of the arts, whether music, literature, painting, sculpture or architecture, forms lacking in grace or harmony are the rule—to such a world Bahá'u'lláh has brought a specific and priceless gift, the gift of a new World Order, divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, embodying the very essence of beauty, which is symmetry and proportion.

The Nature of this Book

The materials gathered here are primarily for contemplation and meditation. As the foundation of man is his virtues, all the first part is composed of what Bahá'u'lláh considers essential for the shaping of character, excerpts taken to a great extent from *The Hidden Words*. We then pass on to the great doctrines of His Faith: His concept of the Godhead; of the Manifestation of God; of the role of religion itself in the evolution of the world and the duties and station of the followers of God's Faith in this Dispensation; of the supreme importance of this Day we are living in, with its attendant agonies as a new age—the age foretold in all the holy Scriptures of past Dispensations, the age of universal peace with the glories that such a state must eventually bestow upon the human race. We then penetrate deeper into the sea of spiritual reality surging through the expression of Bahá'u'lláh's thoughts in selections from His prayers and meditations—an incomparable medium for reflection and communion with God and for a deepening of our understanding of the essentially mystic values underlying all creation. The last part comprises some of the extraordinary wealth of terms which are the titles of God and the titles of the Manifestation of God—in this case Bahá'u'lláh Himself. Taken together they are bewildering in their variety and magnitude, taken singly they are equally bewildering in their implications—surely a fountain-head for contemplation such as the world has never seen!

Read this as a book, unabashed. Or take up the different subjects and reflect upon them. Or take up each separate quotation like a jeweller who contemplates and revolves, with awe and reverence, a surpassing gem which leaves him dumbfounded but entranced. But above all, come back again and again to drink from the living waters of the Word of God.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself quotes the words: “*One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship*”; St. Bernard wrote: “Do you ask what piety is? It is leaving time for contemplation.” Meditation, contemplation, to me is the act of examining and seeking to assimilate a truth. Often it releases all the pent-up love we feel for God, for His Manifestations, for the point of focus in this Day—Bahá'u'lláh. It partakes of those words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá “*that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls—a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds—that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendour.*”

In this reflection on the words of Bahá'u'lláh the degree to which even one word can in an instant or over a lifetime reveal innumerable significances is a source of astonishment. It is like looking into a crystal spring of water: at first it is just a lovely clear pool, reflecting perhaps its surroundings and the sky, but as one gazes into its depths all kinds of things are seen, one's eye travels about, picks up different objects, singles out thoughts that arise through an association of ideas. This contemplation, to me, should be a happy and peaceful experience. Beating one's mind with impatient reproaches when it wanders (as it usually does!), squeezing one's attention in a convulsion of one's mental muscles, renders no service to the act of meditation; as the wind of one's normal preoccupations drops, the leaves of the tree of one's contemplation, so to speak, begin to lie still; perhaps a ruffling breeze will pass over them and they will start to flutter; never mind, relax, be patient with your own mind, your own perhaps nervous and keyed-up body; it is not all that urgent that you should meditate; urgency and meditation do not go together, but prayer and urgency do, so pray, swim in the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's *Prayers and Meditations*, read the comforting prayers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the prayer books. Your world will not come to an end if you cannot achieve a contemplative peacefulness, so turn to God in praise and supplication and renew your spirit that way. Many people renew their inner selves through work; work done in the spirit of service is itself, we are told, a form of worship. The all-important value is that, like the needle of a compass that always points to north, our hearts, our dedication in life, should be fixed on God through His Manifestation for this Day. From Him we receive help and renewal, comfort and guidance.

In two pages of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh one can often find ten subjects touched upon in short sentences, or even phrases, that are so full of meaning that each might well provide material for a lengthy essay. One of the purposes of this book is to put some of these sentences, and the thought each contains, together, to put subject with subject. If one wished to liken each one to a rose, instead of just taking one perfect flower all alone I have tried to put them in bouquets, a cluster of pink roses, or red roses, all together, so to speak, in order that one may contemplate a single subject expressed by Bahá'u'lláh in different words, believing that this will not only deepen our understanding of His thoughts but fix our attention longer on each theme; in other words, the redundancy is deliberate; the eye rapidly passes over a group of words that embody a thought, perhaps one's attention wanders without one even being conscious of it, so here comes the same idea expressed again—often again and again—deliberately, like the rhythmic strokes sounding on a gong or a nail repeatedly hammered deeper and deeper. If He expressed one truth in many ways, why should we not contemplate it in a similar way?

Hidden Words and Moral Precepts

The fundamental concept underlying creation and the moral precepts required for the guidance of man are set forth with brilliant clarity by Bahá'u'lláh in His writings, many of them embodied in His gem-like Hidden Words, a source for contemplation and meditation that may well stretch from the cradle to the grave. Memorize them so that, in time of need, they can be called forth from your inmost being, without recourse to reading, and teach your children to memorize them so that they will possess this treasure inside themselves all their lives.

O SON OF SPIRIT!

My first counsel is this: possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.

The spiritual genesis of man is set forth:

O SON OF MAN!

Veiled in my immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.

O SON OF MAN!

I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.

O SON OF BEING!

Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

O SON OF BEING!

Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not. This is that which hath been destined for thee in Our kingdom above and Our exalted dominion.

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.

O SON OF UTTERANCE!

Turn thy face unto Mine and renounce all save Me; for My sovereignty endureth and My dominion perisheth not. If thou seekest another than Me, yea, if thou searchest the universe for evermore, thy quest will be in vain.

O SON OF MAN!

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.

O BEFRIENDED STRANGER!

The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.

O SON OF BEING!

Make mention of Me on My earth, that in My heaven I may remember thee, thus shall Mine eyes and thine be solaced.

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.

O SON OF BOUNTY!

Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear, and have ordained for thy training every atom in existence and the essence of all created things. Thus, ere thou didst issue from thy mother's womb, I destined for thee two founts of gleaming milk, eyes to watch over thee, and hearts to love thee. Out of my loving-kindness, 'neath the shade of My mercy I nurtured thee, and guarded thee by the essence of My grace and favour. And My purpose in all this was that thou mightest attain My everlasting dominion and become worthy of My invisible bestowals. And yet heedless thou didst remain, and when fully grown, thou didst neglect all My bounties and occupied thyself with thine idle imaginings, in such wise that thou didst become wholly forgetful, and, turning away from the portals of the Friend didst abide within the courts of My enemy.

“What refuge is there besides Thee, O my Lord, to which I can flee, and where is there a haven to which I can hasten? Nay, the power of Thy might beareth me witness! No protector is there but Thee; no place to flee to except Thee, no refuge to seek save Thee.”

A PRAYER

“Magnified be Thy name, O Lord my God! Thou art He Whom all things worship and Who worshippeth no one, Who is the Lord of all things and is the vassal of none, Who knoweth all things and is known of none. Thou didst wish to make Thyself known unto men; therefore, Thou didst, through a word of Thy mouth, bring creation into being and fashion the universe. There is none other God except Thee, the Fashioner, the Creator, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

“I implore Thee, by this very word that hath shone forth above the horizon of Thy will, to enable me to drink deep of the living waters through which Thou hast vivified the hearts of Thy chosen ones and quickened the souls of them that love Thee, that I may, at all times and under all conditions, turn my face wholly towards Thee.

“Thou art the God of power, of glory and bounty. No God is there beside Thee, the Supreme Ruler, the All-Glorious, the Omniscient.”

The thoughts and metaphors expressed by Bahá'u'lláh are like windows looking towards the sky; within each frame an infinite vista opens up; what better source for contemplation?

O SON OF MAN!

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

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 favour at the court of glory . . .

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet.

O SON OF MAN!

For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials.

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 in 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 mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

“Rain down, then, upon us, O my God, that which beseemeth Thy grace and befitteth Thy bounty. Enable us, then, O my God, to live in remembrance of Thee and to die in love of Thee, and supply us with the gift of Thy presence in Thy worlds hereafter—worlds which are inscrutable to all except Thee. Thou art our Lord and the Lord of all worlds, and the God of all that are in heaven and all that are on earth.”

“O people of God! That which traineth the world is justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world.” “. . . the basis of world order hath been firmly established upon these twin principles.”

“It beseemeth you to fix your gaze under all conditions upon justice and fairness. In the Hidden Words this exalted utterance hath been revealed from Our Most August Pen:

O SON OF SPIRIT!

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

“In these days truthfulness and sincerity are sorely afflicted in the clutches of falsehood, and justice is tormented by the scourge of injustice. The smoke of corruption hath enveloped the whole world in such wise that naught can be seen in any direction save regiments of soldiers and nothing is heard from any land but the clashing of swords. We beseech God, the True One, to strengthen the wielders of His power in that which will rehabilitate the world and bring tranquillity to the nations.”

“They that are just and fair-minded in their judgement occupy a sublime station and hold an exalted rank. The light of piety and uprightness shineth resplendent from these souls. We earnestly hope that the peoples and countries of the world may not be deprived of the splendours of these two luminaries.”

O OPPRESSORS ON EARTH!

Withdraw your hands from tyranny, for I have pledged Myself not to forgive any man’s injustice. This is My covenant which I have irrevocably decreed in the preserved tablet and sealed it with My seal of glory.

O CHILDREN OF FANCY!

Know verily, that while the radiant dawn breaketh above the horizon of eternal holiness, the satanic secrets and deeds done in the gloom of night shall be laid bare and manifest before the peoples of the world.

O SON OF SPIRIT!

Know thou of a truth: He that biddeth men be just and himself committeth iniquity is not of Me, even though he bear My name!

“O son of man! If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself.”

“The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance. Were mankind to be adorned with this raiment, they would behold the day-star of the utterance, ‘On that day God will satisfy everyone out of His abundance,’ shining resplendent above the horizon of the world.”

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. . .

O CHILDREN OF DESIRE!

Put away the garment of vainglory, and divest yourselves of the attire of haughtiness.

“Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.”

Bahá'u'lláh, like all the Prophets gone before Him, had a special love for the poor and the downtrodden; His words on the subject of poverty and riches are very strong.

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, “In truth ye are the poor,” and the holy words: “God is the all-possessing” . . .

O YE THAT PRIDE YOURSELVES ON MORTAL RICHES!

Know ye in truth that wealth is a mighty barrier between the seeker and his desire, the lover and his beloved. The rich, but for a few, shall in no wise attain the court of His presence nor enter the city of content and resignation. Well is it then with him, who, being rich, is not hindered by his riches from the eternal kingdom, nor deprived by them of imperishable dominion. By the Most Great Name! The splendour of such a wealthy man shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven, even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth!

O SON OF PASSION!

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

O CHILDREN OF DUST!

Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

“Beware lest ye encroach upon the substance of your neighbour. Prove yourselves worthy of his trust and confidence in you, and withhold not from the poor the gifts which the grace of God hath bestowed upon you. He, verily, shall recompense the charitable, and doubly repay them for what they have bestowed.”

O YE RICH ONES ON EARTH!

The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.

O SON OF SPIRIT!

Vaunt not thyself over the poor, for I lead him on his way and behold thee in thy evil plight and confound thee for evermore.

O SON OF BEING!

Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.

“He is my true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold, will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause. Such a man is, assuredly, of me.”

O QUINTESENCE OF PASSION!

Put away all covetousness and seek contentment; for the covetous hath ever been deprived, and the contented hath ever been loved and praised.

“Charity is pleasing and praiseworthy in the sight of God and is regarded as a prince among goodly deeds. . . . Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself.”

O MY SERVANT!

Purge thy heart from malice and, innocent of envy, enter the divine court of holiness.

O SON OF EARTH!

Know, verily, the heart wherein the least remnant of envy yet lingers, shall never attain My everlasting dominion, nor inhale the sweet savours of holiness breathing from My kingdom of sanctity.

“ . . . show forth that which will ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and the downtrodden . . . ”; “I swear by God! Better for you is what He possesseth than the things ye yourselves possess and the things ye have sought and are now seeking in this vain and empty life.”

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.

O MY SERVANT!

Abandon not for that which perisheth an everlasting dominion, and cast not away celestial sovereignty for a worldly desire. This is the river of everlasting life that hath flowed from the wellspring of the pen of the merciful; well is it with them that drink!

In very strong terms Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly admonishes us to shun the company of the evil doer, the corrupt, the depraved, warning us that through such association we ourselves may be contaminated; parents should feel a heavy responsibility for the guidance and protection of their children in this respect.

O YE SONS OF SPIRIT!

Ye are My treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge. Guard them from the strangers amidst My servants and from the ungodly amongst My people.

O FRIEND!

. . . Treasure the companionship of the righteous and eschew all fellowship with the ungodly.

O SON OF DUST!

Beware! Walk not with the ungodly and seek not fellowship with him, for such companionship turneth the radiance of the heart into infernal fire.

Bahá'u'lláh strongly condemns those *“faithless souls who breathe naught but the breath of selfish desire, and who lie imprisoned in the cage of their idle fancies . . . Like the bats of darkness, they lift not their heads from their couch except to pursue the transient things of the world, and find no rest by night except as they labour to advance the aims of their sordid life. Immersed in their selfish schemes, they are oblivious of the Divine decree. In the daytime they strive with all their soul after worldly benefits, and in the night season their sole occupation is to gratify their carnal desires.”*

O MY SON!

The company of the ungodly increaseth sorrow, whilst fellowship with the righteous cleanseth the rust from off the heart. He that seeketh to commune with God, let him betake himself to the companionship of His loved ones; and he that desireth to hearken unto the word of God, let him give ear to the words of His chosen ones.

O MY FRIEND IN WORD!

Ponder awhile. Hast thou ever heard that friend and foe should abide in one heart? Cast out then the stranger, that the Friend may enter His home.

O MY FRIENDS!

. . . Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings.

O YE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD!

Know verily that an unforeseen calamity is following you and that grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not the deeds ye have committed have been blotted from My sight. By My beauty! All your doings hath My

pen graven with open characters upon tablets of chrysolite.

God is the Help in Peril; obedience to His commands a strong fortress, a refuge in need; one should flee from one's own shortcomings to this haven of safety. Backbiting and calumny are forbidden by Bahá'u'lláh and are sins in His sight. He tells us to "*... observe silence and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century.*" As to backbiting, He goes on to say, it is a "*grievous error*" from which we should all keep aloof, and severely warns us that "*backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.*"

O SON OF BEING!

How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me.

O SON OF MAN!

Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness.

O EMIGRANTS!

The tongue I have designed for the mention of Me, defile it not with detraction. If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others.

O SON OF BEING!

Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

"A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding."

O COMPANION OF MY THRONE!

Hear no evil, and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh and 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 the abasement of anyone, 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.

O SON OF DUST!

Verily I say unto thee: Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother. Say, O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.

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. . . .

O SON OF BEING!

Walk in My statutes for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure.

O FRIENDS!

Verily I say, whatsoever ye have concealed within your hearts is to Us open and manifest as the day; but that it is hidden is of Our grace and favour, and not of your deserving.

O REBELLIOUS ONES!

My forbearance hath emboldened you and My long-suffering hath made you negligent, in such wise that ye have spurred on the fiery charger of passion into perilous ways that lead unto destruction. Have ye thought Me heedless or that I was unaware?

O MY SERVANT!

Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.

Bahá'u'lláh has given us many illuminating words on the subject of death, stressing throughout His writings the importance of our acts in this world as a preparation for an eternal spiritual existence after death. The difference between a physical state and a spiritual one is perforce so great that we, like babes in the womb, cannot conceive of life in another state any more than the babe can imagine this world into which it has not yet been born. But deeds seem to be the key—faith and good conduct make the difference between a joyous and radiant future life, or an existence too terrible in its spiritual barrenness for us to even contemplate. For the righteous, however, He assures us: *“glorious is the domain of eternity, shouldst thou pass beyond the world of mortality”*.

“Know thou of a truth”, Bahá'u'lláh writes, “that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God . . . The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest.”

O SON OF THE SUPREME!

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

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?

O SON OF BEING!

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

“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.”

O YE THAT ARE LYING AS DEAD ON THE COUCH OF HEEDLESSNESS!

Ages have passed and your precious lives are well-nigh ended, yet not a single breath of purity hath reached Our court of holiness from you. Though immersed in the ocean of misbelief, yet with your lips ye profess the one true faith of God. Him whom I abhor ye have loved, and of My foe ye have made a friend. Notwithstanding, ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you. Were ye but to open your eyes, ye would, in truth, prefer a myriad griefs unto this joy, and would count death itself better than this life.

O CHILDREN OF VAINGLORY!

For a fleeting sovereignty ye have abandoned My imperishable dominion, and have adorned yourselves with the gay livery of the world and made of it your boast. By My beauty! All will I gather beneath the one-coloured covering of the dust and efface all these diverse colours save them that choose My own, and that is purging from every colour.

O BRETHREN!

Be forbearing one with another and set not your affections on things below. Pride not yourselves in your glory, and be not ashamed of abasement. By My beauty! I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again.

“By Thy Glory!” exclaims Bahá’u’lláh in one of His prayers, “Were the world to last as long as Thine own kingdom will last, to set their affections upon it would still be unseemly for such as have quaffed, from the hands of Thy mercy, the wine of Thy presence; how much more when they recognize its fleetingness and are persuaded of its transience. The chances that overtake it, and the changes to which all things pertaining unto it are continually subjected, attest its impermanence.”

“They say: ‘Where is Paradise, and where is Hell?’ Say: ‘The one is reunion with Me; the other thine own self . . .’”

O SON OF DUST!

All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee, except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of My beauty and glory; yet thou didst give My home and dwelling to another than Me; and whenever the manifestation of My holiness sought His own abode, a stranger found He there, and, homeless, hastened unto the sanctuary of the Beloved. Notwithstanding I have concealed thy secret and desired not thy shame.

A PRAYER

“Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil conscience within me, O my hope! Through the spirit of power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved, and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O Thou the Goal of my desire! Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, O Source of my being, and by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God! Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquillity on me, O my Companion, and let the riches of Thine ancient countenance deliver me from all except Thee, O my Master, and let the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence bring me joy, O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!”

The seeker on the path of truth, says Bahá’u’lláh, *“must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error; or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this Day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the Divine mysteries, and, shepherdless, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error.”*

“When a true seeker determineth to take the step of search . . . he must, before all else, cleanse his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge . . .”

ALAS! ALAS! O LOVERS OF WORLDLY DESIRE!

Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the Beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor hath the breeze of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion.

O SON OF DUST!

Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth. Blind thine eyes, that is, to all save My beauty; stop thine ears to all save My word; empty thyself of all

learning save the knowledge of Me; that with a clear vision, a pure heart and an attentive ear thou mayest enter the court of My holiness.

Fundamentally Bahá'u'lláh considers education to be that which draws man closer to God. In many profound statements He indicates that without education human beings remain, to a great extent, like a mine whose riches are unexploited; but the forms of education which begin and end in words, with no constructive results for mankind, which neither improve the character nor uplift the mind or the soul, He deplores. With so many people in the world today who are still lacking the benefit of even a rudimentary education, and so many people who are highly educated but totally lacking in any sense of morality, of responsibility towards society, or belief in spiritual values, it behoves us to ponder very carefully Bahá'u'lláh's teachings on this all-important subject.

“Man”, He asserts, “is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.”

“Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet”, writes Bahá'u'lláh, and He goes on to encourage people to assist children other than their own, stating that *“He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine . . .”*

Referring to “arts, crafts and sciences”, He says that “Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world.”

“At the outset of every endeavour,” Bahá'u'lláh admonishes us, “it is incumbent to look to the end of it. Of all the arts and sciences, set the children to studying those which will result in advantage to man, will ensure his progress and elevate his rank. Thus the noisome odours of lawlessness will be dispelled, and thus through the high endeavours of the nation's leaders, all will live cradled, secure and in peace”, and goes on to advise that “The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth.”

“The people of Bahá . . . should treat craftsmen with deference . . . In this Day the sun of craftsmanship shineth above the horizon of the occident and the river of arts is flowing out of the sea of that region. One must speak with fairness and appreciate such bounty.”

“It is permissible to study sciences and arts, but such sciences as are useful and would redound to the progress and advancement of the people . . .

“It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation, such as crafts, trades and the like. We have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship unto God, the True One. . . . Waste not your time in idleness and sloth. Occupy yourselves with that which profiteth yourselves and others.”

“A true philosopher would never deny God nor His evidences, rather would he acknowledge His glory and overpowering majesty which overshadow all created things. Verily We love those men of knowledge who have brought to light such things as promote the best interests of humanity . . . Exert your utmost endeavour that ye may develop such crafts and undertakings that everyone, whether young or old, may benefit therefrom. We are quit of those ignorant ones who fondly imagine that Wisdom is to give vent to one's idle imaginings and to repudiate God, the Lord of all men; even as We hear some of the heedless voicing such assertions today. . . . The beginning of Wisdom and the origin thereof is to acknowledge whatsoever God hath clearly set forth . . .”

O MY SERVANTS!

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on everyone to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

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 those idle and worthless souls.

O MY SERVANT!

The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.

The Divine Physician—for such is one of the titles of Bahá'u'lláh—wisely reminds us: *“To engage in some profession is highly commendable, for when occupied with work one is less likely to dwell on the unpleasant aspects of life.”*

“They that are endued with sincerity and faithfulness should associate with all the peoples and kindreds of the earth with joy and radiance, inasmuch as consorting with people hath promoted and will continue to promote unity and concord, which in turn are conducive to the maintenance of order in the world and to the regeneration of nations. Blessed are such as hold fast to the cord of kindliness and tender mercy and are free from animosity and hatred.”

“A good character is, verily, the best mantle for men from God. With it He adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By My life! The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof. Whoso attaineth unto it is accounted as a jewel among men. The glory and the upliftment of the world must needs depend upon it. A goodly character is a means whereby men are guided to the Straight Path and are led to the Great Announcement. Well is it with him who is adorned with the saintly attributes and character of the Concourse on High.”

Bahá'u'lláh's Words to His Son

Bahá'u'lláh, in a single statement addressed to one of His sons, gave the most succinct and perfect guide to what should constitute the character of a true human being:

“Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer to the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgement, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility. We pray God to protect thee from the heat of jealousy and the cold of hatred. He verily is nigh, ready to answer.”

Throughout His Writings Bahá'u'lláh, in innumerable passages, in different words but with the same meaning, has elaborated on this unique statement and clearly defined the virtues He wished to characterize His followers:

“Honesty, virtue, wisdom and a saintly character redound to the exaltation of man, while dishonesty, imposture, ignorance and hypocrisy lead to his abasement. . . . Man's distinction lieth not in ornaments or wealth, but rather in virtuous behaviour and true understanding.”

“He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation . . .”

“Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others.”

“Beware, O people of Bahá, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds.”

“They that are just and fair-minded in their judgement occupy a sublime station and hold an exalted rank. The light of piety and uprightness shineth resplendent from these souls. We earnestly hope that the peoples and countries of the world may not be deprived of the splendours of these two luminaries.”

In the engulfing materialism of our present egocentric civilization the quality of loyalty is becoming more and more rare. If you have no loyalty to God, to your partner in marriage, to the business firm that employs you, how can you be trusted? Bahá'u'lláh directly relates trustworthiness not only to the individual's personal relationships but to the welfare of mankind as a whole, categorically stating that trustworthiness is *“the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world”* and that this characteristic, of paramount importance, *“is the door of security for all that dwell on earth and a token of glory on the part of the All-Merciful. He who partaketh thereof hath indeed partaken of the treasures of wealth and prosperity. Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it. All the domains of power, of grandeur and of wealth are illumined by its light.”*

“We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God”, Bahá'u'lláh goes on to say, and personifies this attribute of trustworthiness as a heavenly being in whose mouth He places His own words: *“By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.”*

“In this Revelation the hosts that can render it victorious are the hosts of praiseworthy deeds and upright character. The leader and commander of these hosts hath ever been the fear of God, a fear that encompasseth all things and reigneth over all things.”

“. . . the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil.”

“We have admonished Our loved ones to fear God, a fear which is the fountainhead of all goodly deeds and virtues. It is the commander of the hosts of justice in the city of Bahá. Happy the man that hath entered the shadow of its luminous standard, and laid fast hold thereon. He, verily, is of the Companions of the Crimson Ark, which hath been mentioned in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá.”

“The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation. Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame. This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed and do not possess it.”

“The people of Bahá must under all circumstances observe that which is meet and seemly and exhort the people accordingly.”

“O people of Bahá! Ye are the dawning-places of the love of God and the day-springs of His loving-kindness. Defile not your tongues with the cursing and reviling of any soul, and guard your eyes against that which is not seemly.”

“Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful, and your heart enlightened.”

“Be pure, O people of God, be pure; be righteous, be righteous. . . .”

“We, verily, have decreed in Our Book a goodly and bountiful reward to whosoever will turn away from wickedness, and lead a chaste and godly life.”

“They that follow their lusts and corrupt inclinations have erred and dissipated their efforts. They indeed are of the lost.”

“Purity and chastity have been, and still are, the most great ornaments for the handmaidens of God. God is My Witness! The brightness of the light of chastity sheddeth its illumination upon the worlds of the spirit, and its fragrance is wafted even unto the Most Exalted Paradise.”

“I implore Thee, O Thou Fashioner of the nations and the King of eternity, to guard Thy handmaidens within the tabernacle of Thy chastity, and to cancel such of their deeds as are unworthy of Thy days. Purge out, then, from them, O my God, all doubts and idle fancies, and sanctify them from whatsoever becometh not their kinship with Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of names, and the Source of utterance. Thou art He in Whose grasp are the reins of the entire creation.”

A PRAYER FOR A HANDMAIDEN

“O Thou Whose face is the object of the adoration of all that yearn after Thee, Whose presence is the hope of such as are wholly devoted to Thy will, Whose nearness is the desire of all that have drawn nigh unto Thy court, Whose countenance is the companion of those who have recognized Thy truth, Whose name is the mover of the souls that long to behold Thy face, Whose voice is the true life of Thy lovers, the words of Whose mouth are as the waters of life unto all who are in heaven and on earth!

“I beseech Thee, by the wrong Thou hast suffered and the ills inflicted upon Thee by the hosts of wrongful doers, to send down upon me from the clouds of Thy mercy that which will purify me of all that is not of Thee, that I may be worthy to praise Thee and fit to love Thee.

“Withhold not from me, O my Lord, the things Thou didst ordain for such of Thy handmaidens as circle around Thee, and on whom are poured continually the splendours of the sun of Thy beauty and the beams of the brightness of Thy face. Thou art He Who from everlasting hath succoured whosoever hath sought Thee, and bountifully favoured him who hath asked Thee.

“No God is there beside Thee, the Mighty, the Ever-Abiding, the All-Bounteous, the Most Generous.”

PART OF A PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

“O Lord! Thou seest this essence of sinfulness turning unto the ocean of Thy favour and this feeble one seeking the kingdom of Thy divine power and this poor creature inclining himself towards the day-star of Thy wealth. By Thy mercy and Thy grace, disappoint him not, O Lord, nor debar him from the revelations of Thy bounty in Thy days, nor cast him away from Thy door which Thou hast opened wide to all that dwell in Thy heaven and on Thine earth.

“Alas! Alas! My sins have prevented me from approaching the Court of Thy holiness and my trespasses have caused me to stray far from the Tabernacle of Thy majesty. I have committed that which Thou didst forbid me to do and have put away what Thou didst order me to observe.

“I pray Thee by Him Who is the sovereign Lord of Names to write down for me with the Pen of Thy bounty that which will enable me to draw nigh unto Thee and will purge me from my trespasses which have intervened between me and Thy forgiveness and Thy pardon.

“Verily, Thou art the Potent, the Bountiful. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Gracious.”

A Good Character

“A good character is, verily, the best mantle for men from God. With it He adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By My life! The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof.”

The behaviour required of a person possessing a good character is not to intrude uninvited into other people's homes, not to help one's self to other people's things, not to take advantage of them or seek to impose one's opinions upon them—all expressed in the poetical language of this Hidden Word of Bahá'u'lláh:

O MY FRIENDS!

Walk ye in the ways of the good pleasure of the Friend, and know that His pleasure is in the pleasure of His creatures. That is: no man should enter the house of his friend save at his friend's pleasure, nor lay hands upon his treasures nor prefer his own will to his friend's, and in no wise seek an advantage over him. Ponder this, ye that have insight!

One of the duties, states Bahá'u'lláh, which mankind must discharge is *“the protection and preservation of the stations of God's servants”*, a thought rarely voiced in the world today and one surely worthy of special contemplation. He goes on to say: *“One should not ignore the truth of any matter, rather should one give expression to that which is right and true. The people of Bahá should not deny any soul the reward due to him, should treat craftsmen with deference, and, unlike the people aforetime, should not defile their tongues with abuse.”*

“Fair speech and truthfulness, by reason of their lofty rank and position, are regarded as a sun shining above the horizon of knowledge.”

“Let truthfulness and courtesy be your adorning.”

Argument and disputation are forbidden in the Bahá'í teachings. We are told by Bahá'u'lláh to: *“Set forth that which ye possess. If it be favourably received, your end is attained; if not, to protest is vain. Leave that soul to himself and turn unto the Lord, the Protector; the Self-Subsisting. Be not the cause of grief, much less of discord and strife. The hope is cherished that ye may obtain true education in the shelter of the tree of His tender mercies and act in accordance with that which God desireth.”*

“The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. . . . So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The one true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words.”

“O ye beloved of the Lord! Commit not that which defileth the limpid stream of love or destroyeth the sweet fragrance of friendship. By the righteousness of the Lord! Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancour. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind.”

“. . . set your hearts”, Bahá'u'lláh tells us, “on whatever will ensure harmony.” “Verily, the words which have descended from the heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness.”

“Beware lest the desires of the flesh and of a corrupt inclination provoke divisions among you. Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe.”

As the main objective of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is to produce unity in every aspect of man's life, He emphasizes how essential this is in the strongest possible terms: *“We have forbidden you dissension and conflict in My Books, and My Scriptures, and My Scrolls, and My Tablets, and have wished thereby naught else save your exaltation and advancement”*, and calls all creation to bear witness to His words, *“Unto this testify the heavens and the stars thereof, and the sun and the radiance thereof, and the trees and the leaves thereof, and the seas and the waves thereof, and the earth and the treasures thereof.”*

“ . . . whatever is sent down from the heaven of the Will of God is the means for the establishment of order in the world and the instrument for promoting unity and fellowship among its peoples.”

“This Wronged One exhorteth the peoples of the world to observe tolerance and righteousness, which are two lights amidst the darkness of the world and two educators for the edification of mankind. Happy are they who have attained thereto and woe betide the heedless.”

“Cleave tenaciously unto that which will lead to the wellbeing and tranquillity of all mankind. This span of earth is but one homeland and one habitation. It behoveth you to abandon vainglory which causeth alienation and to set your hearts on whatever will ensure harmony. In the estimation of the people of Bahá man’s glory lieth in his knowledge, his upright conduct, his praiseworthy character, his wisdom, and not in his nationality or rank.”

“Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and goodwill. If it be accepted, if it fulfil its purpose, your object is attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.”

“No man of wisdom can demonstrate his knowledge save by means of words. This showeth the significance of the Word as is affirmed in all the Scriptures, whether of former times or more recently. For it is through its potency and animating spirit that the people of the world have attained so eminent a position. Moreover words and utterances should be both impressive and penetrating. However, no word will be infused with these two qualities unless it be uttered wholly for the sake of God and with due regard unto the exigencies of the occasion and the people.

“ . . . Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets.

“Every word is endowed with a spirit, therefore the speaker or expounder should carefully deliver his words at the appropriate time and place, for the impression which each word maketh is clearly evident and perceptible. . . . One word may be likened unto fire, another unto light, and the influence which both exert is manifest in the world. Therefore an enlightened man of wisdom should primarily speak with words as mild as milk, that the children of men may be nurtured and edified thereby and may attain the ultimate goal of human existence which is the station of true understanding and nobility. . . . One word is like unto springtime causing the tender saplings of the rose-garden of knowledge to become verdant and flourishing, while another word is even as a deadly poison. It behoveth a prudent man of wisdom to speak with utmost leniency and forbearance so that the sweetness of his words may induce everyone to attain that which befitteth man’s station.”

“Great is the station of man. Great must also be his endeavours for the rehabilitation of the world and the well-being of nations.”

It is a very high standard indeed that Bahá’u’lláh demands of His followers: a true believer *“should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of them that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit. At the dawn of every day he should commune with God . . . He should succour the dispossessed, and never withhold his favour from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance.”*

“Above all else”, however, states Bahá’u’lláh, *“the greatest gift and the most wondrous blessing hath ever been and will continue to be wisdom. It is man’s unfailing protector. It aideth him and strengtheneth him. Wisdom is God’s emissary and the revealer of His Name the Omniscient. Through it the loftiness of man’s station is made manifest and evident. It is all-knowing and the foremost teacher in the school of existence. It is the guide and is invested with high distinction.”* Certainly one of the best examples of Bahá’u’lláh’s own Divine wisdom is illustrated in these words: *“In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil.”*

Bahá’u’lláh suffered not only from His enemies but from the un wisdom and reprehensible acts of His own followers, to which He testifies in many passages of His writings: *“We have said: ‘My imprisonment doeth Me no harm, nor do the things that have befallen Me at the hands of My enemies. That which harmeth Me is the conduct*

of my loved ones who, though they bear My name, yet commit that which maketh My heart and My pen to lament.' Such utterances as these have again and again been revealed, yet the heedless have failed to profit thereby, since they are captive to their own evil passions and corrupt desires. Beseech thou the One true God that He may enable everyone to repent and return unto Him. So long as one's nature yieldeth unto evil passions, crime and transgression will prevail. We cherish the hope that the hand of divine power and the outpouring of heavenly blessings may sustain all men, may attire them with the vesture of forgiveness and bounty and guard them against that which would harm His Cause among His servants. He is, in truth, the Potent, the All-Powerful, and He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Merciful."

In spite of this Bahá'u'lláh reminds us: *"... well is it with the righteous that mock not the sinful, but rather conceal their misdeeds, so that their own shortcomings may remain veiled to men's eyes."*

"I implore Thee, O Thou Who art the King of names and the Creator of earth and heaven, so to assist me by Thy strengthening grace that nothing whatsoever will have the power to hinder me from remembering Thee, or celebrating Thy praise, or to keep me back from observing what Thou hast prescribed unto me in Thy Tablets, that I may so arise to serve Thee that with bared head I will hasten forth from my habitation, cry out in Thy name amidst Thy creatures, and proclaim Thy virtues among Thy servants."

"Cast me not out of the door of Thy grace, I beseech Thee, and write down for me the recompense destined for him who hath entered Thy presence, and hath risen to serve Thee, and hath been carried away by the drops sprinkled upon him from the Ocean of Thy favours in Thy days . . ."

"Inspire then my soul, O my God, with Thy wondrous remembrance, that I may glorify Thy name. Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants."

O FLEETING SHADOW!

Pass beyond the baser stages of doubt and rise to the exalted heights of certainty. Open the eye of truth, that thou mayest behold the veilless Beauty and exclaim: Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators!

O SON OF SPIRIT!

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

Words of Wisdom

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE EXALTED, THE MOST HIGH

The source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.

The essence of wisdom is the fear of God, the dread of His scourge and punishment, and the apprehension of His justice and decree.

The essence of religion is to testify unto that which the Lord hath revealed, and follow that which He hath ordained in His mighty Book.

The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment with that which God hath ordained.

The essence of love is for man to turn his heart to the Beloved One, and sever himself from all else but Him, and desire naught save that which is the desire of his Lord.

True remembrance is to make mention of the Lord, the All-Praised, and forget aught else besides Him.

True reliance is for the servant to pursue his profession and calling in this world, to hold fast unto the Lord, to seek naught but His grace, inasmuch as in His Hands is the destiny of all His servants.

The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him.

The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty, and submit to the Will of the Lord, the Sovereign, the Gracious, the All-Powerful.

The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love.

The essence of charity is for the servant to recount the blessings of His Lord, and to render thanks unto Him at all times and under all conditions.

The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds; he whose words exceed his deeds, know verily his death is better than his life.

The essence of true safety is to observe silence, to look at the end of things and to renounce the world.

The beginning of magnanimity is when man expendeth his wealth on himself, on his family and on the poor among his brethren in his Faith.

The essence of wealth is love for Me; whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy. This is that which the Finger of Glory and Splendour hath revealed.

The source of all evil is for man to turn away from his Lord and set his heart on things ungodly.

The most burning fire is to question the signs of God, to dispute idly that which He hath revealed, to deny Him and carry one's self proudly before Him.

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

The essence of abasement is to pass out from under the shadow of the Merciful and seek the shelter of the Evil One.²

The source of error is to disbelieve in the One true God, rely upon aught else but Him, and flee from His Decree.

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

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

Thus have We instructed thee, manifested unto thee Words of Wisdom, that thou mayest be thankful unto the Lord, thy God, and glory therein amidst all peoples.

The Purpose of Religion

“It is incumbent upon everyone to observe God’s holy commandments, inasmuch as they are the wellspring of life unto the world. The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion and the canopy of world order is upraised upon the two pillars of reward and punishment.”

“O people of Bahá! Each one of the ordinances We have revealed is a mighty stronghold for the preservation of the world of being. Verily, this Wronged One desireth naught but your security and elevation.”

“The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man’s supreme distinction, his real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity.

“A twofold obligation resteth upon him who hath recognized the Day Spring of the Unity of God, and acknowledged the truth of Him Who is the Manifestation of His oneness. The first is steadfastness in His love, such steadfastness that neither the clamour of the enemy nor the claims of the idle pretender can deter him from cleaving unto Him Who is the Eternal Truth, a steadfastness that taketh no account of them whatever. The second is strict observance of the laws He hath prescribed—laws which He hath always ordained, and will continue to ordain, unto men, and through which the truth may be distinguished and separated from falsehood.”

“When the Day-Star of Wisdom rose above the horizon of God’s Holy Dispensation it voiced this all-glorious utterance: They that are possessed of wealth and invested with authority and power must show the profoundest regard for religion. In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine.

Unto this will bear witness every man of true understanding.”

“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. That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion.”

“Religion is verily the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world and of tranquillity amongst its peoples. The weakening of the pillars of religion hath strengthened the foolish and emboldened them and made them more arrogant. Verily I say: The greater the decline of religion, the more grievous the waywardness of the ungodly. This cannot but lead in the end to chaos and confusion. Hear me, O men of insight, and be warned, ye who are endued with discernment!”

“The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God’s holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God’s House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world.”

“Gird up the loins of your endeavour, O people of Bahá, that haply the tumult of religious dissension and strife that agitateth the peoples of the earth may be stilled, that every trace of it may be completely obliterated. For the love of God, and them that serve Him, arise to aid this most sublime and momentous Revelation. Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction.”

The Godhead

Religion might well be defined as the Divine system of education which flows from God, the Creator, to man, His creature, through His Prophets. The Bahá'í teachings on the Godhead are exhaustive and profound; Bahá'u'lláh over and over again, in His prayers, in His meditations, in His Tablets, returns to this fundamental subject.

“God testifieth to the unity of His Godhood and to the singleness of His own Being. On the throne of eternity, from the inaccessible heights of His station, His tongue proclaimeth that there is none other God but Him. He Himself, independently of all else, hath ever been a witness unto His own oneness, the revealer of His own nature, the glorifier of His own essence. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the Beauteous.

“He is supreme over His servants, and standeth over His creatures. In His hand is the source of authority and truth. He maketh men alive by His signs, and causeth them to die through His wrath. He shall not be asked of His doings and His might is equal unto all things. He is the Potent, the All-Subduing. He holdeth within His grasp the empire of all things, and on His right hand is fixed the Kingdom of His Revelation. His power, verily, embraceth the whole of creation. Victory and overlordship are His; all might and dominion are His; all glory and greatness are His. He, of a truth, is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful, the Unconditioned.”

“Unto Thee be praise, O Lord my God! I testify that Thou art God, and that there is none other God besides Thee. Thou hast from eternity been immeasurably exalted above the praise of any one except Thee, and far above the description of any of Thy creatures. All created things have borne witness to Thy unity, and every dweller in Thy kingdom hath confessed Thy oneness. The essence of the apprehension of the assured among Thy creatures can never attain unto Thee, and the gem-like utterances with which Thy people have praised and glorified Thee can never hope to ascend unto the atmosphere of Thy holiness. For men's apprehension of Thee is but the apprehension of Thine own creation; how can it reach up to Thee? And all human praise and glorification of Thee pertain unto Thy servants; how can they be deemed worthy of the court of Thy oneness?

“I swear by Thy glory! The quintessence of knowledge is powerless to comprehend Thy nature, and the inmost reality of every praise of Thee falleth short of the seat of Thy great glory and of Thine all-compelling power. Every utterance that seeketh to describe Thee, and every knowledge that attempteth to comprehend Thee, is but an expression of Thine own creating, and is begotten by Thy will, and fashioned in conformity with Thy purpose.”

“A drop of the billowing ocean of His endless mercy hath adorned all creation with the ornament of existence, and a breath wafted from His peerless Paradise hath invested all beings with the robe of His sanctity and glory. A sprinkling from the unfathomed deep of His sovereign and all-pervasive Will hath, out of utter nothingness, called into being a creation which is infinite in its range and deathless in its duration. The wonders of His bounty can never cease, and the stream of His merciful grace can never be arrested. The process of His creation hath had no beginning, and can have no end.”

“From all eternity Thou didst rule the entire creation, and Thou wilt continue for evermore to exercise Thy dominion over all created things.”

“O my God, the God of bounty and mercy! Thou art that King by Whose commanding word the whole creation hath been called into being; and Thou art that All-Bountiful One the doings of Whose servants have never hindered Him from showing forth His grace, nor have they frustrated the revelations of His bounty.”

“My God, Thou Whom I adore and worship, Who art Most Powerful! I testify that no description by any created thing can ever reveal Thee, and no praise which any being is able to utter can express Thee. Neither the comprehension of any one in the whole world, nor the intelligence of any of its peoples, can, as it becometh Thee, gain admittance into the court of Thy holiness, or unravel Thy mystery.”

“Praised be Thou, O my God! This servant of Thine testifieth that naught else except Thee can ever express Thee, nor canst Thou be described by any one save Thyself. The thoughts of them that have recognized Thy reality, however much they may ascend towards the heaven of Thy praise, can never hope to pass beyond the bounds which, by Thy behest and decree, have been fixed within their own hearts. How can the creature who is as nothing comprehend Him Who is the Ancient of Days, or succeed in describing the full measure of His sovereignty, His glory, and His grandeur? Nay, and to this Thou Thyself dost witness, O Thou Who art the

Governor of nations! Every created thing hath recognized its own impotence, and the power of Thy might, and hath confessed its own abasement and Thy great glory.”

“The fruit of man’s earthly existence”, asserts Bahá’u’lláh, “is the recognition of the one true God.”

A PRAYER

“Magnified be Thy name, O Lord my God! Thou art He Whom all things worship and Who worshippeth no one, Who is the Lord of all things and is the vassal of none, Who knoweth all things and is known of none. Thou didst wish to make Thyself known unto men; therefore, Thou didst, through a word of Thy mouth, bring creation into being and fashion the universe. There is none other God except Thee, the Fashioner, the Creator, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. “I implore Thee, by this very word that hath shone forth above the horizon of Thy will, to enable me to drink deep of the living waters through which Thou hast vivified the hearts of Thy chosen ones and quickened the souls of them that love Thee, that I may, at all times and under all conditions, turn my face wholly towards Thee. “Thou art the God of power, of glory and bounty. No God is there beside Thee, the Supreme Ruler, the All-Glorious, the Omniscient.”

In spite, however, of His mighty praises of the unapproachable and exalted nature of the Godhead, Bahá’u’lláh leads us through the effulgent outpourings of His words ever closer to an understanding of our Creator and of our relationship to Him:

“There is no God but Thee, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful. There is no God but Thee, the Ordainer, both in the beginning and in the end. O God, my God! Thy forgiveness hath emboldened me, and Thy mercy hath strengthened me, and Thy call hath awakened me, and Thy grace hath raised me up and led me unto Thee. Who, otherwise, am I that I should dare to stand at the gate of the city of Thy nearness, or set my face toward the lights that are shining from the heaven of Thy will? Thou seest, O my Lord, this wretched creature knocking at the door of Thy grace, and this evanescent soul seeking the river of everlasting life from the hands of Thy bounty. Thine is the command at all times, O Thou Who art the Lord of all names; and mine is resignation and willing submission to Thy will, O Creator of the heavens!”

“Thou art He, O my Lord, Who hath called Himself the God of Mercy, the Most Compassionate.”

“Thou disappointest no one who hath sought Thee, nor dost Thou keep back from Thee any one who hath desired Thee.”

“Far be it from us to despair at any time of the incalculable favours of God, for if it were His wish He could cause a mere atom to be transformed into a sun and a single drop into an ocean. He unlocketh thousands of doors, while man is incapable of conceiving even a single one.”

Humanity's Waywardness

Nevertheless, in spite of such assurances as these, Bahá'u'lláh issues a stern warning to us, a warning that in these days of increasing agnosticism would probably seldom cross our minds:

“Know thou for a certainty that whoso disbelieveth in God is neither trustworthy nor truthful . . . Nothing whatever can deter such a man from evil, nothing can hinder him from betraying his neighbour, nothing can induce him to walk uprightly.”

How unbelievably stern are these words—so stern indeed that we are tempted to discount them. But when we pass on to His dire warnings regarding the state of human society and what its general delinquency may well lead to, we begin to grasp the subtle depths of this statement and we enter a field that merits profound contemplation, for it analyses and explains, warns and prophesies about the period we ourselves are living in. *“This is the Day whereon every man will fly from himself, how much more from his kindred, could ye but perceive it . . .”* Split personalities? Broken homes, divorce, shattered societies? *“This is the Day on which all eyes shall stare up with terror, the Day in which the hearts of them that dwell on earth shall tremble . . .”* A giant mushroom in the sky? The sound of gunfire and bombs?

“Behold the disturbances which, for many a long year, have afflicted the earth, and the perturbation that hath seized its peoples. It hath either been ravaged by war, or tormented by sudden and unforeseen calamities. Though the world is encompassed with misery and distress, yet no man hath paused to reflect what the cause or source of that may be. Whenever the True Counsellor uttered a word in admonishment, lo, they all denounced Him as a mover of mischief and rejected His claim. How bewildering, how confusing is such behaviour! No two men can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united. The evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony and union.”

“How long”, asks Bahá'u'lláh, “will humanity persist in its waywardness? How long will injustice continue? How long is chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate the face of society? . . . The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective.”

“Indeed the actions of man himself breed a profusion of satanic power. For were men to abide by and observe the divine teachings, every trace of evil would be banished from the face of the earth. However, the widespread differences that exist among mankind and the prevalence of sedition, contention, conflict and the like are the primary factors which provoke the appearance of the satanic spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit hath ever shunned such matters. A world in which naught can be perceived save strife, quarrels and corruption is bound to become the seat of the throne, the very metropolis, of Satan.”

“So blind hath become the human heart that neither the disruption of the city, nor the reduction of the mountain in dust, nor even the cleaving of the earth, can shake off its torpor. . . . Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day. Its tribulation is continually deepening.”

Bahá'u'lláh links this condition to the repudiation of His Message, announced in 1863, and to His proclamation of its purpose and teachings to the kings, divines and rulers of the world during more than two decades before He passed away in 1892. The result of turning away from Him Who is the “*True Physician*”, Who holds the divine remedy to man's ills, is that the world has not been tranquil, and the hearts of its people never at rest from that day to this. “*The dust of sedition*”, He asserts, “*hath clouded the hearts of men, and blinded their eyes. Ere long they will perceive the consequences of what their hands have wrought . . .*” Addressing His words to “*Members of the human race!*” He warns them of their danger in unambiguous terms: “*The civilization, so often vaunted by the learned exponents of arts and sciences, will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing. If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation. Meditate on this . . . The day is approaching when its flame will devour the cities . . .*”

“We find some men desiring liberty,³ and priding themselves therein. Such men are in the depths of ignorance. Liberty must, in the end, lead to sedition, whose flames none can quench . . . the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. That which becometh man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief-maker. Liberty causeth man to overstep the

bounds of propriety, and to infringe on the dignity of his station. It debaseth him to the level of extreme depravity and wickedness . . . True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments . . . Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty . . . The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God."

"Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence. Consider for instance such things as liberty, civilization and the like. However much men of understanding may favourably regard them, they will, if carried to excess, exercise a pernicious influence upon men."

"The days are approaching their end, and yet the peoples of the earth are seen sunk in grievous heedlessness, and lost in manifest error." "The hour is approaching when the most great convulsion will have appeared. I swear by Him Who is the Truth! It shall cause separation to afflict every one, even those who circle around Me." "Say: O concourse of the heedless! I swear by God! The promised day is come, the day when tormenting trials will have surged above your heads, and beneath your feet, saying: 'Taste ye what your hands have wrought!'" "The time for the destruction of the world and its people hath arrived. He Who is the Pre-Existent is come, that He may bestow everlasting life, and grant eternal preservation, and confer that which is conducive to true living." "The day is approaching when its [civilization's] flame will devour the cities, when the Tongue of Grandeur will proclaim: 'The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Praised!'" "O ye that are bereft of understanding! A severe trial pursueth you, and will suddenly overtake you. Bestir yourselves, that haply it may pass and inflict no harm upon you." "O ye peoples of the world! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity is following you, and that grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not the deeds ye have committed have been blotted from My sight." "O heedless ones! Though the wonders of My mercy have encompassed all created things, both visible and invisible, and though the revelations of My grace and bounty have permeated every atom of the universe, yet the rod with which I can chastise the wicked is grievous, and the fierceness of Mine anger against them terrible." "Grieve thou not over those that have busied themselves with the things of this world, and have forgotten the remembrance of God, the Most Great. By Him Who is the Eternal Truth! The day is approaching when the wrathful anger of the Almighty will have taken hold of them. He, verily, is the Omnipotent, the All-Subduing, the Most Powerful. He shall cleanse the earth from the defilement of their corruption, and shall give it for an heritage unto such of His servants as are nigh unto Him." "Soon will the cry, 'Yea, yea, here am I, here am I' be heard from every land. For there hath never been, nor can there ever be, any other refuge to fly to for any one." "And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake. Then, and only then, will the Divine Standard be unfurled, and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody."

"In the beginning of every Revelation adversities have prevailed, which later on have been turned into great prosperity." "Say: O people of God! Beware lest the powers of the earth alarm you, or the might of the nations weaken you, or the tumult of the people of discord deter you, or the exponents of earthly glory sadden you. Be ye as a mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Unconstrained."

The human race has passed through infancy, childhood and adolescence. It is now entering its adulthood; the first steps into maturity are both hectic and unsure. That which has been prophesied in symbolic terms as the time of the end, the Day of Judgement, the Day of Resurrection, is in reality the day of sifting, the day of unification, the day of building. Accept the plan of the Lord—the kingdom of heaven on earth, the day of fulfilment—and you will experience the resurrection, not of a body from a grave but a society from the dead ashes of the past. "*All created things proclaim the evidences of this worldwide regeneration . . . the counsels which the Pen of this Wronged One hath revealed constitute the supreme animating power for the advancement of the world and the exaltation of its peoples*", states Bahá'u'lláh. Refuse to go forward, to be a part of the regenerative universal springtime of God in this long-promised Day, and you will fall away into the fires of delusion, prejudice, hatred, inharmony and strife. This is the judgement we see taking place before our very eyes.

The nations and peoples of the world are still separated, like rods of cold iron that no amount of binding can unite. But there is a force that will make separate pieces of iron coalesce—fire. To forge them into one integral whole they must be put in fire, then they can be beaten into a great single unit. God, with shaping powers at His disposal far beyond anything that we possess, can and will create a new humanity, a new world, a new Order, through political, economic, and religious upheaval, through war, famine, plague, earthquake, flood— all His instruments.

"The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed."

In other words, the appearance of this new Revelation from God has struck a mighty blow, shattering obsolete, crystallized forms, which will be followed by a vast re-assemblage of essential, eternal values; the Day of the Lord will have dawned. But not, in Bahá'u'lláh's words, without a stupendous upheaval: "*No sooner had that Revelation been unveiled to men's eyes than the signs of universal discord appeared among the peoples of the world, and commotion seized the dwellers of earth and heaven, and the foundations of all things were shaken. The forces of dissension were released*" and "*Hell was made to blaze*". An old order, obsolete and corrupt, was to be ripped out and a new order, worthy of mankind's coming of age, was to be laid down; "*the delights of Paradise*" were to be uncovered before man's eyes; whosoever turned towards the effulgent light of this new truth would be bathed in its brightness and woe betide whosoever denied it, for his portion would be darkness.

"The peoples of the world are fast asleep", states Bahá'u'lláh. "Were they to wake from their slumber, they would hasten with eagerness unto God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. They would cast away everything they possess, be it all the treasures of the earth, that their Lord may remember them to the extent of addressing to them but one word. . . . So bewildered are they in the drunkenness of their evil desires, that they are powerless to recognize the Lord of all being, Whose voice calleth aloud from every direction: 'There is none other God but Me, the Mighty, the All-Wise.'

"Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful. The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty. What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Erelong, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead."

This Day, This Cause

If Bahá'u'lláh foretold the punishment, He also prophesied the fulfilment: *“How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and will, ere long, gather together the whole of mankind beneath its shelter.”*

The greatness and significance of this Day in which we are living—the period of a new Divine Dispensation—and the power and blessing inherent in this Cause of God which Bahá'u'lláh has revealed, are set forth with majesty and clarity by His pen. He testifies to God that in this Day: *“the river that is life indeed hath flowed forth from the fingers of Thy bounty, and the springtime of Thy revelation and Thy presence hath appeared through Thy manifestation unto all who are in Thy heaven and all who are on Thy earth.”*

“This is the Day”, He asserts, “whereon the Ocean of God’s mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favour have overshadowed the whole of mankind.” “Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness.” “The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God.” “This Day a door is open wider than both heaven and earth. The eye of the mercy of Him Who is the Desire of the worlds is turned towards all men.”

“By the righteousness of Mine own Self! Great, immeasurably great is this Cause! Mighty, inconceivably mighty is this Day! Blessed indeed is the man that hath forsaken all things, and fastened his eyes upon Him Whose face hath shed illumination upon all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.” “This Day is God’s Day, and this Cause His Cause.” “This Day is different from other days, and this Cause different from other causes.” “Oh, would that a discerning and fair-minded soul could be found who would recognize the wonders of this Revelation . . . and the greatness of its power.”

“O ye that judge with fairness! If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?” asks Bahá'u'lláh.

Come and taste, He says, *“the sweetness of rest”* within the pale of this *“vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority”*, for the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is, as Shoghi Effendi pointed out, the flower and fruit of all previous Revelations. *“In this most mighty Revelation”*, Bahá'u'lláh Himself asserts, *“all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest and final consummation.”* Every man, He states, has been endowed with the capacity *“to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure?”* If any man in this Day should be asked: *“Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self,”* and should he reply, *“Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal,”* such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. *For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.”*

The Believer

High, indeed, is the praise bestowed upon those who have not been blind to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In a prayer He testifies to God of the merit of those whom He calls the loved ones of God who have accepted His claims: *“Thou hast, verily, revealed Thy Cause, fulfilled Thy Covenant, and opened wide the door of Thy grace to all that dwell in heaven and on earth. Blessing and peace, salutation and glory, rest upon Thy loved ones, whom the changes and chances of the world have not deterred from turning unto Thee, and who have given their all, in the hope of obtaining that which is with Thee.”*

In every Dispensation the station of those who accept the Manifestation of God and follow Him in His Own epoch is very great. Bahá'u'lláh has made some truly astounding statements on this subject. Witness these words:

“. . . how superior must be the destiny of the true believer, whose existence and life are to be regarded as the originating purpose of all creation.⁴ Just as the conception of faith hath existed from the beginning that hath no beginning, and will endure till the end that hath no end, in like manner will the true believer live and endure. His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long as God, Himself, will last. He is revealed through the Revelation of God, and is hidden at His bidding. It is evident that the loftiest mansions in the Realm of Immortality have been ordained as the habitation of them that have truly believed in God and in His signs. Death can never invade that holy seat. Thus have We entrusted thee with the signs of Thy Lord, that thou mayest persevere in thy love for Him, and be of them that comprehend this truth.”

“O friends!” He addresses His followers, “Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. . . . Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll.”

“O people of Bahá! Ye are the breezes of spring that are wafted over the world. Through you We have adorned the world of being with the ornament of the knowledge of the Most Merciful. Through you the countenance of the world hath been wreathed in smiles, and the brightness of His light shone forth. Cling ye to the Cord of steadfastness, in such wise that all vain imaginings may utterly vanish. . . . Beware lest anything withhold you from observing the things prescribed unto you by the Pen of Glory . . . O people of Bahá! The river that is Life indeed hath flowed for your sakes. Quaff ye in My name, despite them that have disbelieved in God, the Lord of Revelation.” “Blessed are the people of Bahá! God beareth Me witness! They are the solace of the eye of creation.”

“The companions of God”, states Bahá'u'lláh of His followers, “are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit by their example.”

He has never failed to both encourage and admonish those who have accepted Him and been honoured with the title of the *“people of Bahá”*:

“The first and foremost duty prescribed unto men,” He states, “next to the recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, is the duty of steadfastness in His Cause. Cleave thou unto it, and be of them whose minds are firmly fixed and grounded in God. No act, however meritorious, did or can ever compare unto it. It is the king of all acts, and to this thy Lord, the All-Highest, the Most Powerful, will testify. . . .”

Well knowing the pressures to which those who accept any Prophet in His Own Day are subjected, He assures His followers:

“Blessed are the steadfast; blessed are they that stand firm in His Faith.”

“Let their hearts, O my Lord, be carried away by Thy remembrance, and their souls enriched by Thy riches, and their wills strengthened to proclaim Thy Cause amidst Thy creatures.

Thou art, verily, the Great Giver, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.”

“It behoveth the people of Bahá to render the Lord victorious through the power of their utterance and to admonish the people by their goodly deeds and character, inasmuch as deeds exert greater influence than words.”

“Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds.”

So many of His prayers are addressed to the Almighty on behalf of His followers:

“I pray Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of all names and the Ruler of both earth and heaven, to grant that all who are dear to Thee may each become a cup of Thy mercy in Thy days, that they may quicken the hearts of Thy servants.”

“Wilt Thou withhold, O my God, from such as love Thee the wonders of Thine ascendancy and triumph? Wilt Thou shatter, O my Beloved, the hopes which they who are devoted to Thee have fixed on Thy manifold bounties and gifts? Wilt Thou keep back, O my Master, those that have recognized Thee from the shores of Thy sanctified knowledge, or wilt Thou cease to rain down upon the hearts of such as desire Thee the showers of Thy transcendent grace? No, no, and to this Thy glory beareth me witness! I testify this very moment that Thy mercy hath surpassed all created things, and Thy loving-kindness encompassed all that are in heaven and all that are on earth. From everlasting the doors of Thy generosity were open to the faces of Thy servants, and the gentle winds of Thy grace were wafted over the hearts of Thy creatures, and the overflowing rains of Thy bounty were showered upon Thy people and the dwellers of Thy realm.”

“O people of God!” He admonishes us, “Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a goodly behaviour. Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of this Cause, and a saintly character will reinforce its power. Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá! This, verily, is the commandment which this Wronged One hath given unto you, and the first choice of His unrestrained Will for every one of you.”

“Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.”

To recognize, to believe, to accept, to allow His teachings to sink deep and transfigure one’s personal character is, however, not sufficient in this hour of change in the world. We must, Bahá’u’lláh makes clear, give forth His light, pass on His message, share the hope and conviction we have found through His Revelation with our fellow men, our own generation, living like us through hours of worldwide trial and metamorphosis, but unlike us, seeing no glimmer of promise for the future and filled with despair.

“This is the day in which to speak. It is incumbent upon the people of Bahá to strive, with the utmost patience and forbearance, to guide the peoples of the world to the Most Great Horizon. Every body calleth aloud for a soul. Heavenly souls must needs quicken, with the breath of the Word of God, the dead bodies with a fresh spirit. Within every word a new spirit is hidden. Happy is the man that attaineth thereunto, and hath arisen to teach the Cause of Him Who is the King of Eternity.” “Say: O servants! The triumph of this Cause hath depended, and will continue to depend, upon the appearance of holy souls, upon the showing forth of goodly deeds, and the revelation of words of consummate wisdom.” “Centre your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded.”

“Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God. Your behaviour towards your neighbour should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be recreated by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory.”

“O ye beloved of God! Repose not yourselves on your couches, nay, bestir yourselves as soon as ye recognize your Lord, the Creator, and hear of the things which have befallen Him, and hasten to His assistance. Unloose your tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.”

“I swear by Him Who is the Truth! Erelong will God adorn the beginning of the Book of Existence with the mention of His loved ones who have suffered tribulation in His path, and journeyed through the countries in His name and for His praise. Whoso hath attained their presence will glory in their meeting, and all that dwell in every land will be illumined by their memory.”

“Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. This is indeed what profiteth you in this world, and in that which is to come.” “The movement itself from place to place, when undertaken for the sake of God, hath always exerted, and can now exert, its influence in the world. In the Books of old the station of them that have voyaged far and near in order to guide the servants of God hath been set forth and written down.”

“I swear by God! So great are the things ordained for the steadfast that were they, so much as the eye of a needle, to be disclosed, all who are in heaven and on earth would be dumbfounded, except such as God, the Lord of all worlds, hath willed to exempt.” “I swear by God! That which hath been destined for him who aideth My Cause excelleth the treasures of the earth.” “Whoso openeth his lips in this day, and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light. Thus hath it been foreordained in the realm of God’s Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.”

“If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honoured in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory. No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendour.”

“Please God ye may all be strengthened to carry out that which is the Will of God, and may be graciously assisted to appreciate the rank conferred upon such of His loved ones as have arisen to serve Him and magnify His name.” “O people of Bahá! That there is none to rival you is a sign of mercy. Quaff ye of the Cup of Bounty the wine of immortality, despite them that have repudiated God, the Lord of names and Maker of the heavens.”

“I swear by the one true God! This is the day of those who have detached themselves from all but Him, the day of those who have recognized His unity, the day whereon God createth, with the hands of His power, divine beings and imperishable essences, every one of whom will cast the world and all that is therein behind him, and will wax so steadfast in the Cause of God that every wise and understanding heart will marvel.”

Bahá’u’lláh puts in our mouths words of thanksgiving for having been blessed by God with recognizing Him in His Day:

A PRAYER

“Glorified art Thou, O my God! I yield Thee thanks that Thou hast made known unto me Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy mercy, and the Dawning-Place of Thy grace, and the Repository of Thy Cause. I beseech Thee by Thy Name, through which the faces of them that are nigh unto Thee have turned white, and the hearts of such as are devoted to Thee have

winged their flight towards Thee, to grant that I may, at all times and under all conditions, lay hold on Thy cord, and be rid of all attachment to any one except Thee, and may keep mine eyes directed towards the horizon of Thy Revelation, and may carry out what Thou hast prescribed unto me in Thy Tablets.

“Attire, O my Lord, both my inner and outer being with the raiment of Thy favours and Thy loving-kindness. Keep me safe, then, from whatsoever may be abhorrent unto Thee, and graciously assist me and my kindred to obey Thee, and to shun whatsoever may stir up any evil or corrupt desire within me.

“Thou, truly, art the Lord of all mankind, and the Possessor of this world and of the next. No God is there save Thee, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

Bahá'u'lláh Himself

But what of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, the pivot of this central point in world history? In detail, in lucid language, He has shared His forty-year-long prophetic experience with us, beginning in 1852, when, by order of the Shah of Persia, He was cast into a subterranean dungeon in Tehran. *"We were consigned",* He wrote, *"for four months to a place foul beyond comparison . . . wrapped in thick darkness, and Our fellow prisoners numbered nearly a hundred and fifty souls: thieves, assassins and highwaymen . . . it had no other outlet than the passage by which We entered . . . God alone knoweth what befell Us in that most foul-smelling and gloomy place!"* His neck was galled and swollen from the heavy steel collar He wore, the marks of which endured till the end of His life. In one of His Tablets to a Muslim divine Bahá'u'lláh wrote: *"Shouldst thou at some time happen to visit the dungeon of His Majesty the Shah, ask the director and chief jailer to show thee those two chains, one of which is known as Qará-Guhar, and the other as Salásil . . . for four months this Wronged One was tormented and chained by one or the other of them."*

But to His God Bahá'u'lláh cries out: *"The throat Thou didst accustom to the touch of silk Thou hast, in the end, clasped with strong chains, and the body Thou didst ease with brocades and velvets Thou hast at last subjected to the abasement of a dungeon."* If these words seem to us surprising we must remember that Bahá'u'lláh, like Buddha, was descended from an ancient line of kings and lived, until He was 35 years old, in an environment of wealth and prominence; the contrast then was great indeed between his youth and the ceaseless persecution—the imprisonment, exile, humiliation and bitter poverty—that, for the most part, He endured till the end of His life. Yet it was in that dungeon that He experienced what Shoghi Effendi so beautifully described as "the first stirrings of God's Revelation within His soul": *"During the days I lay in the prison of Tihrán, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear."*

In another passage He testifies: *"I lay asleep on my couch, O my God, when lo, the gentle winds of Thy grace and Thy loving-kindness passed over me, and wakened me through the power of Thy sovereignty and Thy gifts, and bade me arise before Thy servants, and speak forth Thy praise, and glorify Thy word."* Most touchingly, as if surprised at the reaction of men to His Divine Revelation, He goes on to say: *"Thereupon most of Thy people reviled me. I swear by Thy glory, O my God! I never thought that they would show forth such deeds, aware as I am that Thou hast Thyself announced this Revelation unto them in the Scrolls of Thy commandment and the Tablets of Thy decree, and hast covenanted with them concerning this youth in every word sent down by Thee unto Thy creatures and Thy people."*

So many of Bahá'u'lláh's writings are addressed directly to the Beloved of His heart, His God. Plaintively, but not reproachfully, He reminds Him:

"Lauded be Thy name, O my God! Thou seest how I have been sorely vexed among Thy servants, and beholdest the things that have befallen me in Thy path. Thou knowest full well that I have not spoken a word but by Thy leave, that my lips have never been opened except at Thy bidding and in accordance with Thy pleasure, that every breath I have breathed hath been animated with Thy praise and Thy remembrance, that I have summoned all men to naught else except that whereunto Thy chosen ones have through all eternity been summoned . . ."

But sometimes the terrible, unending nature of His afflictions seems to have overcome Bahá'u'lláh and He gives Tongue to His Beloved Lord on high, voicing the inmost depths of His heart:

"Thou knowest, and seest, and hearest, O my Lord, that before every tree I am moved to lift up my voice to Thee, and before every stone I am impelled to sigh and lament. Hath it been Thy purpose in creating me, O my God, to touch me with tribulation, or to enable me to manifest Thy Cause in the kingdom of Thy creation?"

"Thou hearest, O my God, my sighs and my groaning, and beholdest my powerlessness, and my poverty, and my misery, and my woes, and my wretchedness. I swear by Thy might! I have wept with such a weeping that I have been unable to make mention of Thee, or to extol Thee, and cried with such a bitter cry that every mother in her bereavement was bewildered at me, and forgot her own anguish and the sighs she had uttered."

"Thou seest and hearest the sighing of this wronged One, from this darksome well which the vain imaginations of Thine adversaries have built, and from this blind pit which the idle fancies of the wicked among Thy creatures

have digged. . . . I am not impatient in the troubles that touch me in my love for Thee, neither in the adversities which I suffer in Thy path. Nay, I have, by Thy power, chosen them for mine own self, and I glory in them . . .”

“For them who are endued with discernment,” Bahá’u’lláh testifies, “it is no secret that I have been, most of the days of My life, even as a slave, sitting under a sword hanging on a thread, knowing not whether it would fall soon or late upon him. And yet, notwithstanding all this We render thanks unto God, the Lord of the worlds.”

“I give Thee thanks, O my God, for that Thou hast made me to be a target for the darts of Thine adversaries in Thy path. I offer Thee most high praise, O Thou Who art the Knower of the seen and unseen and the Lord of all being, that Thou hast suffered me to be cast into prison for love of Thee, and caused me to quaff the cup of woe, that I may reveal Thy Cause and glorify Thy word.”

Nevertheless the burden, as the long years of exile and im-prisonment went by, became heavier to bear and the toll on His strength and endurance ever more formidable:

“The cruelties inflicted by My oppressors have bowed Me down, and turned My hair white”, He cries out in a Tablet to one of His followers. “Shouldst thou present thyself before My throne, thou wouldst fail to recognize the Ancient Beauty, for the freshness of His countenance is altered and its brightness hath faded, by reason of the oppression of the infidels. I swear by God! His heart, His soul, and His vitals are melted!” “With every piece of bread the Ancient Beauty breaketh is coupled the assault of a fresh affliction, and with every drop He drinketh is mixed the bitterness of the most woeful of trials. He is preceded in every step He taketh by an army of unforeseen calamities, while in His rear follow legions of agonizing sorrows.”

In one of His communions with God, however, Bahá’u’lláh makes it quite clear that to be persecuted in His Path is the dearest wish of His heart: *“How sweet is the thought of Thee in times of adversity and trial, and how delightful to glorify Thee when compassed about with the fierce winds of Thy decree! Thou knowest full well, O my God, that I endure patiently whatsoever toucheth me in Thy path. Nay, I perceive that all the members and limbs of my body long for tribulation, that I may manifest Thy Cause . . . and the fire of my remembrance of Thee hath set me ablaze before all that are in heaven and on earth. Great is my blessedness, and great the blessedness of this fire whose flame crieth out: ‘No God is there save Thee, Who art the Object of my heart’s adoration, and the Source and Centre of my soul!’ . . . Were all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth to unite and seek to hinder me from remembering Thee and from celebrating Thy praise, they would assuredly have no power over me, and would fail in their purpose”, and in burning and graphic metaphors He attests to what lengths His love and fidelity to the wishes of His Lord will carry Him: “And were the infidels to slay me, my blood would, at Thy command, lift up its voice and proclaim: ‘There is no God but Thee, O Thou Who art all my heart’s Desire!’ And were my flesh to be boiled in the cauldron of hate, the smell which it would send forth would rise towards Thee and cry out: ‘Where art Thou, O Lord of the worlds, Thou One Desire of them that have known Thee!’ And were I to be cast into fire, my ashes would—I swear by Thy glory— declare: ‘The Youth hath, verily, attained that for which he had besought his Lord, the All-Glorious, the Omniscient.’ . . . Such is my love for Thee that I can fear no one, though the powers of all the worlds be arrayed against me. Alone and unaided I have, by the power of Thy might, arisen to pro-claim Thy Cause, unafraid of the host of my oppressors.*

“To all that dwell on earth I cry aloud and say: ‘Fear ye God, O ye servants of God, and suffer not yourselves to be kept back from this pure Wine that hath flowed from the right hand of the throne of the mercy of your Lord, the Most Merciful. I swear by God! Better for you is what He possesseth than the things ye yourselves possess and the things ye have sought and are now seeking in this vain and empty life. Forsake the world, and set your faces towards the all-glorious Horizon. Whoso hath partaken of the wine of His remembrance will forget every other remembrance, and whoso hath recognized Him will rid himself of all attachment to this life and to all that pertaineth unto it.’”

“In the love I bear to Thee, O my Lord, my heart longeth for Thee with a longing such as no heart hath known. Here am I with my body between Thy hands, and my spirit before Thy face. Do with them as it may please Thee, for the exaltation of Thy word, and the revelation of what hath been enshrined within the treasures of Thy knowledge.”

His sole desire, Bahá’u’lláh asserts, is the “regeneration of the whole world, and the establishment of the unity of its peoples, and the salvation of all them that dwell therein.” “By the righteousness of God, my Well-Beloved!” He testifies, “I have never aspired after worldly leadership. My sole purpose hath been to hand down unto men that which I was bidden to deliver by God, the Gracious, the Incomparable, that it may detach them from all that pertaineth to this world, and cause them to attain such heights as neither the ungodly can conceive, nor the froward imagine.”

However replete His writings are with praises of God, the Father, Bahá'u'lláh nevertheless constantly reminds us that no man can attain to knowledge of the Creator except through His Intermediary, His Manifestation. The intimacy of the Prophet with God—far, far beyond our humanness to understand—is made clear in many passages: “*I am stirred by nothing else*”, He firmly asserts, “*except the winds of Thy will, and breathe no word except the words which, by Thy leave and Thine inspiration, I am led to pronounce.*” This role of Intermediary, however, is supreme, indeed the very hub of man’s spiritual life on this planet:

“He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.”

Bahá'u'lláh, the “*royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty*”! “*He that partaketh of the waters of My Revelation*”, He says, “*will taste all the incorruptible delights ordained by God from the beginning that hath no beginning to the end that hath no end*”—words that are indeed “*the soft flowing stream of true knowledge.*”

Referring to Himself Bahá'u'lláh categorically states: “. . . unto no one is given the right to question His authority or to say why or wherefore. . . . He is come from the invisible heaven, bearing the banner ‘He doeth whatsoever He willeth’. . .”

“Consider the mercy of God and His gifts. He enjoineeth upon you that which shall profit you, though He Himself can well dispense with all creatures. Your evil doings can never harm Us, neither can your good works profit Us. We summon you wholly for the sake of God. To this every man of understanding and insight will testify.”

This is the Bahá'u'lláh that “*the people of Bahá*” follow, at once the Beloved, the Lover, the Lawgiver.

Martyrdom and Persecution of the Believers

In these days of increasing world darkness, when once again the fires of a remorseless persecution are consuming our fellow Bahá'ís, particularly in Persia, the Cradle of our Faith, when before our very eyes heroic men, and a few—but ever-increasing in number—heroic women are offering up their lives rather than deny their faith, and thereby winning the highest honour that man can win in this world, a martyr's crown, we need to cool our agitated hearts and feverish brains, teeming with sorrow and outrage, with Bahá'u'lláh's own words on sacrifice, persecution, steadfastness and reward. We need to understand the genesis of such persecution and its cause and to recall His commandments to the people of Bahá and their obedience which lead them ultimately, if needs be, to submit to unjust death with meekness and, indeed, radiant acquiescence.

At all times we must remember the unfolding continuity of Divine Revelation; we must remember that Bahá'u'lláh has appeared by design, in the eternal scheme of things, at that point in the destinies of men which marks the coming of age of mankind, when this planet will become united, and universal peace be established. We must understand that all Prophets break through the old order of Their day when They assert Their Divine origin and Their Divine right to refreshen the temple of truth, grown dusty and obscured under the petty minds of men over the centuries, and to apply the new laws and social principles necessary for the unfoldment of a new age and the further development of humanity. Who does the process affect most? Obviously the powerful and entrenched clergy of the past religious orders.

“Leaders of religion,” claims Bahá'u'lláh, *“in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people.”* What unspeakable cruelties, He goes on to say, have they inflicted upon *“those Gems of Divine virtue,”* as He calls the Prophets of God. Elaborating His theme Bahá'u'lláh states that the peoples of the world, *“utterly ignoring God . . . have placed themselves unreservedly under the authority of these pompous and hypocritical leaders, for they have no sight, no hearing, no heart, of their own to distinguish truth from falsehood.”* He testifies that *“Not one Prophet of God was made manifest Who did not fall a victim to the relentless hate, to the denunciation, denial and execration of the clerics of His day!”* In spite of the fact that many of the most outstanding martyrs and teachers of the Bahá'í Faith have been, and are even now, drawn from the ranks of this same clergy, Bahá'u'lláh's indictment of them in general is fierce indeed: *“The source and origin of tyranny have been the divines.”* They *“esteem themselves the best of all creatures”*, He says, but in His sight are the vilest, because, though they *“occupy the seats of knowledge and learning”* they call ignorance knowledge and oppression justice and they *“worship no God but their own desire”* and *“bear allegiance to naught but gold”*. *“Such is the sway of their desires, that the lamp of conscience and reason hath been quenched in their hearts.”* *“The pagan priests, and the Jewish and Christian divines, have committed the very things which the divines of the age, in this Dispensation, have committed, and are still committing. Nay, these have displayed a more grievous cruelty and a fiercer malice.”*

So terrible is the plight of the clergy themselves in our days, so great the babel of sects in our present world, that no matter to which religion we look we see, as Bahá'u'lláh says, that its divines have reached the point where *“No two are found to agree on one and the same law, for they seek no God but their own desire, and tread no path but the path of error.”*

From the inception of the Bahá'í Faith the Muslim clergy have made its extinction their avowed objective. This perversity is not confined to the clergy, however: *“We, verily, have announced unto men this Most Great Revelation,”* declares Bahá'u'lláh, *“and yet the people are in a state of strange stupor.”* The militant clergy, the indifferent public, no change in almost a century since He wrote those words!

There can be no doubt that time is running out and final decisions—for all men—must be made. For some of us even the ultimate decision, between life with dishonour or death with honour. At a time when Persia had witnessed a recrudescence of the holocaust of the 1850s, shortly before He passed away, Bahá'u'lláh addressed, in scathing words, one of the inveterate enemies of His Faith:

“The companions of God . . . have, for the most part, suffered martyrdom. Thou, however, art still alive. How is it that thou hast been spared? I swear by God! It is because of thy denial, whereas the martyrdom of the blessed souls was due to their confession. Every just and fair-minded person will bear witness unto this, inasmuch as the cause and motive of both are clear and evident as the sun.”

In one of His most beautiful Hidden Words He expresses the great mystery of the crimson ransom—the blood of the martyr:

O SON OF MAN!

Write all that We have revealed unto thee with the ink of light upon the tablet of thy spirit. Should this not be in thy power, then make thine ink of the essence of thy heart. If this thou canst not do, then write with that crimson ink that hath been shed in My path. Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure for ever.

“This is a Revelation, under which, if a man shed for its sake one drop of blood, myriads of oceans will be his recompense.” He assures us that “If ye would reckon up the martyrs in the path of God, ye could not count them . . . ponder on the penetrative influence of the Word of God. Every single one of these souls was first ordered to blaspheme and curse his faith, yet none was found to prefer his own will to the Will of God.”

“*This people*”, He says—His own people, the people of Bahá—“*have passed beyond the narrow straits of names, and pitched their tents upon the shores of the sea of renunciation. They would willingly lay down a myriad lives, rather than breathe the word desired by their enemies. They have clung to that which pleaseth God, and are wholly detached and freed from the things which pertain unto men. They have preferred to have their heads cut off rather than utter one unseemly word. Ponder this in thine heart. Methinks they have quaffed their fill of the ocean of renunciation. The life of the present world hath failed to withhold them from suffering martyrdom in the path of God.*” And He goes on to assert: “*This people need no weapons of destruction, inasmuch as they have girded themselves to reconstruct the world. Their hosts are the hosts of goodly deeds, and their arms the arms of upright conduct, and their commander the fear of God. Blessed that one that judgeth with fairness. By the righteousness of God! Such hath been the patience, the calm, the resignation and contentment of this people that they have become the exponents of justice, and so great hath been their forbearance, that they have suffered themselves to be killed rather than kill, and this notwithstanding that these whom the world hath wronged have endured tribulations the like of which the history of the world hath never recorded, nor the eyes of any nation witnessed. What is it that could have induced them to reconcile themselves to these grievous trials, and to refuse to put forth a hand to repel them? What could have caused such resignation and serenity? The true cause is to be found in the ban which the Pen of Glory hath, day and night, chosen to impose . . .*”

In order to understand these words one must remember that Bahá'u'lláh forbade His followers to retaliate against their enemies; they would not recant and they would not fight for their lives: “. . . *none of the faithful*”, He states, “*transgressed My commandment, nor raised his hand in resistance. Come what might, they refused to allow their own inclinations to supersede that which the Book hath decreed . . . in recent years a number of the faithful have, in most of the cities of Persia, suffered themselves to be killed rather than kill, yet the hatred smouldering in certain hearts hath blazed more fiercely than before.*”

Bahá'u'lláh Himself agonized over the shedding of the blood of His innocent people, testifying that “*No man can reckon, nor can any tongue tell, what hath befallen Thy chosen ones during all this time.*” In many passages He sought to comfort His followers. In one of His prayers He calls down an unbelievable blessing of God upon His martyrs: “*Bless Thou, likewise, as long as Thine own Self endureth and Thine own Essence doth last, them that have suffered martyrdom in Thy path.*”

“*O my servants!*” Bahá'u'lláh tells us, “*Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.*”

Bahá'u'lláh Himself is the witness for the martyrs:

“All these were guided by the light of the Sun of Divine Revelation, confessed and acknowledged His truth. Such was their faith, that most of them renounced their substance and kindred, and cleaved to the good pleasure of the All-Glorious. They laid down their lives for their Well-Beloved, and surrendered their all in His path. Their breasts were made targets for the darts of the enemy, and their heads adorned the spears of the infidel. No land remained which did not drink the blood of these embodiments of detachment, and no sword that did not bruise their necks. Their deeds, alone, testify to the truth of their words. Doth not the testimony of these holy souls, who have so gloriously risen to offer up their lives for their Beloved that the whole world marvelled at the manner of their sacrifice, suffice the people of this day?”

Addressing one of the enemies of His Faith Bahá'u'lláh exclaims: *“O perverse hater! Didst thou imagine that martyrdom could abase this Cause? Nay, by Him Whom God hath made to be the Repository of His Revelation, if thou be of them that comprehend.”* On one hand the shining hosts of martyrs marching with heads erect to meet their destiny, on the other the perverse blindness of their enemies, the divines, and the equally vicious fanaticism of the people, over whom they hold sway. *“The changes and chances of the world and the powers of the nations cannot frustrate”* God, states Bahá'u'lláh; *“He doeth what He pleaseth and ordaineth what He willeth through the power of His sovereignty.”*

Bahá'u'lláh assures us, “With what love, what devotion, what exultation and holy rapture, they sacrificed their lives in the path of the All-Glorious! To the truth of this all witness. And yet, how can they belittle this Revelation? Hath any age witnessed such momentous happenings? If these companions be not the true strivers after God, who else could be called by this name? Have these companions been seekers after power or glory? Have they ever yearned for riches? Have they cherished any desire except the good pleasure of God? If these companions, with all their marvellous testimonies and wondrous works, be false, who then is worthy to claim for himself the truth? I swear by God! Their very deeds are a sufficient testimony, and an irrefutable proof unto all the peoples of the earth, were men to ponder in their hearts the mysteries of Divine Revelation. ‘And they who act unjustly shall soon know what lot awaiteth them!’ ”

“Consider these martyrs of unquestionable sincerity, to whose truthfulness testifieth the explicit text of the Book, and all of whom, as thou hast witnessed, have sacrificed their life, their substance, their wives, their children, their all, and ascended unto the loftiest chambers of Paradise. Is it fair to reject the testimony of these detached and exalted beings to the truth of this pre-eminent and Glorious Revelation, and to regard as acceptable the denunciations which have been uttered against this resplendent Light by this faithless people, who for gold have forsaken their faith, and who for the sake of leadership have repudiated Him Who is the First Leader of all mankind? This, although their character is now revealed unto all people who have recognized them as those who will in no wise relinquish one jot or one tittle of their temporal authority for the sake of God’s holy Faith, how much less their life, their substance, and the like.”

A PRAYER

“Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Thou art He the fire of Whose love hath set ablaze the hearts of them who have recognized Thy unity, and the splendours of Whose countenance have illuminated the faces of such as have drawn nigh unto Thy court. How plenteous, O my God, is the stream of Thy knowledge! How sweet, O my Beloved, is the injury which, in my love for Thee, and for the sake of Thy pleasure, I suffer from the darts of the wicked doers! How pleasing are the wounds which, in Thy path and in order to proclaim Thy Faith, I sustain from the swords of the infidels! “I beseech Thee, by Thy name through which Thou turnest restlessness into tranquillity, fear into confidence, weakness into strength, and abasement into glory, that Thou of Thy grace wilt aid me and Thy servants to exalt Thy name, to deliver Thy Message, and to proclaim Thy Cause, in such wise that we may remain unmoved by either the assaults of the transgressors or the wrath of the infidels, O Thou Who art my Well-Beloved! “I am, O my Lord, Thy handmaiden, who hath hearkened to Thy call, and hastened unto Thee, fleeing from herself and resting her heart upon Thee. I implore Thee, O my Lord, by Thy name out of which all the treasures of the earth were brought forth, to shield me from the hints of such as have disbelieved in Thee and repudiated Thy truth. “Powerful art Thou to do what Thou pleasest. Thou art, verily, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

“How many”, says Bahá'u'lláh, “were those pure and kindly hearts which faithfully reflected the light of that eternal Sun, and how manifold the emanations of knowledge from that Ocean of divine wisdom which encompassed all beings! In every city, all the divines and dignitaries rose to hinder and repress them, and girded up the loins of malice, of envy, and tyranny for their suppression. How great the number of those holy souls, those essences of justice, who, accused of tyranny, were put to death! And how many embodiments of purity, who showed forth naught but true knowledge and stainless deeds, suffered an agonizing death! Notwithstanding all this, each of these holy beings, up to his last moment, breathed the Name of God, and soared in the realm of submission and resignation. Such was the potency and transmuting influence which He exercised over them, that they ceased to cherish any desire but His will, and wedded their soul to His remembrance.

“Reflect: Who in this world is able to manifest such transcendent power, such pervading influence? All these stainless hearts and sanctified souls have, with absolute resignation, responded to the summons of His decree. Instead of complaining, they rendered thanks unto God, and amidst the darkness of their anguish they revealed naught but radiant acquiescence to His will. It is evident how relentless was the hate, and how bitter the malice and enmity entertained by all the peoples of the earth towards these companions. The persecution and pain they inflicted on these holy and spiritual beings were regarded by them as means unto salvation, prosperity, and everlasting success. Hath the world, since the days of Adam, witnessed such tumult, such violent commotion?

Notwithstanding all the torture they suffered, and manifold the afflictions they endured, they became the object of universal opprobrium and execration. Methinks, patience was revealed only by virtue of their fortitude, and faithfulness itself was begotten only by their deeds.”

In one of the periods of grievous trial of His followers, Bahá'u'lláh, in a prayer, testifies of them: *“Thou knowest, O my God, that none can be found on the face of the earth to remember Thee except them. Thou seest how the oppressors among Thy creatures have laid hold on them. Some, O my God, have shed their blood in Thy path, others have abandoned their homes . . . while still others have been cast into prison and are at the mercy of the workers of iniquity.”*

“Unto Thee be praise, O Thou Who inclinest Thine ear to the sighing of them that have rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee, and Who hearest the voice of the lamentation of those who are wholly devoted to Thy Self! Thou beholdest all that hath befallen them at the hands of such of Thy creatures as have transgressed and rebelled against Thee. Thy might beareth me witness, O Thou Who art the King of the realms of justice and the Ruler of the cities of mercy! The tribulations they have been made to suffer are such as no pen, in the entire creation, can reckon. Should any one attempt to make mention of them, he would find himself powerless to describe them.

“As these tribulations, however, were sustained in Thy path and for love of Thee, they who were afflicted by them render thanks, under all conditions, unto Thee, and say: ‘O Thou Who art the Delight of our hearts and the Object of our adoration! Were the clouds of Thy decree to rain down upon us the darts of affliction, we would, in our love for Thee, refuse to be impatient. We would yield Thee praise and thanksgiving, for we have recognized and are persuaded that Thou hast ordained only that which will be best for us. If our bodies be, at times, weighed down by our troubles, yet our souls rejoice with exceeding gladness. We swear by Thy might, O Thou Who art the Desire of our hearts and the Exultation of our souls! Every trouble that toucheth us in our love for Thee is an evidence of Thy tender mercy, every fiery ordeal a sign of the brightness of Thy light, every woeful tribulation a cooling draught, every toil a blissful repose, every anguish a fountain of gladness.’

“Whosoever, O my Lord, is impatient in the tribulations befalling him in Thy path, hath not drunk of the cup of Thy love nor tasted of the sweetness of Thy remembrance. I implore Thee, by Him Who is the King of all names and their Sovereign, Who is the Revealer of all attributes and their Creator, and by them who have soared aloft and drawn nigh unto Thee and winged their flight into the atmosphere of Thy presence, and have endured the galling of chains for Thy sake, to grant that all Thy people may be graciously aided to recognize Him Who is the Manifestation of Thine own Self, Who, because He summoned mankind unto Thee, hath been exiled and cast into prison.

“The tenderness of Thy mercy, O my Lord, surpasseth the fury of Thy wrath, and Thy loving-kindness exceedeth Thy hot displeasure, and Thy grace excelleth Thy justice. Hold Thou, through Thy wondrous favours and mercies, the hands of Thy creatures, and suffer them not to be separated from the grace which Thou hast ordained as the means whereby they can recognize Thee.”

In innumerable prayers Bahá'u'lláh places in our mouths words supplicating for strength to be given in time of trial, for steadfastness in His path, for consecration to His Cause. *“Cause me, O my Lord, to be reckoned among them who have been so stirred up by the sweet savours that have been wafted in Thy days that they have laid down their lives for Thee and hastened to the scene of their death in their longing to gaze on Thy beauty and in their yearning to attain Thy presence. And were any one to say unto them on their way, ‘Whither go ye?’ they would say, ‘Unto God, the All-Possessing, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!’”*

A PRAYER

“Glory be to Thee, O my God! I beg of Thee by Thy name, the Most Merciful, to protect Thy servants and Thy handmaidens when the tempests of trials pass over them, and Thy manifold tests assail them. Enable them, then, O my God, so to seek refuge within the stronghold of Thy love and of Thy Revelation, that neither Thine adversaries nor the wicked doers among Thy servants, who have broken Thy Covenant and Thy Testament, and turned away most disdainfully from the Day-Spring of Thine Essence and the Revealer of Thy glory, may prevail against them. “They themselves, O my Lord, have waited at the door of Thy grace. Do Thou open it to their faces with the keys of Thy bountiful favours. Potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt, and to ordain what Thou pleasest. These are the ones, O my Lord, who have set their faces towards Thee, and turned unto Thy habitation. Do with them, therefore, as becometh Thy mercy, which hath surpassed the worlds.”

Many of us by nature are not strong and heroic; we may even be weak and timid. For such as these Bahá'u'lláh has many words of encouragement and comfort for the fortification of their steadfastness and the development of

their capacity to rise—with His assistance—to great spiritual heights:

“ . . . waft from the heaven of Thy loving-kindness the fragrance of certainty upon the needy among Thy loved ones, in these days when the tempests of trials have compassed them on every side, and so grievously assailed them that the souls of men have been troubled and the foundations of all beings have trembled at what hath been sent down unto them from the heaven of Thine irrevocable Purpose.”

“Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Beneficent.”

“I implore Thee, O my God and my Master, by Thy word through which they who have believed in Thy unity have soared up into the atmosphere of Thy knowledge, and they who are devoted to Thee have ascended into the heaven of Thy oneness, to inspire Thy loved ones with that which will assure their hearts in Thy Cause. Endue them with such steadfastness that nothing whatsoever will hinder them from turning towards Thee.”

“The virtues and attributes pertaining unto God are all evident and manifest, and have been mentioned and described in all the heavenly Books. Among them are trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity of heart while communing with God, forbearance, resignation to whatever the Almighty hath decreed, contentment with the things His Will hath provided, patience, nay, thankfulness in the midst of tribulation, and complete reliance, in all circumstances, upon Him. These rank, according to the estimate of God, among the highest and most laudable of all acts.”

“He that giveth up himself wholly to God, God shall, assuredly, be with him; and he that placeth his complete trust in God, God shall, verily, protect him from whatsoever may harm him, and shield him from the wickedness of every evil plotter.”

“ . . . empower us to become the helpers of His Cause and the dispersers of His adversaries. Powerful art Thou to do all that pleaseth Thee. No God is there beside Thee, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the One Whose help is sought by all men!”

In spite of all these assurances, however, Bahá'u'lláh has not neglected to warn us of the dangers we face from within our own selves:

“Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest the strong ones of the earth rob you of your strength, or they who rule the world fill you with fear. Put your trust in God, and commit your affairs to His keeping. He, verily, will, through the power of truth, render you victorious, and He, verily, is powerful to do what He willleth, and in His grasp are the reins of omnipotent might.” “I swear by My life! Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones. To this testifieth the Pen of God, the Most Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Best Beloved.” “Let not the happenings of the world sadden you. I swear by God! The sea of joy yearneth to attain your presence, for every good thing hath been created for you, and will, according to the needs of the times, be revealed unto you.”

“Whoso hath recognized Me, will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.”

A PRAYER

“Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Every man of insight confesseth Thy sovereignty and Thy dominion, and every discerning eye perceiveth the greatness of Thy majesty and the compelling power of Thy might. The winds of tests are powerless to hold back them that enjoy near access to Thee from setting their faces towards the horizon of Thy glory, and the tempests of trials must fail to draw away and hinder such as are wholly devoted to Thy will from approaching Thy court.

“Methinks, the lamp of Thy love is burning in their hearts, and the light of Thy tenderness is lit within their breasts. Adversities are incapable of estranging them from Thy Cause, and the vicissitudes of fortune can never cause them to stray from Thy pleasure.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by them and by the sighs which their hearts utter in their separation from Thee, to keep them safe from the mischief of Thine adversaries, and to nourish their souls with what Thou hast ordained for Thy loved ones on whom shall come no fear and who shall not be put to grief.”

A PRAYER

“O Thou Whose tests are a healing medicine to such as are nigh unto Thee, Whose sword is the ardent desire of all them that love Thee, Whose dart is the dearest wish of those hearts that yearn after Thee, Whose decree is the sole hope of them that have recognized Thy truth! I implore Thee, by Thy divine sweetness and by the splendours of the glory of Thy face, to send down upon us from Thy retreats on high that which will enable us to draw nigh unto Thee. Set, then, our feet firm, O my God, in Thy Cause, and enlighten our hearts with the effulgence of Thy knowledge, and illumine our breasts with the brightness of Thy names.”

A PRAYER

“I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by that Remembrance of Thee through which all things have been raised to life, and through which all faces have been made to shine, not to frustrate the hopes I have set on the things Thou dost possess. Cause me, then, by Thy mercy, to enter beneath Thy shadow that shadoweth all things.

“Be Thou, O my Lord, my sole Desire, my Goal, mine only Hope, my constant Aim, my Habitation and my Sanctuary. Let the object of mine ardent quest be Thy most resplendent, Thine adorable, and ever-blessed Beauty. I implore Thee, O my Lord, by whatsoever is of Thee, to send, from the right hand of Thy might, that which will exalt Thy loved ones and abase Thine enemies.

“No God is there besides Thee, Thou alone art my Beloved in this world and in the world which is to come. Thou alone art the Desire of all them that have recognized Thee.

“Praised be God, the Lord of the worlds.”

A PRAYER

“I know not, O my God, what the Fire is which Thou didst kindle in Thy land. Earth can never cloud its splendour, nor water quench its flame. All the peoples of the world are powerless to resist its force. Great is the blessedness of him that hath drawn nigh unto it, and heard its roaring. “Some, O my God, Thou didst, through Thy strengthening grace, enable to approach it, while others Thou didst keep back by reason of what their hands have wrought in Thy days. Whoso hath hasted towards it and attained unto it hath, in his eagerness to gaze on Thy beauty, yielded his life in Thy path, and ascended unto Thee, wholly detached from aught else except Thyself. “I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by this Fire which blazeth and rageth in the world of creation, to rend asunder the veils that have hindered me from appearing before the throne of Thy majesty, and from standing at the door of Thy gate. Do Thou ordain for me, O my Lord, every good thing Thou didst send down in Thy Book, and suffer me not to be far removed from the shelter of Thy mercy.

“Powerful art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the All-Powerful, the Most Generous.”

Other Prayers and Part of a Long Meditation

It is in the nature of the Manifestations of God to have a veritable passion of love and attachment to the God Who has made Them His Emissaries, the Embodiments of His attributes, the Carriers of His Message and the blameless targets of every woe that men could inflict upon Them. Many of Bahá'u'lláh's prayers addressed to His Maker reflect the tumult in His soul, a threshing about like the leaping waves of the sea tossed by the tempest of His longing to express and pour out His praise and adoration for His Beloved. Something of this inner struggle is reflected in these words: *"Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! Every time I am reminded of Thee and muse on Thy virtues, I am seized with such ecstasies and am so enraptured by Thee that I find myself unable to make mention of Thy name and to extol Thee, . . ."* *"O Thou, the Light of the world!"* He exclaims, *"The fire of Thy love that burneth continually within me hast so inflamed me that whoever among Thy creatures approacheth me, and inclineth his inner ear towards me, cannot fail to hear its raging within each of my veins."*

The terms He uses are very revealing of Himself for Bahá'u'lláh was a very adorable person. Our awe of His station, our sense of complete non-existence in the face of His grandeur and power, often prevent us from glimpsing this other, infinitely endearing and bewitching side of His nature. For instance, He addresses God as *"the Fountain of my life!"*, *"the Exultation of my heart"*—not only most jubilant and tender expressions but ones which convey an intimacy and oneness far beyond our comprehension. *"I swear by Thy might,"* He says, *"O Thou in Whose grasp are the reins of all mankind, and the destinies of the nations! I am so inflamed by my love for Thee, and so inebriated with the wine of Thy oneness, that I can hear from the whisper of the winds the sound of Thy glorification and praise, and can recognize in the murmur of the waters the voice that proclaimeth Thy virtues and Thine attributes, and can apprehend from the rustling of the leaves the mysteries that have been irrevocably ordained by Thee in Thy realm."*

In Himself, and in all things, Bahá'u'lláh sees the moving of His God: *"Every time I lift up mine eyes unto Thy heaven, I call to mind Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; and every time I turn my gaze to Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. And when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipresence."*

Some of His communions are pure poetry:

A PRAYER

"From the sweet-scented streams of Thine eternity give me to drink, O my God, and of the fruits of the tree of Thy being enable me to taste, O my Hope! From the crystal springs of Thy love suffer me to quaff, O my Glory, and beneath the shadow of Thine everlasting providence let me abide, O my Light! Within the meadows of Thy nearness, before Thy presence, make me able to roam, O my Beloved, and at the right hand of the throne of Thy mercy seat me, O my Desire! From the fragrant breezes of Thy joy let a breath pass over me, O my Goal, and into the heights of the paradise of Thy reality let me gain admission, O my Adored One! To the melodies of the dove of Thy oneness suffer me to hearken, O Resplendent One, and through the spirit of Thy power and Thy might quicken me, O my Provider! In the spirit of Thy love keep me steadfast, O my Succourer, and in the path of Thy good-pleasure set firm my steps, O my Maker! Within the garden of Thine immortality, before Thy countenance, let me abide for ever, O Thou Who art merciful unto me, and upon the seat of Thy glory stablish me, O Thou Who art my Possessor! To the heaven of Thy loving-kindness lift me up, O my Quickener, and unto the Day-Star of Thy guidance lead me, O Thou my Attractor! Before the revelations of Thine invisible spirit summon me to be present, O Thou Who art my Origin and my Highest Wish, and unto the essence of the fragrance of Thy beauty, which Thou wilt manifest, cause me to return, O Thou Who art my God!"

"Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, the All-Highest."

A PRAYER

"Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil conscience within me, O my Hope! Through the spirit of power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved, and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O Thou the Goal of my desire! Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, O Source of my being, and by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God! Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquillity on me, O my Companion, and let the riches of Thine

ancient countenance deliver me from all except Thee, O my Master, and let the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence bring me joy, O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!”

A PRAYER

“Lauded be Thy name, O my God and the God of all things, my Glory and the Glory of all things, my Desire and the Desire of all things, my Strength and the Strength of all things, my King and the King of all things, my Possessor and the Possessor of all things, my Aim and the Aim of all things, my Mover and the Mover of all things! Suffer me not, I implore Thee, to be kept back from the ocean of Thy tender mercies, nor to be far removed from the shores of nearness to Thee.

“Aught else except Thee, O my Lord, profiteth me not, and near access to any one save Thyself availeth me nothing. I entreat Thee by the plenteousness of Thy riches, whereby Thou didst dispense with all else except Thyself, to number me with such as have set their faces towards Thee, and arisen to serve Thee.

“Forgive, then, O my Lord, Thy servants and Thy handmaidens. Thou, truly, art the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.”

TWO PRAYERS

“O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration, Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose habitation is my goal, Whose praise is my hope, Whose providence is my companion, Whose love is the cause of my being, Whose mention is my solace, Whose nearness is my desire, Whose presence is my dearest wish and highest aspiration, I entreat Thee not to withhold from me the things Thou didst ordain for the chosen ones among Thy servants. Supply me, then, with the good of this world and of the next.

“Thou, truly, art the King of all men. There is no God but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.”

“Blessed is the spot,
and the house,
and the place,
and the city,
and the heart,
and the mountain,
and the refuge,
and the cave,
and the valley,
and the land,
and the sea,
and the island,
and the meadow
where mention of God
hath been made,
and His praise glorified.”

A PRAYER

“O my Lord! Make Thy beauty to be my food, and Thy presence my drink, and Thy pleasure my hope, and praise of Thee my action, and remembrance of Thee my companion, and the power of Thy sovereignty my succourer, and Thy habitation my home, and my dwelling-place the seat Thou hast sanctified from the limitations imposed upon them who are shut out as by a veil from Thee. “Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.”

“O Thou Who art the Lord of all names and the Maker of the heavens! I beseech Thee by them Who are the Day-Springs of Thine invisible Essence, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, to make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out from Thy beauty, and a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence. . . .

“Make my prayer, O my Lord, a fountain of living waters whereby I may live as long as Thy sovereignty endureth, and may make mention of Thee in every world of Thy worlds.”

“I am so carried away by the sweetness of Thine utterances, and so inebriated with the wine of Thy tender mercies, that my voice can never be stilled, nor can my suppliant hands any longer desist from being stretched out towards Thee. Thou seest, O my Lord, how mine eyes are fixed in the direction of Thy grace, and mine ears inclined towards the kingdom of Thine utterance, and my tongue unloosed to celebrate Thy praise, and my face set towards Thy face that surviveth all that hath been created by Thy word, and my hands raised up towards the heaven of Thy bounty and favour.

“Wilt Thou keep back from Thee the stranger whom Thou didst call unto his most exalted Home beneath the shadow of the wings of Thy mercy, or cast away the wretched creature that hath hastened to attain the shores of the ocean of Thy wealth? Wilt Thou shut up the door of Thy grace to the face of Thy creatures after having opened it through the power of Thy might and of Thy sovereignty, or close the eyes of Thy people when Thou hast already commanded them to turn unto the Day-Spring of Thy Beauty and the Dawning-Place of the splendours of Thy countenance?

“Nay, and to this Thy glory beareth me witness! Such is not my thought of Thee, nor the thought of those of Thy servants that have near access to Thyself, nor that of the sincere amongst Thy people.”

These words, part of a very long meditation, are a veritable paean of praise to God and lift up the heart to soar on the wings of Bahá'u'lláh's own overwhelming outpouring of joy and gratitude:

“Praise be to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast revealed Thy favours and Thy bounties; and glory be to Thee, O my Beloved, 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 splendours 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 the waters of Thy healing, and can help those who are far from Thee to approach the living fountain of Thy presence. I yield Thee such 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: “Alí [the Báb], in truth, is Thy servant, Whom Thou hast singled out from among Thy Messengers and Thy chosen Ones, and made Him to be the Manifestation of Thyself in 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 can unloose the tongues of all beings to magnify the sovereignty of Thy beauty. I yield Thee such thanks as can fill the heavens and the earth with the signs of Thy transcendent Essence, and assist all created things to enter the Tabernacle of Thy nearness and Thy presence. I yield Thee such thanks as can make every created thing to be a book that shall speak of Thee, and a scroll that shall unfold Thy praise. I yield Thee such thanks as can establish the Manifestations of Thy sovereignty upon the throne of Thy governance, and set up the Exponents of Thy glory upon the seat of Thy Divinity. I yield Thee such thanks as can make the corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit through the holy breaths of Thy favours, and revive the bodies of all beings with the gentle winds of Thy transcendent grace. I yield Thee such thanks as can cause the signs of Thine exalted singleness to be sent down out of the heaven of Thy holy unity. I yield Thee such thanks as can teach all things the realities of Thy knowledge and the essence of Thy wisdom, and will not withhold the wretched creatures from the doors of Thy mercy and Thy bountiful favour. I yield Thee such thanks as can enable all who are in heaven and on earth to dispense with all created things, through the treasures of Thine all-sufficing riches, and can aid all created things to reach unto the summit of Thine almighty favours. I yield Thee such thanks as can assist the

hearts of Thine ardent lovers to soar into the atmosphere of nearness to Thee, and of longing for Thee, and kindle the Light of Lights within the land of 'Irâq. I yield Thee such thanks as can detach them that are nigh unto Thee from all created things, and draw them to the throne of Thy names and Thine attributes. I yield Thee such thanks as can cause Thee to forgive all sins and trespasses, and to fulfil the needs of the peoples of all religions, and to waft the fragrances of pardon over the entire creation. I yield Thee such thanks as can enable them that recognize Thy unity to scale the heights of Thy love, and cause such as are devoted to Thee to ascend unto the Paradise of Thy presence. I yield Thee such thanks as can satisfy the wants of all such as seek Thee, and realize the aims of them that have recognized Thee. I yield Thee such thanks as can blot out from the hearts of men all suggestions of limitations, and inscribe the signs of Thy unity. I yield Thee such thanks as that with which Thou didst from eternity glorify Thine own Self, and didst exalt it above all peers, rivals, and comparisons, O Thou in Whose hands are the heavens of grace and of bounty, and the kingdoms of glory and of majesty!"

Not all His prayers, however, were the vehicles of His joy, or His praise, or His thanksgiving. One of the most heartrending of them all is this one that He repeated as He returned from His seclusion as a dervish in the mountains of Sulaymaniyyih to Baghdad, there to face once again a fresh tempest of opposition and a new stage in His exile from His native land.

A PRAYER

"O God, my God! Be Thou not far from me, for tribulation upon tribulation hath gathered about me. O God, my God! Leave me not to myself, for the extreme of adversity hath come upon me. Out of the pure milk, drawn from the breasts of Thy loving-kindness, give me to drink, for my thirst hath utterly consumed me. Beneath the shadow of the wings of Thy mercy shelter me, for all mine adversaries with one consent have fallen upon me. Keep me near to the throne of Thy majesty, face to face with the revelation of the signs of Thy glory, for wretchedness hath grievously touched me. With the fruits of the Tree of Thine Eternity nourish me, for uttermost weakness hath overtaken me. From the cups of joy, proffered by the hands of Thy tender mercies, feed me, for manifold sorrows have laid mighty hold upon me. With the brodered robe of Thine omnipotent sovereignty attire me, for poverty hath altogether despoiled me. Lulled by the cooing of the Dove of Thine Eternity, suffer me to sleep, for woes at their blackest have befallen me. Before the throne of Thy oneness, amid the blaze of the beauty of Thy countenance, cause me to abide, for fear and trembling have violently crushed me. Beneath the ocean of Thy forgiveness, faced with the restlessness of the leviathan of glory, immerse me, for my sins have utterly doomed me."

"Look, then, O Thou Who art the Well-Beloved of Bahá, upon the tears he sheddeth before Thee, and behold the sighs which he uttereth, O Thou Who art his heart's Desire! I swear by Thy might, and Thy majesty and Thy glory! Were I to inherit from Thee all the delights of Paradise, and to keep them in my possession as long as Thine own Being endureth, and were I to become, for less than a moment, careless of the remembrance of Thee, I would, of a certainty, cast them away from me and cease to consider them. I am the one, O my God, who for love of Thee hath forsaken the world and all its benefits, and willingly accepted every tribulation for the sake of Thy remembrance.

"I entreat Thee, O Thou Who art my Companion and my Best-Beloved, to lift the veil that hath come in between Thee and Thy servants, that they may recognize Thee with Thine own eye and rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. No God is there beside Thee, the Most Exalted, the Self-Sufficing, the Self-Exalting, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

"Praise be unto Thee, for Thou art, in truth, the Lord of earth and heaven."

"Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Thou beholdest my low estate and the habitation wherein I dwell, and bearest witness unto my perplexity, my crying needs, my troubles, and the afflictions I suffer among Thy servants who recite Thy verses and repudiate their Revealer, who call on Thy names and cavil at their Creator, who seek to draw nigh unto Him Who is Thy Friend and put to death Him Who is the Best-Beloved of the worlds.

"Open Thou their eyes, O my God, and my Master, that they may gaze on Thy beauty, or cause them to return unto the lowest abyss of the fire. Potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt. Thou art, verily, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise."

A PRAYER

"Lauded be Thy name, O my God! I can discover no one in Thy realm who can befittingly turn unto Thee, or is able to adequately hearken unto what hath gone out of the mouth of Thy will. I beseech Thee, therefore, O Thou Who art the Possessor of the entire creation and the King of the realm of Thine invention, graciously to aid Thy

creatures to accomplish that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Thee, that they may arise to serve Thy Cause amidst Thy creatures, and to speak forth Thy praise before all who are in heaven and on earth. "Thou art He, O my Lord, Whose bounty hath surpassed all things, and Whose power hath transcended all things, and Whose mercy hath encompassed all things. Look, then, upon Thy people with the eyes of Thy tender mercies, and leave them not to themselves and to their corrupt desires in Thy days. How farsoever they may have strayed from Thee, and however grievously they have turned back from Thy face, yet Thou, in Thine essence, art the All-Bountiful, and, in Thine inmost spirit, art the Most Merciful. Deal with them according to the unrevealed tokens of Thy bounty and Thy gifts.

Thou art, verily, the One to the power of Whose might all things have testified, and to Whose majesty and omnipotence the whole creation hath borne witness.

"No God is there but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting."

A PRAYER

"My God, the Object of my adoration, the Goal of my desire, the All-Bountiful, the Most Compassionate! All life is of Thee and all power lieth within the grasp of Thine omnipotence. Whosoever Thou exaltest is raised above the angels, and attaineth the station: 'Verily, We uplifted him to a place on high!'; and whosoever Thou dost abase is made lower than dust, nay, less than nothing. "O Divine Providence! Though wicked, sinful, and intemperate, we still seek from Thee a 'seat of truth', and long to behold the countenance of the Omnipotent King. It is Thine to command, and all sovereignty belongeth to Thee, and the realm of might boweth before Thy behest. Everything Thou doest is pure justice, nay, the very essence of grace. One gleam from the splendours of Thy Name, the All-Merciful, sufficeth to banish and blot out every trace of sinfulness from the world, and a single breath from the breezes of the Day of Thy Revelation is enough to adorn all mankind with a fresh attire. "Vouchsafe Thy strength, O Almighty One, unto Thy weak creatures, and quicken them who are as dead, that haply they may find Thee, and may be led unto the ocean of Thy guidance, and may remain steadfast in Thy Cause. Should the fragrance of Thy praise be shed abroad by any of the divers tongues of the world, out of the East or out of the West, it would, verily, be prized and greatly cherished. If such tongues, however, be deprived of that fragrance, they assuredly would be unworthy of any mention, be they words or thoughts. "We beg of Thee, O Providence, to show Thy way unto all men, and to guide them aright. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing."

A PRAYER

"Lauded and glorified art Thou, O my God! I entreat Thee by the sighing of Thy lovers and by the tears shed by them that long to behold Thee, not to withhold from me Thy tender mercies in Thy Day, nor to deprive me of the melodies of the Dove that extolleth Thy oneness before the light that shineth from Thy face. I am the one who is in misery, O God! Behold me cleaving fast to Thy Name, the All-Possessing. I am the one who is sure to perish; behold me clinging to Thy Name, the Imperishable. I implore Thee, therefore, by Thy Self, the Exalted, the Most High, not to abandon me unto mine own self and unto the desires of a corrupt inclination. Hold Thou my hand with the hand of Thy power, and deliver me from the depths of my fancies and idle imaginings, and cleanse me of all that is abhorrent unto Thee. "Cause me, then, to turn wholly unto Thee, to put my whole trust in Thee, to seek Thee as my Refuge, and to flee unto Thy face. Thou art, verily, He Who, through the power of His might, doeth whatsoever He desireth, and commandeth, through the potency of His will, whatsoever He chooseth. None can withstand the operation of Thy decree; none can divert the course of Thine appointment. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful."

"I beg of Thee, O my God, by Thy most exalted Word which Thou hast ordained as the Divine Elixir unto all who are in Thy realm, the Elixir through whose potency the crude metal of human life hath been transmuted into purest gold, O Thou in Whose hands are both the visible and invisible kingdoms, to ordain that my choice be conformed to Thy choice and my wish to Thy wish, that I may be entirely content with that which Thou didst desire, and be wholly satisfied with what Thou didst destine for me by Thy bounteousness and favour. Potent art Thou to do as Thou wilt. Thou, in very truth, art the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

"Happy is the man who hath recognized Thee, and discovered the sweetness of Thy fragrance, and set himself towards Thy kingdom, and tasted of the things that have been perfected therein by Thy grace and favour. Great is the blessedness of him who hath acknowledged Thy most excellent majesty, and whom the veils that have shut out the nations from Thee have not hindered from directing his eyes towards Thee, O Thou Who art the King of eternity and the Quickener of every mouldering bone! Blessed, also, is he that hath inhaled Thy sweet savours, and been carried away by Thine utterances in Thy days. Blessed, moreover, be the man that hath turned unto Thee, and woe betide him that hath turned his back upon Thee.

“Praised be Thou, the Lord of the worlds!”

A PRAYER

“Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! Thou seest how I have turned myself toward Thee, and set my face in the direction of Thy grace and Thy gifts. I implore Thee, by Thy name through which Thou didst enable all them that have recognized Thy unity to partake of the wine of Thy mercy, and all such as have drawn nigh unto Thee to quaff the living waters of Thy loving-kindness, to rid me entirely of all vain imaginings, and to incline me in the direction of Thy grace, O Thou Who art the Lord of all men! “Graciously assist me, O my God, in the days of the Manifestation of Thy Cause and of the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, to tear asunder the veils which have hindered me from recognizing Thee, and from immersing myself beneath the ocean of Thy knowledge. Hold Thou me with the hands of Thy power, and grant that I may be so carried away by the sweet melodies of the Dove of Thy oneness, that I will cease to regard in all creation any face except Thy face, O Thou the Goal of my desire, and will recognize in the visible world naught else save the evidences of Thy might, O Thou Who art the God of mercy!”

“I am but a wretched creature, O my Lord, and Thou art the All-Possessing, the Most High; and I am all weakness, and Thou art the Almighty, and the Supreme Ordainer in both the beginning and the end. Withhold not from me the fragrances of Thy Revelation, and shatter not my hopes in the outpourings which have been sent down out of the heaven of Thy gifts. Ordain Thou for me, O my God, the good of this world and the world to come, and grant me what will profit me in every world of Thy worlds, for I know not what will help or harm me. Thou, in truth, art the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

“Have mercy, then, O my God, upon Thy servants who are drowned in the midst of the ocean of evil suggestions, and deliver them by the power of Thy sovereignty, O Thou Who art the Lord of all names and attributes! Thou art He Who from everlasting hath ordained what hath pleased Thee, and will unto everlasting abide the same. No God is there but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

A PRAYER

“Praise be to Thee, O my God, inasmuch as Thou hast turned the faces of Thy servants towards the right-hand of the throne of Thy gifts, and hast caused them to be detached from all else besides Thee, that they may recognize Thy sovereignty and acknowledge Thy glory. I testify to the potency of Thy Cause, the pervasive influence of Thy decree, the immutability of Thy will, the endlessness of Thy purpose. All things lie prisoned within the grasp of Thy might, and the whole creation is destitute when brought face to face with the evidences of Thy wealth.

“Deal Thou, therefore, O my God, my Beloved, my supreme Desire, with Thy servants and with all that were created by Thee as would beseem Thy beauty and Thy greatness, and would be worthy of Thy generosity and gifts. Thou art, in truth, He Whose mercy hath encompassed all the worlds, and Whose grace hath embraced all that dwell on earth and in heaven. Who is there that hath cried after Thee, and whose prayer hath remained unanswered? Where is he to be found who hath reached forth towards Thee, and whom Thou hast failed to approach? Who is he that can claim to have fixed his gaze upon Thee, and toward whom the eye of Thy loving-kindness hath not been directed? I bear witness that Thou hadst turned toward Thy servants ere they had turned toward Thee, and hadst remembered them ere they had remembered Thee. All grace is Thine, O Thou in Whose hand is the kingdom of Divine gifts and the source of every irrevocable decree.

“Send down, therefore, O my God, upon all that seek Thee that which will entirely strip them of all that pertaineth not unto Thee, and will draw them nigh unto Thy Self. Assist them, by Thy grace, to love Thee and to conform unto that which shall please Thee. Grant, then, that they may go straight on in the path of Thy Cause, the path wherein have slipped the footsteps of the doubters among Thy people and the froward among Thy servants. Thou art, verily, the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the Most Great.”

A PRAYER

“Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! I am the one who hath sought the good-pleasure of Thy will, and directed his steps towards the seat of Thy gracious favours. I am he who hath forsaken his all, who hath fled to Thee for shelter, who hath set his face towards the tabernacle of Thy revelation and the adored sanctuary of Thy glory. I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by Thy call whereby they who recognized Thy unity have sought the shadow of Thy most gracious providence, and the sincere have fled far from themselves unto Thy name, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, through which Thy verses were sent down, and Thy word fulfilled, and Thy proof manifested, and the sun of Thy beauty risen, and Thy testimony established, and Thy signs uncovered—I beseech Thee to grant that I may be numbered with them that have quaffed the wine that is life indeed from the hands of Thy gracious

providence, and have rid themselves, in Thy path, of all attachment to Thy creatures, and been so inebriated with Thy manifold wisdom that they hastened to the field of sacrifice with Thy praise on their lips and Thy remembrance in their hearts. Send down, also, upon me, O my God, that which will wash me from anything that is not of Thee, and deliver me from Thine enemies who have disbelieved in Thy signs.

“Potent art Thou to do what Thou willest. No God is there beside Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.”

There are many specific prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, answering the need of the individual or the occasion, or, as does this one, the urgent need of men:

PRAYER FOR MERCY TO MANKIND

“My God, Whom I worship and adore! I bear witness unto Thy unity and Thy oneness, and acknowledge Thy gifts, both in the past and in the present. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the overflowing showers of Whose mercy have rained down upon high and low alike, and the splendours of Whose grace have been shed over both the obedient and the rebellious.

“O God of mercy, before Whose door the quintessence of mercy hath bowed down, and round the sanctuary of Whose Cause loving-kindness, in its inmost spirit, hath circled, we beseech Thee, entreating Thine ancient grace, and seeking Thy present favour, that Thou mayest have mercy upon all who are the manifestations of the world of being, and to deny them not the outpourings of Thy grace in Thy days.

“All are but poor and needy, and Thou, verily, art the All-Possessing, the All-Subduing, the All-Powerful.”

PRAYER FOR ASSISTANCE TO SERVE THE CAUSE

“O God, Who art the Author of all Manifestations, the Source of all Sources, the Fountain-Head of all Revelations, and the Well-Spring of all Lights! I testify that by Thy Name the heaven of understanding hath been adorned, and the ocean of utterance hath surged, and the dispensations of Thy providence have been promulgated unto the followers of all religions. “I beseech Thee so to enrich me as to dispense with all save Thee, and be made independent of any one except Thyself. Rain down, then, upon me out of the clouds of Thy bounty that which shall profit me in every world of Thy worlds. Assist me, then, through Thy strengthening grace, so to serve Thy Cause amidst Thy servants that I may show forth what will cause me to be remembered as long as Thine own kingdom endureth and Thy dominion will last. “This is Thy servant, O my Lord, who with his whole being hath turned unto the horizon of Thy bounty, and the ocean of Thy grace, and the heaven of Thy gifts. Do with me then as becometh Thy majesty, and Thy glory, and Thy bounteousness, and Thy grace. “Thou, in truth, art the God of strength and power, Who art meet to answer them that pray Thee. There is no God save Thee, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

“Dispel my grief by Thy bounty and Thy generosity, O God, my God, and banish mine anguish through Thy sovereignty and Thy might. Thou seest me, O my God, with my face set towards Thee at a time when sorrows have compassed me on every side. I implore Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of all being, and over-shadowest all things visible and invisible, by Thy Name whereby Thou hast subdued the hearts and the souls of men, and by the billows of the Ocean of Thy mercy and the splendours of the Day Star of Thy bounty, to number me with them whom nothing whatsoever hath deterred from setting their faces toward Thee, O Thou Lord of all names and Maker of the heavens!

“Thou beholdest, O my Lord, the things which have befallen me in Thy days. I entreat Thee, by Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy names and the Dawning-Place of Thine attributes, to ordain for me what will enable me to arise to serve Thee and to extol Thy virtues. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, Who art wont to answer the prayers of all men!

“And, finally, I beg of Thee by the light of Thy countenance to bless my affairs, and redeem my debts, and satisfy my needs. Thou art He to Whose power and to Whose dominion every tongue hath testified, and Whose majesty and Whose sovereignty every understanding heart hath acknowledged. No God is there but Thee, Who hearest and art ready to answer.”

Bahá'u'lláh's prayers were revealed in both Arabic and Persian; in Arabic, unlike Persian, there is masculine and feminine, a distinction which He readily made use of in His beautiful selection of words; thus we find that a prayer that certainly seems suitable for general use, for me, for instance, a woman, may be expressed in terms that indicate the speaker is masculine; but this does not mean that I should not use it, for certainly my soul is neither male nor female, conditions which are a part of the physical nature of this world and have nothing to do with the spiritual realms beyond. Shoghi Effendi informed the Bahá'ís that they should strictly adhere to the text. In other words, we should not change masculine to feminine or singular to plural. Some of Bahá'u'lláh's prayers, however, have been particularly revealed for His “handmaidens”—yet another evidence of the special consideration extended to women in this Dispensation. Here are two of His prayers for women, one of them specifically for healing:

PRAYER FOR A HANDMAIDEN

“Magnified be Thy name, O Lord my God! Behold Thou mine eye expectant to gaze on the wonders of Thy mercy, and mine ear longing to hearken unto Thy sweet melodies, and my heart yearning for the living waters of Thy knowledge. Thou seest Thy handmaiden, O my God, standing before the habitation of Thy mercy, and calling upon Thee by Thy name which Thou hast chosen above all other names and set up over all that are in heaven and on earth. Send down upon her the breaths of Thy mercy, that she may be carried away wholly from herself, and be drawn entirely towards the seat which, resplendent with the glory of Thy face, sheddeth afar the radiance of Thy sovereignty, and is established as Thy throne. Potent art Thou to do what Thou willest. No God is there beside Thee, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful. “Cast not out, I entreat Thee, O my Lord, them that have sought Thee, and turn not away such as have directed their steps towards Thee, and deprive not of Thy grace all that love Thee. Thou art He, O my Lord, Who hath called Himself the God of Mercy, the Most Compassionate. Have mercy, then, upon Thy handmaiden who hath sought Thy shelter, and set her face towards Thee.

“Thou art, verily, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

HEALING PRAYER FOR A HANDMAIDEN

“Glory be to Thee, O Lord my God! I beg of Thee by Thy Name through which He Who is Thy Beauty hath been stablished upon the throne of Thy Cause, and by Thy Name through which Thou changest all things, and gatherest together all things, and callest to account all things, and rewardest all things, and preservest all things, and sustainest all things—I beg of Thee to guard this handmaiden who hath fled for refuge to Thee, and hath sought the shelter of Him in Whom Thou Thyself art manifest, and hath put her whole trust and confidence in Thee. “She is sick, O my God, and hath entered beneath the shadow of the Tree of Thy healing; afflicted, and hath fled to the City of Thy protection; diseased, and hath sought the Fountain-Head of Thy favours; sorely vexed, and hath hasted to attain the Well-Spring of Thy tranquillity; burdened with sin, and hath set her face toward the court of Thy forgiveness. “Attire her, by Thy sovereignty and Thy loving-kindness, O my God and my Beloved, with the raiment of Thy balm and Thy healing, and make her quaff of the cup of Thy mercy and Thy favours. Protect her, moreover, from every affliction and ailment, from all pain and sickness, and from whatsoever may be abhorrent unto Thee. Thou, in truth, art immensely exalted above all else except Thyself. Thou art, verily, the Healer, the All-Sufficing, the Preserver, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

In another of His prayers for a handmaiden—but surely highly suitable for all to recite—Bahá’u’lláh implores protection against the whisperings of those who have repudiated the truth of God, in other words the malicious, the doubting and the Covenant-breakers.

PRAYER FOR PROTECTION

“O Thou, at Whose dreadful majesty all things have trembled, in Whose grasp are the affairs of all men, towards Whose grace and mercy are set the faces of all Thy creatures! I entreat Thee, by Thy Name which Thou hast ordained to be the spirit of all names that are in the kingdom of names, to shield us from the whisperings of those who have turned away from Thee, and have repudiated the truth of Thy most august and most exalted Self, in this Revelation that hath caused the kingdom of Thy names to tremble. “I am one of Thy handmaidens, O my Lord! I have turned my face towards the sanctuary of Thy gracious favours and the adored tabernacle of Thy glory. Purify me of all that is not of Thee, and strengthen me to love Thee and to fulfil Thy pleasure, that I may delight myself in the contemplation of Thy beauty, and be rid of all attachment to any of Thy creatures, and may, at every moment, proclaim: ‘Magnified be God, the Lord of the worlds!’ “Let my food, O my Lord, be Thy beauty, and my drink the light of Thy presence, and my hope Thy pleasure, and my work Thy praise, and my companion Thy remembrance, and my aid Thy sovereignty, and my dwelling-place Thy habitation, and my home the seat which Thou hast exalted above the limitations of them that are shut out as by a veil from Thee. “Thou art, in truth, the God of power, of strength and glory.”

“Time and again”, writes Bahá’u’lláh, “have We admonished Our beloved ones to avoid, nay to flee from, anything whatsoever from which the odour of mischief can be detected. The world is in great turmoil, and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions.”

PRAYER FOR HEALING

“O God, my God! I beg of Thee by the ocean of Thy healing, and by the splendours of the Day-Star of Thy grace, and by Thy Name through which Thou didst subdue Thy servants, and by the pervasive power of Thy most exalted Word and the potency of Thy most august Pen, and by Thy mercy that hath preceded the creation of all who are in heaven and on earth, to purge me with the waters of Thy bounty from every affliction and disorder, and from all weakness and feebleness. “Thou seest, O my Lord, Thy suppliant waiting at the door of Thy bounty, and him who hath set his hopes on Thee clinging to the cord of Thy generosity. Deny him not, I beseech Thee, the things he seeketh from the ocean of Thy grace and the Day-Star of Thy loving-kindness. “Powerful art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. There is none other God save Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.”

PRAYER FOR SAFETY

“I have risen this morning by Thy grace, O my God, and left my home trusting wholly in Thee, and committing myself to Thy care. Send down, then, upon me, out of the heaven of Thy mercy, a blessing from Thy side, and enable me to return home in safety even as Thou didst enable me to set out under Thy protection with my thoughts fixed steadfastly upon Thee.

“There is none other God but Thee, the One, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”

PRAYER ON AWAKENING

“I have wakened in Thy shelter, O my God, and it becometh him that seeketh that shelter to abide within the Sanctuary of Thy protection and the Stronghold of Thy defence. Illumine my inner being, O my Lord, with the splendours of the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, even as Thou didst illumine my outer being with the morning light of Thy favour.”

PRAYER ON SLEEPING

“O my God, my Master, the Goal of my desire! This, Thy servant, seeketh to sleep in the shelter of Thy mercy, and to repose beneath the canopy of Thy grace, imploring Thy care and Thy protection. “I beg of Thee, O my Lord, by Thine eye that sleepeth not, to guard mine eyes from beholding aught beside Thee. Strengthen, then, their vision that they may discern Thy signs, and behold the Horizon of Thy Revelation. Thou art He before the revelations of Whose omnipotence the quintessence of power hath trembled. “No God is there but Thee, the Almighty, the All-Subduing, the Unconditioned.”

PRAYER FOR A CHILD

“Praised be Thou, O Lord my God! Graciously grant that this infant be fed from the breast of Thy tender mercy and loving providence and be nourished with the fruit of Thy celestial trees. Suffer him not to be committed to the care of anyone save Thee, inasmuch as Thou, Thyself, through the potency of Thy sovereign will and power, didst create and call him into being. There is none other God but Thee, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

“Lauded art Thou, O my Best-Beloved, waft over him the sweet savours of Thy transcendent bounty and the fragrances of Thy holy bestowals. Enable him then to seek shelter beneath the shadow of Thy most exalted Name, O Thou Who holdest in Thy grasp the kingdom of names and attributes. Verily Thou art potent to do what Thou willest, and Thou art indeed the Mighty, the Exalted, the Ever-Forgiving, the Gracious, the Generous, the Merciful.”

THE TABLET OF AḤMAD

Many hundreds of prayers have been revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, some of them not yet translated into English. In some Bahá'í prayer books the compilers have included a section called "Occasional Prayers", in other words, prayers for a certain occasion; the selection of these is entirely arbitrary. There are, however, as already noted, many which were revealed by Him for a special purpose or a special time. If we liken His prayers to an ocean every drop of which has power and meaning, it seems to me that every now and then we come upon an island of unique beauty, a thing in itself, completely contained within its own borders. One such is the long prayer for the dead, another the long prayer for the fast, another the long obligatory prayer, another the Tablet of Aḥmad.

The Tablet of Aḥmad—so called because it was addressed to a man bearing that name—is in itself a mystery: passing from theme to theme, recapitulating both the station and sufferings of His Own Forerunner, the Báb, and of Himself, testifying to the lamentable state of the peoples of the world, Bahá'u'lláh has nevertheless chosen to endow it with unique power "as a bounty on Our part and a mercy from Our presence". As Shoghi Effendi puts it, this prayer, and a few others, have been invested with "a special potency and significance, and should therefore be accepted as such and be recited by the believers with unquestioned faith and confidence", as through this intermediary they may enter into a closer communion with God.

THE TABLET OF AḤMAD

"He is the King, the All-Knowing, the Wise!

"Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise singeth upon the twigs of the Tree of Eternity, with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One, informing the severed ones of the message which hath been revealed by God, the King, the Glorious, the Peerless, guiding the lovers to the seat of sanctity and to this resplendent Beauty.

"Verily this is that Most Great Beauty, foretold in the Books of the Messengers, through Whom truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom of every command shall be tested. Verily He is the Tree of Life that bringeth forth the fruits of God, the Exalted, the Powerful, the Great.

"O Aḥmad! Bear thou witness that verily He is God and there is no God but Him, the King, the Protector, the Incomparable, the Omnipotent. And that the One Whom He hath sent forth by the name of 'Alí [i.e. His Holiness the Báb] was the true One from God, to Whose commands we are all conforming.

"Say: O people be obedient to the ordinances of God, which have been enjoined in the Bayán by the Glorious, the Wise One. Verily He is the King of the Messengers and His Book is the Mother Book did ye but know.

"Thus doth the Nightingale utter His call unto you from this prison. He hath but to deliver this clear message. Whosoever desireth, let him turn aside from this counsel and whosoever desireth let him choose the path to his Lord.

"O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it, O assemblage of false ones.

"Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another.

"O Aḥmad! Forget not My bounties while I am absent. Remember My days during thy days, and My distress and banishment in this remote prison. And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee.

"Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt.

"And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby.

"Rely upon God, thy God and the Lord of thy fathers. For the people are wandering in the paths of delusion, bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His Melody with their own ears. Thus have We

found them, as thou also dost witness.

“Thus have their superstitions become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great.

“Be thou assured in thyself that verily, he who turns away from this Beauty hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity.

“Learn well this Tablet, O Aḥmad. Chant it during thy days and withhold not thyself therefrom. For verily, God hath ordained for the one who chants it, the reward of a hundred martyrs and a service in both worlds. These favours have We bestowed upon thee as a bounty on Our part and a mercy from Our presence, that thou mayest be of those who are grateful.

“By God! Should one who is in affliction or grief read this Tablet with absolute sincerity, God will dispel his sadness, solve his difficulties and remove his afflictions.

“Verily, He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.”

DAWN FASTING PRAYER

Bahá'u'lláh attaches extraordinary importance to the fasting period and the virtues wherewith fasting has been endowed by God from time immemorial—and is re-endowed, so to speak, by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. In one of His Tablets He states that *“the fast . . . enjoined on all”* is a particular period during which the servants of God cling to the cord of His commandments and seize upon the handle of His precepts. Addressing God in one of His prayers He writes: *“These are the days whereon Thou hast bidden all men to observe the fast, that through it they may purify their souls and rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee . . . Grant, O my Lord, that this fast may become a river of life-giving waters and may yield the virtue wherewith Thou hast endowed it. Cleanse Thou by its means the hearts of Thy servants whom the evils of the world have failed to hinder from turning towards Thine all glorious Name . . .”* The fast is amongst Bahá'u'lláh's *“wondrous laws and precepts”*; one should fast, He says, for love of God and in pursuance of His injunction, and states: *“Blessed is he that observeth the fast wholly for Thy sake”*, and prays God to assist His servants to *“obey Thee and to keep Thy precepts”* and puts this supplication into the mouths of His servants, that this observance of the fast may *“cleanse us from the noisome savours of our transgressions, O Thou Who hast called Thyself the God of mercy!”* So great, Bahá'u'lláh affirms, is the fast that it adorns the *“preamble of the Book of Thy Laws”*, and goes on to say that God has *“endowed every hour of these days with a special virtue . . .”*

The long prayer for the fast grows on one all the adult years of one's life until in the end the blessing of keeping the fast and the blessing of saying this prayer with it become one great annual bounty, one special privilege of life. If one begins at about five minutes before sunrise one discovers that it seems deliberately to be synchronized with the rising of the sun: one finds oneself standing at *“the gate of the city of Thy presence”*, awaiting God's grace; then come *“the shadow of Thy mercy and the canopy of Thy bounty”*—the differentiation of light from dark is taking place, the birds are singing; there follows *“the splendour of Thy luminous brow and the brightness of the light of Thy countenance”*—the sky is beginning to kindle with colour; the worshipper asks to be allowed *“to gaze on the Day-Star of Thy Beauty”*—the sun is rising! Next comes the full panoply of dawn, symbol of the Divine Springtime of God, *“by the Tabernacle of Thy majesty upon the loftiest summits, and the Canopy of Thy Revelation on the highest hills”*; as one gazes upon the sun beginning to mount the skies one reaches the words *“by Thy Beauty that shineth forth above the horizon of eternity, a Beauty before which as soon as it revealeth itself the kingdom of beauty boweth down in worship . . .”* All this takes place in the first half of the prayer. But what the worshipper is supplicating for is: to receive God's grace, to draw nearer to Him, to become attracted to Him and imbibe His words, to serve His Cause in such wise that he may not be held back by those who have turned away from God, to enable him to recognize God's Manifestation, to accomplish what God desires, to grant that *“I may die to all that I possess and live to whatsoever belongeth unto Thee”*, to remember and praise God, to remove him far from whatever displeases God and enable him to draw near to the One Who manifests God's signs, to make known to this worshipper what was hidden in God's knowledge and wisdom, to number him with those who have attained to what God has revealed, to record for him what has been written down by God for His trusted and chosen ones, to write down for everyone who has turned unto God and observed the fast prescribed by Him *“the recompense decreed for such as speak not except by Thy leave, and who forsook all that they possessed in Thy path and for love of Thee”*, and, last of all, to *“cancel the trespasses of those who have held fast to Thy laws, and have observed what Thou hast prescribed unto them in Thy Book.”* Almost like a leitmotiv in a sumptuous musical composition, there occurs the same refrain over and over: *“Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.”* When I repeat this I always visualize myself and my parents and loved ones who are dead, clinging all together to this symbolic celestial robe, and I feel very close to them. Truly a majestic prayer, containing metaphors of deep mysticism, a prayer that is a never-ending experience.

DAWN FASTING PRAYER

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy mighty Sign, and by the revelation of Thy grace amongst men, to cast me not away from the gate of the city of Thy presence, and to disappoint not the hopes I have set on the manifestations of Thy grace amidst Thy creatures. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy most sweet Voice and by Thy most exalted Word, to draw me ever nearer to the threshold of Thy door, and to suffer me not to be far removed from the shadow of Thy mercy and the canopy of Thy bounty. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most

Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by the splendour of Thy luminous brow and the brightness of the light of Thy countenance, which shineth from the all-highest horizon, to attract me by the fragrance of Thy raiment, and make me drink of the choice wine of Thine utterance. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy hair which moveth across Thy face, even as Thy most exalted pen moveth across the pages of Thy Tablets, shedding the musk of hidden meanings over the kingdom of Thy creation, so to raise me up to serve Thy Cause that I shall not fall back, nor be hindered by the suggestions of them who have cavilled at Thy signs and turned away from Thy face. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy Name which Thou hast made the King of Names, by which all who are in heaven and all who are on earth have been enraptured, to enable me to gaze on the Day-Star of Thy Beauty, and to supply me with the wine of Thine utterance. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by the Tabernacle of Thy majesty upon the loftiest summits, and the Canopy of Thy Revelation on the highest hills, to graciously aid me to do what Thy will hath desired and Thy purpose hath manifested. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy Beauty that shineth forth above the horizon of eternity, a Beauty before which as soon as it revealeth itself the kingdom of beauty boweth down in worship, magnifying it in ringing tones, to grant that I may die to all that I possess and live to whatsoever belongeth unto Thee. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by the Manifestation of Thy Name, the Well-Beloved, through Whom the hearts of Thy lovers were consumed and the souls of all that dwell on earth have soared aloft, to aid me to remember Thee amongst Thy creatures, and to extol Thee amidst Thy people. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by the rustling of the Divine Lote-Tree and the murmur of the breezes of Thine utterance in the kingdom of Thy names, to remove me far from whatsoever Thy will abhorreth, and draw me nigh unto the station wherein He Who is the Day-Spring of Thy signs hath shone forth. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by that Letter which, as soon as it proceeded out of the mouth of Thy will, hath caused the oceans to surge, and the winds to blow, and the fruits to be revealed, and the trees to spring forth, and all past traces to vanish, and all veils to be rent asunder, and them who are devoted to Thee to hasten unto the light of the countenance of their Lord, the Unconstrained, to make known unto me what lay hid in the treasures of Thy knowledge and concealed within the repositories of Thy wisdom. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by the fire of Thy love which drove sleep from the eyes of Thy chosen ones and Thy loved ones, and by their remembrance and praise of Thee at the hour of dawn, to number me with such as have attained unto that which Thou hast sent down in Thy Book and manifested through Thy will. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by the light of Thy countenance which impelled them who are nigh unto Thee to meet the darts of Thy decree, and such as are devoted to Thee to face the swords of Thine enemies in Thy path, to write down for me with Thy most exalted Pen what Thou hast written down for Thy trusted ones and Thy chosen ones. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.

“I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy Name through which Thou hast hearkened unto the call of Thy lovers, and the sighs of them that long for Thee, and the cry of them that enjoy near access to Thee, and the groaning of them that are devoted to Thee, and through which Thou hast fulfilled the wishes of them that have set their hopes on Thee, and hast granted them their desires, through Thy grace and Thy favours, and by Thy Name through which the ocean of forgiveness surged before Thy face, and the clouds of Thy generosity rained upon Thy servants, to write down for every one who hath turned unto Thee, and observed the fast prescribed by Thee, the recompense decreed for such as speak not except by Thy leave, and who forsook all that they possessed in Thy path and for love of Thee.

“I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by Thyself, and by Thy signs, and Thy clear tokens, and the shining light of the Day-Star of Thy Beauty, and Thy Branches, to cancel the trespasses of those who have held fast to Thy laws, and have observed what Thou hast prescribed unto them in Thy Book. Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come.”

THE THREE OBLIGATORY PRAYERS

Another of Bahá'u'lláh's very powerful prayers is the longest of the obligatory prayers—for He placed upon His followers the moral obligation, or ordinance, of turning to God at least once a day, that the dust of living and the dross of the world could be wiped away through remembrance of God. Ever thoughtful of the needs and possibilities of people, He gave us a choice of three prayers; the medium one, to be recited three times a day, fulfils not only the needs of the ultra-pious but also of those who, coming from a religion which had, as a fixed law, the recitation of a specific prayer five times a day, might feel deprived and lost without this spiritual reinforcement; the short one, to be said anytime between noon and sunset, which consists of a bare fifty words, enables those who may be engulfed in the hurry and pressures of urban life to fulfil their moral obligation of a daily prayer. But the long one, with all its genuflexions, which may be recited anytime within the twenty-four hours of the day, is a soul-searching, God-communing experience for those who feel the need for it, and the more one says it, the more doors it seems mysteriously to open within one's inner being.

SHORT OBLIGATORY PRAYER, TO BE RECITED ONCE IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, AT NOON

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee, I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.

There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

MEDIUM OBLIGATORY PRAYER, TO BE RECITED DAILY, IN THE MORNING, AT NOON, AND IN THE EVENING

Whoso wisheth to pray, let him wash his hands, and while he washeth, let him say:

Strengthen my hand, O my God, that it may take hold of Thy Book with such steadfastness that the hosts of the world shall have no power over it. Guard it, then, from meddling with whatsoever doth not belong unto it. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

And while washing his face, let him say:

I have turned my face unto Thee, O my Lord! Illumine it with the light of Thy countenance. Protect it, then, from turning to any one but Thee.

Then let him stand up, and facing the Qiblah [Point of Adoration, i.e., Bahjí, 'Akká], let him say:

God testifieth that there is none other God but Him. His are the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation. He, in truth, hath manifested Him Who is the Day-Spring of Revelation, Who conversed on Sinai, through Whom the Supreme Horizon hath been made to shine, and the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing hath spoken, and through Whom the call hath been proclaimed unto all who are in heaven and on earth: "Lo, the All-Possessing is come. Earth and heaven, glory and dominion are God's, the Lord of all men, and the Possessor of the Throne on high and of earth below!"

Let him, then, bend down, with hands resting on the knees, and say:

Exalted art Thou above my praise and the praise of any one besides me, above my description and the description of all who are in heaven and all who are on earth!

Then, standing with open hands, palms upward toward the face, let him say:

Disappoint not, O my God, him that hath, with beseeching fingers, clung to the hem of Thy mercy and Thy grace, O Thou Who of those who show mercy art the Most Merciful!

Let him, then, be seated and say:

I bear witness to Thy unity and Thy oneness, and that Thou art God, and that there is none other God beside Thee. Thou hast, verily, revealed Thy Cause, fulfilled Thy Covenant, and opened wide the door of Thy grace to all that dwell in heaven and on earth. Blessing and peace, salutation and glory, rest upon Thy loved ones, whom the changes and chances of the world have not deterred from turning unto Thee, and who have given their all, in the hope of obtaining that which is with Thee. Thou art, in truth, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Bountiful.

(If any one choose to recite instead of the long verse these words: "God testifieth that there is none other God but Him, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting," it would be sufficient. And likewise, it would suffice were he, while seated, to choose to recite these words: "I bear witness to Thy unity and Thy oneness, and that Thou art God, and that there is none other God beside Thee.")

LONG OBLIGATORY PRAYER,
TO BE RECITED ONCE IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

Whoso wisheth to recite this prayer, let him stand up and turn unto God, and, as he standeth in his place, let him gaze to the right and to the left, as if awaiting the mercy of his Lord, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate. Then let him say:

O Thou Who art the Lord of all names and the Maker of the heavens! I beseech Thee by them Who are the Day-Springs of Thine invisible Essence, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, to make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out from Thy beauty, and a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence.

Let him then raise his hands in supplication toward God—blessed and exalted be He—and say:

O Thou the Desire of the world and the Beloved of the nations! Thou seest me turning toward Thee, and rid of all attachment to any one save Thee, and clinging to Thy cord, through whose movement the whole creation hath been stirred up. I am Thy servant, O my Lord, and the son of Thy servant. Behold me standing ready to do Thy will and Thy desire, and wishing naught else except Thy good pleasure. I implore Thee by the Ocean of Thy mercy and the Day-Star of Thy grace to do with Thy servant as Thou wilt and pleasest. By Thy might which is far above all mention and praise! Whatsoever is revealed by Thee is the desire of my heart and the beloved of my soul. O God, my God! Look not upon my hopes and my doings, nay rather look upon Thy will that hath encompassed the heavens and the earth. By Thy Most Great Name, O Thou Lord of all nations! I have desired only what Thou didst desire, and love only what Thou dost love.

Let him then kneel, and bowing his forehead to the ground, let him say:

Exalted art Thou above the description of any one save Thyself, and the comprehension of aught else except Thee.

Let him then stand and say:

Make my prayer, O my Lord, a fountain of living waters whereby I may live as long as Thy sovereignty endureth, and may make mention of Thee in every world of Thy worlds.

Let him again raise his hands in supplication, and say:

O Thou in separation from Whom hearts and souls have melted, and by the fire of Whose love the whole world hath been set aflame! I implore Thee by Thy Name through which Thou hast subdued the whole creation, not to withhold from me that which is with Thee, O Thou Who rulest over all men! Thou seest, O my Lord, this stranger hastening to his most exalted home beneath the canopy of Thy majesty and within the precincts of Thy mercy; and this transgressor seeking the ocean of Thy forgiveness; and this lowly one the court of Thy glory; and this poor creature the orient of Thy wealth. Thine is the authority to command whatsoever Thou wilt. I bear witness that Thou art to be praised in Thy doings, and to be obeyed in Thy behests, and to remain unconstrained in Thy bidding.

Let him then raise his hands, and repeat three times the Greatest Name. Let him then bend down with hands resting on the knees before God—blessed and exalted be He—and say:

Thou seest, O my God, how my spirit hath been stirred up within my limbs and members, in its longing to worship Thee, and in its yearning to remember Thee and extol Thee; how it testifieth to that whereunto the Tongue of Thy Commandment hath testified in the kingdom of Thine utterance and the heaven of Thy knowledge. I love, in this state, O my Lord, to beg of Thee all that is with Thee, that I may demonstrate my poverty, and magnify Thy bounty and Thy riches, and may declare my powerlessness, and manifest Thy power and Thy might.

Let him then stand and raise his hands twice in supplication, and say:

There is no God but Thee, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful. There is no God but Thee, the Ordainer, both in the beginning and in the end. O God, my God! Thy forgiveness hath emboldened me, and Thy mercy hath strengthened me, and Thy call hath awakened me, and Thy grace hath raised me up and led me unto Thee. Who,

otherwise, am I that I should dare to stand at the gate of the city of Thy nearness, or set my face toward the lights that are shining from the heaven of Thy will? Thou seest, O my Lord, this wretched creature knocking at the door of Thy grace, and this evanescent soul seeking the river of everlasting life from the hands of Thy bounty. Thine is the command at all times, O Thou Who art the Lord of all names; and mine is resignation and willing submission to Thy will, O Creator of the heavens!

Let him then raise his hands thrice, and say:

Greater is God than every great one!

Let him then kneel and, bowing his forehead to the ground, say:

Too high art Thou for the praise of those who are nigh unto Thee to ascend unto the heaven of Thy nearness, or for the birds of the hearts of them who are devoted to Thee to attain to the door of Thy gate. I testify that Thou hast been sanctified above all attributes and holy above all names. No God is there but Thee, the Most Exalted, the All Glorious.

Let him then seat himself and say:

I testify unto that whereunto have testified all created things, and the Concourse on high, and the inmates of the all-highest Paradise, and beyond them the Tongue of Grandeur itself from the all-glorious Horizon, that Thou art God, that there is no God but Thee, and that He Who hath been manifested is the Hidden Mystery, the Treasured Symbol, through Whom the letters B and E (Be) have been joined and knit together. I testify that it is He Whose name hath been set down by the Pen of the Most High, and Who hath been mentioned in the Books of God, the Lord of the Throne on high and of earth below.

Let him then stand erect and say:

O Lord of all being and Possessor of all things visible and invisible! Thou dost perceive my tears and the sighs I utter, and hearest my groaning, and my wailing, and the lamentation of my heart. By Thy might! My trespasses have kept me back from drawing nigh unto Thee; and my sins have held me far from the court of Thy holiness. Thy love, O my Lord, hath enriched me, and separation from Thee hath destroyed me, and remoteness from Thee hath consumed me. I entreat Thee by Thy footsteps in this wilderness, and by the words "Here am I. Here am I" which Thy chosen Ones have uttered in this immensity, and by the breaths of Thy Revelation, and the gentle winds of the Dawn of Thy Manifestation, to ordain that I may gaze on Thy beauty and observe whatsoever is in Thy Book.

Let him then repeat the Greatest Name thrice, and bend down with hands resting on the knees, and say:

Praise be to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast aided me to remember Thee and to praise Thee, and hast made known unto me Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy signs, and hast caused me to bow down before Thy Lordship, and humble myself before Thy Godhead, and to acknowledge that which hath been uttered by the Tongue of Thy grandeur.

Let him then rise and say:

O God, my God! My back is bowed by the burden of my sins, and my heedlessness hath destroyed me. Whenever I ponder my evil doings and Thy benevolence, my heart melteth within me, and my blood boileth in my veins. By Thy Beauty, O Thou the Desire of the world! I blush to lift up my face to Thee, and my longing hands are ashamed to stretch forth toward the heaven of Thy bounty. Thou seest, O my God, how my tears prevent me from remembering Thee and from extolling Thy virtues, O Thou the Lord of the Throne on high and of earth below! I implore Thee by the signs of Thy Kingdom and the mysteries of Thy Dominion to do with Thy loved ones as becometh Thy bounty, O Lord of all being, and is worthy of Thy grace, O King of the seen and the unseen!

Let him then repeat the Greatest Name thrice, and kneel with his forehead to the ground, and say:

Praise be unto Thee, O our God, that Thou hast sent down unto us that which draweth us nigh unto Thee, and supplieth us with every good thing sent down by Thee in Thy Books and Thy Scriptures. Protect us, we beseech Thee, O my Lord, from the hosts of idle fancies and vain imaginations. Thou, in truth, art the Mighty, the All-Knowing.

Let him then raise his head, and seat himself, and say:

I testify, O my God, to that whereunto Thy chosen Ones have testified, and acknowledge that which the inmates of the all-highest Paradise and those who have circled round Thy mighty Throne have acknowledged. The kingdoms of earth and heaven are Thine, O Lord of the worlds!

BURIAL PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

Rituals have been largely excluded in the Bahá'í Faith. One of the few exceptions is the long prayer for the dead which constitutes the Bahá'í burial service. It is very simple and very short—except for the repetition of six verses, nineteen times each verse. On paper this has little meaning but when one stands in the presence of the dead, with perhaps a breaking heart at this final separation, and listens to these verses being repeated over and over again, it is as if each repetition flows down into one's heart like a heavenly balm and cools and soothes it. Not only reconciliation to the will of God takes place but a blessed feeling of consolation seems to melt that inner numbness away until in the end a peaceful sense of exaltation, of detachment from the world and its vicissitudes fills one's being. Truly this prayer is one of Bahá'u'lláh's great and precious gifts to us.

BURIAL PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

“O my God! This is Thy servant and the son of Thy servant who hath believed in Thee and in Thy signs, and set his face towards Thee, wholly detached from all except Thee. Thou art, verily, of those who show mercy the most merciful. “Deal with him, O Thou Who forgivest the sins of men and concealest their faults, as beseemeth the heaven of Thy bounty and the ocean of Thy grace. Grant him admission within the precincts of Thy transcendent mercy that was before the foundation of earth and heaven. There is no God but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.

Let him, then, repeat six times the greeting

“Alláh-u-Abhá”, and then repeat nineteen times each of the following verses:

We all, verily, worship God.

We all, verily, bow down before God.

We all, verily, are devoted unto God.

We all, verily, give praise unto God.

We all, verily, yield thanks unto God.

We all, verily, are patient in God.”

(If the dead be a woman, let him say: This is Thy handmaiden and the daughter of Thy handmaiden, etc . . .)

A PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

“Glory be to Thee, O Lord my God! Abase not him whom Thou hast exalted through the power of Thine everlasting sovereignty, and remove not far from Thee him whom Thou hast caused to enter the tabernacle of Thine eternity. Wilt Thou cast away, O my God, him whom Thou hast overshadowed with Thy Lordship, and wilt Thou turn away from Thee, O my Desire, him to whom Thou hast been a refuge? Canst Thou degrade him whom Thou hast uplifted, or forget him whom Thou didst enable to remember Thee? “Glorified, immensely glorified art Thou! Thou art He Who from everlasting hath been the King of the entire creation and its Prime Mover, and Thou wilt to everlasting remain the Lord of all created things and their Ordainer. Glorified art Thou, O my God! If Thou ceasest to be merciful unto Thy servants, who, then, will show mercy unto them; and if Thou refuseth to succour Thy loved ones, who is there that can succour them?

“Glorified, immeasurably glorified art Thou! Thou art adored in Thy truth, and Thee do we all, verily, worship; and Thou art manifest in Thy justice, and to Thee do we all, verily, bear witness. Thou art, in truth, beloved in Thy grace. No God is there but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.”

“Death proffereth unto every confident believer”, Bahá'u'lláh assures us, “the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.

“As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as we are unable to describe.”

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

The borderline between some prayers and a meditation is thin, indeed. The book compiled and translated by Shoghi Effendi, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh* seems to me such a vast treasury of spiritual nourishment that it alone would be enough to go on with for a thousand years. The meditations it contains, in which Divine musings and communion with God and profound theological themes and mystical truths are all to be found, are far too long, alas, to be incorporated in a work of this nature, but I strongly recommend that they be used from here on in conjunction with the material contained in the remainder of this book.

In trying to swim through the sea of these meditations one is aware of a constant change of subject; these are not intellectual exercises, where a learned man sits down to set forth an argument; these are much closer to the forces of nature—and what is wrong with that? The wind plays around and around a tree, bending it eastward, bending it westward, shaking its branches into a thousand changing designs; if one gazes at the night sky the moon may be rising on the left, a star shooting on the right, the Milky Way blazing overhead; with each crash of a wave on the beach it turns up a hundred new shells and pebbles and makes a new pattern on the sand. Divine inspiration, surging through the soul and mind of Bahá'u'lláh, seems to me like this in these meditations, a marvellous pyrotechnical display in which He touches on theme after theme and sets out truth after truth, and sometimes, within the meditation itself comes a prayer—a jewel in a jewel box, a pearl within the mother of pearl shell!

This preamble to one of Bahá'u'lláh's very long meditations, number CLXXVI in the above-mentioned book, is an excellent example of this:

A PRAYER

“Praise be unto Thee, Who art my God and the God of all men, and my Desire and the Desire of all them that have recognized Thee, and my Beloved and the Beloved of such as have acknowledged Thy unity, and the Object of my adoration and of the adoration of them that have near access to Thee, and my Wish and the Wish of such as are wholly devoted to Thee, and my Hope and the Hope of them that have fixed their hearts upon Thee, and my Refuge and the Refuge of all such as have hastened towards Thee, and my Haven and the Haven of whosoever hath repaired unto Thee, and my Goal and the Goal of all them that have set themselves towards Thee, and my Object and the Object of those who have fixed their gaze upon Thee, and my Paradise and the Paradise of them that have ascended towards Thee, and my Lode-star and the Lode-star of all such as yearn after Thee, and my Joy and the Joy of all them that love Thee, and my Light and the Light of all such as have erred and asked to be forgiven by Thee, and my Exultation and the Exultation of all them that remember Thee, and my Stronghold and the Stronghold of all such as have fled to Thee, and my Sanctuary and the Sanctuary of all that dread Thee, and my Lord and the Lord of all such as dwell in the heavens and on the earth!”

Bahá'u'lláh has Himself given us the explanation of why His writings produce such a deep effect on our souls—the same effect as the words of each Prophet in His own Dispensation:

“The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. . . . It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom. High, immeasurably high is this sublime station, in whose shadow moveth the essence of loftiness and splendour, wrapt in praise and adoration.

“Methinks people's sense of taste hath, alas, been sorely affected by the fever of negligence and folly, for they are found to be wholly unconscious and deprived of the sweetness of His utterance. How regrettable indeed that man should debar himself from the fruits of the tree of wisdom while his days and hours pass swiftly away. Please God, the hand of divine power may safeguard all mankind and direct their steps towards the horizon of true understanding.”

“Inspire then my soul, O my God, with Thy wondrous remembrance, that I may glorify Thy name. Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants.”

One should never be discouraged, however, from reading the “Word of God” just because one does not understand it or is not moved by it. For some it may come very easily, for others, with all the difficulty of a small

child learning to walk—many bumps and falls! Anyone can lay hold on this lifeline—the Word of God. The novice in all such things, even the atheist, should not compare himself to someone who feels it all “intensely”, and claims to “understand it all perfectly!”. “*Thou disappointest no one*”, states Bahá’u’lláh, “*who hath sought Thee, nor dost Thou keep back from Thee any one who hath desired Thee*”; “*No God is there but Thee, Who hearest and art ready to answer*.” He is the One, Bahá’u’lláh assures us, Who is “*the Refuge of the fearful, and the Haven of the needy*.” We must turn to God because He is the One Who changes “*abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty*.” And which one of us is not in need of one, if not all, of these things? For each individual the experience of how the Word of God can quicken to life the force of faith—one of the greatest forces in the world—must always be a deeply personal one.

“The Word of God”, says Bahá’u’lláh, “may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.”

“Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instil 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.”

“Since Thou hast, O my God, established Thyself upon the throne of Thy transcendent unity, and ascended the mercy seat of Thy oneness, it befitteth 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 speak of Thee, and that all created things may show forth the tokens of Thy most august sovereignty, and shed the splendours 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, then, 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 Thine own 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.”

A PRAYER

“My God, Thou Whom I adore and worship, Who art Most Powerful! I testify that no description by any created thing can ever reveal Thee, and no praise which any being is able to utter can express Thee. Neither the comprehension of any one in the whole world, nor the intelligence of any of its peoples, can, as it befitteth Thee, gain admittance into the court of Thy holiness, or unravel Thy mystery. What sin hath kept the inmates of the city of Thy names so far from Thine all-glorious Horizon, and deprived them of access to Thy most great Ocean? One single letter of Thy Book is the mother of all utterances, and a word therefrom the begetter of all creation. What ingratitude have Thy servants shown forth that Thou hast withheld them, one and all, from recognizing Thee? A drop out of the ocean of Thy mercy sufficeth to quench the flames of hell, and a spark of the fire of Thy love is enough to set ablaze a whole world.

“O Thou Who art the All-Knowing! Wayward though we be, we still cling to Thy bounty; and though ignorant, we still set our faces toward the ocean of Thy wisdom. Thou art that All-Bountiful Who art not deterred by a

multitude of sins from vouchsafing Thy bounty, and the flow of Whose gifts is not arrested by the withdrawal of the peoples of the world. From eternity the door of Thy grace hath remained wide open. A dewdrop out of the ocean of Thy mercy is able to adorn all things with the ornament of sanctity, and a sprinkling of the waters of Thy bounty can cause the entire creation to attain unto true wealth.

“Lift not the veil, O Thou Who art the Concealer! From eternity the tokens of Thy bounty have encompassed the universe, and the splendours of Thy Most Great Name have been shed over all created things. Deny not Thy servants the wonders of Thy grace. Cause them to be made aware of Thee, that they may bear witness to Thy unity, and enable them to recognize Thee, that they may hasten towards Thee. Thy mercy hath embraced the whole creation, and Thy grace hath pervaded all things. From the billows of the ocean of Thy generosity the seas of eagerness and enthusiasm were revealed. Thou art what Thou art. Aught except Thee is unworthy of any mention unless it entereth beneath Thy shadow, and gaineth admittance into Thy court.

“Whatever betide us, we beseech Thine ancient forgiveness, and seek Thine all-pervasive grace. Our hope is that Thou wilt deny no one Thy grace, and wilt deprive no soul of the ornament of fairness and justice. Thou art the King of all bounty, and the Lord of all favours, and supreme over all who are in heaven and on earth.”

“In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendourous light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things, so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favours. How all-encompassing are the wonders of His boundless grace! Behold how they have pervaded the whole of creation. Such is their virtue that not a single atom in the entire universe can be found which doth not declare the evidences of His might, which doth not glorify His holy Name, or is not expressive of the effulgent light of His unity. So perfect and comprehensive is His creation that no mind or 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. . . . 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.

“How bewildering to me, insignificant as I am, is the attempt to fathom the sacred depths of Thy knowledge! How futile my efforts to visualize the magnitude of the power inherent in Thine handiwork—the revelation of Thy creative power! How can mine eye, which hath no faculty to perceive itself, claim to have discerned Thine Essence, and how can mine heart, already powerless to apprehend the significance of its own potentialities, pretend to have comprehended Thy nature? How can I claim to have known Thee, when the entire creation is bewildered by Thy mystery, and how can I confess not to have known Thee, when, lo, the whole universe proclaimeth Thy Presence and testifieth to Thy truth? The portals of Thy grace have throughout eternity been open, and the means of access unto Thy Presence made available, unto all created things, and the revelations of Thy matchless Beauty have at all times been imprinted upon the realities of all beings, visible and invisible. Yet, notwithstanding this most gracious favour, this perfect and consummate bestowal, I am moved to testify that Thy court of holiness and glory is immeasurably exalted above the knowledge of all else besides Thee, and the mystery of Thy Presence is inscrutable to every mind except Thine own. No one except Thyself can unravel the secret of Thy nature, and naught else but Thy transcendental Essence can grasp the reality of Thy unsearchable being.”

In one of His long meditations addressing God, Bahá’u’lláh declares: “From everlasting Thou wert alone, with none to describe Thee, and wilt abide for ever the same with no one else to equal or rival Thee. Were the existence of any co-equal with Thee to be recognized, how could it then be maintained that Thou art the Incomparable, or that Thy Godhead is immeasurably exalted above all peers or likeness? The contemplation of the highest minds that have recognized Thy unity failed to attain unto the comprehension of the One Thou hast created through the word of Thy commandment, how much more must it be powerless to soar into the atmosphere of the knowledge of Thine own Being. Every praise which any tongue or pen can recount, every imagination which any heart can devise, is debarred from the station which Thy most exalted Pen hath ordained, how much more must it fall short of the heights which Thou hast Thyself immensely exalted above the conception and the description of any creature. For the attempt of the evanescent to conceive the signs of the Uncreated is as the stirring of the drop before the tumult of Thy billowing oceans. Nay, forbid it, O my God, that I should thus venture to describe Thee, for every similitude and comparison must pertain to what is essentially created by Thee. How can then such similitude and comparison ever befit Thee, or reach up unto Thy Self?”

“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 outsoar 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 a 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 endeavours 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 fitting mention of Thee? Thou art He Who, from eternity, abode in His realm, in the glory of His transcendent unity, and the splendours 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 hadst created the heavens and the earth, that Thou art God, and that 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 made known, through the Day-Springs of Thy knowledge, the words of Thy wisdom. No one besides Thee hath ever been found worthy to be mentioned before the Tabernacle of Thy unity, and none except Thyself hath proved himself capable of being praised within the hallowed court of Thy oneness.”

PRAISE OF GOD

We now come to a selection from the passages of Bahá'u'lláh's writings which might be defined as the essence of theology, which consists for the most part of the titles of God and the titles of Bahá'u'lláh Himself. No one can profess to expound such a subject; He Himself repeatedly testified to the inadequacy of words to convey concepts which are beyond words. Some of these titles, however, have an obvious meaning, such as God being the Creator or the All-Powerful, or the All-Knowing, but mainly they reflect mystical concepts. In his dictionary Webster defines "mystical" as: "Having a spiritual meaning, existence, reality . . . neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence", and goes on to state that it involves individual communion with God through contemplation and spiritual insight.

One might almost say that the whole purpose of this book was to prepare one for this last series of quotations. Inner perception, practice in prayer and meditation, should have been gained; now comes the contemplation of the naked Light, the most abstract of all mystical concepts—the Godhead, and how it manifests itself to man through a God-being, a Divine Spirit reflected in and animating a chosen instrument, a man. How else could we make this contact if it were not brought to us on our own human level?

Although the terms describing the nature of the Almighty and of Bahá'u'lláh Himself given here in His words are not complete, they are nevertheless a comprehensive and impressive selection of the gem-like metaphors and phrases He has used.

In the Bahá'í writings God is not only the Creator, of Whom Bahá'u'lláh declares: "*What power can the shadowy creature claim to possess when face to face with Him Who is the Uncreated?*", but also the Maker and the Fashioner, "*the Maker of earth and heaven*", in other words, of the visible, the tangible, and the invisible, the spiritual. God is also the "*Fashioner of the universe*", which conveys a sense of artisanship, of the artist and his expression, of a directing consciousness which He calls the "*Ancient Being*", interested in His handiwork, not an anthropomorphic Being, but an "*Infinite Essence*", an "*Eternal Essence of Essences*", an "*unknowable Essence*", Who is "*the Source of all things*", Whom Bahá'u'lláh addresses as:⁵

The central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose

Thou, in Whose hand are the realms of revelation and of creation, and all the kingdoms of earth and heaven!

O God, Who art the Author of all Manifestations, the Source of all Sources, the Fountain-Head of all Revelations, and the Well-Spring of all Lights!

The "*Well-Spring of all Lights*" has an almost scientific implication when one thinks of the nebulae and the millions of island universes, but to Bahá'u'lláh it is a description of God. So is "*the Possessor of the entire creation*", He Who is "*nearer unto all things than they are unto themselves.*" Surely a very personal relationship going back to the Hidden Words: "*I loved thy creation, hence I created thee.*" God is the One from "*Whose knowledge nothing whatsoever escapeth, and Whom no one can frustrate.*"

Him to Whom none can compare, with Whom no partners can be joined, the Sovereign Protector of all men, and the Concealer of their sins

The All-Glorious, to Whom all cry for help

The omnipotent Protector of the entire creation

The Knower of the unseen and of the seen

The Truth, Who knoweth the secret things

The Possessor of the entire creation

Him Who hath no peer nor equal

God testifieth to the unity of His Godhood and to the singleness of His own Being

Thou art One in Thine own Self, one in Thy Cause, and one in Thy Revelation

The Point of Adoration of all who are in the heavens and all who are on earth

The Best Beloved of the worlds

The Exultation of the hearts that pant after Thee

The Beloved of the entire creation and the Desire of the whole universe

Thou Who rulest all things

The Ordainer, both in the beginning and in the end

Thy Lastness which is the same as Thy Firstness, and ...Thy Revelation which is identical with Thy Concealment

Existence itself is as nothing when brought face to face with the mighty and manifold wonders of Thine incomparable Self

The use of the words “name” and “names” in Bahá’u’lláh’s writings may seem strange to us. The mystical concept behind this is that God, Who brought the physical cosmos into being, created nature. Bahá’u’lláh states:

Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator

Nature is God’s Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world

It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise

It is endowed with a power whose reality men of learning fail to grasp

Indeed a man of insight can perceive naught therein save the effulgent splendour of Our Name, the Creator

Man, the one natural being possessing immortality and the gift of language, captures concepts by giving them names; he clarifies obscure feelings and thoughts through naming them. There are names of God, titles of God, names of Bahá’u’lláh, titles of Bahá’u’lláh which all help to clarify our thinking and bring us closer to Them. Named things are in our physical world but God Himself, we are told, is “*sanctified above all attributes and above all names*”.

O Thou in Whose hands is the kingdom of all names, and in the grasp of Whose might are all that are in heaven and all that are on earth!

O Thou Who art the Possessor of all names and attributes, Who holdest in Thy grasp the empire of whatever hath been created in heaven and on earth!

The One through a motion of Whose finger all the names and their kingdom were called into being, and all the attributes and their dominion were created

Thou in Whose hand is the empire of all names

The Lord of all names

TITLES OF GOD

In choosing the many titles included here I have sometimes put them in clusters—subject with similar subject—and at others, so as not to lose the extraordinary poetic beauty to which they lend themselves in the English translation, taken advantage of the alliteration which often occurs and which enables one to recite them together with a power and charm that would be lost if they had been placed elsewhere according to their context.

The Almighty

The All-Seeing

The All-Knowing

The All-Compelling

The All-Conquering

The All-Pervading

The All-Sufficing

The All-Possessing

The All-Subduing

The All-Glorious

The All-Bountiful

The All-Wise

The All-Informed

The All-Pardoner

The All-Merciful

The All-Loving

The All-Highest

The All-Praised

The Most Holy

The Most Luminous

The Most Mighty

The Most Great

The Most Exalted

The Most Glorious

The Most High

The Most Powerful

The Most Merciful

The Most Compassionate

The Most Generous

The Ever-living

The Ever-Abiding

The Ever-Forgiving

The Ever-Faithful

The Ever-Blessed

The Ever-Desired

The Lord of Eternity

The Lord of creation

The Lord of all being

The Lord of all men

The Lord of all mankind

The Lord of Lords

The Lord of all worlds

The Lord of the Kingdom of all created things

The Lord of strength and power

The Lord of the Judgement Day

The Lord of Revelations

The Lord of grace abounding

The Lord of all favours

The King of eternity

The King of the entire creation and its Prime Mover

The King of all created things

The Omnipotent King

The King of the seen and the unseen

The King of incomparable glory

The King of everlasting days

The Eternal King

The King of all Kings

The Supreme King

The King of the realms of justice

The King of all men

The ideal King

The King of all bounty

The King of the realm of Thine invention

The King of names

The Ruler of the universe

The Ruler of the kingdoms of creation

The Supreme Ruler

The Ruler of earth and heaven

The Ruler of this world and of the world to come

The Ruler of the cities of mercy

The Ruler of rulers

Thou Who rulest over all men

Although many passages are repetitious I have quoted them nevertheless, not only because of the slight distinctions of thought conveyed, well worth contemplating as such, but also because each of us is bound to be affected more by one phrase than by another; one set of words, though fundamentally saying the same thing, may not appeal to all minds in the same way. In any case Bahá'u'lláh's words are always beautiful and one never tires of repeating them.

Bahá'u'lláh's use of the word "nations" conveys very clearly that God Himself deals with nations—not disinterested but directly involved: "*O Thou in Whose grasp are the reins of all mankind, and the destinies of the nations*"; "*O God of the world and Lord of the nations!*"

TITLES OF GOD

The Shaper of all the nations

The Fashioner of nations

The Governor of nations

The Maker of nations

The Best Beloved of the nations

God

Providence

The Holy

The Truth

The One

The Single

The Eternal

The Unseen

The Imperishable

The One Being

The Great Being

The Divine Being

The unchangeable Being

The Omnipotent

The Omniscient

The Unconditioned

The Unrestrained

The Inaccessible

The Unknowable

The Self-Subsisting

The Self-Sufficing

The Self-Exalting

The Most High

The Incomparable One

The Source of all Sources

The Causer of Causes

The Author of all Manifestations

The Fountain-Head of all Revelations

The Ancient of Days
The Knower of all things
The Supreme Ordainer
The Unifier
The Mighty
The Strong
The Wise
The Exalted
The Perspicuous
The Conqueror
The Victorious
The Governor
The Cleaver
The Chastiser
The Inflictor of trials
The Admonisher
The Restrainer
The Withholder
The Equitable
The Concealer
The Restorer
The Fashioner
The Inspirer
The Effulgent
The Beloved
The One alone Beloved
The Desire of the world
The Adored One
The Incomparable Friend
The Supreme Companion
The Supreme Helper
The Protector
The Most Compassionate
The Beneficent
The Haven
The Refuge
The Preserver
The Help in Peril
The Guardian
The Pitier of the downtrodden
The Bestower of favours

The Great Giver

The Faithful

The Forgiving

The Haven of the needy

The Refuge of the fearful

Divine Providence

The Lord of mankind

The Enlightener of the world

The Sovereign Protector of all men

The Holy of Holies

The Eternal Truth

Thou in Whose hand are the heaven of omnipotence and the kingdom of creation

The One Whose power is immense, Whose vengeance is terrible

Thou in Whose grasp are the reins of the souls of all them that have recognized Thee, and in Whose right hand are the destinies of all that are in heaven and all that are on earth

I testify that everything other than Thee is but Thy creation and is held in the hollow of Thy hand

GOD'S RELATION TO HIS MANIFESTATIONS

We come to the mystery of all mysteries, those Who are the world Reformers, “*the Chosen Ones of God*”, “*the Day-Springs of Revelation, and the Dawning-Places of Inspiration, and the Repositories of Divine knowledge*”; “. . . *They resemble the sun which no matter how often it riseth and setteth is still the one and the same sun. Whoso maketh any distinction between any of Them hath truly failed to attain the ultimate purpose, and to reach the highest goal, and hath been deprived of the mysteries of unity and of the lights of sanctity and oneness.*” We come, in other words, to the relation of God to His Manifestations: the sun and its rays, the sun and its mirror images; the inseparable union on one hand, the eternal singleness of God on the other. Bahá'u'lláh, over and over, in many examples, seeks to convey to our limited understanding what this consists of: “. . . *inasmuch as the shadow telleth of the One Who casts it*”—God and His Prophet, what a wonderful image! To manifest God, Bahá'u'lláh asserts, “*is the station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God.*” He bears witness that “*From everlasting Thou hast existed, alone with no one beside Thee, and wilt, to everlasting, continue to remain the same, in the sublimity of Thine essence and the inaccessible heights of Thy glory.*”

When not pouring out the singleness and inaccessibility of God, Bahá'u'lláh is pouring out His own nearness to Him and love for Him. For Bahá'u'lláh the Almighty is “*my God, and my Desire, and my Adored One, and my Master, and my Mainstay, and my utmost Hope, and my supreme Aspiration!*”, the “*Lord of Bahá, and the Beloved of his heart, and the Object of his desire, and the Inspirer of his tongue, and the Source of his soul.*” This God is the One Who is:

The beloved Companion of Bahá

The Beloved of my soul and the Fountain of my life!

My God, my Master, my Possessor, my King

My Lord, my sole Desire, my Goal, mine only Hope, my constant Aim, my Habitation and my Sanctuary

Thee will I magnify, in all circumstances, with a heart wholly rid of all attachment to the world and all that is therein

TITLES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

We have been contemplating the Godhead, some of the titles of God in Bahá'í Scriptures, and in what terms Bahá'u'lláh addresses God directly. Now we come to what may be defined as how God addresses Bahá'u'lláh and the titles conferred on Him through Divine Revelation. They are shaking in their magnitude and worthy of deep thought, meditation and prayer because, fundamentally, they are a path by which we can draw closer both to our Maker and to the One Whom He has sent to us at this stage of the coming of age of mankind, the long-promised Day of the Lord. However mystical the subject, Bahá'u'lláh's language is always lucid and explicit as He makes clear His own station and His own functions: "*Thou art He, O my God, Who hath . . . bidden me to occupy Thy seat and to summon all men to the court of Thy mercy.*" He Himself is: "*Him Whom God will make manifest.*"

TITLES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Face of God amongst you, and His Testimony and His Guide unto you
Him Who showeth forth the Godhead as One
Him Who is the Manifestation of Thine Essence
The Manifestation of Thy singleness and the Day-Spring of Thy oneness
Him Who is the Highest and Last End of all
Him Who is the Revealer of Thyself
Him Who is the Revealer of Thy oneness
Him Who is the Revealer of Thy Cause
Thy Manifestation Whom Thou hast invested with Thy sovereignty, Thy power, Thy majesty and glory
The Fountain-Head of Thy wisdom and of Thine utterance

Bahá'u'lláh identifies Himself with the biblical prophecies: "*The Word which the Son concealed is made manifest. It hath been sent down in the form of the human temple in this day. Blessed be the Lord Who is the Father*"; "*He Who is the Everlasting Father calleth aloud between earth and heaven*"; "*The Lord is come in His great majesty*"; "*He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is made manifest*".

Despite the wealth of phrases describing Bahá'u'lláh in His capacity of Manifestation of God for this day, the one He chose as His own particular designation is "*the Ancient Beauty*". Can it be that the peace which His World Order will establish will grant men at long last the time, the tranquillity, the possibility of developing their minds and cultivating their spiritual qualities to a point where the keynote of life will be beauty in the truest meaning of the word? A word which outwardly conveys symmetry, harmony, elegant proportions, and inwardly a human being who is virtuous, friendly, trustworthy, radiant and erudite. We will therefore begin with the word "Beauty" as applied to Bahá'u'lláh Himself.

GOD TO BAHÁ

I have used this heading because there are a great many descriptive phrases in Bahá'u'lláh's writings addressed to God but which in reality reflect back upon and directly apply to His Manifestation, and therefore may be said to be God addressing Bahá'u'lláh, in words such as these: "*Him Who is Thy Remembrance and Who hath appeared in the robe of Thy most pure and august Beauty*" and for Whom God "*. . . lifted the veil of glory, and uncovered the countenance of Beauty*"; the One He designates as "*My Beauty*".

The Manifestation of Thy beauty and the Revealer of Thy signs
He Who is Thy Beauty hath been stablished upon the throne of Thy Cause
The Day-Star of Thy beauty

TITLES OF BAHÁ⁶

The Ancient Beauty
The Blessed Beauty

The Veilless Beauty
The Divine Essence
The One Being
The Truth
The Unconstrained
The Father
The Word
The Vision
The Youth
The Wonderful
The Fashioner
The Counsellor
The Comforter
The Crier
The Trumpet
The Bugle
The Balance
The Judge
The Law
The Lawgiver
The All-Glorious
The All-Knowing
The All-Compelling
The Supreme Goal
The Wronged One
The Gem
The Pen
The Blissful
The Promised One
The Eternal Truth
The Spirit of Truth
The Sun of Truth
The Divine Presence
The Lord of Lords
The Lord of all things
The Lord of Names
The Supreme Sovereign
The Hidden Secret
The Hidden Name
The Hidden Gift
The Unseen Treasure

The Preserved Treasure
The Impenetrable Mystery
The Divine Ordainer
The Most Great Spirit
The Glory of God
The Source of everlasting life
The Sun of Righteousness
The Everlasting Father
The Lord of Hosts
The King of Kings
The King of Glory
The King of Revelation
The Lord of all men
The Son of Man
The Lord of the Vineyard
The Prince of Peace
The Prince of this world
The Alpha and Omega
God's Unerring Balance
The Pre-Existent Root
The Voice of God
The Speaker on Sinai
The Testimony of God
The Buddha of universal fellowship
The Immaculate Manifestation of Krishna
The Great Announcement
The Lord of the Day of Reckoning
The Remnant of God
The Sifter of Men
The choice sealed Wine
The Cup-Bearer
The Preserved Tablet
The Sealed Book
The Divine Expounder
The Lord of the Covenant
The Omnipotent Master
The Supreme Mediator
The Supreme Heaven
The Most Great Infallibility
The Sublime Appearance
The Most Great Name

The Most Ancient Name

The All-Glorious Name

The Hidden Name

The Treasured Name

The language describing Bahá'u'lláh offers such a parallel in terms with the language describing God that one should constantly bear in mind that here we are looking at the Sun in the mirror; it seems to be the sun itself, but in reality it is the manifestation of the sun's attributes.

GOD TO BAHÁ

We have chosen Thee to be our most mighty Trumpet whose blast is to signalize the resurrection of all mankind

And when Thy promise came to pass and the set time was fulfilled, He Who is the Possessor of all Names and Attributes was made manifest unto men

Thy Self Thy Light Thy Lamp

Him Who speaketh in Thy Name

Him Who is the Supreme Sovereign

He Who is the Revealer of the names of God

The Manifestation of Thy names

The Bearer of Thy most lofty and exalted name

The Fountain-Head of Thine Inspiration

The Repository of Thy wisdom

The River that is life indeed

The Tree of Thy oneness

Thine infallible Proof unto all men

The Sun that shineth in the heaven of Thy will

Him Whom Thou hast chosen by Thy behest

Him Who is Thine exalted and Supreme Remembrance

The Dawning-Place of Thine inspiration and Thy revelation

The Dawning-Place of Thy most resplendent signs

The Dawning-Place of Thy majesty and power

The Day-Star of Thy creation

The Day-Star of Thy glory

The Day-Star of Thy Justice

The Day-Star of Thy word

The Day-Star of the light of Thy unity

The Day-Spring of Thine Essence

The Day-Spring of Thine invisible Self

The Day-Spring of Thy Cause

The Day-Spring of Thy most excellent titles

The Day-Spring of Thy strength

The Day-Spring of the lights of Thy face

The most pleasant of all thoughts to contemplate is that God is the antithesis of man, that whatever we are He is not. He is uncreated, we are created; He is the Almighty, we are but feeble beings; He is the One Who is impartial, Who is fair and all-encompassing in His judgement, as compassionate as He is dispassionate, pure as the rain that falls from heaven upon all men, fixed as the stars in their orbits, as opposed to our constant vacillation of purpose, the selfishness of our motives, the prejudices of our puny minds, our perpetual self-interest and greed.

Bahá'u'lláh is described as “*the image of the Most Merciful*”, He is also described as “*the Day Star of justice*” and “*Him . . . through Whom*” God has “*divided between the godly and the wicked.*” Shoghi Effendi defines His function even more clearly for he says Bahá'u'lláh is “*the Organizer of the entire planet*”, and “*the Fountain of the Most Great Justice*”.

There is a great deal in the writings on the subject of justice and a great deal on the subject of mercy. Without Divine Mercy for each one of us what hope have we? Without Divine Justice for the world what hope is there for human society? In a world where men show each other, for the most part, neither the one nor the other, it is pleasant, indeed, to think of the reckoning being in the hands of a God who deals in both justice and mercy—two seemingly incompatible qualities— for justice implies punishment, and mercy forgiveness.

TITLES OF BAHÁ

The Merciful

The Most Compassionate

The Forgiving

The Protector

The Haven of the needy

The Refuge of the fearful

The Pitier of the downtrodden

The Help in Peril

The Preserver

The Concealer

The Benevolent

The Supreme Helper

The Generous

The Great Giver

The Most Sublime Horizon

The All-Highest Horizon

The all-glorious Horizon

The Horizon of Revelation

The Horizon of Certitude

The Horizon of Mercy

The Most Ancient Name

The Most Effulgent Name

The Most Great Name
The Most Great Sign
The Most Great Law
The Most Great Light
The Most Great Remembrance
The Most Great Mystery
The Most Great Ocean
The Most Great Bell
The Most Exalted Pen
The Most Exalted Word
The Most Mighty Instrument
The Most Sublime Summit

The Educator of all beings
The All-Knowing Counsellor
The Best Informed
The True Physician
The Countenance of Glory
The Hand of Omnipotence
The Day-Spring of Certitude
The well-guarded Name
The manifest and hidden Secret
The Pen of Revelation
The Tongue of the Ancient of Days
The Divine Voice
The Tabernacle of Immortality
The Lifegiver of the world

The Blessed Beauty for forty years suffered that He might give God's Message to us. What greater love than this—love for God and love for us? It is befitting that this book of His words and His praises of His Divine Beloved should close with words of love, descriptive of His own mystery, His tenderness, His beauty, Who and What He is:

The Loving
The Best Beloved
The Best Beloved of every understanding heart
The Beloved of the world

The Well-Beloved of all worlds

The Beloved of the All-Merciful

The Desire of all nations

The Object of the adoration of the world

The Incomparable Friend

The Adored One

The Divine Lote-Tree

The Bird of the Throne

The Mystic Dove

The Dove of Eternity

The Desire of the world

Bahá'u'lláh is for God “*Him Who is dear to Thee*”, “*Thy most resplendent, Thine adorable, and ever-blessed Beauty*”.

“He that partaketh of the waters of my Revelation will taste all the incorruptible delights ordained by God from the beginning that hath no beginning to the end that hath no end.”

— Bahá'u'lláh

REFERENCES FOR QUOTATIONS

Abbreviations of Sources

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- BP *Bahá'í Prayers* (U.S. edition)
Wilmette, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2002
- ESW *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988
- GWB *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976
- HW *The Hidden Words*⁷
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994
- KI *Kitáb-i-Íqán*
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994
- PM *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*
London, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1957
- TB *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*
Wilmette, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988
- TRUS *Trustworthiness, a Cardinal Bahá'í Virtue* (A compilation)
Haifa, Bahá'í World Centre, 1987

WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

- ADJ *The Advent of Divine Justice*
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990
- GPB *God Passes By*
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974
- PDC *The Promised Day Is Come*
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996
- WOB *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*
Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991

Opening Words	Source
“. . . hath ordained the knowledge”	GWB, 50
“Glory be to Thee, O my God!”	PM, 231
“God, the unknowable Essence	GWB, 46
“. . . each Manifestation of God hath”	GWB, 52
“One hour’s reflection is preferable”	KI, 238
“. . . that the holy ecstasy of prayer. . .”	BP, 71
“What refuge is there besides Thee”	PM, 82
“Magnified be Thy name, O Lord	PM, 6
“Rain down, then, upon us”	PM, 145
“O people of God! That which traineth”	TB, 27
“. . . the basis of world order”	TB, 66
“It beseemeth you to fix your gaze	TB, 36
“In these days truthfulness and sincerity”	TB, 39
“They that are just and fair-minded”	TB, 37
“O son of man! If thine eyes	ESW, 29
“The purpose of justice is”	TB, 67
“Humility exalteth man to the heaven”	ESW, 30
“Beware lest ye encroach upon”	GWB, 278
“He is my true follower who”	GWB, 18
“Charity is pleasing and praiseworthy”	TB, 71
“. . . show forth that which will ensure the peace”	GWB, 92
“I swear by God!”	PM, 188
“faithless souls who breathe naught” . . .	GWB, 181

“... observe silence and refrain from idle talk”	GWB, 265
“A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts”	ESW, 15
“Know thou of a truth that the soul”	GWB, 155
“The generations that have gone on”	GWB, 261
“By Thy Glory! Were the world to last”	PM, 116
“They say: ‘Where is Paradise’ ...	ESW, 132
“Create in me a pure heart, O my God” ...	PM, 248
“... must so cleanse his heart”	GWB, 264
“When a true seeker determineth to take the step”	GWB, 264
“Man is the supreme Talisman.”	GWB, 259
“Unto every father hath been enjoined” ...	TB, 128
“Knowledge is as wings to man’s life” ...	ESW, 26
“At the outset of every endeavour” ...	TB, 168
“The people of Bahá ... should treat craftsmen”	TB, 38
“It is permissible to study sciences” ...	TB, 26
“A true philosopher would never deny God”	TB, 150
“To engage in some profession”	TB, 175
“They that are endued with sincerity”	TB, 36
“A good character is, verily, the best”	TB, 36
“Be generous in prosperity” ...	GWB, 285
“Honesty, virtue, wisdom and a saintly character”	TB, 57
“He must never seek to exalt himself”	KI, 193
“Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind”	GWB, 305
“Beware, O people of Bahá, lest ye walk”	GWB, 305
“They that are just and fair-minded”	TB, 37

“the supreme instrument for the prosperity”	TB, 38
“We will now mention unto Thee trustworthiness”	TB, 37
“In this Revelation the hosts that can render”	TB, 126
“. . . the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast”	TB, 125
“We have admonished Our loved ones to fear God”	TB, 120
“The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence”	TB, 63
“The people of Bahá must under all circumstances”	TB, 35
“O people of Bahá! Ye are the dawning-places”	TB, 27
“Let your eye be chaste”	TB, 138
“Be pure, O people of God, be pure”	GWB, 287
“We, verily, have decreed in Our Book”	GWB, 117
“They that follow their lusts”	GWB, 297
“Purity and chastity have been”	ADJ, 32
“I implore Thee, O Thou Fashioner”	PM, 231
“O Thou Whose face is the object”	PM, 13
“O Lord! Thou seest this essence of”	TB, 25
“A good character is, verily, the best”	TB, 36
“One should not ignore the truth” . . .	TB, 38
“Fair speech and truthfulness”	TB, 40
“Let truthfulness and courtesy be your”	GWB, 305
“Set forth that which ye possess.”	KI, 91
“The utterance of God is a lamp”	ESW, 14
“O ye beloved of the Lord! Commit”	TB, 138
“. . . set your hearts on whatever will”	TB, 67
“Verily, the words which have descended”	ADJ, 37

“Beware lest the desires of the flesh”	GWB, 140
“We have forbidden you dissension”	TB, 120
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“This Wronged One exhorteth the peoples”	TB, 36
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Notes

¹ The Foreword was written by the author in 1982.

² Bahá'ís do not believe in Satan as an individual personification of evil.

³ Liberty and freedom are the same thing.

- ⁴ Return to the Hidden Words on page 9 and read again “I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. . . .” and so on.
- ⁵ In order to provide smoother reading most quotation marks have been eliminated from this section; however, when a phrase or word has perforce been introduced to make a sentence clear or grammatical, they have again been used to differentiate the words of Bahá’u’lláh.
- ⁶ A few are from Bahá’í sources but not Bahá’u’lláh’s own words.
- ⁷ The numerous quotations from The Hidden Words are not referenced here, neither are the short quotations of Bahá’u’lláh’s words within the writer’s text and the lists of short Titles of God and of Bahá’u’lláh.

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