

Self & Selflessness

A PERSONAL MEDITATIVE BOOKLET
COMPILED BY VIOLETTA ZEIN

صد حجاب از دل به سوی دیده شد  چون غرض آمد، منبر پوشیده شد

**Desire and self come in the door
And blot out virtue, bright before,
And a hundred veils will rise
From the heart, to blind the eyes.**

RÚMÍ, THE MATHNAVÍ, 1, 334
(QUOTED BY 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN THE
SECRET OF DIVINE CIVILIZATION)

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I Excerpts from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

The Prophets of God manifest complete self-effacement

We have already in the foregoing pages assigned two stations unto each of the Luminaries arising from the Daysprings of eternal holiness. One of these stations, the station of essential unity, We have already explained. "No distinction do We make between any of them." The other is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation and to the limitations thereof. (...)

Viewed in the light of their second station—the station of distinction, differentiation, temporal limitations, characteristics and standards—they manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution and complete self-effacement. Even as He saith: "I am the servant of God. I am but a man like you."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

Utter self-effacement and complete abnegation

Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! I implore Thee, by Thy Name which none hath befittingly recognized, and whose import no soul hath fathomed; I beseech Thee, by Him Who is the Fountainhead of Thy Revelation and the Dayspring of Thy signs, to make my heart to be a receptacle of Thy love and of remembrance of Thee. Knit it, then, to Thy most great Ocean, that from it may flow out the living waters of Thy wisdom and the crystal streams of Thy glorification and praise.

The limbs of my body testify to Thy unity, and the hair of my head declareth the power of Thy sovereignty and might. I have stood at the door of Thy grace with utter self-effacement and complete abnegation, and clung to the hem of Thy bounty, and fixed mine eyes upon the horizon of Thy gifts.

Do Thou destine for me, O my God, what becometh the greatness of Thy majesty, and assist me, by Thy strengthening grace, so to teach Thy Cause that the dead may speed out of their sepulchers, and rush forth towards Thee, trusting wholly in Thee, and fixing their gaze upon the orient of Thy Cause, and the dawning-place of Thy Revelation.

Thou, verily, art the Most Powerful, the Most High, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God

Either thou or someone else hath said: "Let the Súrih of Tawhíd be translated, so that all may know and be fully persuaded that the one true God begetteth not, nor is He begotten. Moreover, the Bábís believe in his (Bahá'u'lláh's) Divinity and Godhood."

O Shaykh! This station is the station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God. Divinity, whenever I mention it, indicateth My complete and absolute self-effacement. This is the station in which I have no control over mine own weal or woe nor over my life nor over my resurrection.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF

The realm of pure awareness and utter self-effacement

Methinks at this moment I perceive the musk-scented fragrance of the garment of Há' from the Joseph of Bahá; verily He seemeth near at hand, though ye may think Him far away*.

My soul doth sense the fragrant breath
Of a well-beloved soul
The fragrance of that kindly friend
Who's my heart's desire and goal.

The duty of long years of love obey,
And tell the tale of blissful days gone by,
That land and sky may laugh aloud today,
And it may gladden mind and heart and eye.

This is the realm of pure awareness and utter self-effacement. Not even love can find a way to this plane, nor doth affection have a place therein. Wherefore is it said: "Love is a veil betwixt the lover and the beloved." Here love becometh but an obstructing veil, and aught save the Friend but a curtain. Thus the wise Saná'í hath written:

None may approach that well-belov'd
Who harboreth his own desire;
None may embrace that beauteous form
Who's burdened with his own attire.

For this is the realm of God and is sanctified above every allusion of His creatures.

* An intimation of Bahá'u'lláh's imminent Manifestation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH-THE FOUR VALLEYS

Vigilance to the very end

At such times, the ascendancy of God's names and attributes will so surround a soul as to leave it no place either to stay or to flee. This station, however, hath its own obscurities and impediments, for they that journey towards the land of Divine Unity and detachment are still wrapt within the confines of names and attributes, and take delight in their gardens and bowers. Thus it is that, in describing these stations, some have made reference to the "unity of existence" and the "unity of appearance".

By this is meant that the seeker will close his eyes to all save his Beloved and open them to naught but His beauty. He will pass beyond the mortal world and approach the everlasting realm. He will see no beauty but the Beloved's and hear no utterance but His praise; that is, he will avert his gaze from aught save His beauty and refuse to hearken to any melody but the sweet accents of His voice.

Howbeit some are led astray even in this station; for no sooner do they inhale the fragrance of reunion, and hearken unto the voice of the doves of heavenly grace, than they imagine themselves to have attained perfection and wander lost in the wilderness of self-conceit, thus depriving themselves of the soft-flowing stream of divine providence and the ethereal cup of heavenly delight.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE CALL OF THE DIVINE BELOVED

True life is the life of the spirit

In every age and century, the purpose of the Prophets of God and their chosen ones hath been no other but to affirm the spiritual significance of the terms "life," "resurrection," and "judgment." If one will ponder but for a while this utterance of 'Alí in his heart, one will surely discover all mysteries hidden in the terms "grave," "tomb," "sirát," "paradise" and "hell." But oh! how strange and pitiful! Behold, all the people are imprisoned within the tomb of self, and lie buried beneath the nethermost depths of worldly desire! Wert thou to attain to but a dewdrop of the crystal waters of divine knowledge, thou wouldst readily realize that true life is not the life of the flesh but the life of the spirit. For the life of the flesh is common to both men and animals, whereas the life of the spirit is possessed only by the pure in heart who have quaffed from the ocean of faith and partaken of the fruit of certitude. This life knoweth no death, and this existence is crowned by immortality. Even as it hath been said: "He who is a true believer liveth both in this world and in the world to come." If by "life" be meant this earthly life, it is evident that death must needs overtake it.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

Beware of seeking the vanities of this life

Say: If ye be seekers after this life and the vanities thereof, ye should have sought them while ye were still enclosed in your mothers' wombs, for at that time ye were continually approaching them, could ye but perceive it. Ye have, on the other hand, ever since ye were born and attained maturity, been all the while receding from the world and drawing closer to dust. Why, then, exhibit such greed in amassing the treasures of the earth, when your days are numbered and your chance is well-nigh lost? Will ye not, then, O heedless ones, shake off your slumber?

Incline your ears to the counsels which this Servant giveth you for the sake of God. He, verily, asketh no recompense from you and is resigned to what God hath ordained for Him, and is entirely submissive to God's Will.

The days of your life are far spent, O people, and your end is fast approaching. Put away, therefore, the things ye have devised and to which ye cleave, and take firm hold on the precepts of God, that haply ye may attain that which He hath purposed for you, and be of them that pursue a right course. Delight not yourselves in the things of the world and its vain ornaments, neither set your hopes on them. Let your reliance be on the remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. He will, ere long, bring to naught all the things ye possess. Let Him be your fear, and forget not His covenant with you, and be not of them that are shut out as by a veil from Him.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Nº LXVI

Knowledge of one's own self

The first Taráz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfillment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The "Self of God that pervadeth all His laws" (mystical concept)

O my eminent friend! They that seek to ascend to the heaven of mystic wayfaring are of four kinds only. I shall describe them in brief, that the signs and degrees of each may become plain and manifest to thee.

If the wayfarers be among them that seek after THE SANCTUARY OF THE DESIRED ONE, this plane pertaineth to the self—but the self which is intended is "the Self of God that pervadeth all His laws". In this station the self is not rejected but beloved; it is regarded with favour and is not to be shunned. Although at the beginning this plane is the realm of conflict, yet it endeth in the ascent to the throne of glory. As it hath been said: O Abraham of the Spirit and God's Friend in this day! Slay! Slay these four thieving birds of prey! that after death the mystery of life may be unravelled.

This is the plane of the soul that is pleasing unto God, whereof He saith: "Enter thou among My servants, and enter thou My Paradise."

This station hath myriad signs and countless tokens. Hence it is said: "We will surely show them Our signs in the world and within themselves, until it become plain to them that there is no God save Him."

One must, then, read the book of one's own self, rather than the treatise of some grammarian. Wherefore He hath said, "Read thy Book. There needeth none but thyself to make out an account against thee this day."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE FOUR VALLEYS

Our truest nature "Within thee"

O Son Of Being!

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS № 12 (FIRST PART)

O Son Of Spirit!

I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS № 13 (FIRST PART)

O Son Of The Wondrous Vision!

I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought a beloved other than Me?

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS № 19 (FIRST PART)

O Son Of Spirit!

Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS № 22 (FIRST PART)

Self-renouncement

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS № 7 (FIRST PART)

Son Of Spirit!

There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me; for it behooveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be loved alone and above all that is.

Self and Sin

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 26 (FIRST PART)

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 27 (FIRST PART)

Bringing one's self to account

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 31 (FIRST PART)

Detachment from material wealth

O Son Of Being!
Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 55 (FIRST PART)

O Son Of Man!
Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 56 (FIRST PART)

Detachment from idle imaginings

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 62 (FIRST PART)

O Son Of Man!

The light hath shone on thee from the horizon of the sacred Mount and the spirit of enlightenment hath breathed in the Sinai of thy heart. Wherefore, free thyself from the veils of idle fancies and enter into My court, that thou mayest be fit for everlasting life and worthy to meet Me. Thus may death not come upon thee, neither weariness nor trouble.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 63 (FIRST PART)

Emptying oneself of all learning: Freedom from preconceptions

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 11 (SECOND PART)

Self-satisfaction and heedlessness

O Ye That Are Lying As Dead On The Couch Of Heedlessness!

Agnes 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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 20 (SECOND PART)

The veil of self

O Son Of Desire!

The learned and the wise have for long years striven and failed to attain the presence of the All-Glorious; they have spent their lives in search of Him, yet did not behold the beauty of His countenance. Thou without the least effort didst attain thy goal, and without search hast obtained the object of thy quest. Yet, notwithstanding, thou didst remain so wrapt in the veil of self, that thine eyes beheld not the beauty of the Beloved, nor did thy hand touch the hem of His robe. Ye that have eyes, behold and wonder.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 22 (SECOND PART)

The contrary winds of self and passion

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 32 (SECOND PART)

Burst thy cage asunder

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 38 (SECOND PART)

The fetters of this world

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 - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 40 (SECOND PART)

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches

O Son Of Passion!

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 55 (SECOND PART)

The fire of self

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.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 66 (SECOND PART)

The dust of self and hypocrisy

O Children Of Adam!

Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favor at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the

holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity. This is the daystar of wisdom and of divine mystery that hath shone above the horizon of the divine will. Blessed are they that turn thereunto.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 69 (SECOND PART)

The sheath of self and desire

O My Servant!

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE HIDDEN WORDS Nº 72 (SECOND PART)

Poor in self and rich in the Desired One

After scaling the high summits of wonderment, the wayfarer cometh to the VALLEY OF TRUE POVERTY AND ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS. This station is that of dying to the self and living in God, of being poor in self and rich in the Desired One. Poverty, as here referred to, signifieth being poor in that which pertaineth to the world of creation and rich in what belongeth to the realms of God. For when the true lover and devoted friend reacheth the presence of the Beloved, the radiant beauty of the Loved One and the fire of the lover's heart will kindle a blaze and burn away all veils and wrappings. Yea, all that he hath, from marrow to skin, will be set aflame, so that nothing will remain save the Friend.

When once shone forth the attributes
Of Him Who is the ancient King,
All mention Moses burned away
Of every fleeting, transient thing.

Whoso hath attained this station is sanctified from all that pertaineth to the world.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Become independent of those who are plunged in the darkness of self

O My brother! At every juncture We have restated Our theme, that all that hath been recorded in these verses may, by the leave of God, be made clear unto thee, and that thou mayest become independent of those who are plunged in the darkness of self and who tread the valley of arrogance and pride, and be of them that move within the paradise of everlasting life.

Say, O people! The Tree of Life hath verily been planted in the heart of the heavenly paradise and bestoweth life in every direction. How can ye fail to perceive and recognize it? It will in truth aid thee to grasp all that this well-assured Soul hath disclosed unto thee of the essence of the divine mysteries. The Dove of holiness warbleth in the heaven of immortality and admonisheth thee to array thyself with

a new vesture, wrought of steel to shield thee from the shafts of doubt concealed in the allusions of men, saying: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GEMS OF DIVINE MYSTERIES

Renounce thyself that thou mayest find the Peerless One

Love accepteth no existence and wisheth no life. In death it seeth life, and in shame it seeketh glory. To merit the madness of love, one must abound in sanity; to merit the bonds of the Friend, one must be free in spirit. Blessed the neck that is caught in His noose, and happy the head that falleth on the dust in the path of His love. Wherefore, O friend, renounce thy self, that thou mayest find the Peerless One; and soar beyond this mortal world, that thou mayest find thy nest in the abode of heaven. Be as naught, if thou wouldst kindle the fire of being and be fit for the pathway of love.

Ne'er will love allow a living soul to tread its way;
Ne'er will the falcon deign to seize a lifeless prey.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

The reason for burning away the veil of self

Love hath bound a myriad victims in its fetters and pierced a myriad wise men with its arrow. Know that every redness thou seest in the world is from its wrath, and every paleness in men's cheeks is from its poison. It yieldeth no remedy but death and walketh not save in the valley of extinction; yet sweeter than honey is its venom upon the lover's lips, and fairer its deadly sting, in the seeker's sight, than a hundred thousand lives.

Wherefore must the veils of the satanic self be burned away in the fire of love, that the spirit may be cleansed and refined, and thus may apprehend the station of Him but for Whom the world would not have been created.

Kindle the fire of love and burn away all things;
Then set thy foot into the land of the lovers.

And if, confirmed by the Creator, the lover escapeth the claws of the eagle of love, he will enter the Realm of Knowledge and come out of doubt into certitude, and turn from the darkness of wayward desire to the guiding light of the fear of God. His inner eye will open and he will privily converse with his Beloved; he will unlock the gates of truth and supplication and shut the doors of idle fancy. He in this realm is content with the divine decree, and seeth war as peace, and in death findeth the meaning of everlasting life. With both inward and outward eyes he witnesseth the mysteries of resurrection in the realms of creation and in the souls of men, and with a spiritual heart apprehendeth the wisdom of God in His endless

manifestations. In the sea he findeth a drop, in a drop he beholdeth the secrets of the sea.

Split the atom's heart, and lo!
Within it thou wilt find a sun.

Gazing with the eye of absolute insight, the wayfarer in this valley seeth in God's creation neither contradiction nor incongruity, and at every moment exclaimeth, "No defect canst thou see in the creation of the God of mercy. Repeat the gaze. Seest thou a single flaw?" He beholdeth justice in injustice, and in justice, grace. In ignorance he findeth many a knowledge hidden, and in knowledge a myriad wisdoms manifest. He breaketh the cage of the body and the hold of the passions, and communeth with the denizens of the immortal realm. He scaleth the ladders of inner truth and hasteneth to the heaven of inner meanings. He rideth in the ark of "We will surely show them Our signs in the world and within themselves", and saileth upon the sea of "until it become plain to them that it is the truth". And if he meeteth with injustice he shall have patience, and if he cometh upon wrath he shall manifest love.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Taking leave of Self in our Spiritual journey

And further, the stages that mark the wayfarers' journey from their mortal abode to the heavenly homeland are said to be seven. Some have referred to them as seven valleys, and others, as seven cities. And it is said that until the wayfarer taketh leave of self and traverseth these stages, he shall never attain the ocean of nearness and reunion nor taste of the matchless wine.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Attachment to the self for the purpose of furthering the Cause

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH XCVI

The winds of self and passion move them as they will

Beware lest ye act as did the King of Islám* when We came unto him at his bidding. His ministers pronounced judgement against Us with such injustice that all creation lamented and the hearts of those who are nigh unto God were consumed. The winds of self and passion move them as they will, and We found them all bereft of constancy. They are, indeed, of those that are far astray.

*The Sultán of Turkey

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

Envy towards those who have soared beyond the clay of self

Thus it is that certain feeble souls have confined the wide expanse of knowledge within the walls of self and passion, and beneath the cloak of ignorance and blindness, and have thereby veiled themselves from the light of the mystic Sun and the mysteries of the eternal Beloved. They have strayed far from the gem-like wisdom of the resplendent Faith of the Lord of the Messengers, have been shut out of the inner court of the All-Beauteous, and have been banished from the Kaaba of glory. Such is the worth of the people of this age!

And if a nightingale soar beyond the clay of self and dwell in the rose bower of the heart, and in Arabian melodies and sweet Persian tones recount the mysteries of God—a single word whereof quickeneth anew every lifeless form and bestoweth the spirit of holiness upon every mouldering bone—thou wilt behold a thousand claws of envy and a myriad talons of hatred hunting after Him and striving with all their power to encompass His death.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Self and Selflessness and the various stations of the wayfarers

To continue. It is clear that the wayfarers in the wilderness of search and longing, of attainment and reunion, have numerous degrees and countless stations. Some, after spiritual struggle and physical toil, ascend from the lower reaches of “no God is there” to the lofty bowers of “but God”, flee from the shadow of negation to abide in the limitless realm of affirmation, and abandon the privation of a transient existence for the bountiful assemblage of reunion. This is the uttermost limit of the realm of effort and striving.

Others, without receiving the least intimation of “no God is there”, pass beyond the highest horizon of “but God”; without even tasting a dewdrop of the degrees of self-surrender ascend unto the kingdom of life everlasting; and without partaking from the wellspring of utter abnegation quaff the wine of the Ancient of Days. These souls, as they traverse the stages of wayfaring and ascend unto the stations of reunion, walk a different path and occupy a different rank.

Still others, without having perused a single letter of the kingdom of names or acquired the faintest intimation from the realm of attributes, which pertaineth to this world, dawn above the invisible horizon of eternity and return again thereunto. A hundred thousand seas of glory surge in their luminous hearts, and yet to outward seeming their lips are parched; a myriad rivers of holiness stream within their breasts, and yet no trace thereof is to be seen; the books of God’s consummate wisdom are recorded upon the tablets of their hearts, and yet they breathe not a word thereof in the world of appearances. They dwell in the Egypt of certitude and journey in the lands of resignation. They are intoxicated with the beauty, and entranced by the glory, of Him Who is the All-Glorious. Heart to heart they whisper hidden secrets; soul to soul they unfold abstruse matters. The mysteries of the Divine Essence glow upon their brows, and the lights of Divine Unity shine from their peerless faces. They clothe themselves in the robe of

concealment and cast their sleeves over both this world and the world to come. Without wings they soar, without feet they walk, without hands they grasp and hold. They speak an unknown tongue and observe an unseen grammar, of which all the world's inhabitants know not a single letter, save those whom thy Lord hath willed. Unto each hath a share been vouchsafed in His Book, and they shall all attain unto that which hath been destined for them.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE CALL OF THE DIVINE BELOVED

Those addressed to in the Hidden Words

In this connection the text of several passages from the Hidden Book of Fátimih—the blessings of God be upon her!—which are relevant to the present theme will be cited in the Persian tongue, that certain matters which have ere now been hidden may be revealed before thy presence. The people addressed in the aforementioned Book, which is today known as the Hidden Words, are those who, though outwardly known for learning and piety, are inwardly the slaves of self and passion.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

The spiritual rewards of self-surrender

O Shams! Harken with all thy heart unto the nightingale song of the Beloved, that perchance thou mayest abandon the habitation of self and desire and step into the placeless realm of eternal glory, forsake thine own life, and commune with Him Who is the life of thy life. Wert thou to traverse the limitless reaches of the spirit, thou wouldst of a certainty rend asunder the garment of patience and forbearance, hasten to offer up thy soul, renounce the dross of this fleeting world, and find repose upon the throne of ancient glory.

Each thing must needs have an effect and each sign reveal a secret. Not until the world-illuminating sun hath shone can the east be distinguished from the west, nor the blooming garden discerned from the barren waste. Heavenly strains compare not with earthly clamours, and the croaking of the raven can in no wise be confounded with the song of the nightingale. For the latter bespeaketh the land of the Beloved and increaseth life, whereas the former telleth only of the city of the blind and causeth faith to wither.

One must step forth and raise aloft the banner of earnest striving. By God! Wert thou to hearken unto the heavenly words of this evanescent Servant that have been raised in this mystic Tablet, thou wouldst assuredly take to the desert of self-surrender, turn aside from thine own heart and soul, and cast thy head at the feet of the Friend. How high is the soaring flight of the phoenix of love, and how low the requisite measure of our yearning! Strive but a little to soar, that, by the grace of Him Who is the eternal King, thou mayest ascend from the dust-heap of utter non-existence unto the loftiest heights of ancient glory. Give wings to thy celestial spirit and lend strength to thy mystic soul, that haply it may take flight in the atmosphere of divine nearness and attain the ultimate and invisible goal.

This profitless world produceth naught save deadly poison, and its ephemeral dregs can never yield the everlasting cup. Were the Jesus of the spirit to give ear to the call of holiness from the Falcon of the realm above, He would assuredly cry out from His inmost being and be seized with fervid longing even as the lover's soul. It is through that call that the Moses of eternity was dumbfounded; it is by its virtue that the Abraham of faithfulness shattered the idol of the mortal body. Shatter then, in turn, this idol, that thou mayest take up thine abode in the land of the Beloved; and forsake all desire, that thou mayest take flight unto the Egypt of imperishable glory. Sanctify the city of thine heart, that thou mayest behold the beauty of the Divine Essence and be quickened to a new life through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

No melody remaineth that was not intoned upon this branch; no song remaineth that this Nightingale hath not warbled. A thousand Arabian ears are powerless to fathom this Persian lament—nay, none but an embodiment of divine virtues can grasp this subtle mystery. Well it is, then, with the one who attaineth this ocean and drinketh therefrom the draught of life!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE CALL OF THE DIVINE BELOVED

The futility of this material world

O peoples of the earth! Incline your inner ears to the call of this Wronged One and pause to reflect upon the story that We have recounted. Perchance ye may not be consumed by the fire of self and passion, nor allow the vain and worthless objects of this nether world to withhold you from Him Who is the Eternal Truth. Glory and abasement, riches and poverty, tranquillity and tribulation, all will pass away, and all the peoples of the earth will ere long be laid to rest in their tombs. It behoveth therefore every man of insight to fix his gaze upon the goal of eternity, that perchance by the grace of Him Who is the Ancient King he may attain unto the immortal Kingdom and abide beneath the shade of the Tree of His Revelation.

Though this world be fraught with deception and deceit, yet it continually warneth all men of their impending extinction. The death of the father proclaimeth to the son that he, too, shall pass away. Would that the inhabitants of the world who have amassed riches for themselves and have strayed far from the True One might know who will eventually lay hand on their treasures; but, by the life of Bahá, no one knoweth this save God, exalted be His glory.

The poet Saná'í, may God's mercy rest upon him, hath said: "Take heed, O ye whose unseemly conduct hath darkened your faces! Take heed, O ye whose beards have been whitened by age!" Alas, most of the people are fast asleep. They are even as the man who, in his drunkenness, became attracted to a dog, took it in his embrace, and made it his plaything, and who, when the morn of discernment dawned and the light of the sun enveloped the horizon, realized that the object of his affection was but a dog. Then, filled with shame and remorse, he repaired to his abode.

Think not that thou hast abased this Youth or prevailed over Him. The least of creatures ruleth over thee, and yet thou perceivest not. The lowliest and most

object of all things holdeth sway over thee, and that is none other than self and passion, which have ever been reprehensible. Were it not for God's consummate wisdom, thou wouldst have been able to plainly behold thine own helplessness and that of all who dwell on earth. Our abasement is indeed the glory of His Cause, could ye but understand.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

The self-conceited have interposed themselves between humanity and God

As to thy question concerning the heavenly Scriptures: The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.

We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.

Incline your ears to the sweet melody of this Prisoner. Arise, and lift up your voices, that haply they that are fast asleep may be awakened. Say: O ye who are as dead! The Hand of Divine bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. Whoso hath been reborn in this Day, shall never die; whoso remaineth dead, shall never live.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE TABERNACLE OF ÚNITY

The Real of utter self-effacement

If the mystic knowers be among them that have attained the beauty of the Beloved, this station is the throne of the inmost heart and the secret of divine guidance. (...)

This is the realm of pure awareness and utter self-effacement. Not even love can find a way to this plane, nor doth affection have a place therein. Wherefore is it said: "Love is a veil betwixt the lover and the beloved." Here love becometh but an obstructing veil, and aught save the Friend but a curtain. Thus the wise Saná'í hath written:

None may approach that well-belov'd
Who harboreth his own desire;
None may embrace that beauteous form

Who's burdened with his own attire.

For this is the realm of God and is sanctified above every allusion of His creatures.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE FOUR VALLEYS

Deliver your souls from the bondage of self (Intone the verses)

Say, Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me. Remembrance of Me cleanseth all things from defilement, could ye but perceive it. Say, Were all created things to be entirely divested of the veil of worldly vanity and desire, the Hand of God would in this Day clothe them, one and all, with the robe "He doeth whatsoever He willeth in the kingdom of creation," that thereby the sign of His sovereignty might be manifested in all things. Exalted then be He, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Almighty, the Supreme Protector, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.

Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH CXXXVI

The station of self-surrender transcendeth every other station

O Shaykh, O thou who hast surrendered thy will to God! By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose. Whatsoever the Creator commandeth His creatures to observe, the same must they diligently, and with the utmost joy and eagerness, arise and fulfill. They should in no wise allow their fancy to obscure their judgment, neither should they regard their own imaginings as the voice of the Eternal. In the Prayer of Fasting We have revealed, "Should Thy Will decree that out of Thy mouth these words proceed and be addressed unto them, 'Observe, for My Beauty's sake, the fast, O people, and set no limit to its duration,' I swear by the majesty of Thy glory, that every one of them will faithfully observe it, will abstain from whatsoever will violate Thy law, and will continue to do so until they yield up their souls unto Thee." In this consisteth the complete surrender of one's will to the Will of God. Meditate on this, that thou mayest drink in the waters of everlasting life which flow through the words of the Lord of all mankind, and mayest testify that the one true God hath ever been immeasurably exalted above His creatures. He, verily, is the Incomparable, the

Ever-Abiding, the Omniscient, the All-Wise. The station of absolute self-surrender transcendeth, and will ever remain exalted above, every other station.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Nº CLX

Attainment of the City of Immortality

How can a true lover continue to exist when once the effulgent glories of the Beloved are revealed? How can the shadow endure when once the sun hath shone forth? How can a devoted heart have any being before the existence of the Object of its devotion? Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul! In this station, the seeker's complete surrender and utter effacement before his Creator will be such that, were he to search the East and the West, and traverse land, sea, mountain and plain, he would find no trace of his own self or of any other soul.

Gracious God! But for fear of the Nimrod of tyranny and for the protection of the Abraham of justice, I would reveal unto thee that which, wert thou to abandon self and desire, would enable thee to dispense with aught else and to draw nigh unto this city. Be patient, however, until such time as God will have proclaimed His Cause. He, verily, rewardeth beyond measure them that endure with patience. Inhale then the sweet savours of the spirit from the garment of hidden meanings, and say: "O ye that are immersed in the ocean of selflessness! Hasten to enter the City of Immortality, if ye seek to ascend its heights." And We exclaim: "Verily we are God's, and to Him shall we return."

From this most august and exalted station, and from this most sublime and glorious plane, the seeker entereth the City of Immortality, therein to abide forever. In this station he beholdeth himself established upon the throne of independence and the seat of exaltation. Then will he comprehend the meaning of that which hath been revealed of old concerning the day "whereon God shall enrich all through His abundance". Well is it with them that have attained unto this station and drunk their fill from this snow-white chalice before this Crimson Pillar.

Having, in this journey, immersed himself in the ocean of immortality, rid his heart from attachment to aught save Him, and attained unto the loftiest heights of everlasting life, the seeker will see no annihilation either for himself or for any other soul. He will quaff from the cup of immortality, tread in its land, soar in its atmosphere, consort with them that are its embodiments, partake of the imperishable and incorruptible fruits of the tree of eternity, and be forever accounted, in the lofty heights of immortality, amongst the denizens of the everlasting realm.

All that existeth in this city shall indeed endure and will never perish. Shouldst thou, by the leave of God, enter this sublime and exalted garden, thou wouldst find its sun in its noontide glory, never to set, never to be eclipsed. The same holdeth true of its moon, its firmament, its stars, trees, and oceans, and of all that pertaineth thereunto or existeth therein. By Him besides Whom there is none other God! Were I to recount, from this day unto the end that hath no end, its wondrous attributes, the love that My heart cherisheth for this hallowed and everlasting city

would never be exhausted. I shall, however, bring My theme to a close, since time is short and the inquirer impatient, and since these secrets are not to be openly divulged save by the leave of God, the Almighty, the All-Compelling.

Erelong shall the faithful behold, in the day of the latter Resurrection, Him Whom God shall make manifest descending with this city from the heaven of the Unseen, together with a company of His exalted and favoured angels. Great, therefore, is the blessedness of him that attaineth unto His presence and beholdeth His countenance. We all, verily, cherish this hope, and exclaim: "Praise be unto Him, for verily He is the Eternal Truth, and unto Him do we return!"

Know, moreover, that should one who hath attained unto these stations and embarked upon these journeys fall prey to pride and vainglory, he would at that very moment come to naught and return to the first step without realizing it. Indeed, they that seek and yearn after Him in these journeys are known by this sign, that they humbly defer to those who have believed in God and in His verses, that they are lowly before those who have drawn nigh unto Him and unto the Manifestations of His Beauty, and that they bow in submission to them that are firmly established upon the lofty heights of the Cause of God and before its majesty.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH – GEMS OF DIVINE MYSTERIES

The dwellers of the cities of self have wept

I render Thee thanks that Thou hast made known unto me such servants as have utterly abolished, by the power of Thy might and of Thy sovereignty, the idols of their corrupt desires, and were not kept back by the things which are possessed by Thy creatures from turning in the direction of Thy grace. These have so vehemently rent the veils asunder that the dwellers of the cities of self have wept, and fear and trembling seized the people of envy and wickedness who, adorning their heads and their bodies with the emblems of knowledge, have proudly rejected Thee and turned away from Thy beauty.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Nº LIV

Music as a ladder for your souls not as wings for self and passion

We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion. Truly, We are loath to see you numbered with the foolish.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-AQDAS

Cities of men's hearts subdued by utterance, wisdom and understanding

It followeth, therefore, that rendering assistance unto God, in this day, doth not and shall never consist in contending or disputing with any soul; nay rather, what is preferable in the sight of God is that the cities of men's hearts, which are ruled by the hosts of self and passion, should be subdued by the sword of utterance, of

wisdom and of understanding. Thus, whoso seeketh to assist God must, before all else, conquer, with the sword of inner meaning and explanation, the city of his own heart and guard it from the remembrance of all save God, and only then set out to subdue the cities of the hearts of others.

Such is the true meaning of rendering assistance unto God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

To gain admittance to the realms of eternity

By Him Who shineth above the Dayspring of Sanctity! The friends of God have not, nor will they ever, set their hopes upon the world and its ephemeral possessions. The one true God hath ever regarded the hearts of men as His own, His exclusive possession—and this too but as an expression of His all-surpassing mercy, that haply mortal souls may be purged and sanctified from all that pertaineth to the world of dust and gain admittance into the realms of eternity. For otherwise that ideal King is, in Himself and by Himself, sufficient unto Himself and independent of all things. Neither doth the love of His creatures profit Him, nor can their malice harm Him. All have issued forth from abodes of dust, and unto dust shall they return, while the one true God, alone and single, is established upon His Throne, a Throne which is beyond the reaches of time and space, is sanctified above all utterance or expression, intimation, description and definition, and is exalted beyond all notion of abasement and glory. And none knoweth this save Him and those with whom is the knowledge of the Book. No God is there but Him, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

That ye may be released from the bondage of self

Though beset with countless afflictions, We summon the people unto God, the Lord of names. Say, strive ye to attain that which ye have been promised in the Books of God, and walk not in the way of the ignorant. My body hath endured imprisonment that ye may be released from the bondage of self. Set your faces then towards His countenance and follow not the footsteps of every hostile oppressor. Verily, He hath consented to be sorely abased that ye may attain unto glory, and yet, ye are disporting yourselves in the vale of heedlessness. He, in truth, liveth in the most desolate of abodes for your sakes, whilst ye dwell in your palaces.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH IAWH-I-AQDAS

The soul is endowed with two wings

Know also that the soul is endowed with two wings; should it soar in the atmosphere of love and contentment, then it will be related to the All-Merciful, and should it fly in the atmosphere of self and desire, then it will pertain to the Evil One; may God shield and protect us and protect you therefrom, O ye who perceive! Should the soul become ignited with the fire of the love of God, it is called

benevolent and pleasing unto God, but should it be consumed with the fire of passion, it is known as the concupiscent soul. Thus have We expounded this subject for thee that thou mayest obtain a clear understanding.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

The tombs of self and desire

O proud ones of the earth! Do ye believe yourselves to be abiding in palaces whilst He Who is the King of Revelation resideth in the most desolate of abodes? Nay, by My life! In tombs do ye dwell, could ye but perceive it. Verily, he who faileth, in these days, to be stirred by the breeze of God is accounted among the dead in the sight of Him Who is the Lord of all names and attributes. Arise, then, from the tombs of self and desire and turn unto the Kingdom of God, the Possessor of the Throne on high and of earth below, that ye may behold that which ye were promised aforetime by your Lord, the All-Knowing.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

The soul that fails in its allegiance to its Creator

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Nº LXXXII

Five states of selflessness

The novel thoughts thou hast expressed as to the symbolism contained in the word "sparrow" were considered*. Thou appearest to be well grounded in mystic truth. However, in each realm, to every letter a meaning is allotted which pertaineth to that realm. Indeed, the wayfarer findeth a secret in every name and a mystery in every letter.

In one sense, these letters refer to the states of holiness. The first meaneth "Free thyself from the promptings of self, then approach thy Lord." The second meaneth "Purify thyself from all save Him, that thou mayest offer up thy life for His sake." The third meaneth "Draw back from the threshold of the one true God if thou art still possessed of earthly attributes." The fourth meaneth "Render thanks unto thy Lord on His earth, that He may bless thee in His heaven, albeit in the realm of His unity His heaven is the same as His earth." The fifth meaneth "Remove from thine eyes the veils of limitation, that thou mayest learn that which thou knewest not of the stations of holiness."

* In what follows, Bahá'u'lláh interprets the meaning of each of the five letters comprising the word "sparrow" (gunjishk) in Persian.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Wings besmirched with mire can never soar

O Shaykh! Enter thou My presence, that thou mayest behold what the eye of the universe hath never beheld, and hear that which the ear of the whole creation hath never heard, that haply thou mayest free thyself from the mire of vague fancies, and set thy face towards the Most Sublime Station, wherein this Wronged One calleth aloud: "The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Praised!" We fain would hope that through thine exertions the wings of men may be sanctified from the mire of self and desire, and be made worthy to soar in the atmosphere of God's love. Wings that are besmirched with mire can never soar. Unto this testify they who are the exponents of justice and equity, and yet the people are in evident doubt.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF

The purpose of religion is to fully liberate all human potential

From the foregoing passages and allusions it hath been made indubitably clear that in the kingdoms of earth and heaven there must needs be manifested a Being, an Essence Who shall act as a Manifestation and Vehicle for the transmission of the grace of the Divinity Itself, the Sovereign Lord of all. Through the Teachings of this Daystar of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH No XXVII

Be most loving to one another

The Most Great Name beareth Me witness! How sad if any man were, in this Day, to rest his heart on the transitory things of this world! Arise, and cling firmly to the Cause of God. Be most loving one to another. Burn away, wholly for the sake of the Well-Beloved, the veil of self with the flame of the undying Fire, and with faces joyous and beaming with light, associate with your neighbor.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH No CXLVII

Conflicts appear from differing planes and differing understandings

As the wayfarers traverse these three differing planes, their understanding and their words differ accordingly, and hence the sign of conflict hath ever appeared on earth. For there are some who dwell on the plane of Divine Unity and speak of that world, and some inhabit the realms of limitation, and some the grades of self,

while others are completely veiled. Thus do the ignorant people of the day, who have no share of the radiance of the divine Beauty, make certain claims and, in every age and cycle, inflict upon the people of the ocean of Divine Unity what they themselves deserve. "If God should chastise men for their perverse doings, He would not leave upon the earth a moving thing! But to an appointed time doth He respite them."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Cleanse the heart with the burnish of love

O My brother! A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save God, that the true sun may shine therein and the eternal morning dawn. Then wilt thou clearly see the meaning of "Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me." And thou wilt take up thy life in thy hand and with infinite longing cast it before thy newly found Beloved.

Whensoever the light of the revelation of the King of Oneness settleth upon the throne of the heart and soul, His radiance becometh visible in every limb and member.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SEVEN VALLEYS

Mirza Yahya animated by the promptings of self

To this end he conferred with one of My servants and sought to win him over to his own designs; whereupon the Lord despatched unto Mine assistance the hosts of the seen and the unseen, protected Me by the power of truth, and sent down upon Me that which thwarted his purpose. Thus were foiled the plots of those who disbelieve in the verses of the All-Merciful*. They, truly, are a rejected people. When news spread of that which the promptings of self had impelled My brother to attempt, and Our companions in exile learned of his nefarious design, the voice of their indignation and grief was lifted up and threatened to spread throughout the city. We forbade, however, such recriminations, and enjoined upon them patience, that they might be of those that endure steadfastly.

*For an account of the events referred to by Bahá'u'lláh in this and following paragraphs, see *God Passes By*, Chapter X, paragraph beginning "On another occasion this same Mírzá Yahyá..." to paragraph ending "...the enormities of which he had been guilty."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

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

O friends! It behooveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you. The Daystar of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire. Watch over yourselves, for the Evil One is

lying in wait, ready to entrap you. Gird yourselves against his wicked devices, and, led by the light of the name of the All-Seeing God, make your escape from the darkness that surroundeth you. Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self. The Evil One is he that hindereth the rise and obstructeth the spiritual progress of the children of men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - TABLETS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - LAWH-I-DUNYÁ

Emerge from behind the veils of self and passion

He then wept within Himself with such a weeping that the dwellers of earth and heaven, and those suspended in the air before Him, and those circling round the Countenance of grandeur, wept with Him. And He spoke unto them, saying, "Know ye that in such a departure on the very Day of Our Appearance there are signs and tokens for them that understand. Haply, by reason of Our departure on this most sublime and wondrous Day, the peoples of earth and heaven may emerge from behind the veils of self and passion; draw nigh unto God, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious; and become detached from whatsoever He hath created or ordained in this world. This is that which God had purposed for them as a bounty from His presence. He, verily, is the All-Bountiful, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous." Blessed, then, be God, the source of this most manifest, this most exalted bestowal!

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE Nº 10

Prompted by self-conceit and vainglory

Alas, alas, for your negligence, O people of the Bayán! Alas, alas, for your blindness, O concourse of the faithless! For, prompted by self-conceit and vainglory, ye have ascribed the station of successor to one of His enemies and have contended thereby with God, the Author of all religions aforesaid and hereafter. Thus have ye returned to the arguments of the people of the Qur'án, notwithstanding that We prohibited you from uttering a single word in His presence save by His leave. God knoweth and testifieth to the truth of My words. Contemplate, therefore, your condition and the measure of your understanding. Woe betide you, and your thoughts, and your judgement, O ye that are in grievous loss! Know ye not that We have rolled up that which the people possessed, and have unfolded a new order in its place? Blessed, then, be God, the sovereign King, the Unfolder, the Almighty, the Most Generous.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE Nº 38

Having utterly abolished the idol of self and of vain imagination

O Letter of the Living! The ear of God hath heard thy cry, and His eyes have beheld thy written supplication. He is calling thee from His seat of glory, and is revealing unto thee the verses that have been sent down by Him Who is the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Blessed art thou for having utterly abolished the idol of self and of vain imagination, and for having rent asunder the veil of idle fancy, through the power of the might of thy Lord, the Supreme Protector, the Almighty, the one Beloved. Thou art indeed to be numbered with those Letters that have excelled every other Letter. Wherefore thou hast been singled out by God through the tongue of thy Lord, the Báb, the brightness of Whose countenance hath enveloped, and will continue to envelop, the whole of creation. Render thanks unto the Almighty, and magnify His name, inasmuch as He hath aided thee to recognize a Cause that hath made the hearts of the inhabitants of the heavens and of the earth to tremble, that hath caused the denizens of the Kingdoms of creation and of Revelation to cry out, and through which the hidden secrets of men's breasts have been searched out and tested.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Nº CXXXV

The dead of the valley of self

In another passage He saith: "And when Our clear verses are recited to them, their only argument is to say, 'Bring back our fathers, if ye speak the truth!'" Behold, what foolish evidences they sought from these Embodiments of an all-encompassing mercy! They scoffed at the verses, a single letter of which is greater than the creation of heavens and earth, and which quickeneth the dead of the valley of self and desire with the spirit of faith; and clamored saying: "Cause our fathers to speed out of their sepulchers." Such was the perversity and pride of that people. Each one of these verses is unto all the peoples of the world an unfailing testimony and a glorious proof of His truth. Each of them verily sufficeth all mankind, wert thou to meditate upon the verses of God. In the above-mentioned verse itself pearls of mysteries lie hidden. Whatever be the ailment, the remedy it offereth can never fail.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

My Best-Beloved is closer to me than mine own self

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Nº XCIII

Delivered from the prison-cage of self and desire

Were you to ponder, but for a while, these utterances in your heart, you would surely find the portals of understanding unlocked before your face, and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled before your eyes. Such things take place only that the souls of men may develop and be delivered from the prison-cage of self and desire. Otherwise, that ideal King hath, throughout eternity, been in His Essence independent of the comprehension of all beings, and will continue, forever, in His own Being to be exalted above the adoration of every soul. A single breeze of His affluence doth suffice to adorn all mankind with the robe of wealth; and one drop out of the ocean of His bountiful grace is enough to confer upon all beings the glory of everlasting life. But inasmuch as the divine Purpose hath decreed that the true should be known from the false, and the sun from the shadow, He hath, therefore, in every season sent down upon mankind the showers of tests from His realm of glory.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

The executioners of The Báb

Would that I had never been, and that My mother had never borne Me! Would that I had never heard of that which befell Him at the hands of those who worshipped the Names of God and yet slew Him* Who is their Author, their Creator, their Fashioner, and their Revealer! Woe betide them for following the promptings of self and passion, and for committing that which caused the Maids of Heaven to faint away in their celestial chambers and the Spirit to cover its face in the dust by reason of that which these wolves have inflicted upon the Lord of Lords. All things weep at the tears I shed for Him; all things lament at the sighs I uttered over Our separation. Such indeed is My sorrow that the melodies of eternity can no longer flow from My lips, nor can the breezes of the spirit waft from My heart. And had I not sought to protect Myself, My body would have been cleft asunder and My life extinguished.

*The Báb

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE № 39 (SÚRIH OF SORROWS)

Him who seeketh to shed My blood anew

Say· O people, cease your slander of Me. No word have I spoken except in praise of this Revelation; no breath have I drawn but for the love of its Author; and nowhere have I turned My face save towards His shining and luminous Countenance. I have made the Bayán and all that was revealed therein to be as a leaf in the celestial garden that belongeth unto Him, the Protector, the Gracious, the Almighty. Beware lest ye appropriate it and surrender it to him who, in pursuit of self and desire, seeketh to shed My blood anew and who contendeth with God. We, verily, unfolded the Bayán from a single word and returned it again to that same word, bidding it to appear before the Throne of Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, that He might behold His former creation and take delight therein. Be fair, then, in your judgement· Is it the prerogative of the Author of that word to lay hand upon it, or of any other soul? What hath made you so blind, O concourse of veiled ones?

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE № 38 (SÚRIH OF REMEMBRANCE)

The treacherous hand of self

THINE eye is My trust, suffer not the dust of vain desires to becloud its luster. Thine ear is a sign of My bounty, let not the tumult of unseemly motives turn it away from My Word that encompasseth all creation. Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein. Thine hand is a symbol of My loving-kindness, hinder it not from holding fast unto My guarded and hidden Tablets.... Unasked, I have showered upon thee My grace. Unpetitioned, I have fulfilled thy wish. In spite of thy undeserving, I have singled thee out for My richest, My incalculable favors.... O My servants! Be as resigned and submissive as the earth, that from the soil of your being there may blossom the fragrant, the holy and multicolored hyacinths of My knowledge. Be ablaze as the fire, that ye may burn away the veils of heedlessness and set aglow, through the quickening energies of the love of God, the chilled and wayward heart. Be light and untrammelled as the breeze, that ye may obtain admittance into the precincts of My court, My inviolable Sanctuary.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH № XLII

Cleanse the darkened self with the waters of mercy

Strive therefore to comprehend the meaning of “return” which hath been so explicitly revealed in the Qur’án itself, and which none hath as yet understood. What sayest thou? If thou sayest that Muhammad was the “return” of the Prophets of old, as is witnessed by this verse, His Companions must likewise be the “return” of the bygone Companions, even as the “return” of the former people is clearly attested by the text of the above-mentioned verses. And if thou deniest this, thou hast surely repudiated the truth of the Qur’án, the surest testimony of God unto men. In like manner, endeavor to grasp the significance of “return,” “revelation,” and “resurrection,” as witnessed in the days of the Manifestations of the divine Essence, that thou mayest behold with thine own eyes the “return” of the holy souls into sanctified and illumined bodies, and mayest wash away the dust of ignorance, and cleanse the darkened self with the waters of mercy flowing from the Source of divine Knowledge; that perchance thou mayest, through the power of God and the light of divine guidance, distinguish the Morn of everlasting splendor from the darksome night of error.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

Those who wander distractedly in the wilderness of self and passion

Amongst the people are those who allege that this Youth hath had no purpose but to perpetuate His name, whilst others claim that He hath sought for Himself the vanities of the world—this, notwithstanding that never, throughout all My days, have I found a place of safety, be it to the extent of a single foothold. At all times have I been immersed in an ocean of tribulations, whose full measure none can fathom but God. He, truly, is aware of what I say. How many the days in which My loved ones have been sorely shaken by reason of My afflictions, and how many the nights during which My kindred, fearing for My life, have bitterly wept and lamented! And this none can deny save them that are bereft of truthfulness. Is it

conceivable that He Who expecteth to lose His life at any moment should seek after worldly vanities? How very strange the imaginings of those who speak as prompted by their own caprices, and who wander distractedly in the wilderness of self and passion! Ere long shall they be called upon to account for their words, and on that day they shall find none to befriend or help them.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE SUMMONS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

The utter selflessness of the Divine Manifestations

Thus in moments in which these Essences of being were deeply immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared to the loftiest summits of divine mysteries, they claimed their utterance to be the Voice of divinity, the Call of God Himself. Were the eye of discernment to be opened, it would recognize that in this very state, they have considered themselves utterly effaced and nonexistent in the face of Him Who is the All-Pervading, the Incorruptible. Methinks they have regarded themselves as utter nothingness, and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy. For the slightest whispering of self, within such a Court, is an evidence of self-assertion and independent existence. In the eyes of them that have attained unto that Court, such a suggestion is itself a grievous transgression. How much more grievous would it be, were aught else to be mentioned in that Presence, were man's heart, his tongue, his mind, or his soul, to be busied with anyone but the Well-Beloved, were his eyes to behold any countenance other than His beauty, were his ear to be inclined to any melody but His voice, and were his feet to tread any way but His way.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

The Satan of self sows the seeds of malice and hate

Observe, how those in whose midst the Satan of self had for years sown the seeds of malice and hate became so fused and blended through their allegiance to this wondrous and transcendent Revelation that it seemed as if they had sprung from the same loins. Such is the binding force of the Word of God, which uniteth the hearts of them that have renounced all else but Him, who have believed in His signs, and quaffed from the Hand of glory the Kawthar of God's holy grace.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

He maketh each thing to be known through its own self

And also He saith: "Know thou with absolute certainty, and through the firmly established and most irrevocable decree, that He—exalted be His glory, and magnified be His might, and sanctified be His holiness, and glorified be His grandeur, and lauded be His ways, maketh each thing to be known through its own self; who then can know Him through any one except Himself?"

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - EPISTLE TO THE SON OF THE WOLF

What smoke more dense and overpowering than this one?

Likewise, He saith: "On the day when the heaven shall give out a palpable smoke, which shall enshroud mankind: this will be an afflictive torment." The All-Glorious hath decreed these very things that are contrary to the desires of wicked men to be the touchstone and standard whereby He proveth His servants, that the just may be known from the wicked, and the faithful distinguished from the infidel. The symbolic term "smoke" denotes grave dissensions, the abrogation and demolition of recognized standards, and the utter destruction of their narrow-minded exponents. What smoke more dense and overpowering than the one which hath now enshrouded all the peoples of the world, which hath become a torment unto them, and from which they hopelessly fail to deliver themselves, however much they strive? So fierce is this fire of self burning within them, that at every moment they seem to be afflicted with fresh torments. The more they are told that this wondrous Cause of God, this Revelation from the Most High, hath been made manifest to all mankind, and is waxing greater and stronger every day, the fiercer groweth the blaze of the fire in their hearts. The more they observe the indomitable strength, the sublime renunciation, the unwavering constancy of God's holy companions, who, by the aid of God, are growing nobler and more glorious every day, the deeper the dismay which ravageth their souls.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

This same world is within thy proper self and wrapped up within thee

As to thy question concerning the worlds of God. Know thou of a truth that the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range. None can reckon or comprehend them except God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Consider thy state when asleep. Verily, I say, this phenomenon is the most mysterious of the signs of God amongst men, were they to ponder it in their hearts. Behold how the thing which thou hast seen in thy dream is, after a considerable lapse of time, fully realized. Had the world in which thou didst find thyself in thy dream been identical with the world in which thou livest, it would have been necessary for the event occurring in that dream to have transpired in this world at the very moment of its occurrence. Were it so, you yourself would have borne witness unto it. This being not the case, however, it must necessarily follow that the world in which thou livest is different and apart from that which thou hast experienced in thy dream. This latter world hath neither beginning nor end. It would be true if thou wert to contend that this same world is, as decreed by the All-Glorious and Almighty God, within thy proper self and is wrapped up within thee. It would equally be true to maintain that thy spirit, having transcended the limitations of sleep and having stripped itself of all earthly attachment, hath, by the act of God, been made to traverse a realm which lieth hidden in the innermost reality of this world. Verily I say, the creation of God embraceth worlds besides this world, and creatures apart from these creatures. In each of these worlds He hath ordained things which none can search except Himself, the All-Searching, the All-Wise. Do thou meditate on that which We have revealed unto thee, that thou mayest discover the purpose of God, thy Lord, and the Lord of all worlds. In these words the mysteries of Divine

Wisdom have been treasured. We have refrained from dwelling upon this theme owing to the sorrow that hath encompassed Us from the actions of them that have been created through Our words, if ye be of them that will hearken unto Our Voice.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GLEANINGS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Nº LXXIX

An author following the path of self and desire

For instance, a certain man, reputed for his learning and attainments, and accounting himself as one of the preeminent leaders of his people, hath in his book denounced and vilified all the exponents of true learning. This is made abundantly clear by his explicit statements as well as by his allusions throughout his book. As We had frequently heard about him, We purposed to read some of his works. Although We never felt disposed to peruse other peoples' writings, yet as some had questioned Us concerning him, We felt it necessary to refer to his books, in order that We might answer Our questioners with knowledge and understanding. His works, in the Arabic tongue, were, however, not available, until one day a certain man informed Us that one of his compositions, entitled *Irshádu'l-'Avám*, could be found in this city. From this title We perceived the odor of conceit and vainglory, inasmuch as he hath imagined himself a learned man and regarded the rest of the people ignorant. His worth was in fact made known by the very title he had chosen for his book. It became evident that its author was following the path of self and desire, and was lost in the wilderness of ignorance and folly. Methinks he had forgotten the well-known tradition which sayeth: "Knowledge is all that is knowable; and might and power, all creation."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

Lead Pharaoh out of the the shadows of the valley of self and desire

While returning, Moses entered the holy vale, situate in the wilderness of Sinai, and there beheld the vision of the King of glory from the "Tree that belongeth neither to the East nor to the West." There He heard the soul-stirring Voice of the Spirit speaking from out of the kindled Fire, bidding Him to shed upon Pharaonic souls the light of divine guidance; so that, liberating them from the shadows of the valley of self and desire, He might enable them to attain the meads of heavenly delight, and delivering them, through the *Salsabíl* of renunciation, from the bewilderment of remoteness, cause them to enter the peaceful city of the divine presence.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

They naturally hold fast unto the former, and flee from the latter

As to the words—"Immediately after the oppression of those days"—they refer to the time when men shall become oppressed and afflicted, the time when the lingering traces of the Sun of Truth and the fruit of the Tree of knowledge and wisdom will have vanished from the midst of men, when the reins of mankind will have fallen into the grasp of the foolish and ignorant, when the portals of divine unity and understanding—the essential and highest purpose in creation—will have

been closed, when certain knowledge will have given way to idle fancy, and corruption will have usurped the station of righteousness. Such a condition as this is witnessed in this day when the reins of every community have fallen into the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire. On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His holy Word a dead letter. Such is the sway of their desires, that the lamp of conscience and reason hath been quenched in their hearts, and this although the fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun have been made manifest. And yet, in spite of all these manifold revelations of divine knowledge, which have encompassed the world, they still vainly imagine the door of knowledge to be closed, and the showers of mercy to be stilled. Clinging unto idle fancy, they have strayed far from the 'Urvatu'l-Vuthqá of divine knowledge. Their hearts seem not to be inclined to knowledge and the door thereof, neither think they of its manifestations, inasmuch as in idle fancy they have found the door that leadeth unto earthly riches, whereas in the manifestation of the Revealer of knowledge they find naught but the call to self-sacrifice. They therefore naturally hold fast unto the former, and flee from the latter. Though they recognize in their hearts the Law of God to be one and the same, yet from every direction they issue a new command, and in every season proclaim a fresh decree. 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. In leadership they have recognized the ultimate object of their endeavor, and account pride and haughtiness as the highest attainments of their heart's desire. They have placed their sordid machinations above the divine decree, have renounced resignation unto the will of God, busied themselves with selfish calculation, and walked in the way of the hypocrite. With all their power and strength they strive to secure themselves in their petty pursuits, fearful lest the least discredit undermine their authority or blemish the display of their magnificence. Were the eye to be anointed and illumined with the collyrium of the knowledge of God, it would surely discover that a number of voracious beasts have gathered and preyed upon the carrion of the souls of men.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - THE KĪTÁB-I-ÍQÁN

The City of Absolute Nothingness (the wayfarer forgetteth his soul)

And should the servant ascend to even loftier heights, quit this mortal world of dust, and seek to ascend unto the celestial abode, he will then pass from this city into the City of Absolute Nothingness, that is, of dying to self and living in God. In this station, this most exalted habitation, this journey of utter self-effacement, the wayfarer forgetteth his soul, spirit, body, and very being, immerseth himself in the sea of nothingness, and liveth on earth as one unworthy of mention. Nor will one find any sign of his existence, for he hath vanished from the realm of the visible and attained unto the heights of self-abnegation.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - GEMS OF DIVINE MYSTERIES

Enter the expanses of utter nothingness

We have heard that sorrows have compassed thee round in these days. Thy sorrow hath grieved Us, and that which hath befallen thee hath touched Us with bitter pain and anguish.

But at this moment, O friend, the Herald of eternity announceth unto thee, by the robe of faithfulness, His joyful tidings and bestoweth upon thee this emerald-green Tablet. Set out, then, from thine abode, take thou seven steps upon the earth, and with each step complete a stage of the journey.

With the first, enter the ocean of search and seek God, thy Lord, with thine inmost heart and soul.

With the second, enter the ocean of love and make mention of God, thy Lord, in the transports of thy longing and the ecstasies of thy rapture.

With the third, tread the paths of detachment; that is, sever thyself from thine idle fancies and walk in the ways of thy Lord.

With the fourth, enter the fathomless depths of oneness and the billowing seas of eternity. Cover thy face in the dust before the Lord of Lords, and sanctify thy self and thy spirit from all departure and return, that thine inmost heart may be freed from all things in the kingdoms of creation.

With the fifth, ascend unto the heaven of wonderment, that thou mayest taste the goodly fruits of this blessed realm, lose thyself in bewilderment before the power of thy Beloved and the dominion of thy Creator, and proclaim that which the King of existence and the Goal of all desire hath proclaimed: "Increase my wonder and amazement at Thee, O God!"

With the sixth, soar upon the wings of submission and contentment unto the cities of the Unseen, that thou mayest enter the expanses of utter nothingness wherein thou shalt die to thy self and live in Him Who hath fashioned thee.

With the seventh, drown thyself in the depths of eternity, that death may not overtake thee, and that thou mayest abide forever in the shadow of the everlasting Face of God. Thereupon shall the fragrance of the All-Glorious be diffused from the realm of the All-Merciful, and thy heart shall grieve no more over the vicissitudes of a fleeting life and the turns of a transient fortune.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH – THE CALL OF THE DIVINE BELOVED

Without even tasting a dewdrop of the degrees of self-surrender

Others, without receiving the least intimation of "no God is there", pass beyond the highest horizon of "but God"; without even tasting a dewdrop of the degrees of self-surrender ascend unto the kingdom of life everlasting; and without partaking from

the wellspring of utter abnegation quaff the wine of the Ancient of Days. These souls, as they traverse the stages of wayfaring and ascend unto the stations of reunion, walk a different path and occupy a different rank.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH – THE CALL OF THE DIVINE BELOVED

II Excerpts from the writings of The Báb

The station of nothingness compared to the Reality of things

I swear by the most sacred Essence of God that but one line of the Words uttered by Him is more sublime than the words uttered by all that dwell on earth. Nay, I beg forgiveness for making this comparison. How could the reflections of the sun in the mirror compare with the wondrous rays of the sun in the visible heaven? The station of one is that of nothingness, while the station of the other, by the righteousness of God—hallowed and magnified be His Name—is that of the Reality of things....

THE BÁB – THE PERSIAN BAYÁN

III Excerpts from the writings of 'Abd'ul-Bahá

Self and Unity

If five people meet together to seek for truth, they must begin by cutting themselves free from all their own special conditions and renouncing all preconceived ideas. In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential.

If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is necessary if we would reach truth, for truth is one.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - PARIS TALKS Nº 41

Self-abnegation for the good of all people

Then it is clear that the honour and exaltation of man cannot reside solely in material delights and earthly benefits. This material felicity is wholly secondary, while the exaltation of man resides primarily in such virtues and attainments as are the adornments of the human reality. These consist in divine blessings, heavenly bounties, heartfelt emotions, the love and knowledge of God, the education of the people, the perceptions of the mind, and the discoveries of science. They consist in justice and equity, truthfulness and benevolence, inner courage and innate humanity, safeguarding the rights of others and preserving the sanctity of covenants and agreements. They consist in rectitude of conduct under all circumstances, love of truth under all conditions, self-abnegation for the good of all people, kindness and compassion for all nations, obedience to the teachings

of God, service to the heavenly Kingdom, guidance for all mankind, and education for all races and nations. This is the felicity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the contingent realm! This is eternal life and heavenly honour!

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS

Self-abnegation and good deeds of the Christians

Now observe closely how great the sincerity, the self-abnegation, the spiritual emotions, the pure intentions, and the good deeds of the Christian believers must have been for Galen—a philosopher and physician who was not himself a Christian—to attest to the morals and the perfections of these people and call them true philosophers. Such virtues and qualities cannot be attained through good deeds alone. If virtue only meant that some good be obtained and bestowed, then why do we not praise this burning lamp which lights the room, even though its light is without a doubt a good thing? The sun nurtures all earthly things and fosters their growth and development by its heat and light—what greater good is there than this? Nonetheless, since this good does not flow from goodly motives and from the love and knowledge of God, it does not impress in the least. But when someone offers a cup of water to another, he is shown appreciation and gratitude. An unthinking person might say, “This sun which gives light to the world and manifests this great bounty must surely be praised and glorified. For why should we praise a man for such a modest gift and not yield thanks to the sun?” But if we were to gaze with the eye of truth, we would see that the modest gift bestowed by this person stems from the stirrings of conscience and is therefore praiseworthy, whereas the light and heat of the sun are not due to this and thus are not worthy of our praise and gratitude. In like manner, while those who perform good deeds are to be lauded, if these deeds do not flow from the knowledge and love of God they are assuredly imperfect.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS

Inordinate desires and the higher self

Regarding the statement in The Hidden Words, that man must renounce his own self, the meaning is that he must renounce his inordinate desires, his selfish purposes and the promptings of his human self, and seek out the holy breathings of the spirit, and follow the yearnings of his higher self, and immerse himself in the sea of sacrifice, with his heart fixed upon the beauty of the All-Glorious.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 181

Tests and the Self

Thou didst write of afflictive tests that have assailed thee. To the loyal soul, a test is but God's grace and favor; for the valiant doth joyously press forward to furious battle on the field of anguish, when the coward, whimpering with fright, will tremble and shake. So too, the proficient student, who hath with great competence mastered his subjects and committed them to memory, will happily exhibit his

skills before his examiners on the day of his tests. So too will solid gold wondrously gleam and shine out in the assayer's fire.

It is clear, then, that tests and trials are, for sanctified souls, but God's bounty and grace, while to the weak, they are a calamity, unexpected and sudden.

These tests, even as thou didst write, do but cleanse the spotting of self from off the mirror of the heart, till the Sun of Truth can cast its rays thereon; for there is no veil more obstructive than the self, and however tenuous that veil may be, at the last it will completely shut a person out, and deprive him of his portion of eternal grace.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 155

O ye two handmaids of God! Now is the time for you to become as bounteous cups that are filled to overflowing, and even as the reviving gusts that blow from the Abhá Paradise, to scatter the fragrance of musk across that land. Release yourselves from this world's life, and at every stage long ye for nonexistence; for when the ray returneth to the sun, it is wiped out, and when the drop cometh to the sea, it vanisheth, and when the true lover findeth his Beloved, he yieldeth up his soul.

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favor and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth. The martyr's field is the place of detachment from self, that the anthems of eternity may be upraised. Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendors; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things. This is boundless grace; this is the highest sovereignty; this is the life that dieth not. All else save this is at the last but manifest perdition and great loss.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 36

The Fast and the Self

Ye had written of the fasting month. Fortunate are ye to have obeyed the commandment of God, and kept this fast during the holy season. For this material fast is an outer token of the spiritual fast; it is a symbol of self-restraint, the withholding of oneself from all appetites of the self, taking on the characteristics of the spirit, being carried away by the breathings of heaven and catching fire from the love of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 35

Self and enmity

These are the days of seed sowing. These are the days of tree planting. The bountiful bestowals of God are successive. He who sows a seed in this day will behold his reward in the fruits and harvest of the heavenly Kingdom. This timely seed, when planted in the hearts of the beloved of God, will be watered by showers of divine mercy and warmed by the sunshine of divine love. Its fruitage and flower shall be the solidarity of mankind, the perfection of justice and the praiseworthy attributes of heaven manifest in humanity. All who sow such a seed and plant such a tree according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh shall surely witness this divine outcome in the degrees of its perfection and will attain unto the good pleasure of the Merciful One.

Today the nations of the world are self-engaged, occupied with mortal and transitory accomplishments, consumed by the fires of passion and self. Self is dominant; enmity and animosity prevail. Nations and peoples are thinking only of their worldly interests and outcomes. The clash of war and din of strife are heard among them. But the friends of the Blessed Perfection have no thoughts save the thoughts of heaven and the love of God. Therefore, you must without delay employ your powers in spreading the effulgent glow of the love of God and so order your lives that you may be known and seen as examples of its radiance. You must deal with all in loving-kindness in order that this precious seed entrusted to your planting may continue to grow and bring forth its perfect fruit. The love and mercy of God will accomplish this through you if you have love in your own heart.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF
UNIVERSAL PEACE Nº 3

Knowledge of Self

Knowledge is of two kinds: existential knowledge and formal knowledge, that is, intuitive knowledge and conceptual knowledge.

The knowledge that people generally have of things consists in conceptualization and observation; that is, either the object is conceived through the rational faculty, or through its observation a form is produced in the mirror of the heart. The scope of this knowledge is quite limited, as it is conditioned upon acquisition and attainment.

The other kind of knowledge, however, which is existential or intuitive knowledge, is like man's knowledge and awareness of his own self.

For example, the mind and the spirit of man are aware of all his states and conditions, of all the parts and members of his body, and of all his physical sensations, as well as of his spiritual powers, perceptions, and conditions. This is an existential knowledge through which man realizes his own condition. He both senses and comprehends it, for the spirit encompasses the body and is aware of its

sensations and powers. This knowledge is not the result of effort and acquisition. It is an existential matter; it is pure bounty.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS Nº 40

The Self and the Material World

Question· What is the truth of the story of Adam and His eating from the tree?

(...) These verses of the Torah have therefore numerous meanings. We will explain one of them and will say that by “Adam” is meant the spirit of Adam and by “Eve” is meant His self. For in certain passages of the Sacred Scriptures where women are mentioned, the intended meaning is the human self. By “the tree of good and evil” is meant the material world, for the heavenly realm of the spirit is pure goodness and absolute radiance, but in the material world light and darkness, good and evil, and all manner of opposing realities are to be found.

The meaning of the serpent is attachment to the material world. This attachment of the spirit to the material world led to the banishment of the self and spirit of Adam from the realm of freedom to the world of bondage and caused Him to turn from the kingdom of Divine Unity to the world of human existence. When once the self and spirit of Adam entered the material world, He departed from the paradise of freedom and descended into the realm of bondage. He had abided in the heights of sanctity and absolute goodness, and set foot thereafter in the world of good and evil.

By “the tree of life” is meant the highest degree of the world of existence, that is, the station of the Word of God and His universal Manifestation. That station was indeed well guarded, until it appeared and shone forth in the supreme revelation of His universal Manifestation. For the station of Adam, with regard to the appearance and manifestation of the divine perfections, was that of the embryo; the station of Christ was that of coming of age and maturation; and the dawning of the Most Great Luminary was the station of the perfection of the essence and the attributes. That is why in the all-highest Paradise the tree of life alludes to the focal centre of absolute sanctity and purity, that is, the universal Manifestation of God. For from the days of Adam until the time of Christ there was little mention of life eternal and of the all-embracing perfections of the Kingdom on high. This tree of life alludes to the station of the reality of Christ. It was planted in His Dispensation and adorned with everlasting fruits.

Now consider how closely this interpretation conforms to reality. For when the spirit and the self of Adam became attached to the material world, they passed from the realm of freedom into the realm of bondage; this condition was perpetuated with each succeeding generation, and this attachment of spirit and self to the material world—which is sin—was inherited by His descendants. This attachment is the serpent which will forever be in the midst of, and at enmity with, the spirits of the descendants of Adam, for attachment to the world has become the cause of the bondage of the spirits. This bondage is that sin which has been

transmitted from Adam to His descendants, for it has deprived men of recognizing their essential spirituality and attaining to exalted stations.

When the holy breaths of Christ and the sanctified lights of the Most Great Luminary were spread abroad, human realities—that is, those souls who turned towards the Word of God and partook of His manifold grace—were saved from this attachment and sin, were granted eternal life, were delivered from the chains of bondage, and entered the realm of freedom. They were purged of earthly vices and endowed with heavenly virtues. This is the meaning of Christ's words that I gave My blood for the life of the world. That is, I chose to bear all these trials, afflictions, and calamities, even the most great martyrdom, to attain this ultimate objective and to ensure the remission of sins—that is, the detachment of spirits from the material world and their attraction to the divine realm—that souls may arise who will be the very essence of guidance and the manifestations of the perfections of the Kingdom on high.

Note that if these words were taken literally, as imagined by the people of the Book, it would be sheer injustice and absolute predestination. If Adam sinned in approaching the forbidden tree, what then was the sin of glorious Abraham, the Friend of God, and the error of Moses, Who conversed with God? What was the offence of Noah the Prophet and the transgression of truth-speaking Joseph? What was the fault of the Prophets of God and the failure of John the Chaste? Would divine justice have suffered these luminous Manifestations to endure, by reason of Adam's sin, the torment of hell until such time as Christ should come and by His sacrifice rescue them from the nethermost fire? Such a notion is beyond the pale of every rule and principle, and no rational person can ever accept it.

Rather, the meaning is that which was already mentioned. Adam is the spirit of Adam and Eve His self; the tree is the material world and the serpent is attachment to it. This attachment, which is sin, has been transmitted to the descendants of Adam. Through the breaths of holiness, Christ rescued souls from this attachment and delivered them from this sin.

This sin in Adam, moreover, is relative to His station. Although this worldly attachment produced substantial results, yet in relation to attachment to the spiritual realm it is nonetheless regarded as a sin, and the truth of the saying, "The good deeds of the righteous are the sins of the near ones" is established. Again, it is like the power of the body, which is imperfect in relation to the power of the spirit—indeed, it is sheer weakness in comparison. Likewise, material life, compared to eternal existence and the life of the Kingdom, is regarded as death. Thus Christ referred to this material life as death and said, "let the dead bury their dead". Although those souls enjoyed material life, yet in His eyes that life was even as death.

“Guarding of oneself”: acquiring attributes of perfection

An authoritative Tradition states, “As for him who is one of the learned, he must guard himself, defend his faith, oppose his passions and obey the commandments of his Lord. It is then the duty of the people to pattern themselves after him.” Since these illustrious and holy words embody all the conditions of learning, a brief commentary on their meaning is appropriate. Whoever is lacking in these divine qualifications and does not demonstrate these inescapable requirements in his own life, should not be referred to as learned and is not worthy to serve as a model for the believers.

The first of these requirements is to guard one’s own self. It is obvious that this does not refer to protecting oneself from calamities and material tests, for the Prophets and saints were, each and every one, subjected to the bitterest afflictions that the world has to offer, and were targets for all the cruelties and aggressions of mankind. They sacrificed their lives for the welfare of the people, and with all their hearts they hastened to the place of their martyrdom; and with their inward and outward perfections they arrayed humanity in new garments of excellent qualities, both acquired and inborn. The primary meaning of this guarding of oneself is to acquire the attributes of spiritual and material perfection.

The first attribute of perfection is learning and the cultural attainments of the mind, and this eminent station is achieved when the individual combines in himself a thorough knowledge of those complex and transcendental realities pertaining to God, of the fundamental truths of Qur’anic political and religious law, of the contents of the sacred Scriptures of other faiths, and of those regulations and procedures which would contribute to the progress and civilization of this distinguished country. He should in addition be informed as to the laws and principles, the customs, conditions and manners, and the material and moral virtues characterizing the statecraft of other nations, and should be well versed in all the useful branches of learning of the day, and study the historical records of bygone governments and peoples. For if a learned individual has no knowledge of the sacred Scriptures and the entire field of divine and natural science, of religious jurisprudence and the arts of government and the varied learning of the time and the great events of history, he might prove unequal to an emergency, and this is inconsistent with the necessary qualification of comprehensive knowledge.

If for example a spiritually learned Muslim is conducting a debate with a Christian and he knows nothing of the glorious melodies of the Gospel, he will, no matter how much he imparts of the Qur’án and its truths, be unable to convince the Christian, and his words will fall on deaf ears. Should, however, the Christian observe that the Muslim is better versed in the fundamentals of Christianity than the Christian priests themselves, and understands the purport of the Scriptures even better than they, he will gladly accept the Muslim’s arguments, and he would indeed have no other recourse.

When the Chief of the Exile came into the presence of that Luminary of divine wisdom, of salvation and certitude, the Imám Ridá—had the Imám, that mine of knowledge, failed in the course of their interview to base his arguments on authority appropriate and familiar to the Exilarch, the latter would never have acknowledged the greatness of His Holiness.

The state is, moreover, based upon two potent forces, the legislative and the executive. The focal center of the executive power is the government, while that of the legislative is the learned—and if this latter great support and pillar should prove defective, how is it conceivable that the state should stand?

In view of the fact that at the present time such fully developed and comprehensively learned individuals are hard to come by, and the government and people are in dire need of order and direction, it is essential to establish a body of scholars the various groups of whose membership would each be expert in one of the aforementioned branches of knowledge. This body should with the greatest energy and vigor deliberate as to all present and future requirements, and bring about equilibrium and order.

Up to now the religious law has not been given a decisive role in our courts, because each of the ulama has been handing down decrees as he saw fit, based on his arbitrary interpretation and personal opinion. For example, two men will go to law, and one of the ulama will find for the plaintiff and another for the defendant. It may even happen that in one and the same case two conflicting decisions will be handed down by the same mujtahid, on the grounds that he was inspired first in one direction and then in the other. There can be no doubt that this state of affairs has confused every important issue and must jeopardize the very foundations of society. For neither the plaintiff nor the defendant ever loses hope of eventual success, and each in turn will waste his life in the attempt to secure a later verdict which would reverse the previous one. Their entire time is thus given over to litigation, with the result that their life instead of being devoted to beneficial undertakings and necessary personal affairs, is completely involved with the dispute. Indeed, these two litigants might just as well be dead, for they can serve their government and community not a particle. If, however, a definite and final verdict were forthcoming, the duly convicted party would perforce give up all hope of reopening the case, and would then be relieved on that score and would go back to looking after his own concerns and those of others.

Since the primary means for securing the peace and tranquillity of the people, and the most effective agency for the advancement of high and low alike, is this all-important matter, it is incumbent on those learned members of the great consultative assembly who are thoroughly versed in the divine law to evolve a single, direct and definite procedure for the settlement of litigations. This instrument should then be published throughout the country by order of the king, and its provisions should be strictly adhered to. This all-important question requires the most urgent attention.

The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

The third requirement of perfection is to arise with complete sincerity and purity of purpose to educate the masses· to exert the utmost effort to instruct them in the various branches of learning and useful sciences, to encourage the development of modern progress, to widen the scope of commerce, industry and the arts, to further such measures as will increase the people's wealth. For the mass of the population is uninformed as to these vital agencies which would constitute an immediate remedy for society's chronic ills.

It is essential that scholars and the spiritually learned should undertake in all sincerity and purity of intent and for the sake of God alone, to counsel and exhort the masses and clarify their vision with that collyrium which is knowledge. For today the people out of the depths of their superstition, imagine that any individual who believes in God and His signs, and in the Prophets and divine Revelations and laws, and is a devout and God-fearing person, must of necessity remain idle and spend his days in sloth, so as to be considered in the sight of God as one who has forsaken the world and its vanities, set his heart on the life to come, and isolated himself from human beings in order to draw nearer to God. Since this theme will be developed elsewhere in the present text, We shall leave it for the moment.

Other attributes of perfection are to fear God, to love God by loving His servants, to exercise mildness and forbearance and calm, to be sincere, amenable, clement and compassionate; to have resolution and courage, trustworthiness and energy, to strive and struggle, to be generous, loyal, without malice, to have zeal and a sense of honor, to be high-minded and magnanimous, and to have regard for the rights of others. Whoever is lacking in these excellent human qualities is defective. If We were to explain the inner meanings of each one of these attributes, "the poem would take up seventy maunds of paper."

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE SECRET OF DIVINE CIVILIZATION

Self-interest vs. goodly intention

The third virtue of humanity is goodly intention, which is the foundation of all good deeds. Some seekers after truth have held intention to be superior to action, for a goodly intention is absolute light and is entirely sanctified from the least trace of malice, scheming, or deception. Now, one can perform an action which appears to be righteous but which is in reality prompted by self-interest. For

example, a butcher raises a sheep and guards its safety, but this good deed of the butcher is motivated by the hope of profit, and the end result of all this care will be the slaughter of the poor sheep. How many are the goodly and righteous deeds that are in reality prompted by self-interest! But the pure intention is sanctified above such faults.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS Nº 84

Selflessness and true service

It is incumbent upon you to ponder in your hearts and meditate upon His words, and humbly to call upon Him, and to put away self in His heavenly Cause. These are the things that will make of you signs of guidance unto all mankind, and brilliant stars shining down from the all-highest horizon, and towering trees in the Abhá Paradise.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 199

Selflessness, Sincerity and Service

Sincerity is the foundation-stone of faith. That is, a religious individual must disregard his personal desires and seek in whatever way he can wholeheartedly to serve the public interest; and it is impossible for a human being to turn aside from his own selfish advantages and sacrifice his own good for the good of the community except through true religious faith. For self-love is kneaded into the very clay of man, and it is not possible that, without any hope of a substantial reward, he should neglect his own present material good. That individual, however, who puts his faith in God and believes in the words of God—because he is promised and certain of a plentiful reward in the next life, and because worldly benefits as compared to the abiding joy and glory of future planes of existence are nothing to him—will for the sake of God abandon his own peace and profit and will freely consecrate his heart and soul to the common good. “A man, too, there is who selleth his very self out of desire to please God.”

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE SECRET OF DIVINE CIVILIZATION

Self-sacrifice and spiritual results

(Letter written by a woman who gave her long hair as a donation)

O my well-beloved daughter of the Kingdom! The letter thou hadst written to Dr. Esslemont was forwarded by him to the Land of Desire [The Holy Land]. I read it all through with the greatest attention. On the one hand, I was deeply touched, for thou hadst sheared off those fair tresses of thine with the shears of detachment from this world and of self-sacrifice in the path of the Kingdom of God. And on the other, I was greatly pleased, for that dearly beloved daughter hath evinced so great a spirit of self-sacrifice as to offer up so precious a part of her body in the pathway of the Cause of God. Hadst thou sought my opinion, I would in no wise have

consented that thou shouldst shear off even a single thread of thy comely and wavy locks; nay, I myself would have contributed in thy name for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. This deed of thine is, however, an eloquent testimony to thy noble spirit of self-sacrifice. Thou hast, verily, sacrificed thy life and great will be the spiritual results thou shalt obtain. Rest thou confident that day by day thou shalt progress and wax greater in firmness and in constancy. The bounties of Bahá'u'lláh shall compass thee about and the joyful tidings from on high shall time and again be imparted unto thee. And though it be thine hair that thou hast sacrificed, yet thou shalt be filled with the Spirit, and though it be this perishable member of thy body which thou hast laid down in the path of God, yet thou shalt find the Divine Gift, shalt behold the Celestial Beauty, obtain imperishable glory and attain unto everlasting life.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 62

The only real division

The only division that is real is this: There are heavenly men and earthly men; self-sacrificing servants of humanity in the love of the Most High, bringing harmony and unity, teaching peace and goodwill to men. On the other hand there are those selfish men, haters of their brethren, in whose hearts prejudice has replaced loving kindness, and whose influence breeds discord and strife.

To which race or to which color belong these two divisions of men, to the White, to the Yellow, to the Black, to the East or to the West, to the North or to the South? If these are God's divisions, why should we invent others?

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - PARIS TALKS Nº 45
"THE FIFTH PRINCIPLE: THE ABOLITION OF PREJUDICES"

Balance between Self-abnegation and attainment to livelihood

Man must be lofty in endeavor. He must seek to become heavenly and spiritual, to find the pathway to the threshold of God and become acceptable in the sight of God. This is eternal glory—to be near to God. This is eternal sovereignty—to be imbued with the virtues of the human world. This is boundless blessing—to be entirely sanctified and holy above every stain and dross.

Consider the human world. See how nations have come and gone. They have been of all minds and purposes. Some were mere captives of self and desire, engulfed in the passions of the lower nature. They attained to wealth, to the comforts of life, to fame. And what was the final outcome? Utter evanescence and oblivion. Reflect upon this. Look upon it with the eye of admonition. No trace of them remains, no fruit, no result, no benefit; they have gone utterly—complete effacement.

Souls have appeared in the world who were pure and undefiled, who have directed their attention toward God, seeking the reward of God, attaining nearness to the threshold of God, acceptable in the good pleasure of God. They have been the lights of guidance and stars of the Supreme Concurrence.

Consider these souls, shining like stars in the horizon of sanctity forevermore. It must not be implied that one should give up avocation and attainment to livelihood. On the contrary, in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh monasticism and asceticism are not sanctioned. In this great Cause the light of guidance is shining and radiant. Bahá'u'lláh has even said that occupation and labor are devotion. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion, at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. Bahá'u'lláh has thereby encouraged action and stimulated service. But the energies of the heart must not be attached to these things; the soul must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy, the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source.

We have forsaken the path of God; we have given up attention to the divine Kingdom; we have not severed the heart from worldly attractions; we have become defiled with qualities which are not praiseworthy in the sight of God; we are so completely steeped in material issues and tendencies that we are not partakers of the virtues of humanity.

Little reflection, little admonition is necessary for us to realize the purpose of our creation. What a heavenly potentiality God has deposited within us! What a power God has given our spirits! He has endowed us with a power to penetrate the realities of things; but we must be self-abnegating, we must have pure spirits, pure intentions, and strive with heart and soul while in the human world to attain everlasting glory.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE Nº 66

What it means to be “entirely forgetful of self”

With reference to what is meant by an individual becoming entirely forgetful of self: the intent is that he should rise up and sacrifice himself in the true sense, that is, he should obliterate the promptings of the human condition, and rid himself of such characteristics as are worthy of blame and constitute the gloomy darkness of this life on earth—not that he should allow his physical health to deteriorate and his body to become infirm.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 153

Angels: Beings released from the chains of self

The meaning of “angels” is the confirmations of God and His celestial powers. Likewise angels are blessed beings who have severed all ties with this nether world, have been released from the chains of self and the desires of the flesh, and anchored their hearts to the heavenly realms of the Lord. These are of the Kingdom, heavenly; these are of God, spiritual; these are revealers of God's abounding grace; these are dawning-points of His spiritual bestowals.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 39

The Holy Writings have the “dynamic power to motivate the inner self of Man”

Direct thine attention to the holy Tablets; read thou the Ishráqát, Tajallíyyát, the Words of Paradise, the Glad Tidings, the Ṭarázát, the Most Holy Book. Then wilt thou see that today these heavenly Teachings are the remedy for a sick and suffering world, and a healing balm for the sores on the body of mankind. They are the spirit of life, the ark of salvation, the magnet to draw down eternal glory, the dynamic power to motivate the inner self of man.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 39

Sacrifice: From Self to Selflessness

As to the fourth significance of sacrifice. It is the principle that a reality sacrifices its own characteristics. Man must sever himself from the influences of the world of matter, from the world of nature and its laws; for the material world is the world of corruption and death. It is the world of evil and darkness, of animalism and ferocity, bloodthirstiness, ambition and avarice, of self-worship, egotism and passion; it is the world of nature. Man must strip himself of all these imperfections, must sacrifice these tendencies which are peculiar to the outer and material world of existence.

On the other hand, man must acquire heavenly qualities and attain divine attributes. He must become the image and likeness of God. He must seek the bounty of the eternal, become the manifestor of the love of God, the light of guidance, the tree of life and the depository of the bounties of God. That is to say, man must sacrifice the qualities and attributes of the world of nature for the qualities and attributes of the world of God. For instance, consider the substance we call iron. Observe its qualities; it is solid, black, cold. These are the characteristics of iron. When the same iron absorbs heat from the fire, it sacrifices its attribute of solidity for the attribute of fluidity. It sacrifices its attribute of darkness for the attribute of light, which is a quality of the fire. It sacrifices its attribute of coldness to the quality of heat which the fire possesses so that in the iron there remains no solidity, darkness or cold. It becomes illumined and transformed, having sacrificed its qualities to the qualities and attributes of the fire.

Likewise, man, when separated and severed from the attributes of the world of nature, sacrifices the qualities and exigencies of that mortal realm and manifests the perfections of the Kingdom, just as the qualities of the iron disappeared and the qualities of the fire appeared in their place.

Every man trained through the teachings of God and illumined by the light of His guidance, who becomes a believer in God and His signs and is enkindled with the fire of the love of God, sacrifices the imperfections of nature for the sake of divine perfections. Consequently, every perfect person, every illumined, heavenly individual stands in the station of sacrifice. It is my hope that through the assistance and providence of God and through the bounties of the Kingdom of

Abhá you may be entirely severed from the imperfections of the world of nature, purified from selfish, human desires, receiving life from the Kingdom of Abhá and attaining heavenly graces. May the divine light become manifest upon your faces, the fragrances of holiness refresh your nostrils and the breath of the Holy Spirit quicken you with eternal life.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE № 133

A revolution in his inner self

One of the emigrants who died along the way to the Holy Land was Zaynu'l-'Ábidín of Yazd. When, in Manshád, this devoted man first heard the cry of God, he was awakened to restless life. A holy passion stirred him, his soul was made new. The light of guidance flamed from the lamp of his heart; the love of God sparked a revolution in the country of his inner self. Carried away by love for the Loved One's beauty, he left the home that was dear to him and set out for the Desired Land.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - MEMORIALS OF THE FAITHFUL № 29

Conversation with the “higher self”

“Can a departed soul converse with someone still on earth?”

'Abdu'l-Bahá: “A conversation can be held, but not as our conversation. There is no doubt that the forces of the higher worlds interplay with the forces of this plane. The heart of man is open to inspiration; this is spiritual communication. As in a dream one talks with a friend while the mouth is silent, so is it in the conversation of the spirit. A man may converse with the ego within him saying: ‘May I do this? Would it be advisable for me to do this work?’ Such as this is conversation with the higher self.”

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - PARIS TALKS № 57 “THE PROGRESS OF THE SOUL”

Sacrifice of self: nearness is likeness

Bahá'u'lláh proclaims in the Hidden Words that God inspires His servants and is revealed through them. He says, “Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.” Therefore, we learn that nearness to God is possible through devotion to Him, through entrance into the Kingdom and service to humanity; it is attained by unity with mankind and through loving-kindness to all; it is dependent upon investigation of truth, acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, service in the cause of universal peace and personal sanctification. In a word, nearness to God necessitates sacrifice of self, severance and the giving up of all to Him. Nearness is likeness.

Behold how the sun shines upon all creation, but only surfaces that are pure and polished can reflect its glory and light. The darkened soul has no portion of the revelation of the glorious effulgence of reality; and the soil of self, unable to take advantage of that light, does not produce growth. The eyes of the blind cannot

behold the rays of the sun; only pure eyes with sound and perfect sight can receive them. Green and living trees can absorb the bounty of the sun; dead roots and withered branches are destroyed by it. Therefore, man must seek capacity and develop readiness. As long as he lacks susceptibility to divine influences, he is incapable of reflecting the light and assimilating its benefits. Sterile soil will produce nothing, even if the cloud of mercy pours rain upon it a thousand years. We must make the soil of our hearts receptive and fertile by tilling in order that the rain of divine mercy may refresh them and bring forth roses and hyacinths of heavenly planting. We must have perceiving eyes in order to see the light of the sun. We must cleanse the nostril in order to scent the fragrances of the divine rose garden. We must render the ears attentive in order to hear the summons of the supreme Kingdom. No matter how beautiful the melody, the ear that is deaf cannot hear it, cannot receive the call of the Supreme Concurrence. The nostril that is clogged with dust cannot inhale the fragrant odors of the blossoms. Therefore, we must ever strive for capacity and seek readiness. As long as we lack susceptibility, the beauties and bounties of God cannot penetrate. Christ spoke a parable in which He said His words were like the seeds of the sower; some fall upon stony ground, some upon sterile soil, some are choked by thorns and thistles, but some fall upon the ready, receptive and fertile ground of human hearts. When seeds are cast upon sterile soil, no growth follows. Those cast upon stony ground will grow a short time, but lacking deep roots will wither away. Thorns and thistles destroy others completely, but the seed cast in good ground brings forth harvest and fruitage.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE Nº 55

Violators of the Covenant “lost in passion and self and seeking leadership”

The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe. These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected. These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features; but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and shall cast ashore the bodies of the dead, for it cannot retain them. Thus it is seen that the ocean of the Covenant hath surged and surged until it hath thrown out the dead bodies—souls that are deprived of the Spirit of God and are lost in passion and self and are seeking leadership. This foam of the ocean shall not endure and shall soon disperse and vanish, while the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar....

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 185

How to consult like the Supreme Concurrence: do not be self-opinionated

It is my hope that the meetings of the Bahá'í Assembly in New York shall become like meetings of the Supreme Concurrence. When you assemble, you must reflect the lights of the heavenly Kingdom. Let your hearts be as mirrors in which the radiance of the Sun of Reality is visible. Each bosom must be a telegraph station—one terminus of the wire attached to the soul, the other fixed in the Supreme

Concourse—so that inspiration may descend from the Kingdom of Abhá and questions of reality be discussed. Then opinions will coincide with truth; day by day there will be progression, and the meetings will become more radiant and spiritual. This attainment is conditioned upon unity and agreement. The more perfect the love and agreement, the more the divine confirmations and assistance of the Blessed Perfection will descend. May this prove to be a divine meeting, and may boundless bestowals come down upon you. Strive with all your hearts and with the very power of life that unity and love may continually increase. In discussions look toward the reality without being self-opinionated. Let no one assert and insist upon his own mere opinion; nay, rather, let each investigate reality with the greatest love and fellowship. Consult upon every matter, and when one presents the point of view of reality itself, that shall be acceptable to all. Then will spiritual unity increase among you, individual illumination will be greater, happiness will be more abundant, and you will draw nearer and nearer to the Kingdom of God.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE Nº 64

The Manifestations of God and the dual nature of Man

As we have before indicated, this human reality stands between the higher and the lower in man, between the world of the animal and the world of Divinity. When the animal proclivity in man becomes predominant, he sinks even lower than the brute. When the heavenly powers are triumphant in his nature, he becomes the noblest and most superior being in the world of creation. All the imperfections found in the animal are found in man. In him there is antagonism, hatred and selfish struggle for existence; in his nature lurk jealousy, revenge, ferocity, cunning, hypocrisy, greed, injustice and tyranny. So to speak, the reality of man is clad in the outer garment of the animal, the habiliments of the world of nature, the world of darkness, imperfections and unlimited baseness.

On the other hand, we find in him justice, sincerity, faithfulness, knowledge, wisdom, illumination, mercy and pity, coupled with intellect, comprehension, the power to grasp the realities of things and the ability to penetrate the truths of existence. All these great perfections are to be found in man. Therefore, we say that man is a reality which stands between light and darkness. From this standpoint his nature is threefold· animal, human and divine. The animal nature is darkness; the heavenly is light in light.

The holy Manifestations of God come into the world to dispel the darkness of the animal, or physical, nature of man, to purify him from his imperfections in order that his heavenly and spiritual nature may become quickened, his divine qualities awakened, his perfections visible, his potential powers revealed and all the virtues of the world of humanity latent within him may come to life. These holy Manifestations of God are the Educators and Trainers of the world of existence, the Teachers of the world of humanity. They liberate man from the darkness of the world of nature, deliver him from despair, error, ignorance, imperfections and all evil qualities. They clothe him in the garment of perfections and exalted virtues. Men are ignorant; the Manifestations of God make them wise. They are animalistic;

the Manifestations make them human. They are savage and cruel; the Manifestations lead them into kingdoms of light and love. They are unjust; the Manifestations cause them to become just. Man is selfish; They sever him from self and desire. Man is haughty; They make him meek, humble and friendly. He is earthly; They make him heavenly. Men are material; the Manifestations transform them into divine semblance. They are immature children; the Manifestations develop them into maturity. Man is poor; They endow him with wealth. Man is base, treacherous and mean; the Manifestations of God uplift him into dignity, nobility and loftiness.

These holy Manifestations liberate the world of humanity from the imperfections which beset it and cause men to appear in the beauty of heavenly perfections. Were it not for the coming of these holy Manifestations of God, all mankind would be found on the plane of the animal. They would remain darkened and ignorant like those who have been denied schooling and who never had a teacher or trainer. Undoubtedly, such unfortunates will continue in their condition of need and deprivation.

If the mountains, hills and plains of the material world are left wild and uncultivated under the rule of nature, they will remain an unbroken wilderness, no fruitful tree to be found anywhere upon them. A true cultivator changes this forest and jungle into a garden, training its trees to bring forth fruit and causing flowers to grow in place of thorns and thistles. The holy Manifestations are the ideal Gardeners of human souls, the divine Cultivators of human hearts. The world of existence is but a jungle of disorder and confusion, a state of nature producing nothing but fruitless, useless trees. The ideal Gardeners train these wild, uncultivated human trees, cause them to become fruitful, water and cultivate them day by day so that they adorn the world of existence and continue to flourish in the utmost beauty.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE № 139

Self-interest and religious prejudice

The Prophets come into the world to guide and educate humanity so that the animal nature of man may disappear and the divinity of his powers become awakened. The divine aspect or spiritual nature consists of the breaths of the Holy Spirit. The second birth of which Jesus has spoken refers to the appearance of this heavenly nature in man. It is expressed in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and he who is baptized by the Holy Spirit is a veritable manifestation of divine mercy to mankind. Then he becomes just and kind to all humanity; he entertains prejudice and ill will toward none; he shuns no nation or people.

The foundations of the divine religions are one. If we investigate these foundations, we discover much ground for agreement, but if we consider the imitations of forms and ancestral beliefs, we find points of disagreement and division; for these imitations differ, while the sources and foundations are one and the same. That is to say, the fundamentals are conducive to unity, but imitations are the cause of disunion and dismemberment. Whosoever is lacking in love for humanity or

manifests hatred and bigotry toward any part of it violates the foundation and source of his own belief and is holding to forms and imitations. Jesus Christ declares that the sun rises upon the evil and the good, and the rain descends upon the just and the unjust—upon all humanity alike. Christ was a divine mercy which shone upon all mankind, the medium for the descent of the bounty of God, and the bounty of God is transcendent, unrestricted, universal.

The revered minister read from the words of the Gospel, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” The century has dawned when the Spirit of Truth can reveal these verities to mankind, proclaim that very Word, establish the real foundations of Christianity and deliver the nations and peoples from the bondage of forms and imitations. The cause of discord, prejudice and animosity will be removed, the basis of love and amity be established.

Therefore, all of you must strive with heart and soul in order that enmity may disappear entirely and that strife and hatred pass away absolutely from the midst of the human world. You must listen to the admonition of this Spirit of Truth. You must follow the example and footprints of Jesus Christ. Read the Gospels. Jesus Christ was mercy itself, was love itself. He even prayed in behalf of His executioners—for those who crucified Him—saying, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” If they knew what they were doing, they would not have done it. Consider how kind Jesus Christ was, that even upon the cross He prayed for His oppressors. We must follow His example. We must emulate the Prophets of God. We must follow Jesus Christ. We must free ourselves from all these imitations which are the source of darkness in the world.

I shall ask you a question. Did God create us for love or for enmity? Did He create us for peace or discord? Surely He has created us for love; therefore, we should live in accordance with His will. Do not listen to anything that is prejudiced, for self-interest prompts men to be prejudiced. They are thoughtful only of their own will and purposes. They live and move in darkness.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE № 16:
TALK AT UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

Lack of self-interest differentiates man from animal

If man were to care for himself only he would be nothing but an animal, for only the animals are thus egoistic. If you bring a thousand sheep to a well to kill nine hundred and ninety-nine, the one remaining sheep would go on grazing, not thinking of the others and worrying not at all about the lost, never bothering that its own kind had passed away, or had perished or been killed. To look after one's self only is, therefore, an animal propensity. It is the animal propensity to live solitary and alone. It is the animal proclivity to look after one's own comfort. But man was created to be a man—to be fair, to be just, to be merciful, to be kind to all his species, never to be willing that he himself be well off while others are in misery and distress. This is an attribute of the animal and not of man. Nay, rather, man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order that others may enjoy

wealth; he should enjoy trouble for himself that others may enjoy happiness and well-being. This is the attribute of man. This is becoming of man. Otherwise man is not man—he is less than the animal.

The man who thinks only of himself and is thoughtless of others is undoubtedly inferior to the animal because the animal is not possessed of the reasoning faculty. The animal is excused; but in man there is reason, the faculty of justice, the faculty of mercifulness. Possessing all these faculties, he must not leave them unused. He who is so hard-hearted as to think only of his own comfort, such an one will not be called man.

Man is he who forgets his own interests for the sake of others. His own comfort he forfeits for the well-being of all. Nay, rather, his own life must he be willing to forfeit for the life of mankind. Such a man is the honor of the world of humanity. Such a man is the glory of the world of mankind. Such a man is the one who wins eternal bliss. Such a man is near to the threshold of God. Such a man is the very manifestation of eternal happiness. Otherwise, men are like animals, exhibiting the same proclivities and propensities as the world of animals. What distinction is there? What prerogatives, what perfection? None whatever! Animals are better even—thinking only of themselves and negligent of the needs of others.

Consider how the greatest men in the world—whether among prophets or philosophers—all have forfeited their own comfort, have sacrificed their own pleasure for the well-being of humanity. They have sacrificed their own lives for the body politic. They have sacrificed their own wealth for that of the general welfare. They have forfeited their own honor for the honor of mankind. Therefore, it becomes evident that this is the highest attainment for the world of humanity.

We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE Nº 102

The one crusade of God's cause is "against the insistent self"

O ye loved ones of God! In this, the Bahá'í dispensation, God's Cause is spirit unalloyed. His Cause belongeth not to the material world. It cometh neither for strife nor war, nor for acts of mischief or of shame; it is neither for quarrelling with other Faiths, nor for conflicts with the nations. Its only army is the love of God, its only joy the clear wine of His knowledge, its only battle the expounding of the Truth; its one crusade is against the insistent self, the evil promptings of the human heart. Its victory is to submit and yield, and to be selfless is its everlasting glory. In brief, it is spirit upon spirit.

Unless ye must,
Bruise not the serpent in the dust,
How much less wound a man.
And if ye can,
No ant should ye alarm,
Much less a brother harm.

Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side. Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature· look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord, the light of Whose grace hath embosomed the whole earth and all who dwell thereon, and in the plenitude of Whose bounty are immersed both the wise and the ignorant.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 206

Service is freedom from the bonds of self

What are the animals' propensities? To eat, drink, wander about and sleep. The thoughts, the minds of the animals are confined to these. They are captives in the bonds of these desires. Man becomes a prisoner and slave to them when his ultimate desire is no higher than his welfare in this world of the senses. Consider how difficult for man is the attainment of pleasures and happiness in this mortal world. How easy it is for the animal. Look upon the fields and flowers, prairies, streams, forests and mountains. The grazing animals, the birds of the air, the fishes neither toil nor undergo hardships; they sow not, nor are they concerned about the reaping; they have no anxiety about business or politics—no trouble or worry whatsoever. All the fields and grasses, all the meadows of fruits and grains, all the mountain slopes and streams of salubrious water belong to them. They do not labor for their livelihood and happiness because everything is provided and made possible for them. If the life of man be confined to this physical, material outlook, the animal's life is a hundred times better, easier and more productive of comfort and contentment. The animal is nobler, more serene and confident because each hour is free from anxiety and worry; but man, restless and dissatisfied, runs from morn till eve, sailing the seas, diving beneath them in submarines, flying aloft in airplanes, delving into the lowest strata of the earth to obtain his livelihood—all with the greatest difficulty, anxiety and unrest.

Therefore, in this respect the animal is nobler, more serene, poised and confident. Consider the birds in the forest and jungle· how they build their nests high in the swaying treetops, build them with the utmost skill and beauty—swinging, rocking in the morning breezes, drinking the pure, sweet water, enjoying the most enchanting views as they fly here and there high overhead, singing joyously—all without labor, free from worry, care and forebodings. If man's life be confined to the elemental, physical world of enjoyment, one lark is nobler, more admirable than all humanity because its livelihood is prepared, its condition complete, its accomplishment perfect and natural.

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

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

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

I have come to this country in the advanced years of my life, undergoing difficulties of health and climate because of excessive love for the friends of God. It is my wish that they may be assisted to become servants of the heavenly Kingdom, captives in the service of the will of God. This captivity is freedom; this sacrifice is glorification; this labor is reward; this need is bestowal. For service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - THE PROMULGATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE Nº 65

“Self-interest” vs. the “common weal”

Today, all the peoples of the world are indulging in self-interest and exert the utmost effort and endeavor to promote their own material interests. They are

worshipping themselves and not the divine reality, nor the world of mankind. They seek diligently their own benefit and not the common weal. This is because they are captives of the world of nature and unaware of the divine teachings, of the bounty of the Kingdom and of the Sun of Truth. But ye, praise be to God, are at present especially favored with this bounty, have become of the chosen, have been informed of the heavenly instructions, have gained admittance into the Kingdom of God, have become the recipients of unbounded blessings and have been baptized with the Water of Life, with the fire of the love of God and with the Holy Spirit.

Strive, therefore, with heart and soul that ye become ignited candles in the assemblage of the world, glittering stars on the horizon of Truth and may become the cause of the propagation of the light of the Kingdom; in order that the world of humanity may be converted into a divine realm, the nether world may become the world on high, the love of God and the mercy of the Lord may raise their canopy upon the apex of the world, human souls may become the waves of the ocean of truth, the world of humanity may grow into one blessed tree, the verses of oneness may be chanted and the melodies of sanctity may reach the Supreme Concurrence.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 68

Path to Perfection: From self-interest to interest

Every imperfect soul is self-centered and thinketh only of his own good. But as his thoughts expand a little he will begin to think of the welfare and comfort of his family. If his ideas still more widen, his concern will be the felicity of his fellow citizens; and if still they widen, he will be thinking of the glory of his land and of his race. But when ideas and views reach the utmost degree of expansion and attain the stage of perfection, then will he be interested in the exaltation of humankind. He will then be the well-wisher of all men and the seeker of the weal and prosperity of all lands. This is indicative of perfection.

Thus, the divine Manifestations of God had a universal and all-inclusive conception. They endeavored for the sake of everyone's life and engaged in the service of universal education. The area of their aims was not limited—nay, rather, it was wide and all-inclusive.

Therefore, ye must also be thinking of everyone, so that mankind may be educated, character moderated and this world may turn into a Garden of Eden.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE
WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Nº 34

Mashhadí Fattáh was utter selflessness

Mashhadí Fattáh possessed some merchandise; this was all he owned in the world. He had entrusted it to persons in Adrianople, and later on those unrighteous people did away with the goods. Thus, in the pathway of God, he lost whatever he possessed. He passed his days, perfectly content, in the Most Great Prison. He was

utter selflessness; from him, no one ever heard a syllable to indicate that he existed. He was always in a certain corner of the prison, silently meditating, occupied with the remembrance of God; at all times spiritually alert and mindful, in a state of supplication.

Then came the Supreme Affliction. He could not tolerate the anguish of parting with Bahá'u'lláh, and after Bahá'u'lláh's passing, he died of grief. Blessed is he; again, blessed is he. Glad tidings to him; again, glad tidings to him. Upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious.

—'ABD'UL-BAHÁ – MEMORIALS OF THE FAITHFUL

Prayerful humility and self-effacement

O Thou dear handmaid of God! Praise thou God, because thou art favored at His Holy Threshold, and cherished in the Kingdom of His might. Thou art the head of an assembly which is the very imprint of the Company on high, the mirror image of the all-glorious realm. Strive thou with heart and soul, in prayerful humility and self-effacement, to uphold the Law of God and spread His sweet savors abroad. Endeavor thou to become the true president of the assemblies of spiritual souls, and a companion to the angels in the realm of the All-Merciful.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Speak with the utmost kindness, self-effacement, humility, and lowliness

The friends must not—either with the people in general, or with the 'ulamá—speak in a contentious fashion, but rather they should express themselves with the utmost consideration, kindness, and propriety. Nor must they allow any topic to lead to conflict and altercation, for contentious and polemical speech will never be productive of any useful result, but will rather engender rancour and enmity. Wherefore they should speak with the utmost kindness, self-effacement, humility, and lowliness, nor ever let a harsh word pass their lips, saying instead: “We have no quarrel or dispute with any group of people, nor hold them in contempt, but regard both ourselves and them as servants of the one true God. We are all the fruits of one tree, and grown from the same bough. The only difference is that some are searching for the truth, while others are calm and silent, and occupied with themselves and their own interests.”

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ – ADDITIONAL TABLETS, EXTRACTS AND TALKS

IV Excerpts from prayers by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá

PRAYERS BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Tablet of the Holy Mariner

“Study the Tablet of the Holy Mariner that ye may know the truth, and consider that the Blessed Beauty hath fully foretold future events. Let them who perceive, take warning!”
—'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

He is the Gracious, the Well-Beloved!

O Holy Mariner!

Bid thine ark of eternity appear before the Celestial Concourse,
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

Launch it upon the ancient sea, in His Name, the Most Wondrous,
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

And let the angelic spirits enter, in the Name of God, the Most High.
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

Unmoor it, then, that it may sail upon the ocean of glory,
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

Haply the dwellers therein may attain the retreats of nearness in the everlasting
realm.
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

Having reached the sacred strand, the shore of the crimson seas,
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

Bid them issue forth and attain this ethereal invisible station,
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

A station wherein the Lord hath in the Flame of His Beauty appeared within the
deathless tree;
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

Wherein the embodiments of His Cause cleansed themselves of self and passion;
Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious! (...)

—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

I have forgotten my self

Lauded be Thy name, O my God! I am so carried away by the breezes blowing from Thy presence that I have forgotten my self and all that I possess. This is but a sign of the wonders of Thy grace and bountiful favors vouchsafed unto me.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH XXXVI

I implore Thee not to abandon me unto my self

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Every time I venture to make mention of Thee, I am held back by my mighty sins and grievous trespasses against Thee, and find myself wholly deprived of Thy grace, and utterly powerless to celebrate Thy praise. My great confidence in Thy bounty, however, reviveth my hope in Thee, and my certitude that Thou wilt bountifully deal with me emboldeneth me to extol Thee, and to ask of Thee the things Thou dost possess.

I implore Thee, O my God, by Thy mercy that hath surpassed all created things, and to which all that are immersed beneath the oceans of Thy names bear witness, not to abandon me unto my self, for my heart is prone to evil. Guard me, then, within the stronghold of Thy protection and the shelter of Thy care. I am he, O my God, whose only wish is what Thou hast determined by the power of Thy might. All I have chosen for myself is to be assisted by Thy gracious appointments and the ruling of Thy will, and to be aided with the tokens of Thy decree and judgment.

I beseech Thee, O Thou Who art the Beloved of the hearts which long for Thee, by the Manifestations of Thy Cause and the Daysprings of Thine inspiration, and the Exponents of Thy majesty, and the Treasuries of Thy knowledge, not to suffer me to be deprived of Thy holy Habitation, Thy Fane and Thy Tabernacle. Aid me, O my Lord, to attain His hallowed court, and to circle round His person, and to stand humbly at His door.

Thou art He Whose power is from everlasting to everlasting. Nothing escapeth Thy knowledge. Thou art, verily, the God of power, the God of glory and wisdom. Praised be God, the Lord of the worlds!

— BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Be as a lamp of Thy remembrance unto those whom self and passion have veiled

O my God and the God of all the worlds! O my desire and the desire of every understanding heart! I implore Thee, by Him Who hath caused the sun of Thy revelation and inspiration to dawn, to ordain for the people of this Day that which Thou hast ordained for the chosen ones amongst Thy servants. Send down then upon them such liberal effusions of Thy grace as none hath previously attained, and cause them to circle round the court of Thy nearness and the sanctuary of Thy presence. Inspire them, then, in Thy Cause with that which setteth ablaze the hearts and souls of men. Make each one of them to be as a lamp of Thy remembrance unto those servants of Thine whom self and passion have veiled from recognizing the Manifestation of Thine Essence and the Dayspring of Thy signs.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH - DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE Nº 16

Him who hath fasted out of love for Thee and not out of self and desire

This is, O my God, the first of the days on which Thou hast bidden Thy loved ones to observe the Fast. I ask of Thee by Thy Self and by him who hath fasted out of love for Thee and for Thy good-pleasure—and not out of self and desire, nor out of fear of Thy wrath—and by Thy most excellent names and august attributes, to purify Thy servants from the love of aught except Thee and to draw them nigh unto the Dawning-Place of the lights of Thy countenance and the Seat of the throne of Thy oneness. Illumine their hearts, O my God, with the light of Thy knowledge and brighten their faces with the rays of the Daystar that shineth from the horizon of Thy Will. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. No God is there but Thee, the All-Glorious, Whose help is implored by all men.

Assist them, O my God, to render Thee victorious and to exalt Thy Word. Suffer them, then, to become as hands of Thy Cause amongst Thy servants, and make them to be revealers of Thy religion and Thy signs amongst mankind, in such wise that the whole world may be filled with Thy remembrance and praise and with Thy proofs and evidences. Thou art, verily, the All-Bounteous, the Most Exalted, the Powerful, the Mighty, and the Merciful.

—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

That it may take her away from her own self

Glory to Thee, O my God! One of Thy handmaidens, who hath believed in Thee and in Thy signs, hath entered beneath the shadow of the tree of Thy oneness. Give her to quaff, O my God, by Thy Name, the Manifest and the Hidden, of Thy choice sealed Wine that it may take her away from her own self, and make her to be entirely devoted to Thy remembrance, and wholly detached from any one beside Thee.

Now that Thou hast revealed unto her the knowledge of Thee, O my Lord, deny her not, by Thy bounty, Thy grace; and now that Thou hast called her unto Thyself, drive her not away from Thee, through Thy favor. Supply her, then, with that which excelleth all that can be found on Thine earth. Thou art, verily, the Most Bountiful, Whose grace is immense.

Wert Thou to bestow on one of Thy creatures what would equal the kingdoms of earth and heaven, it would still not diminish by even as much as an atom the immensity of Thy dominion. Far greater art Thou than the Great One men are wont to call Thee, for such a title is but one of Thy names all of which were created by a mere indication of Thy will.

There is no God but Thee, the God of power, the God of glory, the God of knowledge and wisdom.

—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Utter self-effacement and complete abnegation

Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! I implore Thee, by Thy Name which none hath befittingly recognized, and whose import no soul hath fathomed; I beseech Thee, by

Him Who is the Fountainhead of Thy Revelation and the Dayspring of Thy signs, to make my heart to be a receptacle of Thy love and of remembrance of Thee. Knit it, then, to Thy most great Ocean, that from it may flow out the living waters of Thy wisdom and the crystal streams of Thy glorification and praise.

The limbs of my body testify to Thy unity, and the hair of my head declareth the power of Thy sovereignty and might. I have stood at the door of Thy grace with utter self-effacement and complete abnegation, and clung to the hem of Thy bounty, and fixed mine eyes upon the horizon of Thy gifts.

Do Thou destine for me, O my God, what becometh the greatness of Thy majesty, and assist me, by Thy strengthening grace, so to teach Thy Cause that the dead may speed out of their sepulchers, and rush forth towards Thee, trusting wholly in Thee, and fixing their gaze upon the orient of Thy Cause, and the dawning-place of Thy Revelation.

Thou, verily, art the Most Powerful, the Most High, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

—BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

PRAYERS BY THE BÁB

Conscious as I am of my nothingness

Thou seest, O my Lord, my dwelling-place in the heart of this mountain and Thou dost witness my forbearance. Verily I have desired naught else but Thy love and the love of those who love Thee. How can I extol the effulgent beauty of Thy Lordship, conscious as I am of my nothingness before the habitation of Thy glory? Yet the sorrow of solitude and loneliness prompteth me to invoke Thee through this prayer, perchance Thy trusted servants may become aware of my lamentations, may supplicate unto Thee on my behalf, and Thou wouldst graciously answer their prayers as a token of Thy grace and Thy favor. I bear witness that there is no God but Thee, inasmuch as Thou art invested with sovereignty, grandeur, glory and power which no one among Thy servants can visualize or comprehend. Indeed Thou shalt, by virtue of that which is inherent in Thine Essence, ever remain inscrutable unto all except Thyself.

THE BÁB

We are but the embodiments of nothingness

O Lord! Render victorious Thy forbearing servants in Thy days by granting them a befitting victory, inasmuch as they have sought martyrdom in Thy path. Send down upon them that which will bring comfort to their minds, will rejoice their inner beings, will impart assurance to their hearts and tranquillity to their bodies and will enable their souls to ascend to the presence of God, the Most Exalted, and to attain the supreme Paradise and such retreats of glory as Thou hast destined for men of true knowledge and virtue. Verily Thou knowest all things, while we are but Thy servants, Thy thralls, Thy bondsmen and Thy poor ones. No Lord but Thee do we invoke, O God our Lord, nor do we implore blessings or grace from anyone but

Thee, O Thou Who art the God of mercy unto this world and the next. We are but the embodiments of poverty, of nothingness, of helplessness and of perdition, while Thy whole Being betokeneth wealth, independence, glory, majesty and boundless grace.

THE BÁB

PRAYERS BY 'ABD'UL-BAHÁ

Tablet of Visitation for 'Abd'ul-Bahá

*Whoso reciteth this prayer with lowliness and fervor
will bring gladness and joy to the heart of this Servant;
it will be even as meeting Him face to face.*

He is the All-Glorious!

O God, my God! Lowly and tearful, I raise my suppliant hands to Thee and cover my face in the dust of that Threshold of Thine, exalted above the knowledge of the learned, and the praise of all that glorify Thee. Graciously look upon Thy servant, humble and lowly at Thy door, with the glances of the eye of Thy mercy, and immerse him in the Ocean of Thine eternal grace.

Lord! He is a poor and lowly servant of Thine, enthralled and imploring Thee, captive in Thy hand, praying fervently to Thee, trusting in Thee, in tears before Thy face, calling to Thee and beseeching Thee, saying:

O Lord, my God! Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee, illumine my brow with the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy Kingdom of grandeur. Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest.

With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee, at dawntide and in the night-season. Fulfill his heart's desire, O Lord! Illumine his heart, gladden his bosom, kindle his light, that he may serve Thy Cause and Thy servants.

Thou art the Bestower, the Pitiful, the Most Bountiful, the Gracious, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

—'ABD'UL-BAHÁ

NOTE: In the original Arabic of this prayer, used as the Tablet of Visitation for the Shrine of 'Abd'ul-Bahá, the word “**Selflessness**” is repeated three times in this portion: “Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with *its* robe clothe me, and in *its* ocean immerse me.” The repetition in Arabic is a melodious rhyming rhythm which would have translated as repetitive in English and is therefore replaced by “its.”

الفناء

“Al Fanaa” = Nothingness/Selflessness in Arabic

To be nothingness itself

O God, my God! Have mercy then upon my helpless state, my poverty, my misery, my abasement! Give me to drink from the generous cup of Thy grace and forgiveness, stir me with the sweet scents of Thy love, gladden my bosom with the light of Thy knowledge, purify my soul with the mysteries of Thy oneness, raise me to life with the gentle breeze that cometh from the gardens of Thy mercy—till I sever myself from all else but Thee, and lay hold of the hem of Thy garment of grandeur, and consign to oblivion all that is not Thee, and be companioned by the sweet breathings that waft during these Thy days, and attain unto faithfulness at Thy Threshold of Holiness, and arise to serve Thy Cause, and to be humble before Thy loved ones, and, in the presence of Thy favored ones, to be nothingness itself.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ - SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Give them Thy grace to withstand the onslaught of self and passion

O Lord my God! Assist Thy loved ones to be firm in Thy Faith, to walk in Thy ways, to be steadfast in Thy Cause. Give them Thy grace to withstand the onslaught of self and passion, to follow the light of divine guidance. Thou art the Powerful, the Gracious, the Self-Subsisting, the Bestower, the Compassionate, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.

—'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Preserve me from the suggestions of self and desire

O my Lord! Thou knowest that the people are encircled with pain and calamities and are environed with hardships and trouble. Every trial doth attack man and every dire adversity doth assail him like unto the assault of a serpent. There is no shelter and asylum for him except under the wing of Thy protection, preservation, guard and custody.

O Thou the Merciful One! O my Lord! Make Thy protection my armor, Thy preservation my shield, humbleness before the door of Thy oneness my guard, and Thy custody and defense my fortress and my abode. Preserve me from the suggestions of self and desire, and guard me from every sickness, trial, difficulty and ordeal.

Verily, Thou art the Protector, the Guardian, the Preserver, the Sufficer, and verily, Thou art the Merciful of the Most Merciful.

—'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion

O God, my God! Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion, protect them with the watchful eye of Thy loving-kindness from all rancor, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy care and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy divine unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy holy kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thine all-swaying power that cometh from Thy realm of glory. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious.

—‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

That we may become oblivious of self and occupied only with Thee

O Thou kind Lord! We are servants of Thy Threshold, taking shelter at Thy holy Door. We seek no refuge save only this strong pillar, turn nowhere for a haven but unto Thy safekeeping. Protect us, bless us, support us, make us such that we shall love but Thy good pleasure, utter only Thy praise, follow only the pathway of truth, that we may become rich enough to dispense with all save Thee, and receive our gifts from the sea of Thy beneficence, that we may ever strive to exalt Thy Cause and to spread Thy sweet savors far and wide, that we may become oblivious of self and occupied only with Thee, and disown all else and be caught up in Thee.

O Thou Provider, O Thou Forgiver! Grant us Thy grace and loving-kindness, Thy gifts and Thy bestowals, and sustain us, that we may attain our goal. Thou art the Powerful, the Able, the Knower, the Seer; and, verily, Thou art the Generous, and, verily, Thou art the All-Merciful, and, verily, Thou art the Ever-Forgiving. He to Whom repentance is due, He Who forgiveth even the most grievous of sins.

—‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

The call to selflessness and evanescence is sounded

O Thou kind and loving Providence! The east is astir and the west surgeth even as the eternal billows of the sea. The gentle breezes of holiness are diffused and, from the Unseen Kingdom, the rays of the Orb of Truth shine forth resplendent. The anthems of divine unity are being chanted and the ensigns of celestial might are waving. The angelic Voice is raised and, even as the roaring of the leviathan, soundeth the call to selflessness and evanescence. The triumphal cry Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá resoundeth on every side, and the call Yá ‘Alíyyu’l-‘Alá ringeth throughout all regions. No stir is there in the world save that of the Glory of the One Ravisher of Hearts, and no tumult is there save the surging of the love of Him, the Incomparable, the Well-Beloved.

—‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

'Abdu'l-Bahá's station of complete self-effacement and utter nothingness

"I affirm," is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own written comment on the Tablet of the Branch, "that the true meaning, the real significance, the innermost secret of these verses, of these very words, is my own servitude to the sacred Threshold of the Abhá Beauty, my complete self-effacement, my utter nothingness before Him. This is my resplendent crown, my most precious adorning. On this I pride myself in the kingdom of earth and heaven. Therein I glory among the company of the well-favored!" "No one is permitted," He warns us in the passage which immediately follows, "to give these verses any other interpretation." "I am," He, in this same connection, affirms, "according to the explicit texts of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the Kitáb-i-'Ahd the manifest Interpreter of the Word of God... Whoso deviates from my interpretation is a victim of his own fancy."

SHOGHI EFFENDI – THE WORLD ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The disciples of Christ

The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the Divine Guidance, till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!

—SHOGHI EFFENDI - BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION

The Chosen Trustees of a Divine Plan

In this supreme, this sacred and international undertaking in which the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, in all the continents of the globe, are summoned to show forth the noblest spirit of self-sacrifice, the members of the American Bahá'í Community must by virtue of the abilities they have already demonstrated and of the primacy conferred upon them as the chosen trustees of a Divine Plan, play a preponderating role, and, together with their brethren residing in the cradle of their Faith, who are linked by such unique ties with its Herald, set an example of self-abnegation worthy to be emulated by their fellow-workers in every land.

—SHOGHI EFFENDI - CITADEL OF FAITH

Paramount Duty of Every Bahá'í

With this vision clearly set before us, and fortified by the knowledge of the gracious aid of Bahá'u'lláh and the repeated assurances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, let us first strive to live the life and then arise with one heart, one mind, one voice, to reinforce

our numbers and achieve our end. Let us recall, and seek on this sad occasion the comfort of, the last wishes of our departed yet ever-watchful Master•

“It behooveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime, and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest, and steadfast to the end, they must raise in every land the triumphal cry ‘Ya Bahá’u’l-Abhá!’ (O Thou the Glory of Glories).... The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion, and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the divine guidance; till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth, and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!”

—SHOGHI EFFENDI - BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Cherished Desire

For this reason do I feel impelled to direct by incessant plea in particular to the followers of the Faith in the United States and Canada to arise and play their part, while there is yet time, and not to allow their earnest strivings to be swamped and superseded by the self-sacrificing heroism of the multitude of their brethren in Persia. Again I feel the urge to remind you one and all of the necessity of keeping ever in mind this fundamental verity that the efficacy of the spiritual forces centering in, and radiating from, the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in the West will in a great measure depend upon the extent to which we, the pioneer workers in that land will, with clear vision, unquenchable faith, and inflexible determination, resolve to voluntarily abnegate temporal advantages in our support of so meritorious an endeavor. The higher the degree of our renunciation and self-sacrifice, the wider the range of the contributing believers, the more apparent will become the vitalizing forces that are to emanate from this unique and sacred Edifice; and the greater, in consequence, the stimulating effect it will exert upon the propagation of the Faith in the days to come. Not by the abundance of our donations, not even by the spontaneity of our efforts, but rather by the degree of self-abnegation which our contributions will entail, can we effectively promote the speedy realization of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s cherished desire. How great our responsibility, how immense our task, how priceless the advantages that we can reap!

—SHOGHI EFFENDI - BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATION

Covenant-breakers sponsored by deluded, self-seeking adventurers

Generated by the propelling and purifying forces of a mysterious Faith, born of delusion or malice, winning a fleeting notoriety derived from the precarious advantages of wealth, fame, or fortune, these movements, sponsored by deluded, self-seeking adventurers, find themselves, sooner or later, enmeshed in

the machinations of their authors, are buried in shame, and sink eventually into complete oblivion.

—SHOGHI EFFENDI – THIS DECISIVE HOUR

The American believers should evince a nobler spirit of self-sacrifice

As the opening phase of the Second Seven Year Plan draws inexorably to a close, the American Bahá'í community, which has already abundantly demonstrated its capacity to carry to a triumphant conclusion the initial stage of the Plan conceived by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, must equally—nay even more convincingly—prove to the entire Bahá'í world its inflexible determination and undoubted ability to discharge befittingly whatever responsibilities the constant evolution of the Plan may impose upon its members under any circumstances and in whatever continent of the globe. As the field of their historic labors steadily widens, as the implications of their high mission become more apparent, as the complexity of their task increases, as the agencies designed to facilitate and accelerate its execution multiply, the members of this community must, individually as well as collectively, redouble their efforts, evince a nobler spirit of self-sacrifice, display greater resourcefulness, unity, initiative, steadfastness and enterprise, rise to loftier heights of heroism and self-abnegation, and establish, more convincingly than ever, their right to be regarded as the worthy champions of a glorious Cause, the principal builders of a unique Order, and the chosen trustees and executors of a divinely conceived Plan.

—SHOGHI EFFENDI – THIS DECISIVE HOUR

To the degree that the home front crusader is...emptied of self

The gross materialism that engulfs the entire nation at the present hour; the attachment to worldly things that enshrouds the souls of men; the fears and anxieties that distract their minds; the pleasure and dissipations that fill their time, the prejudices and animosities that darken their outlook, the apathy and lethargy that paralyze their spiritual faculties—these are among the formidable obstacles that stand in the path of every would-be warrior in the service of Bahá'u'lláh, obstacles which he must battle against and surmount in his crusade for the redemption of his own countrymen.

To the degree that the home front crusader is himself cleansed of these impurities, liberated from these petty preoccupations and gnawing anxieties, delivered from these prejudices and antagonisms, emptied of self, and filled by the healing and the sustaining power of God, will he be able to combat the forces arrayed against him, magnetize the souls of those whom he seeks to convert, and win their unreserved, their enthusiastic and enduring allegiance to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

—SHOGHI EFFENDI – CITADEL OF FAITH

A historic perspective on self-abnegation

The completion of the Mother Temple of the West, the sacredness of which neither the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the Bahá'í world, nor any future House of Worship to be erected by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, in any country, at any future date, can rival, in time for the celebration of its Jubilee, is the one remaining objective that now hangs precariously in the balance. Owing to a combination of circumstances wholly beyond the control of its builders, this task has assumed a critical importance, and is of such vital urgency, that no prosecutor of the Plan, eager to witness its consummation, can afford to ignore for a moment.

The sacrifice demanded is such as to have no parallel whatsoever in the history of that community. The manifold issues inextricably interwoven with the campaign audaciously launched for the achievement of this high objective are of such a weighty character as to overshadow every enterprise embarked upon through the organized efforts of its members, in either the concluding years of the Heroic Age of the Faith or the first epoch of the Age which succeeded it. The two years during which this emergency will be most keenly felt coincide on the one hand with a period of increasing distraction occasioned by the uncertainties, the perils and fears of a steadily worsening international situation, and on the other with the centenary of one of the most turbulent, afflictive and glorious stages of Bahá'í history—a stage immortalized by an effusion of blood, a self-abnegation, a heroism unsurpassed not only in the annals of the Faith but in the world's spiritual history. How meritorious, indeed, are the self-denying acts which this supremely challenging hour now calls forth, amidst the perplexities and confusion which present-day society is now experiencing! And yet, how trifling in comparison with the self-immolation of the most distinguished, the most precious heroes and saints of the Primitive Age of our glorious Faith! An outpouring of treasure, no less copious than the blood shed so lavishly in the Apostolic Age of the Faith by those who in the heart of the Asiatic continent proclaimed its birth to the world, can befit their spiritual descendants, who, in the present Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, have championed the Cause, and assumed so preponderating a share in the erection of its Administrative Order, and are now engaged in the final stage of the building of the House that incarnates the soul of that Faith in the American continent. No sacrifice can be deemed too great to insure the completion of such an edifice—the most holy House of Worship ever to be associated with the Faith of the Most Great Name—an edifice whose inception has shed such a luster on the closing years of the Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, which has assumed a concrete shape in the present Formative stage in the evolution of our beloved Faith, whose dependencies must spring into existence in the course of successive epochs of this same Age, and whose fairest fruits will be garnered in the Age that is to come, the last, the Golden Age of the initial and brightest Dispensation of the five-thousand-century Bahá'í Cycle.

—SHOGHI EFFENDI – CITADEL OF FAITH

Note:

This is a long meditational compilation (I called it a personal meditative booklet because it is 70 pages long) of Bahá'í Writings on the mystical topics of Self and Selflessness (as well as self-effacement, self-abnegation and utter nothingness) gleaned from the website Bahá'í Reference Library (<https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/>)

The format is longer than normal compilations, to keep references of the Self in as much context as possible, and thus the length of this document is (ahem) substantial. It is meant as an aid to study and meditation on various aspects of the Self and as such the table of content titles are subjective and written by me and quoted as much as possible from the language of the excerpt in question.

As always, this compilation is not authoritative or official, it was made for personal use by an individual for a specific study group and should preferably not be widely distributed. As such I ask you to not forward this on social media or social messaging. Particularly because, for ease of study, sub-headings in bold were added to organize the excerpts from the Holy Writings and Prayers thematically for ease of study. These titles are subjective, thus prone to error.

Feel free to email me with suggestions or comments at violettaz@gmail.com

Lovingly,

Violetta Zein