

Reality and the Worlds of God

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| Preface by the Compiler | 2 |
| I. Reality Unveiled..... | 5 |
| A. Why Study Reality? | 5 |
| B. What is Reality?..... | 6 |
| C. How to Perceive Reality: “Not with your eyes, but Mine” | 7 |
| D. Reality: Kinds of Knowledge, and Powers of Perception | 8 |
| II. Three Conditions of Existence in Reality..... | 10 |
| A. Deity, the Source Condition: Kingdom of the Essence of God..... | 11 |
| 1. “In the Beginning”? | 11 |
| 2. The Source of All Being | 11 |
| 3. God, The Divine Reality | 12 |
| 4. The Inadequacy of Human Concepts of God..... | 13 |
| 5. The Manifesting and Creating of Worlds..... | 15 |
| B. The Greater World: The Kingdom of the Manifestation of God..... | 16 |
| 1. The Condition that God Manifests: The World of Prophethood..... | 16 |
| 3. The Cause that God Manifests: His Divine Plan | 17 |
| 4. The Spirit that God Manifests: The Holy Spirit | 20 |
| 5. The Will that God Manifests: the Divine Law..... | 23 |
| 6. The Word that God Manifests: Divine Revelation | 24 |
| 7. The Being Who Embodies All that God Manifests | 26 |
| 8. The Purpose of God’s Manifestation..... | 30 |
| 9. The Revelation Manifested by God | 31 |
| a. <i>GIVEN TO CREATION</i> | 31 |
| b. <i>PARTAKING OF THIS GIFT</i> | 31 |
| c. <i>THE PURPOSE OF REVELATION</i> | 32 |
| C. The Lesser World, Servitude, Creation: The Kingdom of the Emanation of God | 33 |
| 1. The Condition of Prophethood in Creation..... | 33 |
| a. <i>SUPERHUMAN CONDITION, INTERMEDIATE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN</i> | 33 |
| b. <i>PROVISIONS FOR WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS</i> | 38 |
| c. <i>THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, MAKING TRUTH (REALITY) PERCEPTIBLE</i> | 39 |
| d. <i>THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH NOW AVAILABLE</i> | 42 |
| 2. The World of Servitude | 43 |
| 3. Creation as Seen by “My Eyes”..... | 45 |
| 4. Creation: The World of Souls and Reflection of Divinity..... | 47 |
| 5. Two Conditions of Creation: Material and Spiritual | 50 |
| 6. Man: Spiritual, Compared to the Animal | 51 |
| 7. Mankind: Combining the Spiritual and Material Conditions..... | 52 |
| 8. The Spiritual World, Progressively Unveiled: The “Kingdom Revealed”..... | 53 |

Preface by the Compiler

The references in this two-volume compilation have been chosen to present the overall picture of reality in the light of God's purpose for man, as seen from the "God's-eye viewpoint," by Bahá'u'lláh, the Revelator of God for this new age.

Volume One of the compilation, "Reality and the Worlds of God", encompasses the relationships between the Divine Source-Essence and the two conditions of existence that proceed therefrom: the "Greater World" of God's Manifestation, and the "Lesser World" of God's creation.

In Volume Two—"The Reality of the Soul"—the living soul, whose domain is the Lesser World, is portrayed in the way that any creator or inventor might introduce what he or she has brought into being, and explain it to the world: by explaining the various phases or elements that go to make up the reality of any created thing, as follows:

- God's Purpose in creating the soul;
- The power with which He has endowed the soul to insure the fulfillment of that Purpose;
- The behavior or life-pattern by which the soul is destined to achieve its Creator's Purpose, activated by the motive power of the soul, and moving toward that objective;
- The attributes or characteristics, and individual acts and activities, that make up the successful life of the soul;
- The name by which the Creator has referred to His creation in the instructions and explanations sent to

humankind through His Representatives, to enable souls to fulfill their heavenly destiny and to "face" or deal victoriously with their own reality.

This is the best but not the only way that we learn to deal with what faces us. Because enlighteners are not always available to explain the real purpose of things, or because we are too immature to understand available explanations, we gain the knowledge we need in another way that might be called "from the ground up." In this second method of learning, we are told the names of things as we observe their attributes and immediate actions enough to be curious about them. In time we become aware of existing behavior patterns behind the immediate activity; and from the objectives that are achieved, we guess at the purpose of what is going on; but our guesses are not always right. For instance, children cannot understand the real purpose of education; to them, school may be something merely to be endured, in which case they dawdle along with the minimum amount of attention and gain very little of what they need. Dealing intelligently with anything is nearly impossible unless we know its purpose or function.

Until now, humankind has approached the subject of its own being via this second method. We can watch children slowly gaining an awareness of themselves. They are told the name that their parents have given them, and are directed to behave and develop certain attributes that they "should" acquire. They are told contradictory things about themselves: "You are good", "You are bad", "You are stupid", "You are clever". Finally, in confusion, the modern youth of today faces himself and wonders: "What am I really? Why am I alive and am I fully alive? Am I experiencing everything that can be experienced, gaining all the joy and love and exhilaration that life has to offer? Why must I be 'good'? What about the forces

that help and hinder me? Are there divine forces that I could corral for my own use? How can I better cope with the adverse powers that frustrate me at present? What is wrong with life, my own and other people's? What is the truth about God? Is God real or not? If existence is the product of a divine Creator, why is the world in such an appalling condition?"

Only the Creator can explain life as it is in reality. Only the Inventor of a soul can tell us what we need to know about ourselves, if, as we are told, we really are souls. Without understanding what a soul is, or knowing our real purpose, we have no way of facing our own reality.

Bahá'u'lláh is the first Manifestation of God to explain the purpose of life and the reality of the soul. He does this in the overall picture that He puts before us. He provides the key to all Truth and answers all of these questions. He makes knowing our real Purpose not only possible, but also helps us understand how that Purpose may be gloriously fulfilled!

To be able to study this overall view of life is a great bounty bestowed upon us in this Day of God. As we do so, we realize that our limited concepts of life in general and of ourselves in particular are very far from the Truth; no matter how divinely enlightened we may have previously felt ourselves to be. Religion in the past, like the parent of small children, has given the name of God's creation (soul), and instructed humankind in what people's attributes and actions must be in order to fulfill God's purpose for man. Bahá'u'lláh repeats some of this kind of instruction too, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá enlarges on it. Also, Shoghi Effendi was appointed to give explicit directions about the outer manifestations and actions that are essential here and now, in order to achieve the divine Purpose. Thus, from the beloved Guardian of the Faith, aided by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's elaboration on behavior patterns, we may acquire a detailed and exact knowledge of the structure of Bahá'í administration:

including the objectives of the spiritual assemblies as embodied in their by-laws, an understanding of how to teach by word and by living the life, and an awareness of the many other varied applications of Bahá'í law under the diverse conditions prevailing in our own lives and around the world. Therefore, we have everything that is needed to enlighten us from the ground up.

This knowledge alone, however, does not necessarily produce the divine conditions that we are responsible for creating. To achieve our goals, some superhuman ingredient must be added to what we know and how we live: The natural human motive power, which has been called by Bahá'u'lláh "satanic strength", must be converted into "heavenly power" that is inherent in every "living soul".

We have been told unequivocally that "the Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change."¹

Human well-being and happiness, starting with one's own well-being and satisfaction, is the natural objective of all people, Bahá'ís included. Current concepts of human well-being and happiness, however, are far removed from what God has planned for us. The only real well-being for humankind today comes from fulfilling—first in the world of vision and desire and finally in our daily living—the needs and destiny of the soul. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "But the honor of the human kingdom is the attainment of spiritual happiness in the human world, the acquisition of the knowledge and love of God."²

How is this attained?

This is not a matter of submitting the ego will to the divine Will and blindly obeying the latter. Nor is the goal achieved by

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 200.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 166.

blind faith, nor accepting in theory the purpose we affirm daily in the short Bahá'í obligatory prayer. These patterns are desirable, but they represent only a human effort that all Bahá'ís presumably make. What is needed beyond the human effort is that the Word of God should take effect in the inner being until the divine Truth takes such complete possession of our hearts that it finally enlightens our outer consciousness, thereby dissipating the darkness of our human power and our personal desires. When this happens, all of our energies (“heavenly powers”³) are released automatically to achieve the heavenly desire of our Creator and to reach the goals established under the dynamic guidance of Bahá'u'lláh. This, on an individual basis, is the “organic change”⁴ that Shoghi Effendi mentioned in his moving explanation of “The Goal of a New World Order.” The change that will take place first in the thinking, feeling and reacting of each responsive soul; and then gradually, as the “leaven”⁵ becomes active in the world, the same change will be reflected in the entire structure of society.

Every Bahá'í is a “receptive soul”⁶, because he has fulfilled the first of the “twin duties”⁷ laid upon man in this Day of God. Something in each heart responds to Bahá'u'lláh's invitation to immerse oneself in the “ocean”⁸ of His words, words that assuredly offer much more than a “mere code of laws”⁹ to be glibly believed and blindly obeyed. Don't we all long to partake of the “choice Wine”¹⁰ that so exhilarates the hearts as to

³ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 465.

⁴ Shoghi Effendi: The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 43.

⁵ Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 161.

⁶ Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 103, 220.

⁷ Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 19 (para. 1).

⁸ Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 85 (para. 182).

⁹ Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 21 (para. 5).

¹⁰ Ibid.

arouse in them the irresistible desire to fulfill the real Purpose of our being? But the “ocean” is so vast that we hardly know where to enter it, or how to abide in the world of divine vision that the new Word of God opens to our hearts! Yet how we do need this spiritual vision by which we may perceive the reality of life and of our own being in the light of God's purpose for man!

That such a view of life has been given by Bahá'u'lláh to mankind was realized when a plan was developed, and, in 1956, approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, to index the entire English translated scriptures of the Bahá'í Revelation. Several years of effort in this direction had shown that Bahá'u'lláh's own classifications and definitions constitute the only categories under which such an index could be made, because this Revelation covers many subjects that have never before been professionally categorized. To draw clear lines between the worlds and beings that He has revealed as making up the reality of existence, two years were spent in preparing a compilation of this particular type of references, references that designate and define those worlds and beings. This compilation was produced in 1965 by the National Reference Library Committee under the title, The Worlds of God, for use in training indexers to produce the Master Bahá'í Index.

In the process of working and thinking in terms of this “God's-eye” view of life, something unexpected and exciting began to happen to would-be indexers. Little by little their outlook on life was changing—an “organic change”, in the sense that the former ideas and emotional attitudes imprinted on their brain cells began to be reformed. The “choice Wine” was having its effect! The transmuting of the dark heavy human consciousness into the pure gold of God-consciousness was mysteriously taking place. The committee felt it had stumbled

upon an actual technique for activating the potential transformation that can come from immersion in the ocean of His words.

This book contains the same compilation of references as were originally accumulated by that committee. It is humbly offered as a tiny “sea” taken from that glorious infinite ocean that holds such promise for mankind. In it, it is believed, any “living soul” may immerse himself and find his understanding of reality deepened.

That it may play a definite part in developing, in those who study it, a clearer apprehension of the purpose of God for man, and particularly of His immediate purpose as revealed and directed by Bahá’u’lláh, is the hope of those who have taken part in its preparation.

I. Reality Unveiled

A. *Why Study Reality?*

It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, page 166)

The greatest cause of bereavement and disheartening in the world of humanity is ignorance based upon blind imitation. It is due to this that wars and battles prevail; from this cause hatred and animosity arise continually among mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 291)

The first teaching of Bahá’u’lláh is the investigation of reality. Man must seek reality himself, forsaking imitations and adherence to mere hereditary forms. As the nations of the world are following imitations in lieu of truth and as imitations are many and various, differences of belief have been productive of strife and warfare. So long as these imitations remain, the oneness of the world of humanity is impossible. Therefore, we must investigate reality in order that by its light the clouds and darkness may be dispelled.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 180)

Reality is the cause of illumination of mankind. Reality is love, ever working for the welfare of humanity. Reality is the bond which conjoins hearts. This ever uplifts man toward higher stages of progress and attainment.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 376)

The essentials of the divine religion are one reality, indivisible and not multiple. It is one. And when through investigation we find it to be single, we have a basis for the oneness of the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 42)

Praise be to God! The medieval ages of darkness have passed away and this century of radiance has dawned, this century wherein the reality of things is becoming evident, wherein science is penetrating the mysteries of the universe, the oneness of the world of humanity is being established, and service to mankind is the paramount motive of all existence. Shall we remain steeped in our fanaticisms and cling to our prejudices?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 369)

O friends of God! Strive ye so that this darkness may be utterly dispelled and the Hidden Mysery may be revealed and the realities of things made evident and manifest.
(Bahá'í World Faith, page 217)

B. What is Reality?

The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 105)

The Reality is the Truth, and truth has no division. Truth is God's guidance, it is the light of the world, it is love, it is mercy. These attributes of truth are also human virtues inspired by the Holy Spirit.

So let us one and all hold fast to truth, and we shall be free indeed!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 121)

The foundation of the divine religions is reality; were there no reality, there would be no religions. Abraham heralded reality. Moses promulgated reality. Christ established reality. Muhammad was the Messenger of reality. The Báb was the door of reality. Bahá'u'lláh was the splendor of reality. Reality is one; it does not admit multiplicity or division. Reality is as the sun, which shines forth from different dawning points; it is as the light, which has illumined many lanterns.

Therefore, if the religions investigate reality and seek the essential truth of their own foundations, they will agree and no difference will be found. But inasmuch as religions are submerged in dogmatic imitations, forsaking the original foundations, and as imitations differ widely, therefore, the religions are divergent and antagonistic. These imitations may be likened to clouds which obscure the sunrise; but reality is the sun. If the clouds disperse, the Sun of Reality shines upon all, and no difference of vision will exist. The religions will then agree, for fundamentally they are the same. The subject is one, but predicates are many.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 126)

Reality is the love of God. Reality is the knowledge of God. Reality is justice. Reality is the oneness or solidarity of mankind. Reality is international peace. Reality is the knowledge of verities. Reality unifies humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 372)

The foundation of progress and real prosperity in the human world is reality, for reality is the divine standard and the bestowal of God. Reality is reasonableness, and reasonableness is ever conducive to the honorable station of man. Reality is the guidance of God. Reality is the cause of illumination of mankind. Reality is love, ever working for the welfare of humanity. Reality is the bond which conjoins hearts. This ever uplifts man toward higher stages of progress and attainment. Reality is the unity of mankind, conferring everlasting life. Reality is perfect equality, the foundation of agreement between the nations, the first step toward international peace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 376)

C. How to Perceive Reality: “Not with your eyes, but Mine”

Behold Me, not with your eyes but with Mine. Thus admonisheth you He Who is the Gracious, the All-Knowing. (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 90-91)

Open Thou, O my Lord, mine eyes and the eyes of all them that have sought Thee, that we may recognize Thee with Thine own eyes. This is Thy bidding given us in the Book sent down by Thee unto Him Whom Thou hast chosen by Thy behest, Whom Thou hast singled out for Thy favor above all Thy creatures, Whom Thou hast been pleased to invest with Thy sovereignty, and Whom Thou hast specially favored and entrusted with Thy Message unto Thy people. (Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 80-81)

I entreat Thee, O Thou Who art my Companion and my Best-Beloved, to lift the veil that hath come in between Thee and Thy servants, that they may recognize Thee with Thine own eye and rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee. (Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 206)

After passing through the Valley of knowledge, which is the last plane of limitation, the wayfarer cometh to THE VALLEY OF UNITY and drinketh from the cup of the Absolute, and gazeth on the Manifestations of Oneness. In this station he pierceth the veils of plurality, fleeth from the worlds of the flesh, and ascendeth into the heaven of singleness. With the ear of God he heareth, with the eye of God he beholdeth the mysteries of divine creation. (Bahá'u'lláh: Seven Valleys and Four Valleys, page 17)

Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being. At that hour will the Mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet-blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of heedlessness. Then will the manifold favors and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of Divine Revelation, and the evidences of an everlasting Manifestation. (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 267)

With fixed and steady gaze, born of the unerring eye of God, scan for a while the horizon of divine knowledge, and contemplate those words of perfection which the Eternal hath revealed, that haply the mysteries of divine wisdom, hidden ere now beneath the veil of glory and treasured within the tabernacle of His grace, may be made manifest unto you. (Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pages 16-17)

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: Persian Hidden Words, page 11)

D. Reality: Kinds of Knowledge, and Powers of Perception

Know verily that Knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Satanic. The one welleteth out from the fountain of divine inspiration; the other is but a reflection of vain and obscure thoughts. The source of the former is God Himself; the motive-force of the latter the whisperings of selfish desire. The one is guided by the principle: “Fear ye God; God will teach you;”(Qur’án 2:282) the other is but a confirmation of the truth: “Knowledge is the most grievous veil between man and his Creator.” The former bringeth forth the fruit of patience, of longing desire, of true understanding, and love; whilst the latter can yield naught but arrogance, vainglory and conceit.

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 69)

. . . these mentionings that have been made of the grades of knowledge relate to the knowledge of the Manifestations of that Sun of Reality, which casteth Its light upon the Mirrors. And the splendor of that light is in the hearts, yet it is hidden under the veils of sense and the conditions of this earth, even as a

candle within a lantern of iron, and only when the lantern is removed doth the light of the candle shine out.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Seven Valleys and Four Valleys, pages 23-24)

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

earth have come to exist at His bidding, and by His Will all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being. How can, therefore, the creature which the Word of God hath fashioned comprehend the nature of Him Who is the Ancient of Days?

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 317-318)

Since the Sanctified Realities, the supreme Manifestations of God, surround the essence and qualities of the creatures, transcend and contain existing realities and understand all things, therefore, Their knowledge is divine knowledge, and not acquired—that is to say, it is a holy bounty; it is a divine revelation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 157-158)

The first condition of perception in the world of nature is the perception of the rational soul. In this perception and in this power all men are sharers, whether they be neglectful or vigilant, believers or deniers. This human rational soul is God’s creation; it encompasses and excels other creatures; as it is more noble and distinguished, it encompasses things. The power of the rational soul can discover the realities of things, comprehend the peculiarities of beings, and penetrate the mysteries of existence. All sciences, knowledge, arts, wonders, institutions, discoveries and enterprises come from the exercised intelligence of the rational soul. There was a time when they were unknown, preserved mysteries and hidden secrets; the rational soul gradually discovered them and brought them out from the plane of the invisible and the hidden into the realm of the visible. This is the greatest power of perception in the world of nature, which in its highest flight and soaring comprehends the realities, the properties and the effects of the contingent beings.

But the universal divine mind, which is beyond nature, is the bounty of the Preexistent Power. This universal mind is divine; it embraces existing realities, and it receives the light of the mysteries of God. It is a conscious power, not a power of investigation and of research. The intellectual power of the world of nature is a power of investigation, and by its researches it discovers the realities of beings and the properties of existences; but the heavenly intellectual power, which is beyond nature, embraces things and is cognizant of things, knows them, understands them, is aware of mysteries, realities and divine significations, and is the discoverer of the concealed verities of the Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 217-218)

Know that there are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of the essence of a thing and the knowledge of its qualities. The essence of a thing is known through its qualities; otherwise, it is unknown and hidden.

As our knowledge of things, even of created and limited things, is knowledge of their qualities and not of their essence, how is it possible to comprehend in its essence the Divine Reality, which is unlimited? For the inner essence of anything is not comprehended, but only its qualities. For example, the inner essence of the sun is unknown, but is understood by its qualities, which are heat and light. The inner essence of man is unknown and not evident, but by its qualities it is characterized and known. Thus everything is known by its qualities and not by its essence. Although the mind encompasses all things, and the outward beings are comprehended by it, nevertheless these beings with regard to their essence are unknown; they are only known with regard to their qualities.

Then how can the eternal everlasting Lord, Who is held sanctified from comprehension and conception, be known by

His essence? That is to say, as things can only be known by their qualities and not by their essence, it is certain that the Divine Reality is unknown with regard to its essence and is known with regard to its attributes. Besides, how can the phenomenal reality embrace the Preexistent Reality? For comprehension is the result of encompassing—embracing must be, so that comprehension may be—and the Essence of Unity surrounds all and is not surrounded.

Also the difference of conditions in the world of beings is an obstacle to comprehension. For example, this mineral belongs to the mineral kingdom; however far it may rise, it can never comprehend the power of growth. The plants, the trees, whatever progress they may make, cannot conceive of the power of sight or the powers of the other senses; and the animal cannot imagine the condition of man—that is to say, his spiritual powers. Difference of condition is an obstacle to knowledge; the inferior degree cannot comprehend the superior degree. How then can the phenomenal reality comprehend the Preexistent Reality? Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and the knowledge of His attributes, and not of His Reality. This knowledge of the attributes is also proportioned to the capacity and power of man; it is not absolute. Philosophy consists in comprehending the reality of things as they exist, according to the capacity and the power of man. For the phenomenal reality can comprehend the Preexistent attributes only to the extent of the human capacity. The mystery of Divinity is sanctified and purified from the comprehension of the beings, for all that comes to the imagination is that which man understands, and the power of the understanding of man does not embrace the Reality of the Divine Essence. All that man is able to understand are the attributes of Divinity, the radiance of which appears and is visible in the world and within men's souls.

When we look at the world and within men's souls, we see wonderful signs of the divine perfections, which are clear and apparent; for the reality of things proves the Universal Reality. The Reality of Divinity may be compared to the sun, which from the height of its magnificence shines upon all the horizons; and each horizon, and each soul, receives a share of its radiance. If this light and these rays did not exist, beings would not exist; all beings express something and partake of some ray and portion of this light. The splendors of the perfections, bounties and attributes of God shine forth and radiate from the reality of the Perfect Man—that is to say, the Unique One, the supreme Manifestation of God. Other beings receive only one ray, but the supreme Manifestation is the mirror for this Sun, which appears and becomes manifest in it, with all its perfections, attributes, signs and wonders.

The knowledge of the Reality of the Divinity is impossible and unattainable, but the knowledge of the Manifestations of God is the knowledge of God, for the bounties, splendors and divine attributes are apparent in Them. Therefore, if man attains to the knowledge of the Manifestations of God, he will attain to the knowledge of God; and if he be neglectful of the knowledge of the Holy Manifestations, he will be bereft of the knowledge of God. It is then ascertained and proved that the Holy Manifestations are the center of the bounty, signs and perfections of God. Blessed are those who receive the light of the divine bounties from the enlightened Dawning-points! ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 220-222)

II. Three Conditions of Existence in Reality

Know that the conditions of existence are limited to the conditions of servitude, of prophethood and of Deity
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 230)

A. Deity, the Source Condition: Kingdom of the Essence of God

1. “In the Beginning”?

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1)

Know assuredly that God’s creation hath existed from eternity, and will continue to exist forever. Its beginning hath had no beginning, and its end knoweth no end. His name, the Creator, presupposeth a creation, even as His title, the Lord of Men, must involve the existence of a servant.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 150)

Know that it is one of the most abstruse spiritual truths that the world of existence—that is to say, this endless universe—has no beginning.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 180)

There are two kinds of priorities: one is essential and is not preceded by a cause, but its existence is in itself, as, for example, the sun has light in itself, for its shining is not dependent on the light of other stars. This is called an essential light. But the light of the moon is received from the sun, for the moon is dependent on the sun for its light; therefore, the sun,

with regard to light, is the cause, and the moon becomes the effect. The former is the ancient, the precedent, the antecedent, while the latter is the preceded and the last.

The second sort of preexistence is the preexistence of time, and that has no beginning. The Word of God is sanctified from time. The past, the present, the future, all, in relation to God, are equal. Yesterday, today, tomorrow do not exist in the sun.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 116)

For God the end is the same thing as the beginning.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 152)

2. The Source of All Being

All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 157)

Consider the human eye. Though it hath the faculty of perceiving all created things, yet the slightest impediment may so obstruct its vision as to deprive it of the power of discerning any object whatsoever. Magnified be the name of Him Who hath created, and is the Cause of, these causes, Who hath ordained that every change and variation in the world of being be made dependent upon them. Every created thing in the whole universe is but a door leading into His knowledge, a sign of His sovereignty, a revelation of His names, a symbol of His majesty, a token of His power, a means of admittance into His straight Path.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 160)

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

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

(Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 86-87)

Through His world-pervading Will He hath brought into being all created things. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His own exalted and indivisible Essence, and will everlastingly continue to remain concealed in His inaccessible majesty and glory.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 318)

As we, however, reflect with broad minds upon this infinite universe, we observe that motion without a motive force, and an effect without a cause are both impossible; that every being hath come to exist under numerous influences and continually undergoeth reaction.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablet to August Forel, page 18)

. . . . the wise and reflecting soul will know of a certainty that this infinite universe with all its grandeur and perfect order could not have come to exist by itself.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablet to August Forel, page 19)

3. God, The Divine Reality

Absolute existence is strictly confined to God, exalted be His glory.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 157)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 46-47)

Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men. He is, and hath ever been, immensely exalted beyond all that can either be recounted or perceived.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 49)

The Essence of the Divine Entity and the Unseen of the unseen is holy above imagination and is beyond thought. Consciousness doth not reach It. Within the capacity of comprehension of a produced (or created) reality that Ancient Reality cannot be contained. It is a different world; from it there is no information; arrival thereat is impossible; attainment thereto is prohibited and inaccessible. This much is known: It exists and Its existence is certain and proven—but the condition is unknown.

All the philosophers and the doctors know that It is, but they were perplexed in the comprehension of Its existence and were at last discouraged, and in great despair they left this world. For the comprehension of the condition and mysteries of that Reality of realities and Mystery of mysteries there is need for another power and another sense. That power and sense is not possessed by mankind, therefore they have not found any information.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Japan Will Turn Ablaze, page 23)

The Divine Reality is Unthinkable, Limitless, Eternal, Immortal and Invisible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 57)

The Infinite Reality cannot be said to ascend or descend. It is beyond the understanding of man, and cannot be described in terms which apply to the phenomenal sphere of the created world.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 57-58)

Every discerning eye will readily perceive that the Lord is now manifest, yet there is none to recognize His glory. By this is meant that the habitation wherein the Divine Being dwelleth is far above the reach and ken of any one besides Him.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 150-151)

4. The Inadequacy of Human Concepts of God

Every attempt which, from the beginning that hath no beginning, hath been made to visualize and know God is limited by the exigencies of His own creation—a creation which He, through the operation of His own Will and for the purposes of none other but His own Self, hath called into being. Immeasurably exalted is He above the strivings of human mind to grasp His Essence, or of human tongue to describe His mystery. No tie of direct intercourse can ever bind Him to the things He hath created, nor can the most abstruse and most remote allusions of His creatures do justice to His being.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 318)

Every praise which any tongue or pen can recount, every imagination which any heart can devise, is debarred from the station which Thy most exalted Pen hath ordained, how much more must it fall short of the heights which Thou hast Thyself immensely exalted above the conception and the description of any creature. For the attempt of the evanescent to conceive the signs of the Uncreated is as the stirring of the drop before the tumult of Thy billowing oceans. Nay, forbid it, O my God, that I should thus venture to describe Thee, for every similitude and comparison must pertain to what is essentially created by Thee. How can then such similitude and comparison ever befit Thee, or reach up unto Thy Self?

(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 194)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 165-166)

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, closed in the face of men. No man's understanding shall ever gain access unto His holy court. As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Every one of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard

of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 49-50)

Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and the knowledge of His attributes, and not of His Reality. This knowledge of the attributes is also proportioned to the capacity and power of man; it is not absolute. Philosophy consists in comprehending the reality of things as they exist, according to the capacity and the power of man. For the phenomenal reality can comprehend the Preexistent attributes only to the extent of the human capacity. The mystery of Divinity is sanctified and purified from the comprehension of the beings, for all that comes to the imagination is that which man understands, and the power of the understanding of man does not embrace the Reality of the Divine Essence. All that man is able to understand are the attributes of Divinity, the radiance of which appears and is visible in the world and within men's souls.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 221)

That which we imagine, is not the Reality of God; He, the Unknowable, the Unthinkable, is far beyond the highest conception of man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 25)

Some worship the product of their own imagination: they make for themselves an imaginary God and adore this, when the creation of their finite minds cannot be the Infinite Mighty Maker of all things visible and invisible!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 145)

Man all over the world is seeking for God. All that exists is God; but the Reality of Divinity is holy above all understanding.

The pictures of Divinity that come to our mind are the product of our fancy; they exist in the realm of our imagination. They are not adequate to the Truth; truth in its essence cannot be put into words.

Divinity cannot be comprehended because it is comprehending.

Man, who has also a real existence, is comprehended by God; therefore, the Divinity which man can understand is partial; it is not complete. Divinity is actual Truth and real existence, and not any representation of it. Divinity itself contains All, and is not contained.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London, page 22)

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

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

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 326)

5. The Manifesting and Creating of Worlds

O Lord my God! I testify that Thou wast a hidden Treasure wrapped within Thine immemorial Being and an impenetrable Mystery enshrined in Thine own Essence. Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and the Lesser Worlds, and didst choose Man above all Thy creatures, and didst make Him a sign of both of these worlds, O Thou Who art our Lord, the Most Compassionate!

(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 48-49)

Know that proceeding is of two kinds: the proceeding and appearance through emanation, and the proceeding and appearance through manifestation. The proceeding through emanation is like the coming forth of the action from the actor, of the writing from the writer. Now the writing emanates from the writer, and the discourse emanates from the speaker, and in the same way the human spirit emanates from God. . . . But the proceeding through manifestation is the manifestation of the reality of a thing in other forms, like the coming forth of this tree from the seed of the tree,

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 205)

. . . . great is the difference between manifestation and emanation. The appearance in manifestation means that a single thing appears in infinite forms. For example, the seed, which is a single thing possessing the vegetative perfections, which it manifests in infinite forms, resolving itself into branches, leaves, flowers and fruits: this is called appearance in manifestation; . . .
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 294)

The dependence of the creatures upon God is a dependence of emanation—that is to say, creatures emanate from God; they do not manifest Him. The relation is that of emanation and not that of manifestation.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 202)

Know thou that every fixed star hath its own planets, and every planet its own creatures, whose number no man can compute.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 163)

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.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, page 187)

How great, O my God, is this Thy most excellent handiwork, and how consummate Thy creation, which hath caused every understanding heart and mind to marvel!
(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 49-50)

The worlds of God are in perfect harmony and correspondence one with another. Each world in this limitless universe is, as it were, a mirror reflecting the history and nature of all the rest.

The physical universe is, likewise, in perfect correspondence with the spiritual or divine realm. The world of matter is an outer expression or facsimile of the inner kingdom of spirit. The world of minds corresponds with the world of hearts.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 270)

Consider the endless phenomena of His creation. They are infinite; the universe is infinite. Who shall declare its height, its depth and length? It is absolutely infinite.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 274)

The kingdoms of earth and heaven are Thine, O Lord of the worlds!
(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 323)

B. The Greater World: The Kingdom of the Manifestation of God

1. The Condition that God Manifests: The World of Prophethood

. . . . all creatures emanate from God—that is to say, it is by God that all things are realized, and by Him that all beings have attained to existence. The first thing which emanated from God is that universal reality, which the ancient philosophers termed the “First Mind,” and which the people of Bahá call the “First Will.” This emanation, in that which concerns its action in the world of God, is not limited by time or place; it is without beginning or end—beginning and end in relation to God are one. The preexistence of God is the preexistence of essence,

and also preexistence of time, and the phenomenality of contingency is essential and not temporal

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 203)

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

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 203)

. . . . the Word of God, the Eternal Bounty, the Holy Spirit has neither beginning nor end, for these things [beginnings and endings] are related to the world of contingencies and not to the divine world. For God the end is the same thing as the beginning. So the reckoning of days, weeks, months and years, of yesterday and today, is connected with the terrestrial globe; but in the sun there is no such thing—there is neither yesterday, today nor tomorrow, neither months nor years: all are equal. In the same way the Word of God is purified from all these conditions and is exempt from the boundaries, the laws and the limits of the world of contingency. Therefore, the reality of prophethood, which is the Word of God and the perfect state of manifestation, did not have any beginning and will not have any end; its rising is different from all others and is like that of the sun.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 152)

3. The Cause that God Manifests: His Divine Plan

Verily, I say: The Cause of God hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer or equal.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 114)

I know not, O my God, whether I should speak forth the wonders of Thy praise among Thy servants, and lay bare before them the secrets of Thy mercy and the mysteries of Thy Cause, or keep them wrapped up within the receptacle of my heart. Though the lover be loth to share with any one the intimate conversation of his beloved, yet at whatever time Thine inescapable commandment to declare Thy Cause reacheth me, I will unhesitatingly obey it. I would proclaim Thee, undeterred by the darts of affliction that may rain down upon me from the clouds of Thy decree.

I swear by Thy might! Neither the hosts of the earth nor those of heaven can keep me back from revealing the things I am commanded to manifest. I have no will before Thy will, and can cherish no desire in the face of Thy desire. By Thy grace I am, at all times, ready to serve Thee and am rid of all attachment to any one except Thee.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 184)

Verily He Who is the Day-star of Truth and Revealer of the Supreme Being holdeth, for all time, undisputed sovereignty over all that is in heaven and on earth, though no man be found on earth to obey Him. He verily is independent of all earthly dominion, though He be utterly destitute. Thus We reveal unto thee the mysteries of the Cause of God, and bestow upon thee the gems of divine wisdom, that haply thou mayest soar on the wings of renunciation to those heights that are veiled from the eyes of men.

(Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 97)

We left Our home country accompanied by two mounted escorts, representing the two honoured governments of Persia and Russia until We arrived in Iraq in the plenitude of glory and power. Praise be to God! The Cause whereof this Wronged One is the Bearer standeth as high as heaven and shineth resplendent as the sun. Concealment hath no access unto this station, nor is there any occasion for fear or silence.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, page 40)

O God, my God! Thou hast lighted the lamp of Thy Cause with the oil of wisdom; protect it from contrary winds. The lamp is Thine, and the glass is Thine, and all things in the heavens and on earth are in the grasp of Thy power.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 104)

That which can ensure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as clear and manifest as the sun. These hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight. Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 287)

Couldst thou but know the things sent down by My Pen, and discover the treasures of My Cause, and the pearls of My mysteries which lie hid in the seas of My names and in the goblets of My words, thou wouldst, in thy love for My name, and in thy longing for My glorious and sublime Kingdom, lay down thy life in My path.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 28-29)

I testify, O my God, and my King, that Thou hast created me to remember Thee, to glorify Thee, and to aid Thy Cause.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 3)

O my brother! Take thou the step of the spirit, so that, swift as the twinkling of an eye, thou mayest flash through the wilds of remoteness and bereavement, attain the Ridván of everlasting reunion, and in one breath commune with the heavenly Spirits. For with human feet thou canst never hope to traverse these immeasurable distances, nor attain thy goal. Peace be upon him whom the light of truth guideth unto all truth, and who, in the name of God, standeth in the path of His Cause, upon the shore of true understanding.

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 43)

The spirit of power confirmeth thee in His cause; why dost thou veil thyself?

(Bahá'u'lláh: Arabic Hidden Words, page 34)

Arm thyself with His strength and power, and arise to aid His Cause and to magnify His holy name.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 312)

Through the spirit of power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved, and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O Thou the Goal of my desire!

(Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 248)

O My Name! Utterance must needs possess penetrating power. For if bereft of this quality it would fail to exert influence. And this penetrating influence dependeth on the spirit being pure and the heart stainless. Likewise it needeth moderation, without

which the hearer would be unable to bear it, rather he would manifest opposition from the very outset. And moderation will be obtained by blending utterance with the tokens of divine wisdom which are recorded in the sacred Books and Tablets. Thus when the essence of one's utterance is endowed with these two requisites it will prove highly effective and will be the prime factor in transforming the souls of men. This is the station of supreme victory and celestial dominion. Whoso attaineth thereto is invested with the power to teach the Cause of God and to prevail over the hearts and minds of men. (Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 198-199)

. . . . were a person to possess the whole world and would tender his possessions at the cost of degrading the honour of the Cause, even to the extent of a grain of mustard, it would be essential and imperative to refuse to accept such wealth. Such is the Cause of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Well is it with them that act accordingly. (Bahá'u'lláh: Huququ'llah, page 500)

The Cause of God hath come as a token of His grace. Happy are they who act; happy are they who understand; happy the man that hath clung unto the truth, detached from all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. (Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 139)

Every eye, in this Day, should seek what will best promote the Cause of God. He, Who is the Eternal Truth, beareth Me witness! Nothing whatever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God. Flee them, through the power of God and His sovereign aid, and

strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savor of such deeds as are performed in His path, and partake of the sweetness of such humility and submissiveness as are shown for His sake. Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds. Ponder it in your hearts, and be ye of them that observe its precepts. (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 8-9)

How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and will, ere long, gather together the whole of mankind beneath its shelter. Thy day of service is now come. Countless Tablets bear the testimony of the bounties vouchsafed unto thee. Arise for the triumph of My Cause, and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the hearts of men. Thou must show forth that which will ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and the down-trodden. Gird up the loins of thine endeavor, that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty. (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 92)

To whatever place We may be banished, however great the tribulation We may suffer, they who are the people of God must, with fixed resolve and perfect confidence, keep their eyes directed towards the Day Spring of Glory, and be busied in whatever may be conducive to the betterment of the world and

the education of its peoples. All that hath befallen Us in the past hath advanced the interests of Our Revelation and blazoned its fame; and all that may befall Us in the future will have a like result. Cling ye, with your inmost hearts, to the Cause of God, a Cause that hath been sent down by Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Wise. We have, with the utmost kindness and mercy, summoned and directed all peoples and nations to that which shall truly profit them.

The Day Star of Truth that shineth in its meridian splendor beareth Us witness! They who are the people of God have no ambition except to revive the world, to ennoble its life, and regenerate its peoples. Truthfulness and good-will have, at all times, marked their relations with all men. Their outward conduct is but a reflection of their inward life, and their inward life a mirror of their outward conduct. No veil hideth or obscureth the verities on which their Faith is established. Before the eyes of all men these verities have been laid bare, and can be unmistakably recognized. Their very acts attest the truth of these words.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 270-271)

There is a power in this Cause, a mysterious power, far, far, far away from the ken of men and angels. That invisible power is the cause of all these outward activities. It moves the hearts. It rends the mountains. It administers the complicated affairs of the Cause. It inspires the friends. It dashes into a thousand pieces all the forces of opposition. It creates new spiritual worlds. This is a mystery of the Kingdom of Abhá.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Star of the West, Vol. 7, page 34)

4. The Spirit that God Manifests: The Holy Spirit

And when the hour at which Thy resistless Faith was to be made manifest did strike, Thou didst breathe a breath of Thy spirit into Thy Pen, and lo, the entire creation shook to its very foundations, unveiling to mankind such mysteries as lay hidden within the treasuries of Him Who is the Possessor of all created things.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 3-4)

The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations; for the focus of the rays of the Sun of Reality was Christ, and from this glorious focus, which is the Reality of Christ, the Bounty of God reflected upon the other mirrors which were the reality of the Apostles. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles signifies that the glorious divine bounties reflected and appeared in their reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 108)

All the Prophets and Messengers have come from One Holy Spirit and bear the Message of God, fitted to the age in which they appear. The One Light is in them and they are One with each other.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London, page 24)

The Infinite Reality cannot be said to ascend or descend. It is beyond the understanding of man, and cannot be described in terms which apply to the phenomenal sphere of the created world.

Man, then, is in extreme need of the only Power by which he is able to receive help from the Divine Reality, that Power alone bringing him into contact with the Source of all life.

An intermediary is needed to bring two extremes into relation with each other. Riches and poverty, plenty and need: without an intermediary power there could be no relation between these pairs of opposites.

So we can say there must be a Mediator between God and Man, and this is none other than the Holy Spirit, which brings the created earth into relation with the “Unthinkable One”, the Divine Reality.

The Divine Reality may be likened to the sun and the Holy Spirit to the rays of the sun. As the rays of the sun bring the light and warmth of the sun to the earth, giving life to all created beings, so do the “Manifestations” bring the power of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Sun of Reality to give light and life to the souls of men.

Behold, there is an intermediary necessary between the sun and the earth; the sun does not descend to the earth, neither does the earth ascend to the sun. This contact is made by the rays of the sun which bring light and warmth and heat.

The Holy Spirit is the Light from the Sun of Truth bringing, by its infinite power, life and illumination to all mankind, flooding all souls with Divine Radiance, conveying the blessings of God’s Mercy to the whole world. The earth, without the medium of the warmth and light of the rays of the sun, could receive no benefits from the sun.

Likewise the Holy Spirit is the very cause of the life of man; without the Holy Spirit he would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge by which his great influence over the rest of creation is gained. The illumination of the Holy Spirit gives to man the power of thought, and enables

him to make discoveries by which he bends the laws of nature to his will.

The Holy Spirit it is which, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man and enables him to attain Eternal Life.

All these blessings are brought to man by the Holy Spirit; therefore we can understand that the Holy Spirit is the Intermediary between the Creator and the created. The light and heat of the sun cause the earth to be fruitful, and create life in all things that grow; and the Holy Spirit quickens the souls of men.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 57-59)

The power of the Holy Spirit, enlightening man’s intelligence, has enabled him to discover means of bending many natural laws to his will. He flies through the air, floats on the sea, and even moves under the waters

The Holy Spirit will give to man greater powers than these, if only he will strive after the things of the spirit and endeavour to attune his heart to the Divine infinite love.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 37-38)

You were asleep; you are awakened. Your ears are attentive; your hearts are informed. You have acquired the love of God. You have attained to the knowledge of God. This is the most great bestowal of God. This is the breath of the Holy Spirit, and this consists of faith and assurance. This eternal life is the second birth; this is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. God has destined this station for you all. He has prepared this for you. You must appreciate the value of this bounty and engage your time in mentioning and thanking the True One. You must live in the utmost happiness. If any trouble or vicissitude comes into your lives, if your heart is depressed on account of health,

livelihood or vocation, let not these things affect you. They should not cause unhappiness, for Bahá'u'lláh has brought you divine happiness. He has prepared heavenly food for you; He has destined eternal bounty for you; He has bestowed everlasting glory upon you. Therefore, these glad tidings should cause you to soar in the atmosphere of joy forever and ever. Render continual thanks unto God so that the confirmations of God may encircle you all.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 188-189)

In the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, it is written: “By the Power of the Holy Spirit alone is man able to progress, for the power of man is limited and the Divine Power is boundless.” The reading of history brings us to the conclusion that all truly great men, the benefactors of the human race, those who have moved men to love the right and hate the wrong and who have caused real progress, all these have been inspired by the force of the Holy Spirit.

The Prophets of God have not all graduated in the schools of learned philosophy; indeed they were often men of humble birth, to all appearance ignorant, unknown men of no importance in the eyes of the world; sometimes even lacking the knowledge of reading and writing.

That which raised these great ones above men, and by which they were able to become Teachers of the truth, was the power of the Holy Spirit. Their influence on humanity, by virtue of this mighty inspiration, was great and penetrating.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 163-164)

He [Jesus] came to the world through the Power of God, born of the Holy Spirit and of the blessed Virgin Mary.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 47)

The influence of the wisest philosophers, without this Spirit Divine, has been comparatively unimportant, however extensive their learning and deep their scholarship.

The unusual intellects, for instance, of Plato, Aristotle, Pliny and Socrates, have not influenced men so greatly that they have been anxious to sacrifice their lives for their teachings; whilst some of those simple men so moved humanity that thousands of men have become willing martyrs to uphold their words; for these words were inspired by the Divine Spirit of God! The prophets of Judah and Israel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, were humble men, as were also the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Peter, the chief of the apostles, used to divide the proceeds of his fishing into seven parts, and when, having taken one part for each day's use, he arrived at the seventh portion, he knew it was the Sabbath day. Consider this! and then think of his future position; to what glory he attained because the Holy Spirit wrought great works through him.

We understand that the Holy Spirit is the energizing factor in the life of man. Whosoever receives this power is able to influence all with whom he comes into contact.

The greatest philosophers without this Spirit are powerless, their souls lifeless, their hearts dead! Unless the Holy Spirit breathes into their souls, they can do no good work. No system of philosophy has ever been able to change the manners and customs of a people for the better. Learned philosophers, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, have often been men of inferior morality; they have not proclaimed in their actions the reality of their beautiful phrases.

The difference between spiritual philosophers and others is shown by their lives. The Spiritual Teacher shows His belief in

His own teaching, by Himself being what He recommends to others.

An humble man without learning, but filled with the Holy Spirit, is more powerful than the most nobly-born profound scholar without that inspiration. He who is educated by the Divine Spirit can, in his time, lead others to receive the same Spirit.

I pray for you that you may be informed by the life of the Divine Spirit, so that you may be the means of educating others. The life and morals of a spiritual man are, in themselves, an education to those who know him.

Think not of your own limitations, dwell only on the welfare of the Kingdom of Glory. Consider the influence of Jesus Christ on His apostles, then think of their effect upon the world. These simple men were enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to spread the glad tidings!

So may you all receive Divine assistance! No capacity is limited when led by the Spirit of God!

The earth of itself has no properties of life, it is barren and dry, until fertilized by the sun and the rain; still the earth need not bewail its own limitations.

May you be given life! May the rain of the Divine Mercy and the warmth of the Sun of Truth make your gardens fruitful, so that many beautiful flowers of exquisite fragrance and love may blossom in abundance. Turn your faces away from the contemplation of your own finite selves and fix your eyes upon the Everlasting Radiance; then will your souls receive in full measure the Divine Power of the Spirit and the Blessings of the Infinite Bounty.

If you thus keep yourselves in readiness, you will become to the world of humanity a burning flame, a star of guidance, and a fruitful tree, changing all its darkness and woe into light and joy

by the shining of the Sun of Mercy and the infinite blessings of the Glad Tidings.

This is the meaning of the power of the Holy Spirit, which I pray may be bountifully showered upon you.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 164-166)

5. The Will that God Manifests: the Divine Law

The first thing which emanated from God is that universal reality, which the ancient philosophers termed the “First Mind,” and which the people of Bahá call the “First Will.”
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 203)

And whosoever is made a Viceregent by Him, shall be a Viceregent in all the worlds, for this is an act of God. For the will of God can in no wise be revealed except through His will, nor His wish be manifested save through His wish.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 155)

Powerful is He to manifest His Cause, and to exalt His testimony, and to establish whatsoever is His Will, and to elevate it to so eminent a position that neither thine own hands, nor the hands of them that have turned away from Him, can ever touch or harm it.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 219-220)

The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God, and the end of all things is strict observance of whatsoever hath been sent down from the empyrean of the Divine Will that pervadeth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 5)

All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 141)

The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 299)

None can escape the snares He setteth, and no soul can find release except through submission to His will.
(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 251)

O SON OF MAN! Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Arabic Hidden Words, page 40)

The source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, page 155)

The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty, and submit to the Will of the Lord, the Sovereign, the Gracious, the All-Powerful.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 155-156)

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among

My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation.
(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, page 20)

6. The Word that God Manifests: Divine Revelation

Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 142)

Every single letter proceeding from Our mouth is endowed with such regenerative power as to enable it to bring into existence a new creation—a creation the magnitude of which is inscrutable to all save God. He verily hath knowledge of all things
(Bahá'u'lláh: The Power of Divine Assistance, page 203)

Praise be to God at Whose bidding the standard of the Most Exalted Word hath been lifted up in the world of creation, and the banner of "He doeth whatsoever He willeth" raised amidst all peoples.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 1)

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

through yet another word all such as Thou didst wish were, by Thy grace and bounty, endued with new life.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 42)

The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame!
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 316)

Behold how the generality of mankind hath been endued with the capacity to hearken unto God's most exalted Word—the Word upon which must depend the gathering together and spiritual resurrection of all men.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, page 89)

It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 76)

No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 77)

The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it? Is it within human power, O Hakim, to effect in the constituent elements of any of the minute and indivisible particles of matter so complete a transformation as to transmute it into purest gold? Perplexing and difficult as this

may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. The Force capable of such a transformation transcendeth the potency of the Elixir itself. The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 200)

Such are the mysteries of the Word of God, which have been unveiled and made manifest, that haply thou mayest apprehend the morning light of divine guidance, mayest quench, by the power of reliance and renunciation, the lamp of idle fancy, of vain imaginings, of hesitation, and doubt, and mayest kindle, in the inmost chamber of thine heart, the new-born light of divine knowledge and certitude.
(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 49)

Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil. From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books.
(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 49)

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 141)

O my friend, . . . the penetration of the Word of God in the temple of all the regions is similar to the pervasion of the soul in a sound body.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Bahá’í World Faith, page 393)

Consider the statement recorded in the first chapter of the book of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This statement is brief but replete with the greatest meanings. Its applications are illimitable and beyond the power of books or words to contain and express. Heretofore the doctors of theology have not expounded it but have restricted it to Jesus as “the Word made flesh,” the separation of Jesus from God, the Father, and His descent upon the earth. In this way the individualized separation of the godhead came to be taught.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 154)

But the proceeding through manifestation (if by this is meant the divine appearance, and not division into parts), we have said, is the proceeding and the appearance of the Holy Spirit and the Word, which is from God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 206)

7. The Being Who Embodies All that God Manifests

As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He [God] hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to

their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Every one of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 49-50)

He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 49)

Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! I testify that Thou wast a hidden Treasure wrapped within Thine immemorial Being and an impenetrable Mystery enshrined in Thine own Essence. Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and the Lesser Worlds, and didst choose Man above all Thy creatures, and didst make Him a sign of both of these worlds, O Thou Who art our Lord, the Most Compassionate!

Thou didst raise Him up to occupy Thy throne before all the people of Thy creation. Thou didst enable Him to unravel Thy mysteries, and to shine with the lights of Thine inspiration and Thy Revelation, and to manifest Thy names and Thine attributes. Through Him Thou didst adorn the preamble of the book of Thy creation, O Thou Who art the Ruler of the universe Thou hast fashioned!

I bear witness that in His person solidity and fluidity have been joined and combined. Through His immovable constancy

in Thy Cause, and His unwavering adherence to whatsoever Thou, in the plenitude of the light of Thy glory, didst unveil to His eyes, throughout the domains of Thy Revelation and creation, the souls of Thy servants were stirred up in their longing for Thy Kingdom, and the dwellers of Thy realms rushed forth to enter into Thy heavenly dominion. Through the restlessness He evinced in Thy path, the feet of all them that are devoted to Thee were steeled and confirmed to manifest Thy Cause amidst Thy creatures, and to demonstrate Thy sovereignty throughout Thy realm.

How great, O my God, is this Thy most excellent handiwork, and how consummate Thy creation, which hath caused every understanding heart and mind to marvel! And when the set time was fulfilled, and what had been preordained came to pass, Thou didst unloose His tongue to praise Thee, and to lay bare Thy mysteries before all Thy creation, O Thou Who art the Possessor of all names, and the Fashioner of earth and heaven! Through Him all created things were made to glorify Thee, and to celebrate Thy praise, and every soul was directed towards the kingdom of Thy revelation and Thy sovereignty.

At one time, Thou didst raise Him up, O my God, and didst attire Him with the ornament of the name of Him Who conversed with Thee (Moses), and didst through Him uncover all that Thy will had decreed and Thine irrevocable purpose ordained. At another time, Thou didst adorn Him with the name of Him Who was Thy Spirit (Jesus), and didst send Him down out of the heaven of Thy will, for the edification of Thy people, infusing thereby the spirit of life into the hearts of the sincere among Thy servants and the faithful among Thy creatures. Again, Thou didst reveal Him, decked forth by the name of Him Who was Thy Friend (Muhammad), and caused Him to shine brightly above the horizon of Hijaz, as a token of

Thy power and an evidence of Thy might. Through Him Thou didst send unto Thy servants what enabled them to scale the heights of Thy unity, and to yearn over the wonders of Thy manifold knowledge and wisdom.

I testify, O Thou Who art the Lord of the whole creation, and the Desire of whosoever hath sought Thee, that, amidst Thy creatures, They resemble the sun which no matter how often it riseth and setteth is still the one and the same sun. Whoso maketh any distinction between any of Them hath truly failed to attain the ultimate purpose, and to reach the highest goal, and hath been deprived of the mysteries of unity and of the lights of sanctity and oneness. I testify, moreover, that Thou hast decreed that none on the face of the earth should equal Them, and none of Thy creatures be able to be compared with any of Them, in order that Thine own singleness and peerlessness might be recognized and established.

Glorified, immeasurably glorified be Thy name, O my God! How can I ever befittingly mention Thee or sufficiently praise Thee, that Thou hast manifested Him by the power of Thy might, and caused Him to shine above the horizon of Thy will, and made Him the Day-Spring of Thy signs, and the Dawning-Place of the revelation of Thy names and Thine attributes? How bewilderingly mysterious, moreover, O my God, is His nature and all that Thou hast infused into Him, through Thy strength and by the power of Thy might! At one time He appeareth as the water which is Life indeed, sent down out of the heaven of Thy grace, and poured forth from the clouds of Thy mercy, that Thy creatures may be endued with new life, and live as long as Thine own Kingdom endureth. Every drop of that water would suffice to quicken the dead, and to set their faces in the direction of Thy favors and Thy gifts, and to rid them of all attachment to aught else except Thee. At another time He revealeth Himself as the Fire which Thou didst kindle in the tree

of Thy unity, whose heat melted the hearts of Thine ardent lovers when He Who is the Day-Star of the world shone forth above the horizon of Iraq. I testify, O my God, that through Him the veils of human fancy were burnt up, and the hearts of men were set towards the scene of Thy most resplendent glory. (Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 48-52)

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God!" He verily speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: "Those shafts were God's, not Thine!" (Qur'án 8:17) And also He saith: "In truth, they who plighted fealty unto thee, really plighted that fealty unto God." (Qur'án 48:40) And were any of them to voice the utterance: "I am the Messenger of God," He also speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth. Even as He saith: "Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of God." (Qur'án 33:40) Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. And were they all to proclaim: "I am the Seal of the Prophets," they verily utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt. For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation. They are all the manifestation of the "Beginning" and the "End," the "First" and the "Last," the "Seen" and "Hidden"—all of which pertain to Him Who is the innermost Spirit of Spirits and eternal Essence of Essences. And were they to say: "We are the servants of God," this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. 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 non-existent 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, pages 178-180)

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath indeed

disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 59-60)

[The Manifestation of God] incarnateth in Himself the kingdom of utterance.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 158)

. . . . viewed from the standpoint of their oneness and sublime detachment, the attributes of Godhead, Divinity, Supreme Singleness, and Inmost Essence, have been and are applicable to those Essences of being, inasmuch as they all abide on the throne of divine Revelation, and are established upon the seat of divine Concealment. Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the divine Being.

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pages 177-178)

These Countenances are the recipients of the Divine Command, and the day-springs of His Revelation. This Revelation is exalted above the veils of plurality and the exigencies of number. Thus He saith: "Our Cause is but one." (Qur'án 54:50) Inasmuch as the Cause is one and the same, the Exponents thereof also must needs be one and the same.

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 153)

Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck upon the Sinai of their search at His forbidding voice, "Thou shalt never behold Me!"; whilst a myriad Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction, "Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend!" From

time immemorial He hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence. Every attempt to attain to an understanding of His inaccessible Reality hath ended in complete bewilderment, and every effort to approach His exalted Self and envisage His Essence hath resulted in hopelessness and failure.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 62-63)

. . . . the perfect man, the Prophet, is one who is transfigured, one who has the purity and clearness of a perfect mirror—one who reflects the Sun of Truth. Of such a one—of such a Prophet and Messenger—we can say that the Light of Divinity with the heavenly Perfections dwells in him.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London, pages 23-24)

These Holy Souls are like the leaves of a tree which are put in motion by the blowing of the wind, and not by Their own desire; for They are attracted by the breeze of the love of God, and Their will is absolutely submissive. Their word is the word of God; Their commandment is the commandment of God; Their prohibition is the prohibition of God. They are like the glass globe which receives light from the lamp. Although the light appears to emanate from the glass, in reality it is shining from the lamp. In the same way for the Prophets of God, the centers of manifestation, Their movement and repose come from divine inspiration, not from human passions. If it were not so, how could the Prophet be worthy of trust, and how could He be the Messenger of God, delivering the commands and the prohibitions of God? All the defects that are mentioned in the Holy Books with reference to the Manifestations refer to questions of this kind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 168)

Briefly, in the Holy Manifestations the Preexistent Bounty is like the light, the individuality is represented by the glass globe, and the human body is like the niche: if the niche is destroyed, the lamp continues to burn.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 155)

8. The Purpose of God’s Manifestation

[God] hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence.

(Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 99)

We had no other purpose except to edify the souls of men, and to exalt the blessed Word.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 166)

These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God’s all-pervasive grace. Led by the light of unflinching guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, They are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 67)

The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. (Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 99)

Notwithstanding His knowledge of what would befall Him, He [Jesus] arose to proclaim His message, suffered all tribulation and hardships from the people and finally offered His life as a sacrifice in order to illumine humanity—gave His blood in order to guide the world of mankind. He accepted every calamity and suffering in order to guide men to the truth.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 450)

. . . . for this cause came I [Jesus] into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

(John 18:37)

God has sent forth the Prophets for the purpose of quickening the soul of man into higher and divine recognitions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 310)

God has purposed that the darkness of the world of nature shall be dispelled and the imperfect attributes of the natal self be effaced in the effulgent reflection of the Sun of Truth. The mission of the Prophets of God has been to train the souls of humanity and free them from the thralldom of natural instincts and physical tendencies. They are like unto Gardeners, and the world of humanity is the field of Their cultivation, the wilderness and untrained jungle growth wherein They proceed to labor. They cause the crooked branches to become straightened, the fruitless trees to become fruitful, and gradually

transform this great wild, uncultivated field into a beautiful orchard producing wonderful abundance and outcome.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 310)

Only by improving spiritually as well as materially can we make any real progress, and become perfect beings. It was in order to bring this spiritual life and light into the world that all the great Teachers have appeared. They came so that the Sun of Truth might be manifested, and shine in the hearts of men, and that through its wondrous power men might attain unto Everlasting Light.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 63)

9. The Revelation Manifested by God

a. GIVEN TO CREATION

That which is preeminent above all other gifts, is incorruptible in nature, and pertaineth to God Himself, is the gift of Divine Revelation. Every bounty conferred by the Creator upon man, be it material or spiritual, is subservient unto this. It is, in its essence, and will ever so remain, the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. It is God’s supreme testimony, the clearest evidence of His truth, the sign of His consummate bounty, the token of His all-encompassing mercy, the proof of His most loving providence, the symbol of His most perfect grace. He hath, indeed, partaken of this highest gift of God who hath recognized His Manifestation in this Day.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 195)

O people! I swear by the one true God! This is the Ocean out of which all seas have proceeded, and with which every one of them will ultimately be united. From Him all the Suns have been generated, and unto Him they will all return. Through His potency the Trees of Divine Revelation have yielded their fruits, every one of which hath been sent down in the form of a Prophet, bearing a Message to God’s creatures in each of the worlds whose number God, alone, in His all-encompassing Knowledge, can reckon. This He hath accomplished through the agency of but one Letter of His Word, revealed by His Pen—a Pen moved by His directing Finger—His Finger itself sustained by the power of God’s Truth.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 104)

Thou hast inspired the Pen with the mysteries of Thine eternity, and bidden it teach man that which he knoweth not, and caused him to partake of the living waters of truth from the cup of Thy Revelation and Thine inspiration.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 197)

b. PARTAKING OF THIS GIFT

Know thou verily the Divine Food is descending from heaven, but only those taste thereof who are directed to the light of guidance, and only those can enjoy it who are endowed with a sound taste. Otherwise every diseased soul disliketh the delicious and merciful food and this is because of the sickness which hath seized him
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pages 130-131)

They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples.

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, page 19)

O My servants! Whoso hath tasted of this Fountain hath attained unto everlasting Life, and whoso hath refused to drink therefrom is even as the dead.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 169)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 183)

O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it.

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, page 56)

c. THE PURPOSE OF REVELATION

And yet, is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent. (Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pages 240-241)

For all that has flowed from the Supreme Pen has been and is conducive to the elevation, exaltation and training of all the people of the world, and is the greatest antidote for all diseases – were they to understand and perceive

(EWP p. 186)

There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 68-69)

O my God, the God of bounty and mercy! Thou art that King by Whose commanding word the whole creation hath been called into being; and Thou art that All-Bountiful One the doings of Whose servants have never hindered Him from

showing forth His grace, nor have they frustrated the revelations of His bounty.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 251)

He it is Who hath revealed His Cause for the guidance of His creatures, and sent down His verses to demonstrate His Proof and His Testimony

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 1)

The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book, nay, of every divinely-revealed verse, is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding, so that peace and tranquillity may be firmly established amongst them.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 206)

C. The Lesser World, Servitude, Creation: The Kingdom of the Emanation of God

1. The Condition of Prophethood in Creation

a. SUPERHUMAN CONDITION, INTERMEDIATE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! I testify that Thou wast a hidden Treasure wrapped within Thine immemorial Being and an impenetrable Mystery enshrined in Thine own Essence.

Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and the Lesser Worlds, and didst choose Man above all

Thy creatures, and didst make Him a sign of both of these worlds, O Thou Who art our Lord, the Most Compassionate!

Thou didst raise Him up to occupy Thy throne before all the people of Thy creation. Thou didst enable Him to unravel Thy mysteries, and to shine with the lights of Thine inspiration and Thy Revelation, and to manifest Thy names and Thine attributes. Through Him Thou didst adorn the preamble of the book of Thy creation, O Thou Who art the Ruler of the universe Thou hast fashioned!

I bear witness that in His person solidity and fluidity have been joined and combined. Through His immovable constancy in Thy Cause, and His unwavering adherence to whatsoever Thou, in the plenitude of the light of Thy glory, didst unveil to His eyes, throughout the domains of Thy Revelation and creation, the souls of Thy servants were stirred up in their longing for Thy Kingdom, and the dwellers of Thy realms rushed forth to enter into Thy heavenly dominion. Through the restlessness He evinced in Thy path, the feet of all them that are devoted to Thee were steeled and confirmed to manifest Thy Cause amidst Thy creatures, and to demonstrate Thy sovereignty throughout Thy realm.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 48-49)

These sanctified Mirrors, these Day Springs of ancient glory, are, one and all, the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the Light that can never fade These Tabernacles of Holiness,

these Primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these Gems of Divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest.

These attributes of God are not, and have never been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. Even as He hath revealed: “Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others.”

It hath, therefore, become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they who are the Day Springs of God’s attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beauteous Countenances have, each and every one of them, been endowed with all the attributes of God, such as sovereignty, dominion, and the like, even though to outward seeming they be shorn of all earthly majesty
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 47-49)

These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to

them the same attributes, thou hast not erred from the truth. Even as He hath revealed: “No distinction do We make between any of His Messengers.” For they, one and all, summon the people of the earth to acknowledge the unity of God, and herald unto them the Kawthar of an infinite grace and bounty. They are all invested with the robe of prophethood, and are honored with the mantle of glory. Thus hath Muhammad, the Point of the Qur’an, revealed: “I am all the Prophets.” Likewise, He saith: “I am the first Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus.” Similar statements have been made by Imám ‘Alí. Sayings such as these, which indicate the essential unity of those Exponents of Oneness, have also emanated from the Channels of God’s immortal utterance, and the Treasuries of the gems of Divine knowledge, and have been recorded in the Scriptures. These Countenances are the recipients of the Divine Command, and the Day Springs of His Revelation. This Revelation is exalted above the veils of plurality and the exigencies of number. Thus He saith: “Our Cause is but One.” Inasmuch as the Cause is one and the same, the Exponents thereof also must needs be one and the same. Likewise, the Imáms of the Muhammadan Faith, those lamps of certitude, have said: “Muhammad is our first, Muhammad is our last, Muhammad our all.”

It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold Them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of Being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendor! Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: “I am the return of all the Prophets,” He, verily, speaketh the truth. In like manner,

in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established

The other station is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation, and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfils a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. Even as He saith: “Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others. To some God hath spoken, some He hath raised and exalted. And to Jesus, Son of Mary, We gave manifest signs, and We strengthened Him with the Holy Spirit.”

It is because of this difference in their station and mission that the words and utterances flowing from these Well Springs of Divine knowledge appear to diverge and differ. Otherwise, in the eyes of them that are initiated into the mysteries of Divine wisdom, all their utterances are, in reality, but the expressions of one Truth. As most of the people have failed to appreciate those stations to which We have referred, they, therefore, feel perplexed and dismayed at the varying utterances pronounced by Manifestations that are essentially one and the same.

It hath ever been evident that all these divergencies of utterance are attributable to differences of station. Thus, viewed from the standpoint of their oneness and sublime detachment, the attributes of Godhead, Divinity, Supreme Singleness, and Inmost Essence, have been, and are applicable to those Essences of Being, inasmuch as they all abide on the throne of Divine Revelation, and are established upon the seat of Divine Concealment. Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the Divine Being.

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.”

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: “I am God,” He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: “Those shafts were God’s, not Thine.” And also He saith: “In truth, they who plighted fealty unto Thee, really plighted that fealty unto God.” And were any of them to voice the utterance, “I am the Messenger of God,” He, also, speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth. Even as He saith: “Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of God.” Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. And were they all to proclaim, “I am the Seal of the Prophets,” they, verily, utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt. For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation. They are all the manifestation of the “Beginning” and the “End,” the “First” and the “Last,” the “Seen” and the “Hidden”—all of which pertain to Him Who is the Innermost Spirit of Spirits and Eternal Essence of Essences. And were they to say, “We are the Servants of God,” this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. Thus in moments in which these Essences of Being were deep immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared

to the loftiest summits of Divine mysteries, they claimed their utterances 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 non-existent 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 any one 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

By virtue of this station they have claimed for themselves the Voice of Divinity and the like, whilst by virtue of their station of Messengership, they have declared themselves the Messengers of God. In every instance they have voiced an utterance that would conform to the requirements of the occasion, and have ascribed all these declarations to Themselves, declarations ranging from the realm of Divine Revelation to the realm of creation, and from the domain of Divinity even unto the domain of earthly existence. Thus it is that whatsoever be their utterance, whether it pertain to the realm of Divinity, Lordship, Prophethood, Messengership, Guardianship, Apostleship, or Servitude, all is true, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Therefore these sayings which We have quoted in support of Our argument must be attentively considered, that the divergent

utterances of the Manifestations of the Unseen and Day Springs of Holiness may cease to agitate the soul and perplex the mind. (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 50-56)

The Bearers of the Trust of God are made manifest unto the peoples of the earth as the Exponents of a new Cause and the Revealers of a new Message. Inasmuch as these Birds of the celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they, therefore, are regarded as one soul and the same person. For they all drink from the one Cup of the love of God, and all partake of the fruit of the same Tree of Oneness. (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 50)

In every instance they [the Messengers of God] . . . have ascribed all these declarations to Themselves, declarations ranging from the realm of divine Revelation to the realm of creation, and from the domain of Divinity even unto the domain of earthly existence. Thus it is that whatsoever be their utterance, whether it pertain to the realm of Divinity, Lordship, Prophethood, Messengership, Guardianship, Apostleship or Servitude, all is true, beyond the shadow of a doubt. (Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 181)

The Perfect Man is as a polished mirror reflecting the Sun of Truth, manifesting the attributes of God.

The Lord Christ said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"—God manifested in man.

The sun does not leave his place in the heavens and descend into the mirror, for the actions of ascent and descent, coming and going, do not belong to the Infinite, they are the methods of finite beings. In the Manifestation of God, the perfectly

polished mirror, appear the qualities of the Divine in a form that man is capable of comprehending.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 25-26)

These Holy Souls are like the leaves of a tree which are put in motion by the blowing of the wind, and not by Their own desire; for They are attracted by the breeze of the love of God, and Their will is absolutely submissive. Their word is the word of God; Their commandment is the commandment of God; Their prohibition is the prohibition of God. They are like the glass globe which receives light from the lamp. Although the light appears to emanate from the glass, in reality it is shining from the lamp. In the same way for the Prophets of God, the centers of manifestation, Their movement and repose come from divine inspiration, not from human passions. If it were not so, how could the Prophet be worthy of trust, and how could He be the Messenger of God, delivering the commands and the prohibitions of God?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 168)

The knowledge of the Reality of the Divinity is impossible and unattainable, but the knowledge of the Manifestations of God is the knowledge of God, for the bounties, splendors and divine attributes are apparent in Them. Therefore, if man attains to the knowledge of the Manifestations of God, he will attain to the knowledge of God; and if he be neglectful of the knowledge of the Holy Manifestations, he will be bereft of the knowledge of God. It is then ascertained and proved that the Holy Manifestations are the center of the bounty, signs and perfections of God. Blessed are those who receive the light of the divine bounties from the enlightened Dawning-points!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 222)

. . . . all that the human reality knows, discovers and understands of the names, the attributes and the perfections of God refer to these Holy Manifestations. There is no access to anything else: “the way is closed, and seeking is forbidden.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 148)

We said that the Manifestations have three planes. First, the physical reality, which depends upon the body; second, the individual reality, that is to say, the rational soul; third, the divine appearance, which is the divine perfections, the cause of the life of existence, of the education of souls, of the guidance of people, and of the enlightenment of the contingent world.

The physical state is the human state which perishes because it is composed of elements, and all that is composed of elements will necessarily be decomposed and dispersed.

But the individual reality of the Manifestations of God is a holy reality, and for that reason it is sanctified and, in that which concerns its nature and quality, is distinguished from all other things. It is like the sun, which by its essential nature produces light and cannot be compared to the moon, just as the particles that compose the globe of the sun cannot be compared with those which compose the moon. The particles and organization of the former produce rays, but the particles of which the moon is composed do not produce rays but need to borrow light. So other human realities are those souls who, like the moon, take light from the sun; but that Holy Reality is luminous in Himself.

The third plane of that Being is the Divine Bounty, the splendor of the Preexistent Beauty, and the radiance of the light of the Almighty. The individual realities of the Divine Manifestations have no separation from the Bounty of God and the Lordly Splendor. In the same way, the orb of the sun has no separation from the light. Therefore, it may be said that the ascension of the Holy Manifestation is simply the leaving of this

elemental form. For example, if a lamp illumines this niche, and if its light ceases to illuminate it because the niche is destroyed, the bounty of the lamp is not cut off. Briefly, in the Holy Manifestations the Preexistent Bounty is like the light, the individuality is represented by the glass globe, and the human body is like the niche: if the niche is destroyed, the lamp continues to burn. The Divine Manifestations are so many different mirrors because They have a special individuality, but that which is reflected in the mirrors is one sun.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 154-155)

b. PROVISIONS FOR WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

. . . . when Thou didst purpose to unveil Thy sovereignty, and to glorify Thy word, and to reveal Thy bounteousness and mercy, Thou didst raise up one of Thy servants, and didst choose Him above all Thy creatures, and didst single Him out for Thy purpose, and didst clothe Him with the robe of Thy guidance, and didst immerse Him beneath the seas of Thy majesty and grandeur, and didst sanctify Him from all that beseemeth not the greatness of Thy glory and the power of Thy might, and didst bid Him to cry out before all that are in heaven and on earth, and summon the multitudes to the Manifestation of Thy Self and the Revealer of Thy signs.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 96-97)

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying, “His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all,” hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the

spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 47)

In all the Divine Books the promise of the Divine Presence hath been explicitly recorded. By this Presence is meant the Presence of Him Who is the Dayspring of the signs, and the Dawning-Place of the clear tokens, and the Manifestation of the Excellent Names, and the Source of the attributes, of the true God, exalted be His glory. God in His Essence and in His own Self hath ever been unseen, inaccessible, and unknowable. By Presence, therefore, is meant the Presence of the One Who is His Viceregent amongst men.
(Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 118)

In every instance they [the Messengers of God] have voiced an utterance that would conform to the requirements of the occasion
(Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 181)

In the Manifestation of God, the perfectly polished mirror, appear the qualities of the Divine in a form that man is capable of comprehending.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 26)

The independent Prophets are the lawgivers and the founders of a new cycle. Through Their appearance the world puts on a new garment, the foundations of religion are established, and a new book is revealed. Without an intermediary They receive bounty from the Reality of the Divinity, and Their illumination is an essential illumination. They are like the sun which is

luminous in itself: the light is its essential necessity; it does not receive light from any other star. These Dawning-places of the morn of Unity are the sources of bounty and the mirrors of the Essence of Reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 164)

Jesus Christ established the religion of God through love. His sovereignty is everlasting. Napoleon overthrew governments in war and bloodshed. His dominion passed away; he himself was dethroned. Bonaparte destroyed human life; Christ was a Savior. Bonaparte controlled the physical bodies of men; Christ was a conqueror of human hearts. None of the Prophets of God were famous men, but They were unique in spiritual power. Love is the eternal sovereignty. Love is the divine power. By it all the kings of earth are overthrown and conquered.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 211)

c. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, MAKING TRUTH (REALITY) PERCEPTIBLE

The light that is shed from the heaven of bounty, and the benediction that shineth from the dawning-place of the will of God, the Lord of the Kingdom of Names, rest upon Him Who is the Supreme Mediator, the Most Exalted Pen, Him Whom God hath made the dawning-place of His most excellent names and the dayspring of His most exalted attributes. Through Him the light of unity hath shone forth above the horizon of the world, and the law of oneness hath been revealed amidst the nations, who, with radiant faces, have turned towards the Supreme Horizon, and acknowledged that which the Tongue of

Utterance hath spoken in the kingdom of His knowledge: “Earth and heaven, glory and dominion, are God’s, the Omnipotent, the Almighty, the Lord of grace abounding!” (Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pages 1-2)

It is the outward practices of religion that are so different, and it is they that cause disputes and enmity—while the reality is always the same, and one. The Reality is the Truth, and truth has no division. Truth is God’s guidance, it is the light of the world, it is love, it is mercy. These attributes of truth are also human virtues inspired by the Holy Spirit.

So let us one and all hold fast to truth, and we shall be free indeed!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 120-121)

The solar system is dark and obscure, and in it the sun is the center of light, and all the planets of the system revolve around its might and are partakers of its bounty. The sun is the cause of life and illumination, and the means of the growth and development of all the beings of the solar system; for without the bounty of the sun no living being could exist: all would be dark and destroyed. Therefore, it is evident and clear that the sun is the center of light and the cause of the life of the beings of the solar system.

In like manner, the Holy Manifestations of God are the centers of the light of reality, of the source of mysteries, and of the bounties of love. They are resplendent in the world of hearts and thoughts, and shower eternal graces upon the world of spirits; They give spiritual life and are shining with the light of realities and meanings. The enlightenment of the world of thought comes from these centers of light and sources of mysteries. Without the bounty of the splendor and the instructions of these Holy Beings the world of souls and

thoughts would be opaque darkness. Without the irrefutable teachings of those sources of mysteries the human world would become the pasture of animal appetites and qualities, the existence of everything would be unreal, and there would be no true life. That is why it is said in the Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word,” meaning that it became the cause of all life. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 162-163)

One of the functions of the sun is to quicken and reveal the hidden realities of the kingdoms of existence. Through the light and heat of the great central luminary, all that is potential in the earth is awakened and comes forth into the realm of the visible. The fruit hidden in the tree appears upon its branches in response to the power of the sun; man and all other organisms live, move and have their being under its developing rays; nature is resplendent with countless evolutionary forms through its pervading impulse—so that we can say a function of the sun is the revelation of the mysteries and creative purposes hidden within the phenomenal world.

The outer sun is a sign or symbol of the inner and ideal Sun of Truth, the Word of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 74)

Truth may be likened to the sun! The sun is the luminous body that disperses all shadows; in the same way does truth scatter the shadows of our imagination. As the sun gives life to the body of humanity so does truth give life to their souls. Truth is a sun that rises from different points on the horizon.

Sometimes the sun rises from the centre of the horizon, then in summer it rises farther north, in winter farther south—but it is always the self-same sun, however different are the points of its rising.

In like manner truth is one, although its manifestations may be very different. Some men have eyes and see. These worship the sun, no matter from which point on the horizon it may dawn; and when the sun has left the winter sky to appear in the summer one, they know how to find it again. Others there are who worship only the spot from which the sun arose, and when it arises in its glory from another place they remain in contemplation before the spot of its former rising. Alas! these men are deprived of the blessings of the sun. Those who in truth adore the sun itself will recognize it from whatsoever dawning-place it may appear, and will straightway turn their faces towards its radiance.

We must adore the sun itself and not merely the place of its appearance. In the same way men of enlightened heart worship truth on whatever horizon it appears. They are not bound by personality, but they follow the truth, and are able to recognize it no matter from whence it may come. It is this same truth which helps humanity to progress, which gives life to all created beings, for it is the Tree of Life!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pages 127-128)

Reality is not divisible; it does not admit multiplicity. All the holy Manifestations of God have proclaimed and promulgated the same reality. They have summoned mankind to reality itself, and reality is one. The clouds and mists of imitations have obscured the Sun of Truth. We must forsake these imitations, dispel these clouds and mists and free the Sun from the darkness of superstition. Then will the Sun of Truth shine most gloriously; then all the inhabitants of the world will be united, the religions will be one, sects and denominations will reconcile, all nationalities will flow together in the recognition of one Fatherhood, and all degrees of humankind will gather in the shelter of the same tabernacle, under the same banner.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 96)

The sun is the life-giver to the physical bodies of all creatures upon earth; without its warmth their growth would be stunted, their development would be arrested, they would decay and die. Even so do the souls of men need the Sun of Truth to shed its rays upon their souls, to develop them, to educate and encourage them. As the sun is to the body of a man so is the Sun of Truth to his soul.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 31)

If we look into the mirror, we see the sun, and we say, “It is the sun.” Therefore, the Word and the Holy Spirit, which signify the perfections of God, are the divine appearance. This is the meaning of the verse in the Gospel which says: “The Word was with God, and the Word was God”;(John 1:1) for the divine perfections are not different from the Essence of Oneness. The perfections of Christ are called the Word because all the beings are in the condition of letters, and one letter has not a complete meaning, while the perfections of Christ have the power of the word because a complete meaning can be inferred from a word. As the Reality of Christ was the manifestation of the divine perfections, therefore, it was like the word. Why? because He is the sum of perfect meanings. This is why He is called the Word.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 206-207)

In him [the Word of God] was life; and the life was the light of men And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth.
(John 1:4,14)

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

(John 8:12)

Jesus answered, As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

(John 9:3, 5)

Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

(John 12:44-46,49)

From these statements therefore it hath been made evident and manifest that should a Soul in the “End that knoweth no end” be made manifest, and arise to proclaim and uphold a Cause which in “the Beginning that hath no beginning” another Soul had proclaimed and upheld, it can be truly declared of Him Who is the Last and of Him Who was the First that they are one and the same, inasmuch as both are the Exponents of one and the same Cause.

(Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 161)

He [Jesus] said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.” It was not the body of Christ which came from heaven. His body came from the womb of Mary, but the Christly perfections descended from heaven; the reality of Christ came down from heaven. The Spirit of Christ and not the body descended from heaven. The body of Christ was but human.

There could be no question that the physical body was born from the womb of Mary. But the reality of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the perfections of Christ all came from heaven. Consequently, by saying He was the bread which came from heaven He meant that the perfections which He showed forth were divine perfections, that the blessings within Him were heavenly gifts and bestowals, that His light was the light of Reality. He said, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." That is to say, whosoever assimilates these divine perfections which are within me will never die; whosoever has a share and partakes of these heavenly bounties I embody will find eternal life; he who takes unto himself these divine lights shall find everlasting life. How manifest the meaning is! How evident! For the soul which acquires divine perfections and seeks heavenly illumination from the teachings of Christ will undoubtedly live eternally. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 450-451)

d. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH NOW AVAILABLE

I testify, O my God, that this is the Day whereon Thy testimony hath been fulfilled, and Thy clear tokens have been manifested, and Thine utterances have been revealed, and Thy signs have been demonstrated, and the radiance of Thy countenance hath been diffused, and Thy proof hath been perfected, and Thine ascendancy hath been established, and Thy mercy hath overflowed, and the Day-Star of Thy grace hath shone forth with such brilliance that Thou didst manifest Him Who is the Revealer of Thyself and the Treasury of Thy wisdom and the

Dawning-Place of Thy majesty and power. Thou didst establish His covenant with every one who hath been created in the kingdoms of earth and heaven and in the realms of revelation and of creation. Thou didst raise Him up to such heights that the wrongs inflicted by the oppressors have been powerless to deter Him from revealing Thy sovereignty, and the ascendancy of the wayward hath failed to prevent Him from demonstrating Thy power and from exalting Thy Cause. (Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 35-36)

Behold the disturbances which, for many a long year, have afflicted the earth, and the perturbation that hath seized its peoples. It hath either been ravaged by war, or tormented by sudden and unforeseen calamities. Though the world is encompassed with misery and distress, yet no man hath paused to reflect what the cause or source of that may be. Whenever the True Counsellor uttered a word in admonishment, lo, they all denounced Him as a mover of mischief and rejected His claim. How bewildering, how confusing is such behavior! (Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 218)

Gracious God! how strange the way of this people! They clamour for guidance, although the standards of Him Who guideth all things are already hoisted. They cleave to the obscure intricacies of knowledge, when He, Who is the Object of all knowledge, shineth as the sun. They see the sun with their own eyes, and yet question that brilliant Orb as to the proof of its light. They behold the vernal showers descending upon them, and yet seek an evidence of that bounty. The proof of the sun is the light thereof, which shineth and envelopeth all things. (Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pages 208-209)

Moreover, observe how explicitly the enmity of the divines hath been mentioned in the books. Notwithstanding all these evident and significant traditions, all these unmistakable and undisputed allusions, the people have rejected the immaculate Essence of knowledge and of holy utterance, and have turned unto the exponents of rebellion and error. Despite these recorded traditions and revealed utterances, they speak only that which is prompted by their own selfish desires. And should the Essence of Truth reveal that which is contrary to their inclinations and desires, they will straightway denounce Him as an infidel, and will protest saying: “This is contrary to the sayings of the Imáms of the Faith and of the resplendent lights. No such thing hath been provided by our inviolable Law.” Even so in this day such worthless statements have been and are being made by these poor mortals.

(Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pages 241-242)

The vitality of men’s belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it? Is it within human power, O Hakim, to effect in the constituent elements of any of the minute and indivisible particles of matter so complete a transformation as to transmute it into purest gold? Perplexing and difficult as this may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. The Force capable of such a transformation transcendeth the potency of the Elixir itself. The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 200)

2. The World of Servitude

The tie of servitude established between the worshiper and the adored One, between the creature and the Creator, should in itself be regarded as a token of His gracious favor unto men, and not as an indication of any merit they may possess.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 193-194)

I know not what is in their hearts, O my God, nor can tell the thoughts they think of Thee. Methinks that they imagine that Thy purpose in calling them to Thine all-highest horizon is to heighten the glory of Thy majesty and power. For had they been satisfied that Thou summonest them to that which will recreate their hearts and immortalize their souls, they would never have fled from Thy governance

(Bahá’u’lláh: Prayers and Meditations, pages 197-198)

The Imám Sadiq hath said: “Servitude is a substance, the essence of which is Divinity.”

(Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 111)

This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.

(Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pages 85-86)

I can have no doubt that should the holy breaths of Thy loving-kindness and the breeze of Thy bountiful favor cease, for less than the twinkling of an eye, to breathe over all created things, the entire creation would perish, and all that are in heaven and on earth would be reduced to utter nothingness.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 90)

Thou didst wish to make Thyself known unto men; therefore, Thou didst, through a word of Thy mouth, bring creation into being and fashion the universe.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Prayers and Meditations, page 6)

Through Him all things live, move, and have their being.

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 34)

Dost thou believe thou hast the power to frustrate His Will, to hinder Him from executing His judgment, or to deter Him from exercising His sovereignty? Pretendest thou that aught in the heavens or in the earth can resist His Faith? No, by Him Who is the Eternal Truth! Nothing whatsoever in the whole of creation can thwart His Purpose. Cast away, therefore, the mere conceit thou dost follow, for mere conceit can never take the place of truth.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 220)

. . . . [God] holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of the entire creation!

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 253)

Divine Will . . . pervadeth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 5)

. . . . in Thy grasp are the reins of all that is in heaven and all that is on earth.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 38)

. . . . in Thy grasp are the reins of all created things.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, page 91)

Bear thou witness in thine inmost heart unto this testimony which God hath Himself and for Himself pronounced, that there is none other God but Him, that all else besides Him have been created by His behest, have been fashioned by His leave, are subject to His law, are as a thing forgotten when compared to the glorious evidences of His oneness, and are as nothing when brought face to face with the mighty revelations of His unity.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 192-193)

Such an existence is a contingent and not an absolute existence, inasmuch as the former is preceded by a cause, whilst the latter is independent thereof. Absolute existence is strictly confined to God

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 157)

The connection between God and the creatures is that of the creator to the creation; it is like the connection between the sun and the dark bodies of contingent beings, and is the connection between the maker and the things that he has made.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 202)

The dependence of the creatures upon God is a dependence of emanation—that is to say, creatures emanate from God; they do not manifest Him. The relation is that of emanation and not that of manifestation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 202)

It is my wish that they [the friends of God] 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: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 186)

The world of creation is bound by natural law, finite and mortal.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 57)

3. Creation as Seen by “My Eyes”

God . . . hath called into being His creatures, that they may know Him, Who is the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. Unto the cities of all nations He hath sent His Messengers, Whom He hath commissioned to announce unto men tidings of the Paradise of His good pleasure, and to draw them nigh unto the Haven of abiding security, the Seat of eternal holiness and transcendent glory.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 144-145)

. . . by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible.

(Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Íqán, page 98)

God . . . out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things, . . . and . . . rescuing His creatures from the abasement of remoteness and the perils of ultimate extinction, hath received them into His kingdom of incorruptible glory.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 64-65)

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

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 166)

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

In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendid light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things, so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favors.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, pages 61-62)

All beings, whether large or small, were created perfect and complete from the first, but their perfections appear in them by degrees. The organization of God is one; the evolution of

existence is one; the divine system is one. Whether they be small or great beings, all are subject to one law and system. Each seed has in it from the first all the vegetable perfections. For example, in the seed all the vegetable perfections exist from the beginning, but not visibly; afterward little by little they appear. So it is first the shoot which appears from the seed, then the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits; but from the beginning of its existence all these things are in the seed, potentially, though not apparently.

In the same way, the embryo possesses from the first all perfections, such as the spirit, the mind, the sight, the smell, the taste—in one word, all the powers—but they are not visible and become so only by degrees.

Similarly, the terrestrial globe from the beginning was created with all its elements, substances, minerals, atoms and organisms; but these only appeared by degrees: first the mineral, then the plant, afterward the animal, and finally man. But from the first these kinds and species existed, but were undeveloped in the terrestrial globe, and then appeared only gradually. For the supreme organization of God, and the universal natural system, surround all beings, and all are subject to this rule. When you consider this universal system, you see that there is not one of the beings which at its coming into existence has reached the limit of perfection. No, they gradually grow and develop, and then attain the degree of perfection.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 199)

All divine philosophers and men of wisdom and understanding, when observing these endless beings, have considered that in this great and infinite universe all things end in the mineral kingdom, that the outcome of the mineral kingdom is the vegetable kingdom, the outcome of the vegetable kingdom is

the animal kingdom and the outcome of the animal kingdom the world of man. The consummation of this limitless universe with all its grandeur and glory hath been man himself, who in this world of being toileth and suffereth for a time, with divers ills and pains, and ultimately disintegrates, leaving no trace and no fruit after him. Were it so, there is no doubt that this infinite universe with all its perfections has ended in sham and delusion with no result, no fruit, no permanence and no effect. It would be utterly without meaning. They were thus convinced that such is not the case, that this Great Workshop with all its power, its bewildering magnificence and endless perfections, cannot eventually come to naught. That still another life should exist is thus certain, and, just as the vegetable kingdom is unaware of the world of man, so we, too, know not of the Great Life hereafter that followeth the life of man here below. Our non-comprehension of that life, however, is no proof of its non-existence. The mineral world, for instance, is utterly unaware of the world of man and cannot comprehend it, but the ignorance of a thing is no proof of its non-existence. Numerous and conclusive proofs exist that go to show that this infinite world cannot end with this human life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablet to August Forel, pages 13-14)

In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendid light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things, so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favors. How all-encompassing are the wonders of His boundless grace! Behold how they have pervaded the whole of creation. Such is their virtue that not a single atom in the entire universe can be found which doth not declare the evidences of His might, which doth not glorify His holy Name, or is not

expressive of the effulgent light of His unity. So perfect and comprehensive is His creation that no mind nor heart, however keen or pure, can ever grasp the nature of the most insignificant of His creatures; much less fathom the mystery of Him Who is the Day Star of Truth, Who is the invisible and unknowable Essence.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 62)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 166)

Consider the relation between the craftsman and his handiwork, between the painter and his painting. Can it ever be maintained that the work their hands have produced is the same as themselves? By Him Who is the Lord of the Throne above and of earth below! They can be regarded in no other light except as evidences that proclaim the excellence and perfection of their author.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 337)

Can the creation be perfect and the creator imperfect? Can a picture be a masterpiece and the painter imperfect in his art? For it is his art and his creation. Moreover, the picture cannot be like the painter; otherwise, the painting would have created

itself. However perfect the picture may be, in comparison with the painter it is in the utmost degree of imperfection.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 5)

4. Creation: The World of Souls and Reflection of Divinity

From the exalted source, and out of the essence of His favor and bounty He hath entrusted every created thing with a sign of His knowledge, so that none of His creatures may be deprived of its share in expressing, each according to its capacity and rank, this knowledge. This sign is the mirror of His beauty in the world of creation. The greater the effort exerted for the refinement of this sublime and noble mirror, the more faithfully will it be made to reflect the glory of the names and attributes of God, and reveal the wonders of His signs and knowledge. Every created thing will be enabled (so great is this reflecting power) to reveal the potentialities of its pre-ordained station, will recognize its capacity and limitations, and will testify to the truth that “He, verily, is God; there is none other God besides Him.”

There can be no doubt whatever that, in consequence of the efforts which every man may consciously exert and as a result of the exertion of his own spiritual faculties, this mirror can be so cleansed from the dross of earthly defilements and purged from satanic fancies as to be able to draw nigh unto the meads of eternal holiness and attain the courts of everlasting fellowship.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 262)

These energies with which the Day Star of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man

lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pages 65-66)

Every created thing in the whole universe is but a door leading into His knowledge, a sign of His sovereignty, a revelation of His names, a symbol of His majesty, a token of His power, a means of admittance into His straight Path
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 160)

From that which hath been said it becometh evident that all things, in their inmost reality, testify to the revelation of the names and attributes of God within them. Each according to its capacity, indicateth, and is expressive of, the knowledge of God.
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 178)

Man is said to be the greatest representative of God, and he is the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of beings exist in him. If he comes under the shadow of the True Educator and is rightly trained, he becomes the essence of essences, the light of lights, the spirit of spirits; he becomes the center of the divine appearances, the source of spiritual qualities, the rising-place of heavenly lights, and the receptacle of divine inspirations. If he

is deprived of this education, he becomes the manifestation of satanic qualities, the sum of animal vices, and the source of all dark conditions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 236)

Without doubt each being is the center of the shining forth of the glory of God—that is to say, the perfections of God appear from it and are resplendent in it. It is like the sun, which is resplendent in the desert, upon the sea, in the trees, in the fruits and blossoms, and in all earthly things. The world, indeed each existing being, proclaims to us one of the names of God, but the reality of man is the collective reality, the general reality, and is the center where the glory of all the perfections of God shine forth—that is to say, for each name, each attribute, each perfection which we affirm of God there exists a sign in man. If it were otherwise, man could not imagine these perfections and could not understand them. So we say that God is the seer, and the eye is the sign of His vision; if this sight were not in man, how could we imagine the vision of God? For the blind (that is, one born blind) cannot imagine sight; and the deaf (that is, one deaf from birth) cannot imagine hearing; and the dead cannot realize life. Consequently, the Divinity of God, which is the sum of all perfections, reflects itself in the reality of man—that is to say, the Essence of Oneness is the gathering of all perfections, and from this unity He casts a reflection upon the human reality. Man, then, is the perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth and is the center of radiation: the Sun of Truth shines in this mirror. The reflection of the divine perfections appears in the reality of man, so he is the representative of God, the messenger of God. If man did not exist, the universe would be without result, for the object of existence is the appearance of the perfections of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 195-196)

Praise and thanksgiving be unto Providence that out of all the realities in existence He has chosen the reality of man and has honored it with intellect and wisdom, the two most luminous lights in either world. Through the agency of this great endowment, He has in every epoch cast on the mirror of creation new and wonderful configurations. If we look objectively upon the world of being, it will become apparent that from age to age, the temple of existence has continually been embellished with a fresh grace, and distinguished with an ever-varying splendor, deriving from wisdom and the power of thought.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Secret of Divine Civilization, page 1)

He has bestowed upon him the power of intellect so that through the attribute of reason, when fortified by the Holy Spirit, he may penetrate and discover ideal realities and become informed of the mysteries of the world of significances. As this power to penetrate the ideal knowledges is superhuman, supernatural, man becomes the collective center of spiritual as well as material forces so that the divine spirit may manifest itself in his being, the effulgences of the Kingdom shine within the sanctuary of his heart, the signs of the attributes and perfections of God reveal themselves in a newness of life, the everlasting glory and eternal existence be attained, the knowledge of God illumine, and the mysteries of the realm of might be unsealed.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 303)

When we consider beings with the seeing eye, we observe that they are limited to three sorts—that is to say, as a whole they are either mineral, vegetable or animal, each of these three classes containing species. Man is the highest species because

he is the possessor of the perfections of all the classes—that is, he has a body which grows and which feels. As well as having the perfections of the mineral, of the vegetable and of the animal, he also possesses an especial excellence which the other beings are without—that is, the intellectual perfections. Therefore, man is the most noble of beings.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 235)

The All-loving God created man to radiate the Divine light and to illumine the world by his words, action and life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, page 113)

. . . . the human spirit or reality of man, unless it becomes the recipient of the lights of the Kingdom, develops divine susceptibilities and consciously reflects the effulgence of God, will not be the manifestation of ideal bounties, for only the reality of man can become the mirror wherein the lights of God are revealed. The reality of man will then be as the spirit of this world, for just as the animus of life quickens the physical human body, so the body of the world will receive its vivification through the animating virtue of the sanctified spirit of man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 330-331)

Briefly, the intellectual realities, such as all the qualities and admirable perfections of man, are purely good, and exist. Evil is simply their nonexistence. So ignorance is the want of knowledge; error is the want of guidance; forgetfulness is the want of memory; stupidity is the want of good sense. All these things have no real existence.

In the same way, the sensible realities are absolutely good, and evil is due to their nonexistence—that is to say, blindness is the want of sight, deafness is the want of hearing, poverty is the

want of wealth, illness is the want of health, death is the want of life, and weakness is the want of strength.

Nevertheless a doubt occurs to the mind—that is, scorpions and serpents are poisonous. Are they good or evil, for they are existing beings? Yes, a scorpion is evil in relation to man; a serpent is evil in relation to man; but in relation to themselves they are not evil, for their poison is their weapon, and by their sting they defend themselves. But as the elements of their poison do not agree with our elements—that is to say, as there is antagonism between these different elements, therefore, this antagonism is evil; but in reality as regards themselves they are good.

The epitome of this discourse is that it is possible that one thing in relation to another may be evil, and at the same time within the limits of its proper being it may not be evil. Then it is proved that there is no evil in existence; all that God created He created good. This evil is nothingness; so death is the absence of life. When man no longer receives life, he dies. Darkness is the absence of light: when there is no light, there is darkness. Light is an existing thing, but darkness is nonexistent. Wealth is an existing thing, but poverty is nonexistent.

Then it is evident that all evils return to nonexistence. Good exists; evil is nonexistent.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 263-264)

. . . . in creation and nature evil does not exist at all; but when the natural qualities of man are used in an unlawful way, they are blameworthy.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 215)

O SON OF DESIRE! How long wilt thou soar in the realms of desire? Wings have I bestowed upon thee, that thou mayest fly

to the realms of mystic holiness and not the regions of satanic fancy.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Persian Hidden Words, page 79)

God hath in that Book, and by His behest, decreed as lawful whatsoever He hath pleased to decree, and hath, through the power of His sovereign might, forbidden whatsoever He elected to forbid. To this testifieth the text of that Book. Will ye not bear witness? Men, however, have wittingly broken His law. Is such a behavior to be attributed to God, or to their proper selves? Be fair in your judgment. Every good thing is of God, and every evil thing is from yourselves.

(Bahá’u’lláh: Gleanings, page 149)

5. Two Conditions of Creation: Material and Spiritual

. . . . human knowledge is of two kinds. One is the knowledge of things perceptible to the senses. . . . The other kind of human knowledge is intellectual—that is to say, it is a reality of the intellect; it has no outward form and no place and is not perceptible to the senses.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 83)

Know that beings are of two kinds: material and spiritual, those perceptible to the senses and those intellectual.

Things which are sensible are those which are perceived by the five exterior senses; thus those outward existences which the eyes see are called sensible. Intellectual things are those which have no outward existence but are conceptions of the mind. For example, mind itself is an intellectual thing which has

no outward existence. All man's characteristics and qualities form an intellectual existence and are not sensible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 263)

. . . . the world of things is the world of imperfection in comparison with that of man, and the world of man is the world of perfection in comparison with that of things. When imperfections reach the station of perfection, they become eternal.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 152)

The worlds of God are in perfect harmony and correspondence one with another. Each world in this limitless universe is, as it were, a mirror reflecting the history and nature of all the rest. The physical universe is, likewise, in perfect correspondence with the spiritual or divine realm. The world of matter is an outer expression or facsimile of the inner kingdom of spirit. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 270)

The spiritual world is like unto the phenomenal world. They are the exact counterpart of each other. Whatever objects appear in this world of existence are the outer pictures of the world of heaven. When we look upon the phenomenal world, we perceive that it is divided into four seasons; one is the season of spring, another the season of summer, another autumn and then these three seasons are followed by winter. When the season of spring appears in the arena of existence, the whole world is rejuvenated and finds new life. The soul-refreshing breeze is wafted from every direction; the soul-quickenning bounty is everywhere; the cloud of mercy showers down its rain, and the sun shines upon everything. Day by day we perceive that the signs of vegetation are all about us. Wonderful flowers, hyacinths and roses perfume the nostrils.

The trees are full of leaves and blossoms, and the blossoms are followed by fruit. The spring and summer are followed by autumn and winter. The flowers wither and are no more; the leaves turn gray and life has gone. Then comes another springtime; the former springtime is renewed; again a new life stirs within everything.

The appearances of the Manifestations of God are the divine springtime. When Christ appeared in this world, it was like the vernal bounty; the outpouring descended; the effulgences of the Merciful encircled all things; the human world found new life. Even the physical world partook of it. The divine perfections were upraised; souls were trained in the school of heaven so that all grades of human existence received life and light. Then by degrees these fragrances of heaven were discontinued; the season of winter came upon the world; the beauties of spring vanished; the excellences and perfections passed away; the lights and quickening were no longer evident; the phenomenal world and its materialities conquered everything; the spiritualities of life were lost; the world of existence became life unto a lifeless body; there was no trace of the spring left.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 10)

6. Man: Spiritual, Compared to the Animal

Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to

enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God ...
(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, page 194)

Know that perception varies. The lowest degree of perception is that of the animals—that is to say, the natural feeling which appears through the powers of the senses, and which is called sensation. In this, men and animals are sharers;...
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 217)

Man is like the animal in physical structure but otherwise immeasurably separated and superior.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 67)

Just as the animal is more noble than the vegetable and mineral, so man is superior to the animal.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 240)

The animal may develop a wonderful degree of intelligence, but it can never attain the powers of ideation and conscious reflection which belong to man.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 172-173)

... if there were not in man a power different from any of those of the animals, the latter would be superior to man in inventions and the comprehension of realities. Therefore, it is evident that man has a gift which the animal does not possess.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 187)

The animal can only know through sense impressions and cannot grasp intellectual realities. The animal cannot conceive of the power of thought. This is an abstract intellectual matter

and not limited to the senses. The animal is incapable of knowing that the earth is round. In brief, abstract intellectual phenomena are human powers. All creation below the kingdom of man is the captive of nature; it cannot deviate in the slightest degree from nature’s laws. But man wrests the sword of dominion from nature’s hand and uses it upon nature’s head. For example, it is a natural exigency that man should be a dweller upon the earth, but the power of the human spirit transcends this limitation, and he soars aloft in airplanes.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 241)

What difference is there between the animal and man? The difference is this: that the animal is not capable of apprehending the divine teachings, whereas man is worthy of them and possesses the capacity to understand.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 61)

7. Mankind: Combining the Spiritual and Material Conditions

Man is in the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality—that is to say, he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the last degree of darkness, and at the beginning of light; that is why it has been said that the condition of man is the end of the night and the beginning of day, meaning that he is the sum of all the degrees of imperfection, and that he possesses the degrees of perfection. He has the animal side as well as the angelic side, and the aim of an educator is to so train human souls that their angelic aspect may overcome their animal side. Then if the divine power in man, which is his essential perfection, overcomes the satanic

power, which is absolute imperfection, he becomes the most excellent among the creatures; but if the satanic power overcomes the divine power, he becomes the lowest of the creatures. That is why he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. Not in any other of the species in the world of existence is there such a difference, contrast, contradiction and opposition as in the species of man. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pages 235-236)

. . . . if the perfections of the spirit did not appear in this world, this world would be unenlightened and absolutely brutal. By the appearance of the spirit in the physical form, this world is enlightened. As the spirit of man is the cause of the life of the body, so the world is in the condition of the body, and man is in the condition of the spirit. If there were no man, the perfections of the spirit would not appear, and the light of the mind would not be resplendent in this world. This world would be like a body without a soul. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, page 201)

. . . . the things humanity shares in common are numerous and manifest. This equal participation in the physical, intellectual and spiritual problems of human existence is a valid basis for the unification of mankind. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 229)

8. The Spiritual World, Progressively Unveiled: The “Kingdom Revealed”

The divine Manifestations since the day of Adam have striven to unite humanity so that all may be accounted as one soul. The

function and purpose of a shepherd is to gather and not disperse his flock. The Prophets of God have been divine Shepherds of humanity. They have established a bond of love and unity among mankind, made scattered peoples one nation and wandering tribes a mighty kingdom. They have laid the foundation of the oneness of God and summoned all to universal peace. All these holy, divine Manifestations are one. They have served one God, promulgated the same truth, founded the same institutions and reflected the same light. Their appearances have been successive and correlated; each One has announced and extolled the One Who was to follow, and all laid the foundation of reality. They summoned and invited the people to love and made the human world a mirror of the Word of God. ('Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 151)

. . . . in the spiritual realm of intelligence and idealism there must be a center of illumination, and that center is the everlasting, ever-shining Sun, the Word of God. Its lights are the lights of reality which have shone upon humanity, illumining the realm of thought and morals, conferring the bounties of the divine world upon man. These lights are the cause of the education of souls and the source of the enlightenment of hearts, sending forth in effulgent radiance the message of the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. In brief, the moral and ethical world and the world of spiritual regeneration are dependent for their progressive being upon that heavenly Center of illumination. It gives forth the light of religion and bestows the life of the spirit, imbues humanity with archetypal virtues and confers eternal splendors. This Sun of Reality, this Center of effulgences, is the Prophet or Manifestation of God. Just as the phenomenal sun shines upon the material world producing life and growth, likewise, the spiritual or prophetic Sun confers

illumination upon the human world of thought and intelligence, and unless it rose upon the horizon of human existence, the kingdom of man would become dark and extinguished.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 94)

The Prophets of God have come to show man the way of righteousness in order that he may not follow his own natural impulse but govern his action by the light of Their precept and example. According to Their teachings he should do that which is found to be praiseworthy by the standard of reason and judgment of intellect, even though it be opposed to his natural human inclination; and he should not do that which is found to be unworthy by that same standard, even though it be in the direction of his natural impulse and desire. Therefore, man must follow and manifest the attributes of the Merciful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 40-41)

If the moral precepts and foundations of divine civilization become united with the material advancement of man, there is no doubt that the happiness of the human world will be attained and that from every direction the glad tidings of peace upon earth will be announced. Then humankind will achieve extraordinary progress, the sphere of human intelligence will be immeasurably enlarged, wonderful inventions will appear, and the spirit of God will reveal itself; all men will consort in joy and fragrance, and eternal life will be conferred upon the children of the Kingdom. Then will the power of the divine make itself effective and the breath of the Holy Spirit penetrate the essence of all things. Therefore, the material and the divine, or merciful, civilizations must progress together until the highest aspirations and desires of humanity shall become realized.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 109-110)