

Portals to Celestial Light

Editorial comments by Ann Lynn Millonig

- ❖ Green Markings on Document Mean one of the following:
 - I changed something
 - I couldn't read
 - I guessed
 - I made notes to question or explain
- ❖ Why does Marian use the word "Cosmonauts" instead of "Astronauts"?
- ❖ Marian changes formatting throughout document (spacing, abbreviations, etc.). I tried to keep them consistent.
- ❖ [] means I changed something marked in green or zipped through spell-check and didn't have source to verify, so I guessed. Also, page number references need to be changed. I typed these as is!
- ❖ There are a lot of spaces in the manuscript where I think something something was supposed to be added. But I don't know what should have gone in, so in most cases I just continued typing the next section. These spaces should be checked
- ❖ ^{*(123)} means something was missing or unreadable.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This presentation has taken liberties in ignoring a few traditional practices established and recognized as criteria of excellence in the past. Indulgence is begged in this connection, based on the fact that this material has a purpose and is addressed to an audience different from the purpose and intended readers of all past publications. Its purpose is to enlighten and move to specified action, Baha'is only. It is addressed to believers who are spiritually mature enough to recognize their need for better understanding and to be willing to be taught like children. For true deepening is learning what has never yet been encountered or experienced. Such Baha'is are not necessarily intellectually mature. And they included believers who are unable to grasp or benefit from what is produced by those who admittedly use "their membership in the intellectual community as a means of establishing themselves as pioneers therein," and who aim to "maintain" to the best of their ability "a standard like that of Shoghi Effendi." Many Baha'is cannot even *read* Shoghi Effendi's Writings, or World Order Magazine.

Shoghi Effendi's purpose was to instruct mankind in the divine procedure of building the World Order of Baha'u'llah. To carry out that purpose as Guardian of the Cause of God, he used an inimitable and supremely appropriate technique of presentation. The Comprehensive Deepening Program, however, has no such purpose. Our purpose is to speak, as God's servants and at grass roots level, to other servants of God who are struggling with us to grasp and apply the Word of God, in terms of everyday thought, feeling and experience.

Such a thing has never been attempted before. Books have been written about the Faith, for Baha'is and non-Baha'is, in text book style, quoting and paraphrasing the Words of the Revelation, with a minimum of human expression and with great care to use only what has been authentically translated and officially accepted as absolute Truth. Compilations have been made, assembling as many references as possible to expound and define specific subjects that must be "known"; and since it is first to know and then to do, institutes have been established to study that essential knowledge and to consider how to act upon it. Other books, written by believers, have been made available, presenting the inspiring experiences and enlightened views of especially devoted servants and brilliantly successful teachers. These books are valued contributions of "the learned". They serve admirably to awaken devotion, faith and a determination to serve more effectively, as they are read. They appeal to the basic capacity to imitate.

This manuscript is different from all of these publications. It is a broad and voluminous collection of quotations from the Writings set within a framework that is built on human experiences and needs, and that introduces ideas and realizations that have come from a grass-roots level study of the Writings, and from reasoning and drawing conclusions based on the quoted spiritual facts in a way that is hoped may throw a little light on practical applications of esoteric concepts and on what Baha'is say they believe. The style is purposely informal, and

as far as we dared, effort was made to approach the standards of “readability” established by its world-be and generally accepted (?) authority, Rudolph Flesch.

‘Abdu’l-Baha is our God-given Exemplar and the most perfect human teacher of the Faith that the world will ever have. Therefore his talks and Writings represent the ideal presentation of spiritual principles. We gave these in terms of human behavior patterns. They set forth the highest type of applications of our glorious Teachings and explain how spiritual development can be acquired. Therefore there has been an unsparing use of quotations from his Teachings, for the beloved Guardian urged us to study and imitate them. To this end, there has been included, material from Promulgation of Universal Peace, Star of the West, Tablets and a few from other publications once officially approved but now no longer accepted as absolutely authentic. The Divine Art of Living has made similar inclusions and no harm has come from its circulation. It is hoped that the same tolerance of what is quoted from ‘Abdu’l-Baha here will be accorded to Portals of Light. Every truth and idea that he expressed is infinitely precious whether or not its translation or wordage is perfect.

Finally, it should be known that, as nearly as such a thing is possible, this is the product of committee effort extending over a period of the entire lifetime of the National Reference Library Committee, that was first appointed in 1951. When a letter is received from an assembly or committee it is seen as the product of the individual serving as secretary. There is no reason why a longer communication from a national committee should be judged as a personal effort of its secretary. The material could not have been developed or written without what has been contributed since 1951 by every member of that committee.

FORWARD OR INTRODUCTION

This material and its purpose are unique. Obviously the book contains reading matter on the subject of prayer and meditation. But it is designed as a do-it-yourself project, and has been prepared not merely to be read. It aims to involve the reader in actual meditation. If the purpose of its study is to be served, it should be undertaken in a spirit of faith which is an ingredient of all meditation, and with a sincere desire to “deepen” from the experience.

We are told that we must first know and then do. Of course all knowledge is derived from the Word of God, so what should be known about prayer and meditation has been presented in many quotations, some doubtless familiar and some perhaps new to the reader. But to “deepen” requires action, so the goal of this presentation is the action of reflecting on the truth and reacting to the enlightenment. Therefore the verities are presented in terms of personal application - that is, in terms of what “I” know and of how “my” knowledge affects “me.” The extent to which the

reader can identify with what is presented will determine the benefit that will be gained from its use.

We are told that prayer is conversation with God and that meditation is communion with one's soul. It is the soul that prays, and meditation prepared it to do so more effectively. So while the subject of prayer is considered first, it is hoped that in that consideration, meditation will be put into practice, which means to read slowly and think deeply about what is read. And answer the questions.

This material is not the product of one person's study and effort. It is based on what our loving Creator is saying to all mankind through His divine Voice, and is explaining through the beloved Center of His Covenant. The words are addressed to you, the reader, and they call for acknowledgment and response from your heart.

Please study the material in this light.

“Behold, a light hath shone forth out of the morn of eternity, and lo, its waves have penetrated the inner reality of all men.” BWF 117, GL 178-9 or Iqan 102

“The human heart . . . is the recipient of the light of God.” BWF 98 or GL 186

TO THE PROJECT DIRECTOR WHO COMMITTED ME TO THIS ASSIGNMENT:

What is here submitted is a strange and unique product. I have not written what I knew and believed about prayer and meditation. There are any number of believers who know much more than I ever have, about these subjects. What I have written came through my outer being but is not a product of my human consciousness. It is much more than I had any conscious knowledge of when I started to write.

It seems to me that the strange way that Baha'u'llah works through His servants is worthy of mention.

The National Reference library Committee in 1948-60 discovered a deepening technique. When it was brought to the attention of the NSA, the Committee was stopped in the development of a course of study that explained the technique, because the NSA considered the effort “premature”. But the secretary of the Committee was encouraged to develop the material in her own teaching. She has done so, continuously for these thirteen years.

Daniel Jordan, then secretary of the NTC, was appointed by the NSA to watch and evaluate what was being developed. But other administrators saw only a “personal interpretation” of the Writings, in the Compilation that was involved (“The Worlds of God”) and in the personal teaching efforts of its Compiler.

As time went on, Dr. Jordan tried to interest the NSA in the deepening project that the

National Reference Library Committee had found. He succeeded up to a point in 1966. But later in view of the general feeling that personal interpretation was involved, his evaluation was rejected and another member's brief study and disapproval of it were registered. More urgent matters intervened and in 1970 the whole project was rejected and pronounced "misleading."

Was it strange or perhaps miraculous, when, in 1971, the NSA decided to plan a much needed Comprehensive Deepening Program in reaction to the 1967 Ridvan Message of the Universal House of Justice, that it was Dr. Jordan who was chosen to head up the Project?

In any case, in view of past rejection, it did seem strange and quite miraculous, too, when the program was planned, that Marian Lippitt should have been named "general consultant to the project"; and when material on the subject of prayer and meditation was required, that she should have been asked to prepare it. These are two subjects never dwelt upon in my study of the Writings. No one but Baha'u'llah knew that I was born with what is humanly called a "mental block" against prayer. So real was this, for instance, that my violent protest against family prayers before I was four years old forced my parents to abandon that part of their established routine.

The block was not removed by exposure to every educational advantage that a good actively functioning Christian background could offer. Every phase of traditional religion that I was taught was intuitively and sometimes violently rejected. For over four decades my mind was close to orthodox prayer. My prayer life was limited to communion with the beauties of nature (God's attributes, I now know, "the radiance of which appears and is visible in worlds and souls"); BWF 322 or SAQ 257, plus some real spiritual experiences in dire crises (that could be counted on one hand), when an undeniable Answer was received. It was years after becoming a Baha'i before I could say the Noon Prayer without fighting a jittery feeling.

Meditation I knew even less about in an academic way. Reading quantities of material on the subject was pleasant and intriguing, and so was attendance at sessions where groups, first Christian and later Baha'i, "practiced the Presence" or tried to develop techniques of meditation. But never in my life had I mastered a technique or even had a conscious experience of what is academically called meditation.

But oddly enough, I had had an experience that is meditation although not commonly recognized as such. The activity began, when I was ten years old and has been part of my life ever since then.

'Abdu'l-Baha says:

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

During the first years of my life I was cured of saying what was in my heart; I was stopped for impertinence by the Daddy that I adored, so I learned to be silent. I learned very early too, to write what I "knew" and felt. I began at age 8 to write letters and two years later to

keep a diary. Then whenever I was in confusion or deep trouble and full of unanswered questions, I unconsciously put these questions to my inner being - my soul or spirit - and with a pencil and pater at hand, the answer or explanation, wrote itself out, and I felt relieved and unconfused. In fact every such experience ended in a mysterious sense of exhilaration.

In the light of the divine secrets and heavenly realities that Baha'u'llah has unveiled, this is understandable and readily qualifies as a form of meditation.

Of course "the light" or spiritual truth that "breaks through" in such an experience is limited to what God "casteth into the heart" plus what has been planted and developed there through study of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah. So the "reality" that was revealed by this writing activity before enrollment as a Baha'i was limited mostly to the world of human affairs. There had to be a life-long desire for spiritual Light and then thirty years of full-time intensive study of the Writings as is involved in research, indexing, secretarial and other duties of the National Reference Library Committee, before there could be enough "light" within, to make what "came forth" of sufficient value to fulfill the commission I was given.

It is only because that "light" originates and is encompassed in hundreds of quotations from the Writings themselves that I dare to hope that what has "come forth" will be some value to other seekers.

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PORTALS OF CELESTIAL INNER LIGHT

PART ONE - WHAT PORTALS AND LIGHT ARE WITHIN MY REACH?

“The fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun hath been made manifest.” 74(e), Iqan 29-30

“Unlock, then to their hearts, O my God, the portals of Thy knowledge.” BWF 41 or P&M 42, (see page 9 [])

“The portals of Thy grace have throughout eternity been open, and the means of access unto Thy Presence made available, unto all created things, and the revelations of Thy matchless Beauty have at all times been imprinted upon the realities of all beings, visible and invisible.” GL 63 or BWF 31, (see p.18 [])

“Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that . . . the portal of God’s infinite guidance can ever be closed in the fact of men?” BWF 104 or GL 68, (see page 30 [])

“Every verse which this Pen hath revealed is a bright and shining portal that discloseth the glories of a saintly and pious life, of pure stainless deeds.” GL 96, see p. 49

“Were you to ponder . . . these utterances in you heart, you would surely find the portals of understanding unlocked before your face, and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled before your eyes.” 5(bb), Iqan 52, (see p. 131 [])

“I beseech Thee, by Thy most excellent titles and Thy most exalted attributes, to open to my face the portals of Thy bestowals.” P&M 215, BP’69, p. 72 #5

1. DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

Prayer, Meditation: the Heart

Two definite “portals” of the knowledge, bounties, infinite guidance, revelation, understanding and bestowals of God are Prayer and Meditation. Therefore I should have a clear understanding of these two words. Here are dictionary definitions of them:

pray vi 1: ENTREAT, IMPLORE

vi 1: to make entreaty or supplication

2: to address God with adoration, confession, supplication or

thanksgiving

prayer 1: an approach to Deity in word or thought or an earnest request

2: the act or practice of praying to God

3: (often plural) a religious service consisting chiefly of prayers

4: a form of words used in praying

5: something prayed for

meditate 1: to reflect on or muse over: CONTEMPLATE

2: INTEND, PURPOSE: to engage in contemplation or reflection

meditation 1: a discourse intended to express its author’s reflections or to guide others in contemplation

2: the act or process of meditating (Webster’s Collegiate

Dictionary)

These are humanly determined definitions. But what I want to know and understand is their significance and relation to me. So I ask: is a practical sense, what are prayer and meditation to me?

I am a mysterious kind of creature: a living being having:

(1) a tangible outer life of limited dimensions, clearly perceptible, carried on in space

and time: and

(2) an intangible inner life that is multidimensional and is imperceptible and incomprehensible even to myself; and that is carried on not in a place, but in a condition that is “sanctified from time and place.” 83(aa), SAQ 280

My life as a human being, which is lived in the material domain in the human thought world, and in the realm of human affairs, is my outer life. It is a very real life, yet it is only one aspect of my existence. My other life resembles the invisible part of an iceberg: it is lived at an imperceptible level and in a condition quite different from where the visible part lives, It involves the purpose, potentialities and motive of my being, and is a purely spiritual life. I call this may “inner” life. It is in a strictly spiritual environment that my outer or human consciousness does not encompass or even perceive. Yet it is the source and reality that produces all of the outer manifestations of my being. As ‘Abdu’l-Baha said of the Source and Reality that produces the whole of existence:

“This much is known: It exists and Its existence is certian and proven - but the condition is unknown.” 13(e), BWF 382

Prayer and meditation form a part of this “inner life” of mine. Obviously it involves more than my anatomy. Both activities must be participated in by my mind. Even intellectuals who shrink from using the word “soul” recognize that both prayer and meditation are realities in the human thought world and that they involve mental activity. So let’s note some dictionary definitions of mind and mental:

mind: 1: RECOLLECTION, MEMORY

2 a: element or complex of elements in an individual that feels, perceives, thinks, wills, and especially, reasons
b: the conscious events and capabilities in an organism
c: the organized conscious or unconscious adaptive activity of an organism

3: INTENTION, DESIRE

4: the normal or healthy condition of the mental faculties

5: OPINION, VIEW

6: DISPOSITION, MOOD

7a: a person or group embodying mental qualities (the public)

b: intellectual ability

mental: 1a: of or relating to mind; specif.: relating to the total emotional and intellectual response of an individual to environment

b: of or relating to intellectual as contrasted with emotional activity

c: of, relating to, or being intellectual as contrasted with over physical activity

d: occurring or experienced in the ming: INNER

e: relating to mind, its activity or its activity or its products as an
object of study: IDEOLOGICAL

f: relating to spirit or idea as opposed to matter

2a: of, relating to or affected by a psychiatric disease (a man patient)

b: intended for the care or treatment of persons affected by
psychiatric disorders

3: relating to telepathic, mind-reading, or other occult powers

Yes, it seems obvious that my mind must be active as I pray or meditate and that both activities are at least partly “mental,” and either activity requires a certain intellectual power and development. And yet children and adults whose minds are very meagerly developed can pray, and their prayers may be more real than my reading of words from a book. The fact is that while what I call my “thinking” is classified as part of my inner life, a large part of my mental activity is simply action of my brain cells, powered by my inner spirit and being. And my real “inner life” is much more than my intellectual actions, unless I exclude all but the first of the foregoing definitions of mental. I respect and admire the human intellect and glory in its powers, but mental action involves only my, whereas I do my living and motivate my behavior in my emotional being. As a matter of fact, my mental concepts and “vision” are as much a product of my emotional nature as of my intellect. For my inner life begins with feelings and desires; and my mind is merely one part of me that I use in working to fulfill my desires and to satisfy my f*___ ings. And prayer and true meditation are both servants of and expressions of what is in my heart, with or without mental activity.

This “inner” life, then is my real life. My outer environment imposes on me much that is irre* ___ to my inner objectives and desires, and I am forced to deal with things that *___ matter or are revolting to me. But my “inner” life is what my heart is involved in, everything is vitally important and real to me. I think of it as my “heart life.” But this makes it essential that I have a clear understanding of what my heart j *___

So, here are its dictionary definitions:

heart 1a: a hollow muscular organ of vertebrate animals that by its rhythmic contraction acts as a force pump maintaining the circulation of the *___

b: a structure in an invertebrate animal functionally analogous to *___ the
vertebrate heart

c: BREAST, BOSOM

d: something resembling a heart in shape; specifically a conventional
representation of a heart

3a (1): the whole personality including intellectual as well as em *___
functions or traits

(2): obs: INTELLECT

(3): MEMORY, ROTE

(4): OPINION: ATTITUDE

b (1): the emotional or moral as distinguished from the intellectual nature

(2): generous disposition: COMPASSION

(3): TEMPERAMENT, MOOD

(4): GOODWILL

c: LOVE, AFFECTIONS

d: COURAGE, ARDOR

e: (1): TASTE, LIKING

(2): fixed purpose or desire

f: one's innermost being

4: PERSON

5a: the central or innermost part: CENTER

b: the essential or most vital part of something (Webster's Collegiate

Dictionary)

The heart is evidence of the reality of both my inner and outer beings. My physical heart is "the essential or most vital part" of my body. And I also use the word to refer to "the essential or most vital part" of my spiritual being or "soul."

Body and soul - that is what I am in reality.

"Heart" seems to have been a term used in everyday parlance for long ages, both to refer to "the essential or most vital part" of a person, and to his entire being, and especially to the part of man that distinguishes him from the animal. Apparently at one time his spiritual powers of perception, his most obvious "spiritual" characteristic, came under observation as man's distinguishing endowment, for "heart" was once used to designate the intellect. From this obsolete use of the term we still speak of learning something "by heart." But as man evolved under the aegis of divine enlightenment, his emotional and moral nature not only became more perceptible but was seen to supersede his mentality as his essential and distinguishing endowment. Now when I say, "I love him with all my heart" or I love him with my whole soul," the two expressions mean the same thing to me, and I see that "heart" and "soul" are almost synonymous. Perhaps it would be safe to say that my "heart" is the outer expression of my inner reality or soul in its current state of development.

What I know or am aware of determines what I can love or feel about. And

"Human knowledge is of two kinds. One is the knowledge of things perceptible to the senses . . . The other kind of human knowledge is intellectual . . . A reality of the intellect . . . is not perceptible to the senses." 33(v), SAQ 95-6

and "In explaining these intellectual realities, one is obliged to express them by sensible figures . . . Therefore to explain the reality of the spirit, its condition, its station, one is obliged to give explanations under the forms of sensible things. 6(a), SAQ 96

This truth explains the development of "visual aids" in this age of rapidly expanding

intellectual knowledge. And I feel a need to use this means of expressing the fact that I am body and soul combined, or body and heart, as I realize that my heart is the essential or most vital part of that mysterious creation of God. So I use that word put into the form of “a conventionalized representation of the heart, along with the simplest two dimensional symbol picture of the human body. I place the heart above the body because it is a “higher” form of creation than the body.

This makes me wonder about the relation and connection between the essential or most vital part of me and my anatomy, so I am interested in these explanations:

“The human body is visible, the soul is invisible. It is the soul nevertheless that directs a man’s faculties.” 50(e), PT 86

“... it is the soul that animates the body; the body alone has no real significance. Deprived of the blessings of the Holy Spirit the dog would be inert.” 46(rr), PT 33

In speaking to Christians who use the terms “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably, He said,

“The connection of the spirit with the body is like that of the sun with the mirror . . . the spirit with the utmost greatness rules in the world of the body.” BWF 328 or SAQ 266

And Baha’u’llah, using the terms as they have been revealed by Him, expresses the same truth thus:

“The soul of man is the sun by which his body is illumined, and from which it draweth its sustenance,” BWF 121 or GL 155

that “sustenance” that is derived from God Himself. 31(s), GL 166

“Some think that the body is the substance and exists by itself, and that the spirit is accidental and depends upon the substance of the body . . . On the contrary, the rational soul is the substance, and the body depends upon it. If . . . the body be destroyed, the substance, the spirit, remains.” 42(h), SAQ 277

It is the soul, not the body, that prays, of course. My inner being and heart must be involved when I pray or meditate. Baha’u’llah teaches me to ask and know that God may “make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out” from God’s beauty and ‘a light that will lead me unto the ocean of His presence.” BP’69 120-1 or P& M 317 But this kind of prayer must come from my heart, for Baha’u’llah tells me that it is in hearts that remembrance of Him can start the fire that burns away “those intervening veils,” GL 286; and He teaches me to thank God for having cast the beams of divine light into my heart.” P&M 283

Obviously, though, I need to know more about prayer and meditation and how my heart is related to them, than is expressed by dictionary definitions. So I turn to Baha’u’llah Who, alone, can explain their full meaning. For

“The fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun hath

been made manifest.” 74(1), Iqan 29-30

2. THE REALITY OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION

These Are Portal to Celestial Light

Baha'u'llah brings the light of divine knowledge to focus on every subject that has been given a name in the world of rational thought; and this light He, and 'Abdu'l-Baha says that the knowledge that comes to us through God's Prophets "constitutes the science of reality," 19(ee), PUP 291, and I know that to grasp any reality I must know its purpose. So now I am able, through that "science," to understand the reality and purpose. So now I am able, through that "science," to understand the reality and purpose of many things that have heretofore been known only in terms of their outer expressions.

For instance, about prayer, I learn:

“In that state man with all his heart and soul turneth his face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking His association and desiring His love and compassion.”
BSF 368

It is a “portal” that opens my heart to His love; and this is the most important thing that can happen to me. For “love is the fundamental principle of God’s purpose for man,” 75(t), PT 122, and comes to me only as “the conscious bestowal of God” 76(aa), PUP 249 to my heart. But I must respond to it - for I learn that I must love God in order for His love to reach me. HWA 4#5 Love is a two way channel between God and my heart or soul. But if I am not aware of it in my outer consciousness, it is like having a million dollars in the bank and not knowing it is there.

Prayer, of course, is a heart’s recognition of God’s love and a love-inspired response to it.

About meditation I learn:

“It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own

spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed.” PT 174

To grasp the full significance of this statement, it may help to remember that ‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke these words to Christians who, according to the English dictionary, use the words soul and spirit interchangeably. But in the newest development of “the science of reality,” they have different meanings. Spirit has now been defined as power - “the divine breath which animates and pervades all things” 38© BWF 260; whereas the soul is the “celestial entity” that God creates. 34(b) Gen. 2:7; 34(f), BWF 121 or GL 158-9; 34(d), PT 85 In practical understanding, when I ask a question, it may be some power within me that answers, but I would say that I am asking it of my own soul, thereby substituting this word for its Christian synonym.

Celestial Light and Help Are Needed

Why should I pray or meditate, aside from an instinctive urge to do so?

A practical answer is: because I am driven by hungers and needs to seek help beyond what is available in the outer world. I need help in understanding what my needs are and also in finding their fulfillment.

Although my human desires and requirements take specific forms, I do not always know what it takes to satisfy those inner longings that Baha’u’llah says are prompted by a yearning for spiritual conditions and realities that are infinite, eternal and divine. It is only in this new Dispensation that it is possible to know our own inner needs, for they spring from God’s purpose for man and particularly from “His immediate purpose as revealed and directed by Baha’u’llah.” 346(c), Wellspr. of Guid. 113 As a purposeful being, don’t I naturally want and struggle to achieve my objectives: But without His Guidance, I don’t have the vision to reach out for divine fulfillment, nor the wisdom to reject as answers to my needs what satisfies my human nature or material being. This is where I need superhuman help.

I am a part of the realm of human affairs, too, and this includes my physical environment. I have learned to participate in the life of mankind. I have worked hard to acquire as much as possible of the knowledge offered here, and I have experienced various kinds of human love. My success in this world is determined by how well I have learned to understand and cope with this environment. But I must admit that somehow this life does not fully satisfy my highest aspirations nor does it give adequate expression to the deepest longings of my heart. This is what drives me to pray and to meditate.

The same thing drove me to seek until I found Baha’u’llah: I had an insatiable craving to know and be dynamically related to Divinity, long before I knew that my heart was reaching out blindly to find God and His Manifestation. But I do know that the greatest soul satisfaction, the greatest joy of my heart, that I have ever experienced was when I found Baha’u’llah and awakened, through Him, to a new and vivid consciousness of my Creator. In fact this was the beginning of a new kind of inner life, my conscious self-directed spiritual existence.

My success in this spiritual life will be determined by how well I learn to understand and

cope with the realms of existence that make up my spiritual environment - intangible, invisible, infinite, eternal, divine. I know now that I have Baha'u'llah and God Himself "with" me, ready as a divine Enlightener and heavenly Progenitor to teach me all I need to know about the celestial world of which I am a part. But I must turn to them and listen for Their Guidance. This is another reason for prayer and meditation. Because I shall never really be totally self sufficient or self-directing. It is true that I have the responsibility to make my own choices between "good" and "evil," 36(s), SAQ 287, but my vision is so human and limited that I shall always need the celestial Light of Guidance, and new insight in relation to the spiritual realities to help me choose wisely. I know that my finite human mind and imperfectly developed rational soul cannot maintain a consciousness of the revealed divine Mind and Will, even though my heart has recognized and accepted them. And although through that Source I have been advised of my Creator's purpose in causing me to be, and have been told the potentialities with which I am endowed, I still lose sight of my real objectives, and allow my human nature to go on dictating behavior and expressing feelings that are anything but spiritual. God help me!

In short, to acquire the knowledge and love that my inner being requires for intelligent living, even in the outer world, I need superhuman help. And prayer and meditation are portals through which I can gain that assistance and bring into my outer consciousness all that I need to know and to feel. Just as I turned, as a baby, to my parents for love, care and even words through which to communicate, and as a child I depended largely on them (as final authority) for answers to my questions, so also my heart turns to Baha'u'llah and, through Him, to God. How glorious it is to have access to everything I need for successful spiritual living!

But this is not something intangible in my inner life alone. That celestial Light that my heart craves and receives answers specific questions in my outer consciousness - the questions that I, as a rational being, naturally ask, such as:

Who and what am I?

What powers do I possess?

What immediate objectives and goals am I intended to pursue?

And how can I deal successfully with the terrific problems that my outer life presents?

Baha'u'llah brings us all of God's answers to such questions.

In the outer world I can pick up a Book and read many of them, for this is the most obvious way that my Creator communicated with His creatures - through His Word the Baha'u'llah has spoken and written. But just reading those words with my outer being is not enough, for they are deeply spiritual, and beyond the power of my finite mind to grasp. Understanding and comprehension of the Word "depends solely upon purity of heart", 25(qqq), Iqan 211 I'm told. Baha'u'llah prayed that God would purify our hearts so that His words "may sink deep into them." BWF 92 or P&M 197 And it is from my own heart that their wisdom can come. I must, as Baha'u'llah says, "ponder" His words in my heart. So I find that while reading the creative Word is vitally important, it is not only from this activity that my answers come:

they can sometimes actually come from my own soul, for they are given direct to the yearning heart in a mysterious way. Baha'u'llah mentions this in referring to the light from the Sun of Reality with Manifestations reflect, as perfect Mirrors. He says:

“And the splendor of that light is in the hearts, yet it is hidden under the veiling of sense and the conditions of this earth.” 41(w), 7 VAL 24

How thrilling it is to think of the splendor of divine light that may be hidden within my own heart, ready to answer my questions if and when I learn how to practice the reality of meditation!

As a human creature who must depend on his brain and nervous system to activate my soul's inner powers and so generate my immediate consciousness, I can see that I have an undeniable need for that celestial inner light, and a definite way to tap it. I need to supplicate God for it. And I must learn to face my inner being with loving confidence and faith, both as the seeker of enlightenment and as its recipient.

Prayer and mediation, then, are the most obvious portals and channels through which divine communication can be established, and also through which the longed for spiritual bounties make themselves known. Through these activities I open my heart to the infinite, eternal, divine world of spirit. And also I establish a connection from my inner and outer beings.

Do I regard praying and mediation as arduous or unpleasant duties, similar to demands that human beings make on me? If so I should remember these words of Baha'u'llah when communing with His Beloved:

“Whatever duty Thou hast prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enable to ascend unto the station conferred upon their inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves.” GL 4-5

QUESTION FOR ME TO ANSWER

1. I understand from the foregoing definitions these enlightening facts about prayer meditation and * ____ “heart.”
2. * ____
3. * ____
4. * ____
5. * ____

3. WHAT I LEARN FROM MY CREATOR ABOUT MY INNER AND OUTER BEINGS

Divine Light on the Human Make-up

I look in the mirror. There is the person known by my name. I wonder a little about that person - what it feels like to encounter and react to that being that is known to actually exist.

Of course that is my outer being, and not exactly a stranger to me. I just know that that is not the real me - certainly not all of me. Actually I am something quite different from what I see. It is a comfort, at times, that other people only see that outer self, and not what I am inside. Yet, on the other hand, I often wish that I could be known as I am in reality, feeling intuitively that I am far greater than is known, and that I am not fully appreciated. The fact is that I don't quite know my own inner being. I only know that what I really am, "deep down inside," is something quite different from the outer self that people know. My real or inner self is beyond my own reach, a reality that I am continually trying to express, understand and to feel at home with.

As already noted, 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated that,

"The Prophets of God have been the servants of reality; Their teachings constitute the science of reality." 19(ee), (see page 5 [8])

Science is used here, surely, in its basic sense of "systematic and formulated knowledge." (Oxford Dictionary) From Them, then, I can acquire knowledge of my own reality. So I ask: what am I in reality, and what is that being that faces me?

From the time of Adam, the Creator has identified man,[as] His masterpiece of creation,

as “a living soul.” 34(b), Gen. 2:7 (see page 6 [9]) And now Baha’u’llah defines a soul as “a celestial being,” 24(d), PT 85, a “heavenly gem,” 34(f), BWF 121 or GL 158-9 (see page 5 [8-9]) “the reality . . . where the glory of all the perfections of God shine forth.” 32(b), SAQ 228

I am well acquainted with my outer being. I am accustomed to thinking of this being in the mirror as me, because this is where my immediate consciousness is created and functions - where I think, feel, decide and plan my actions. I know that this part of me is very limited in knowledge and love, being ego-centric in vision, and decidedly critical of my environment. I know that this outer self was born on a certain date and will die at some future time. I know that it has faults and character deficiencies that I, in my heart, deplore. All of this is readily perceptible to my human powers of perception.

So I am amazed and almost unbelieving, when Baha’u’llah reveals that in reality I am the center where the glory of all of the perfections of God are destined to shine forth! For since those perfections are infinite, eternal and divine, 9(f), GL 318, and I learn that the soul has a beginning but no end, this means that, having infinite and divine potentialities, I am part of an infinite, eternal, divine existence. This is the world that Baha’u’llah is unveiling to mankind - a world of divine secrets and heavenly realities.

It seems that this celestial world is to my outer consciousness what the “sky” is to my physical being: a realm of existence that I see as actually existing every time I lift my eyes to that direction, but that is far beyond my comprehension. Science has been discovering and revealing to mankind the nature of outer space, and has recently made possible travel and exploration there. The Prophets of God, since the time of Adam, have been slowly revealing the nature of that world of infinitude, eternity and divinity, too, and now Baha’u’llah has made it possible for me to soar into its heavenly heights and to explore the divine secrets and spiritual realities.

At first it is an unvoiced unconscious experience of my soul - at least one of which I am not fully conscious in my outer being; for as already noted, (see page 8 []) I am told that the splendor of the divine illumination that reflects through Baha’u’llah “is in the heart’s though hidden under the veiling of sense and the conditions of this earth.” 41(w), 7 VAL 23-4, (see page 8 []) this means that my heart “sees” and knows more than I do, in my outer consciousness. This is borne out, too, by the fact that:

“The spirit may be likened to the light within the lantern. The body is simply the outer lantern . . . The human soul by means of this body can perform its operations, and without the body it can likewise have its control.” PUP 411

What treasures of celestial light and wisdom are within my inner being, ready to help me to perceive and understand the mysteries that Baha’u’llah reveals? It is thrilling to even contemplate the possibilities!

How eagerly, then, I listen, as He explains this unknown part of me! ‘Abud’l-Baha assists, by stating that my reality or soul has two main faculties:

(a) As outer circumstances are communicated to the soul by the eyes, ears, and brain of a

man, so does the soul communicates its desires and purposes through the brain to the hands and tongue of the physical body, thereby expressing itself . . . (b) The second faculty of the soul expresses itself . . . and functions without the help of the material bodily senses. There, in the realm of vision, the soul see without the help of the physical eye, hears without the aid of the physical ear, and travels without dependence upon physical motion. 47(zz), PT ____

And again,

“The power and comprehension of the human spirit . . . perceive and act in two different modes. One way is through instruments and organs. . . . The other . . . is without instruments and organs. 47 (yy), BWF 326 or SAQ 263

The purpose of my body is clear: it is to serve during my earthly lifetime, as an instrument through which my soul or real self my function. I use my body when I consciously “think,” reason or imagine, because

“In the human organism there is a center of intellection, a power of intellectual operation which is the discoverer of the realities of things. This power can unravel the mysteries of phenomena. It can comprehend that which is knowable; not alone the sensible. All the inventions are its products . . . All the sciences which we now utilize are the products of that wondrous reality.” 51(j), PUP 412

How little I appreciate the marvelous machinery with which my Creator has provided me! I realize this when I read:

”The body of man, which is composed from the elements, is combined and mingled in the most perfect form; it is . . . the noblest combination, the most perfect existence.” 47(vv), SAQ 164

“Moreover, these members, these elements, this composition, which are found in the organism of man, are an attraction and magnet for the spirit. . . . Under these conditions . . . when the elements are arranged and combined in the most glorious system, organization and manner, the HUMAN spirit will appear and be manifest in them. This is the decree of the Powerful, the Wise.” 47,ww) SAQ 234-5

“Immeasurably exalted is the Almighty Who hath created these powers, and revealed them in the body of man.” 47(xx), BWF 122 or GL 194

What is still more new, though, is the fact that the powers of my soul also manifest and act “without instruments and organs.” This is the “heart” of my inner life. An example of this that ‘Abdu’l-Baha gives is that “Many times it happens that a question which on cannot solve in the world of wakefulness, is solved in the world of dreams.” BWF 326 or SAQ 263

My faculties of hearing and vision are powers of my soul, too, that can function spiritually with or without the outer instrumentality of the body; for the Voice of my Creator speaks to me thus:

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

Thy sight is My sight, do thou see therewith, that in thine inmost soul thou mayest testify unto My exalted sanctity, and I within Myself may bear witness unto an exalted station for thee.” HWA 14 #44

I have undreamed of powers, actually, for spiritual perception:

“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.” HWP 25 #1 74 * ____

To fully understand these instructions, I need to learn what has been revealed about my powers and potentialities.

Baha’u’llah has revealed the fact that in creating me, God endowed me with the capacity to know and love my Creator, and established this not only as my purpose in life but as the very purpose of creation itself. 32(j), BWF 102-3 or GL 65. He called this capacity or power, spirit; and I learn that spirit is “the divine breath which animates and pervades all things,” and that it “is manifested throughout creation in different degrees of kingdoms.” 38(c, f), BWF 260 (see page 5-6 []) From this I understand that spirit is _____ love power, which ‘Abdu’l-Baha defines as a linking force, 72(a), DAL 108-9, combined with or conditioned by the “know-how” or degree of knowing and intelligence that is essential to successful living and fulfillment of God’s purpose at each level of existence. So I become aware of the amazing fact that “the phenomena of the universe find realization through the one power animating and dominating all things: 38(d), FWU 58 or PUP 280 this God-given capacity to know and to love. All things are but manifestation of various degrees of its energy and bounty. This is spirit!

S P I R I T

	<u>Holy Spirit</u>	_____
	<u>spirit of faith</u>	_____
	<u>human spirit</u>	_____
	<u>animal spirit</u>	_____
	<u>vegetable spirit</u>	_____
	<u>mineral spirit</u>	_____

40(a), SWF 316 or SAQ 243

The Life Force or Powers of Existence

The being that I see in the mirror, I am told, has ten “agents of perception” which “are in truth of the inherent properties of the soul,” 57(a), BWF 337: “five physical powers and five spiritual powers.” 57(d), BWF 317 or SAQ 245 But I am seeing only my material self, whereas ‘Abdu’l-Baha says that “beings are of two kinds: material and spiritual; those perceptible to the senses and those intellectual.” 33(v), SAQ 95-6 (see page 3 []) My physical senses are aware of that material self that the mirror reflects, but intellectually and by using my spiritual powers of perception I know that I am also a spiritual being. This means that in reality I live two lives: one in the visible world of matter, and the other in the invisible world of spirit. ‘Abdu’l-Baha explains and rationalizes this by saying:

“In man there are two natures: his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God; in the other he lives for the world alone.: 48(a), PT 60

“Man. . . 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.” 48(b), BWF 331 or SAQ 272-3

“Signs of both of these natures are to be found in man. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice . . . If a man’s divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint.” 48(c), PT 60

My material powers are those of my anatomy, and are the same as those of the highest type of animal, since my body is “animal in type.” 57(bbb), PUP 411 These “agents of perception” are sight, hearing, smell, taste and physical feeling. Through these I perceive “outward existences.” 57(d), BWF 317 or SAQ 245 My five spiritual “agents of perception” enable me to remember, imagine, think, reason, comprehend, and generate the immediate consciousness where I react to what my senses report. 52(c); and 57(f,g), BWF 317-8 or SAQ 245 This allows my outer being to use the marvelous intellectual powers of my soul in pursuing its objectives, thereby transforming my anatomy from an instinct driven physical organism into an educated animal. Thus my body, through which my soul “can perform its operations,” 47(bbb), PUP 411 becomes and unimaginably potent instrument.

But a soul, I recall, has two abilities or ways of functioning: it can operate through the body; but also it can function “in the world of vision” (spiritual vision, that is) “where the soul . . . has it being,” without the help of the body. 40(k), PT 86 In other words, as previously stated, my soul can “perceive and act” not only “through instruments and organs,” 47(yy), BWF 326 or SAQ 260, (see page 11 []), but also “independently” without them. PUP 411 For instance, it is my soul that sees through my eyes, hears with my ears, smells through my nostrils and grasps objects with my hands, all being operations “through instruments.” But in sleep, when my body is not serving as an instrument,

“There is an immediate and vivid perception by the soul. Exhilaration is experienced: (by the soul, though not necessarily in my outer consciousness). “The soul journeys, perceives, senses. It often happens that man in a state of wakefulness has not been able to accomplish the solution of a problem and when he goes to sleep he will reach that solution in a dream: PUP 410-1 Thus my soul, “without instruments or organs. . . in the state of sleep, without eyes . . . sees, without an ear . . . hears, without a tongue . . . speaks, without feet . . . runs How often it happens that it sees a dream in the world of sleep, and its signification becomes apparent two years afterward in corresponding events.” 47(yy), BWF 326 or SAQ 263

Many individuals are not aware of such dreams or visions as outer experiences. That means that for them that particular channel between the inner and outer beings is not open. It does not prove that no such experiences take place, but simply indicated that, like much of the life that carries on without the instrumentality of the body and brain, such experiences are not communicated to the human mind. But I have had sudden feelings of depression, and at other times experienced a welling up of unaccountable joy. I have received incredible inspirations at times of crisis, and been nagged by totally irrational aspirations over long periods of time. And where can such effects come from, if not from within my own heart where unknown and incredible things are happening?

It is in this inner being that I feel love, and love can be there whether or not I am aware of it as a human being, and whether or not it is expressed in my outer being. It is in that inner self, too, that knowledge and wisdom are stored - beyond the knowledge and mental concepts that my human nature has build up and recorded on my brain cells to be reactivated. Where do I think a brand new idea comes from? Here, in my heart, there is the “light” that God “casts” into my divine nature. Here, too, is the very center and perhaps the source of what I believe and of much that I “just know,” unaccountably or because it is the inherent power of the soul to “know” such things, my intuitive wisdom or innate intelligence. Talents are latent here until activated. Undreamed of potentialities, infinite, eternal, divine, characterize this mysterious unknowable part of me. It is the seat and source of all of my powers. So it is indeed “the essential or most vital part” of me, that has been given the simple name, heart.

But like a bank account of which I have no knowledge, I cannot experience the full benefit of what exists and is developing in this inner being or heart of mine, until channels from it are opened or it expresses (“out-presses”?) In my human consciousness or outer being. Unconscious wisdom, vague restlessness, or unaccounted-for dissatisfaction with life are no help to me. I need to understand this divine nature of mine, that is so much more latent than active. Reacting as I must does call forth some of these precious unawakened potentialities, especially if I use the spirit of faith and intuition as I should. But because the portals of my heart are open to the Great Unknown and are constantly (especially during sleep) receiving light and love from the spiritual world where my soul “has its being,” I need to make a definite effort to open every

possible channel from my heart to my outer consciousness. And prayer and mediation can do this. Through them the best that is in me can "come out" and activate my perception, my feelings and my behavior.

What about that "spirit" that is likened to the light operating in the outer "lantern" to the light operating in the outer "lantern" of my being? - the greatest power in the realm and range of human existence"? 38(b), PT 87 where do I key into this power? For I recall that "Abdu'l-Baha said about this power that "all things are but manifestations of its energy and bounty." 38(d), PUP 280 to make this clearer, He names the degrees of spirit that are manifested as life-powers in creation, in terms of the kingdoms with which we are familiar, calling the vegetable spirit the first degree, the animal spirit the second degree, and the human spirit the third degree. And He mentions, as the fourth degree, a higher-than-human spirit which He calls the spirit of faith. Below these kingdoms there is the mineral kingdom, about which He comments that minerals, though not alive, "are endowed with a spirit and life according to the requirements of that stage." 38(n), BWF 338 It is notable that each higher kingdom possesses all the powers of the lower ones with a "plus" that is the characteristic (or "spirit") that the lower ones lack. He defines the degrees of spirit that activate me in terms of my knowing powers or "agencies of perception, thereby establishing three levels of vision to which I have access:

animal knowing powers: senses, instinct and the brain mechanism that records and recalls every experience of my outer being; 38(I), BWF 316, 49(k), PUP 37-8

human knowing powers: my rational faculties, intellect or spiritual powers (imagination, thought or reason, comprehension and powers of the immediate consciousness where all of the perceptions are combined). 57(f,g), BWF 317-8 or SAQ 245, 38(h), PT 25

higher-than-human powers: faith or the power of conscious knowledge gained by accepting revelations; and innate intelligence or intuition (inner "teaching") 29(x), SAQ 165, 74(I), PUP 322

Animal powers characterize my animal nature, and the higher-than-human degree of spirit is the potential power of my divine nature. And in between the two, generating my human nature, are the powers of my mind.

So I not only have two natures: the lower animal nature (of my physical being) and the higher nature of my soul, 48(a), PT 60 but I have three natures: "animal, human and divine"; 50 (d), FWU 110 or PUP 461 for between the two aspects which have been called "the image and likeness of God and the aspect of Satan," my "human reality stands." 50(b), FWU 180-9 or PUP 460

The lines have been clearly drawn between these three natures, in terms of the degrees of spirit that animate and activate me. These definitions establish three levels of vision (powers of perception) from which I may view life and react. Just as a car drives either in low, second or high gear, each to achieve its own purpose, as I react, I use either my low animal degree of spirit,

my “natural” human degree, or my top level of spiritual powers; and in every case it is “I” who am reacting, whether as a physical being, a human body and mentality, or as the total being that includes my outer self. Each has its own purpose and way of living. Each lives only in the world of which it is aware.

The first of these natures is that of my anatomy, and its acts, attributes and environment are “things perceptible to the senses.” But the rest of me is “reality of the intellect and is not perceptible to the senses (see page 3 []). The human and divine natures, their action patterns, motives, purposes and even attributes, are intellectual “realities,” and so are the worlds of which they are part. So to comply with ‘Abud’l-Baha’s statement that to express such realities “one is obliged to give explanations under the forms of sensible things,” 6(a), SAQ 96, (see page 3-4 []), we might visualize them as follows.

Beginning with my body that “is purely animal in type,” 47(bbb), PUP 411, (see page 14 []), we might add the part of me “which distinguishes man from the animal,” (the human spirit), 38(b), BWF 317 or SAQ 243, and what it generates as it “manifests” in the human kingdom: namely, my human consciousness. This is the human creature that I see in my mirror, and a physical being that see, hears, smells, tastes and touches its material surroundings and imagines and thinks about them, remembers, comprehends and reacts to them to as degree. What my rational faculties do, what goes on above my ears, gives me access into the human thought world or realm of the intellect; and this is a greater world, with the material one, of course, than the world where the animal lives. But it has a definite ceiling, too.

My divine nature, possessed of all three degrees of spirit, is the nature of my soul that has been symbolized for my by “a conventionalized representation of the heart.: This is a reality that “has its being” in the world of spiritual vision, 40(k), (see page 15 []) - the kingdom of spiritual realities. This is the real me, “the essential or most vital part” of me that we speak of as my heart. My body belongs to me too - it is part of the real me, for it is my body, my brain, my nervous system, and my human consciousness that is imprinted on its brain cells. I, a “living soul,” function through that human organism. I use it in dealing with the lower worlds. And, “without instruments of organs,” I live in and deal with my soul’s invisible, intangible, infinite, eternal, divine surroundings which Baha’u’llah is trying to teach me to consciously “see.”

My top degree of spirit can function or not in relation to the “things” of the material or human worlds. That is, I can believe what I like or shut off all faith; and I can experience and recognize “hunches or develop talents or other aspects of my innate intelligence as I choose here on earth and in operating in the realm of human affairs. but when I comes to understanding spiritual truths or dealing with heavenly realities (such as other souls, or God’s purpose for man), I must use everything that faith and inner wisdom can provide.

These powers give me access to the world of divine purpose - in short, the spiritual world - where my real life - the life of my immortal soul - is lived.

Baha’u’llah says that each of these worlds where man lives, and this means each level of

existence to which he can consciously react, “proceeds from his own vision.” 80(a), 7 VAL 18 This makes it all the more important for me to understand the powers of my vision and how to control and use them.

I am quite aware of all three of these degrees of spirit as powers of my own being. I enjoy using my physical powers and would be lost without my sight, my hearing and my bodily sensations. I am grateful for my intellectual powers that I use both as a human being and as an immortal soul. And as for my top level “high gear” perceptions, I know that I can believe when I choose to do so, and that some things I “just know” intuitively.

Baha’u’llah describes at some length the rational faculty which is the human spirit and distinguishing characteristic. He says that this is an endowment of the very essence of man - not just an outer quality belonging to the two legged members of the animal kingdom. He says that from this endowment “proceeds” my motion and stillness, my will and purpose, my sight and hearing, my sense of smell and power of speech, and “whatever else is related to or transcendeth” my physical senses and spiritual perceptions. They all owe their existence to this same endowment: the rational faculty. Baha’u’llah says:

“Wert thou to ponder in thine heart, from now till 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.” GL 165

Understanding is one of its virtues, and the purpose of my being endowed with that virtue “is none other than to enable me “to know and recognize the one true God.” 35(m), BWF 122 or GL 194 But understanding and intellectual awareness are not the same, nor are wisdom and humanly acquired learning. So the rational powers that characterize the human nature and are synonymous with the human spirit is not the full endowment of the soul. In fact I am told plainly that “the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities.” 39(y), BWF 317 or SAQ 244. Think of how many individuals today have highly developed intellects and still know nothing about God!

How can I pray if I am unacquainted with the heavenly secrets that explain the what and why of prayer? How can I want to address the Greatest of all Heavenly Realities if I don’t have a speaking acquaintance or active love-relationship with that Supreme Being?

I must conclude that to be “assisted by the spirit of faith” is a primary requisite to true prayer. Of course any literate human being can read a Baha’i Prayer, but that is not necessarily praying. Experience tells me that when “the holy ecstasy of prayer” frills my heart, that prayer will “rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds? BP’69, 93 #75 - and intellectual human concepts, too.

So what can I learn about the spirit of faith? How can I unfailingly gain its assistance? And where does the power-source come into the picture? This reminds me of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s

simple words: (see page 13 [])

“It has been before explained that spirit is divided into five categories: the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the spirit of faith, and the Holy Spirit.” 40(a), BWF 316 or SAQ 243

I recall that the origin of “Holy” is whole, according to my Oxford Dictionary. The lower degrees of spirit come from the Source, which “is the bounty of God, and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations.” 40(b), SAQ 124 And “The fourth degree of spirit . . . the spirit of faith . . . comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit.” 39(x), SAQ 165, (see page 15b []) It is a gift from the Creator, made dynamically available through Baha’u’llah Whose spirit is the Holy Spirit. It is not an inevitable expression of the human soul, as are the powers of reason and imagination. I can accept it as a source of perception and enlightenment, or I can reject it.

I learn that even the third degree of spirit can only come from the Holy Spirit, the whole or source of this heavenly life force. “Abdu’l-Baha says:

“Without the Holy Spirit he (man) would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge The illumination of the Holy Spirit gives to man the power of thought, and, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man.” 22(_), PT 59 But just as the intellect is “the special gift” by which man is able to receive a larger share of the “light Divine” 41(s), Pt 25 than the animal receives, so too it is through the spirit of faith that each soul must be illuminated “with the radiance of the Sun of Reality.” 83(cc), BWF 324 or SAQ 260 What a loss and real tragedy it is for a person to limit his acquisition of knowledge to what his intellect can discover, and to ignore the higher education that the Prophets of God offer! But this has been happening all over the world. That is why humanity is in such deep trouble.

“The power of the Holy spirit, enlightening man’s intelligence, has enabled him to discover means of bending many natural law 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 endeavor to attune his heart to the Divine infinite love.” 22(s) PT 37-8

To do this is the essence of faith.

‘Abdu’l-Baha says that the first sign of faith is love. 40(I), PUP 331 Also, that the “love that flows from man to God is faith.” 5(s), PT 180 The two are interdependent - one generates the other, and neither is possible without the other. An intellectual may have an admiration for the Creator, simply by recognizing certain attributes of divinity that manifest and are “visible in worlds and souls.” 9(m), BWF 322 or SAQ 257 Such a person can develop and live by a high type of philosophy. But ‘Abdu’l-Baha states plainly the “No system of philosophy has ever been able to change the manners and customs of a people for the better.” 81(n), PT 165

“The day has come when all darkness is to be dispelled and the Sun of Truth shall shine forth radiantly.” PUP 35 I thank God that I have been so blessed as to have both faith and love of

God awakened in me, and I certainly shall keep the channel of illumination open through prayer and meditation. For I hear ‘Abdu’l-Baha saying:

“Just as human intellects have revealed the secrets of matter and have brought forth from the realm of the invisible the mysteries of nature, may minds and spirits likewise come into the knowledge of the verities of God, and the realities of the kingdom be made manifest in human hearts.” 68(hh) or 81(1), PUP 36

God’s purpose for man is the greatest verity that can be know today, and the reality that is most needed to be “manifest in human hearts today. In my early years, I “made up my mind” and developed my ego will based on “current concepts of human well-being and happiness. 34(b), WS of G 113, (see page 6 []) I was unaware of my own inner being and its desires, for “the inferior degree cannot comprehend the superior degree.” * ____ My fourth degree of spirit was very limited, in action and development.

The Purpose of Life and the Worlds Where It Is Fulfilled

Now, however, it is different. As a Baha’i I know Go’s purpose for man, and understand that my real purpose is a threefold one:

- (1) to know, love and serve my Creator; 34a (a and c), P&M 314 and BWF 102-3 or
- (2) to acquire virtues; 85(ddd), PT 177
- (3) to promote the oneness of mankind which is the next step in advancing carrying forward an ever-advancing civilization. 34a(j, h) BNs #231, 6 and BWF 114 or GL 215

So whether I have grasped this as a human creature or am concerned with it as I live my outer life, in my inner life I certainly should abandon all current concepts of human well-being and happiness that have developed from unenlightened desires or objectives. how is it that this change of purpose has not taken place in my outer consciousness?

The difficulty is that a soul, like other living creatures, begins its life in seed form, with its powers of perception and other endowments latent and awaiting development. 33(m), BWF 103 or GL ____ So “I” - the inner unknowable reality - must grow from the physical condition in which I began my life toward the condition of infinitude, eternality and divinity that my soul is destined to reach. The purpose of my being is to develop into a purely spiritual creation, but until I reach that condition and discard my body, my inner reality is limited to a large extent by my humanness.

However, I have been given clear instructions by my Creator for using my powers in a way to insure the progress and growth that He has destined for me. Day by day what state of consciousness I live in and what qualities I develop depend[s] entirely on how I use my powers of perception as I react. Once I understand, even, that “all men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization,” these explanations are meaningful:

“God gave this power (the intellect)to man that it might be used for the advancement of civilization, for the good of humanity, to increase love and concord and

peace. But man prefers to use this gift to destroy instead of to build, for injustice and oppression, for hatred and discord and devastation, for the destruction of his fellow creatures. 53(I), PT 42

“Although man is part of the animal creation: (in body), “he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings. If a man’s thought is constantly aspiring towards heavenly subjects, then does he become saintly; if, on the other hand, his thought does not soar, but is directed downwards to center itself upon the things of this world, he grows more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal.” 50(a), RofM 9

“It may be that a man who has every material benefit, and who lives surrounded by all the greatest comfort modern civilization can give him, is denied the all important gift of the Holy Spirit: 52(e), PT 63

“Unless . . . man is released from the captivity of materialism, and receiving a portion of the bounties of the spiritual world . . . the utmost we can say of him is that he is a perfect animal. No one can rightly call him a man.” 52(f), PUP 298

“As we have before indicated, this human reality stands between the higher and lower in man, between the world of the animal and the world of divinity. When the animal proclivity in man becomes predominant, he sinks lower than the brute. When the heavenly powers are triumphant in his nature, he becomes the noblest and most superior being in the world.” 52(a), PUP 461 or FWU 110

It is that kind of noble and spiritual being that I want to be and that is destined to bring the kingdom of God on earth “as it is in heaven,” and to build the World Order of Baha’u’llah. But I know that it takes top level spirit and a heart deeply affected and influenced by the Holy Spirit, to even approach that goal. For ‘Abdu’l-Baha warned that

“the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and heavenly realities”? 39(y), BWF 317 or SAQ 244 (see page 16e[]) And Baha’u’llah has declared that the minds of the wise and learned are impotent to fathom those secrets, 65(n), P7M 92-3, and that the understanding of what has been unveiled is “in no wise dependent upon human learning, but depends instead “solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.” 25(qqq), Iqan 211, (see page * ___[]) In short, it is only through my inner being - through my heart and what the Holy Spirit bestows upon it - that I can gain a clear apprehension of God’s purpose for man, and particularly of His immediate purpose as revealed and directed by Baha’u’llah; and abandonment of lesser objectives will only take place when that apprehension is very clear.

“It is only the Divine Light that can give us sight for the invisible things,: 93(aa), PT 69

This explains why what I experience in my heart is so vitally important to me, why what I feel can be so thrilling or so devastating. This inner life that involves my heart is by far the realist part of my being. No matter how brilliant my intellectual life is, what I experience in my heart is

far more important than any worldly power or achievements in the outer domain. Once, like the majority of mankind, I questioned whether a soul was a reality, whether I “had” one, or could possible be one. But I have always know that I “have a heart.”

I know that I am a purposeful being, and because of this my life is a struggle to achieve the objectives that lead to the fulfillment of whatever purpose activates me. The cry of my heart, the longing of my soul, is for what I need to fulfill whatever purpose I cherish in my heart. this is what I pray for. This is the subject of my heart’s seeking and meditation.

Knowing this in my outer consciousness is what enables me, as a human being, to “catch up” with the growth that goes on beyond the level of my human awareness. For let me not forget that

“in the realm of vision, the soul sees without the help of the physical eye, hears without the aid of the physical ear, and travels without dependence upon physical motion. It is therefore clear that the spirit in the soul of man can function though the physical body by using the organs of the ordinary senses, and that it is able also to live and act without their aid in the world of vision.” PT 86

And what I, as a living soul or spiritual reality, see, feel and do in that spiritual “world of vision” is the vital part of my life, as surely as the light is the vital part of a lamp. (ibid.) Only to the extent that light comes into outer manifestation through the lamp can that object fulfill its real purpose in the outer world. And, similarly, only as the spiritual light and powers of my being show forth and manifest in my outer life can my purpose be fulfilled or the value of what is happening in my inner spiritual life be realized.

So the question is: do I know, in my outer consciousness, what my soul or heart need and is struggling to achieve? Can I or do I pray intelligently or wisely? Are the portals of my heart open, no only to what my Creator provides for its growth and fulfillment, but between my inner and outer beings? How constructive in my thought life? - how truly is it based on reality? These are questions that every true seeker must ask, even though he may think there are no answers. For - let me be assured! - when a heart needs guidance, God provides it. Hasn’t He promised never to leave us unguided? - never let me forget that covenant!

All I need it to understand what Baha’u’llah reveals about my heart and the real purpose of my being, and then apply this truth in my thought life.

“The portals of Thy grace have throughout eternity been open, and the means of access unto Thy Presence made available, unto all created things, and the revelations of Thy matchless Beauty have at all times been imprinted upon the realities of all being, visible and invisible.” BWF 30 or GL 63 (see page 1 [])

4. INNER NEEDS ARE DETERMINED BY THE PURPOSE OF MY BEING

My General Needs and the Possibility of Their Fulfillment

“O SON OF BOUNTY! Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear, and have ordained for thy training every atom in existence and the essence of all created things. Thus, ere thou didst issue from they mother’s womb, I destined for thee two founts of gleaming milk, eyes to watch over thee, and hearts to love thee. Out of My loving-kindness, ‘neath the shade of My mercy I nurtured thee, and guarded thee by the essence of My grace and favor. And My purpose in all this was that thou mightest become worthy of My invisible bestowals.” 37(dd), HWP 32 #29

QUESTIONS FOR ME TO ANSWER

1. When I look in the mirror do I see my “reality”? (* ____ [])
2. If not, what do I see? (page 9 -10 [])
3. What new truth does Baha’u’llah reveal about my reality? (page 10 - 11)
4. What purpose does my body and physical being serve in relation to my reality? (page 11-12 [])

5. How does Baha'u'llah indicate that I should feel about my anatomy and my physical powers and being? (page 12 [])
6. How many powers animate existence and what are they? (page 18 [])
7. What powers of degrees of spirit “animate” me, the real me? (page 13-14 [])
8. What are my two natures? (page 14 [])
9. How do my powers define or draw lines between my three natures? (page 14 [])
10. Where does each of my three natures live? (page 14 -15 [])
11. What is the purpose of my physical being or body? (page 15 [])
12. [what is] God's purpose for me, the real me, as defined by
 1. Baha'u'llah
 2. 'Abdu'l-Baha
 3. Shoghi Effendi (page 15 [])
13. What are some of the *___ concepts of human well-being and happiness that are incompatible or in *___ ? (page *___ [])
14. Is it “right” or “wrong” that I should have started life knowing - feeling nothing more than animal senses and feels? - explain. (page 16 [])
15. What special powers cause a person to develop a higher consciousness than that of an animal? (page 16 [])
16. If my “heavenly powers” (especially those used in prayer and meditation) were not used what would happen to me? (page 16 [])
17. What power and what creation of my heart does it take to build the new World Order? (page 17 [])
18. What is more important to me - new mental life or my emotional life? (page *___ [])
19. Granting that my emotional life is the life of my heart or inner being, am I aware of what that part of me needs and is struggling to achieve? (page *___ [])
20. How can I learn my inner needs and the real purpose of my whole being? (page *___ [])

Thus my glorious Creator reminds me that He supplies my every need, whether I know it or not, and has planned the fulfillment of all of my desires even before I am aware of them. In fact I can have no concept of how bounteously He has provided for me, except as I gradually experience my ever increasing desires and learn what my real needs are. Sadly I admit that most of my conscious desires are concerned predominantly with my outer life.

My inner life is deeply concerned however, with my desires and objectives, my motives and purposes, and my struggles to fulfill them. For I must accept and use what He provides.

In the beginning of my life, these gradually pressed outward in my involvement with my immediate surroundings, as perceived by my senses. This activated my mental powers, and my mind began to develop. From the first and always, I was driven to seek and acquire what I needed and desired.

At first my efforts were unconscious and instinctive, but gradually they became more

conscious as I learned to think, reason and imagine in response to my needs and to make choices. To my immediate goals I added future ones. What I live for in this way can keep my mind occupied if I allow it to do so.

But meanwhile my objectives, expanded and my needs and desires became less material. My aspirations and goals changed from those required for body survival and human pleasure as those of my spiritual being began to express more freely.

For a time the outer scene and world of human affairs may promise fulfillment of such spiritual needs and desires as I am specifically aware of. But, unbeknownst to me, long ago the real purpose of my being began to assert itself in my heart and motives. Gradually I have found that my outer life leaves me with an unsatisfied hunger for divine love. This may register in my outer consciousness as a disappointment or disillusionment in my human relationships. Such experiences produce anger, bitterness, blame or revulsion toward the former objects of my love and adoration. Or it may express as a general dissatisfaction with life or an overwhelming feeling of depression. It can cast me into all sorts of misery and despair.

Why is this?

As I face my mirror, I feel that I understand the needs and desires of that human creature. In fact much of my life is occupied with the struggle to fulfill these needs and desires. Food and body comforts are a must. Association with other human beings is an essential to human existence not only for the help and cooperation that are needed, but for the mental and emotional stimuli that force me into participation in the world of human affairs. I note, of course, that the Creator has made food, shelter and human beings abundantly available; and that what He has provided contains infinite potentialities for fulfilling human needs. How fully my outer needs are satisfied, depends considerably on how I use the material bounties provided in the outer world. Doubtless the same is true of having my inner needs supplied: I first must become aware of those needs, and then must learn to see and use what He provides for their fulfillment.

Although God supplies all my needs, the world where my outer personality lives is a realm of opposite extremes: fulfillment and frustration; what is delightfully acceptable, and what is unendurably revolting; and every gradation of “good” and “evil” between these extremes. My ever present need is to be able to cope with such condition. To insure this, God gave me the power to acquire, comprehend and use knowledge, and then He revealed what I need to know to make my earthly struggle successful. The process of using my powers and His enlightenment in dealing with my environment has built into my brain cells and conditioned consciousness certain fixed concepts and concrete emotional attitudes, that characterize the human creature that I see in my mirror. I must go deeper than that - must seek enlightenment beyond what my rational mind can discover - to understand the unsatisfied yearnings of my heart, the unfulfilled aspirations and dreams of my soul.

So what are the needs of my inner being? What does my heart desire in reality? And does God provide answers for these deeper needs, as He has supplied what my physical being

requires?

My outer being is the part of me that I have consciously developed, and I am therefore well acquainted with it. But my inner being is what God created, and there are only two ways of becoming acquainted with that part of me: through its own creative expressions in my outer consciousness and living, and through listening with my heart and through the spirit of faith to what my Creator has revealed through His latest Manifestation.

As a purposeful human being, I know that I have a need and even compulsion to achieve my own objectives and goals. And as a Baha'i I know, through I need to increase my consciousness of the fact, that my real purpose in life is to know and love my Creator. so the basic heart-hunger and most urgent requirement of my soul is for knowledge and love of God. He has so created me that I "naturally" love what I see and divine or perfect, better than the best. And in addition He provides the enlightenment which I need in order to really "know" God. But as is true of my physical need-answers, I must accept and use what He provides. I must study His Revelations, and adapt the knowledge He provides to my own powers of assimilation and application. That is what my top level or 4th degree of spirit and life energies is for: to enable me to acquire and use the knowledge that He makes available. It is an inner heart need, and calls forth the highest powers of my soul for its fulfillment.

The whole purpose of divine Revelation and the basic goal of the science of reality is to unveil to men's hearts the realness of God and His relationship to them as it exists in reality. I need this, because of my total inability to grasp the infinitude, eternity and divinity of existence as a whole, of my own being, and of the Being called God. I need Baha'u'llah's explanations.

The first fact essential to spiritual understanding is that God created me. I have my own ideas of what that means. As a human being I see myself as a separate entity, an individual who is struggling to achieve objectives and to initiate or maintain satisfactory relationships with other beings. I recognize that my relationship with the two beings who were responsible for my birth is a transitory bond. Parents launch their offspring into the material world and eventually assume that the same relationship probably maintains between the soul and its spiritual Progenitor.

But Baha'u'llah denies this categorically. I learn that the very substance from which souls are created is a spiritual essence that flows eternally from God Himself: "the essence of knowledge" and "the clay of love" 42(d), HWA 7#13 - [the] infinite, eternal, divine substance that establishes my reality in the spiritual world, and exalts man's reality "above the rest of His creatures." 42(e), GL 81. He not only brought me into existence, but made me eternally dependent upon Him, because from Him is derived "the source of the sustenance of all things." (See page 4 []) In fact I am told that if "the holy breaths of His loving-kindness were to be withdrawn from the soul's domain for less than the twinkling of an eye, . . . the entire creation would perish." 30(b), P&M 90_4.. My first need, then, is to recognize my very real and vital relationship with God. Baha'u'llah quotes "what God hath revealed" in this connection:

"We are closer to man than his live-vein." BWF 98 or GL 185, which He has

followed up by saying:

“O SON OF BEING! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.” HWA 4 #4, (see page 5 [])
That is, I must consciously love Him in order to experience the bounties He provides.

This puts a clear responsibility on my outer consciousness, for it means that, as with the food, shelter and human companionship that He has provided for my outer needs, I must search out, develop and use constructively the bounties of God’s closeness and love if they are to satisfy my heart’s needs. In short, my relationship with God is something to be recognized and dealt with, especially since to know, serve, and worship Him is the real purpose of my being.

What does this relationship mean to me in terms of my everyday living? How does it affect the motives of my heart and influence what I am becoming as a person? What hungers and yearnings does it engender?

The human being that is reflected in my mirror follows a routine in the outer world that includes attending Baha’i Feasts, serving the Faith administratively, and trying in various ways to “teach” as I know I should. My human emotions are involved in these activities, too. But how much is my heart - my inner spiritual being that knows its real purpose - involved in these outer activities? How open is the channel between my heart and my outer consciousness?

Actually, since most of my activities are conducted in the world of human affairs I regretfully find myself driven in that world by the same basic compulsions that activated me before I was a Baha’i, following many of the same habit patterns (whether currently appropriate or not), and reacting with the same conditioned emotional attitudes. I want my spiritual aspirations to overrule my old world order human motives and desires. When I become dynamically aware of my relationship with God and of the true purpose of my being, divine love will surely take possession of my heart and replace every impulse growing out of self-love. How can I bring this about?

I know what Baha’u’llah has revealed. I have testified repeatedly
“unto that whereunto have testified all created things, and the Concourse on high, and the inmates of the all-highest Paradise, and beyond them the tongue of grandeur itself from the all-glorious Horizon,” BP’69, 125 or P&M 321
that God is a Reality and that there is no God but Him. Also I have been blessed by recognizing Baha’u’llah Who has been mentioned down through the ages “in the Books of God, the Lord of the Throne on high and of earth below.” *ibid.* I have accepted Him as “the Nightingale of paradise” and “the Tree of Life that bringeth forth the fruits of God.” BP’69, 129, 130 I know that what He has revealed is true. But it is truth too profound for my human finite mind to grasp or act upon readily. Moreover, my outer self that is so firmly conditioned to its own egocentric vision, needs and desires, actively resists any such a revolution of consciousness. the real “I” - even my inner being - is still so human! “I” am so proud of my own ideas, so entrenched in my habit patterns, so firmly committed to my conditioned emotional attitudes, that my heart

encounters interference from within, in its struggle to face reality. I can only cry from the depths of my confused disturbed heart, God help me!

I am feeling a need for celestial Light and superhuman understanding: and this heart hunger is destined to be satisfied by the Revelations from the Sun of Reality. But my heart must be receptive to that Light if I am to gain a transforming apprehension of reality as is intended. Baha'u'llah warns me clearly:

“O friend, the heart is the dwelling of eternal mysteries, make it not the home of fleeting fancies . . . Thou comest from the world of holiness - bind not thine heart to the earth . . . 7 VAL 35

Since the time of Adam there have always been believers, agnostics and infidels. There have been the pure in spirit who have sought the Source and Purpose of their being, and there have been the heedless indifferent souls.

“‘If God had pleased He had surely made all men on people.’ His purpose, however, is to enable the pure in spirit and the detached in heart to ascend, by virtue of their own innate powers . . . that thereby they who seek the Beauty of the All-Glorious may be distinguished and separated from the wayward and perverse.” 36(r), GL 71

So we all have a choice about accepting the answer for this need.

But in the past, knowledge of the heavenly secrets and divine realities was not fully available. the needs of the soul were not known, except as the latent potentialities of the heart found their way into the outer consciousness. Now, however, the time has come in the history of mankind for all truth to be known, and for souls to take a more conscious part in fulfilling God's purpose for them. This means that the spirit of faith must be more fully activated, developed and used as a power of perception, since the human degree of spirit with its rational powers and magnificent intellect must have the assistance of this top level of spirit in order even to know what that purpose is, much less achieve it. (see page 12)

In the past, the most devout believers could not understand their relationship with their unseen intangible Creator or be aware of the real purpose of their being. It has not been perceived that God is the intended Aim and Desire of every heart, and that the real life of every human being is the ascent toward his Maker. Nor has any soul ever dreamed of how productive of joy that long climb and painful struggle can be! I never imagined the ecstasy and heavenly fulfillment that has already resulted from the agonizing effort that is demanded of me. Yet I am so human that I cannot keep my feet on that ascending path. Earthly desires and objectives continually sidetrack me. This is why I must have a persistent intake of the Light that my heart needs for spiritual vision and in order to develop and realize fully my potentialities. Please God! - may the portals to that Light be opened!

The outer man may hear and use the word, God, and know intellectually that “God “ is his Creator. But only Baha'u'llah can reveal what that relationship is and can mean. I know now that it involves the purpose of my being, and that the power to achieve that purpose must come

from Him. I know in my outer mind what that purpose is. But if I were to become fully conscious of it as a reality, my whole inner and outer lives would both be revolutionized. I long for that kind of clear apprehension to take possession of my heart. But the question is: will my outer being, my human self, that is so firmly conditioned to its own egocentric vision, needs and desires, allow such a thing to happen?

I “know” what Baha’u’llah has revealed. I once questioned the existence of God, but now I know that

“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.” 33(n), GL 160

But I must admit that in my outer life that is not the way I see “every created thing.”

I, an insignificant little human creature have testified repeatedly with my lips at least;

“To that whereunto Thy chosen Ones have testified, and acknowledged that which the inmates of the all-highest Paradise and those who have circled round Thy mighty Throne have acknowledged.” BP’69, 128 or P&M 323

so I know beyond all doubt that God exists and that there is no God but Him. But do I fully recognize Him? Do I real-ize what He means to my inner life and soul?

I should, because I have been blessed with being able to accept Baha’u’llah as a divine Revelator and He has explained reality so I should cling to Him, for He holds in His hand “the immediate destinies of all created things.” 100(s), P&M 123 And that means my destiny - Baha’u’llah,

“Whose name hath been set down by the Pen of the Most High, and Who hath been mentioned in the Books of God, the Lord of the Throne on high and of earth below.” BP’69, 125 or P&M 321

QUESTIONS FOR ME TO ANSWER

1. Has my Creator provided for the fulfillment of all of my needs or should I expect frustration and an inability *___ to achieve my purpose in life? (page 18-9 [])
2. What must I supply if I am to benefit fully from God’s provisions for my progress and success? (page 19 [])
3. What three kinds of objective do I have? (page 19 [])
4. What causes unsatisfied hunger of a kind other than physical? (page 19 [])
5. What about the needs of my body? - is it wrong to devote time and attention in an effort to satisfy these? (page 20 [])
6. How do I find out the deeper needs of my spiritual or inner being? (page 20-1 [])
7. What do I learn about my inner needs and “natural” spiritual reaction to what faces me, from the short Obligatory Prayer? (page 21 [])

8. How is divine Revelation and “the science of reality” related to the purpose of my being and why do I need it? (page 21 [])

9. I learn that God created me. Does that sum up His whole relation to me? - in that one creative action did He launch me on a life of my own and then end our relationship? (page 21-2 [])

10. But He is invisible and I must cope with what is visible. How can I learn about God’s relationship to me? (page 22-3 [])

The Reality of Baha’u’llah and What He Offers

Do I understand what it means to recognize a Manifestation of God as my Sovereign, my Lord, my Beloved? Never in the past has man begun to conceive of a Manifestation’s reality, or dreamed of the part He plays in the life and progress of souls. He is the Manifestor or cause of the showing of everything God wills in creating. When I recognized God as the Supreme Creator, I realized that He has but to say: “Be!” and His creation exists. I can understand this, because I know that when a human inventor successfully “creates” something new, it starts with an inspiration and inner concept, and at that moment his invention becomes a reality in the world of creative thought - a reality with a purpose, a pattern for carrying out that purpose, able to act and qualified with attributes to achieve the purpose. The whole reality is there in his mind. But of course the invention at that point has yet to be brought into its last stage: that of manifesting in the world of space and time. A manufacturer must be found to carry out the last part of the creative process, which we might call the joining and knitting together of the letters of the command: BE! This is the responsibility of the builder who can work from what he is given in the world of command and creatively, and can thus produce the invention in the world where its purpose will actually be carried.

In a sense, I think of Baha’u’llah as such a divine “Manufacturer.” He completes the process of bringing souls into the world of existence and of the fulfillment of their purpose. He works from the Plans and instructions of the Supreme Creator, and directs the evolution of man into the divine reality that God has created. He chooses and manipulates the spiritual material - “the essence of knowledge” and “the clay of love” - pouring out heavenly truth and flawless love in such a way as to form a mind and heart in each unfolding human reality after it has been conceived and its body is born into the outer world.

Do I doubt that Baha’u’llah exerts such an influence over creation, or bears this relation to me? That doubt will be dissolved when I recall that all of my power - the divine breath that animates me and pervades my being 38 (d), BWF 260 (see pages 13,15a []) - is spirit, and is a part or degree of the whole or highest degree of Baha’u’llah’s power, which is called the Holy Spirit; and that the Holy spirit “is the Mediator between God and His creatures.”; 39(w), SAQ 165; and that “the Holy Spirit is the bounty of God, and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations.” 40(b), SAQ 124 (see page 15f [])

Just as my spirit has two aspects, knowing power and love power, so too in the

Manifestations the Holy Spirit has two showing: as Absolute divine Knowledge, and as infinite God-like Love. For speaking of Their knowledge, Baha'u'llah said:

“Yea, 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. 41(w), 7 VAL 23-4

And to me the Voice of God speaks, saying:

“O SON OF THE WONDROUS VISION! I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought a beloved other than Me?” 40(g), HWA 8 #19

Also, ‘Abdu’l-Baha explained that

“Love is heaven’s kindly light, the Holy Spirit’s eternal breath that vivifies the human soul.” 72(a), DAL 108 #2

In short, “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.” 22(n), PT58-9

The “Sun of Truth” is sometimes referred to as God Himself, the divine Reality that the “Perfect Man” (the Manifestation of God) reflects completely as a flawless polished Mirror would. 41(t), PT 25; 17(h), AbBa in Lond 1- and SAQ 130 And at other times the Manifestation of God is called the Sun of Truth. 14(r), PUP 70-1 and 14 (s), SA! 185 But in either case,

“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.” 22(n), PT 58

Now that “The glorious Sun of Truth has once again risen in the East,” 99(I), PT 109, and the “The Promised One of all the nations of the world hath become apparent and manifest,” 99(m), TAB III, 626, we know that it is Baha'u'llah's Spirit that is exerting this influence on the world. ‘Abdu’l-Baha had a way of bringing the spiritual reality of what has been revealed down to very practical application, and He reaches my heart when He says:

“A new day has dawned. Divine susceptibilities and heavenly capacities are developing in human souls under the training of the Sun of Truth.” PUP 21

I accept His challenge when He says that I must “develop capacity and divine susceptibility in order that the merciful bounty” of that Sun may reflect from me “as light from pure crystals.” PUP 21-2 And He gives me a definite promise:

“If you attain to such a capacity of love and unity the Blessed Perfection will shower infinite graces of the spiritual Kingdom upon you, guide, protect and preserve you . . . increase your happiness . . . and uphold you through all difficulties.” 104(ff), PUP 22

The foregoing is another bit of “intellectual knowledge” about “the reality of the spirit, its condition, its station,” about which ‘Abdu’l-Baha has said

“when we seek for explanations in the external world, we are obliged to give them

sensible form,” 6 (a), SAQ 95-6, (see page 3) meaning form that the senses can perceive. So I portray the relationship between my heart or soul and my Power-Source in this way, indicating the lines that ‘Abdu’l-Baha has drawn between the degrees of spirit or kingdoms in which He says spirit is manifested (animal kingdom, human kingdom and kingdom of developing souls which Baha’u’llah as come to reveal). These are the lines also that have been drawn between my three levels of vision which these three kinds of power provide for my soul (sense perception of the animal spirit, intellectual awareness of the human spirit, and the spirit of faith that my heart has). This also accounts for the three “variations” or worlds where I find myself living the spiritual “world of vision”); for these all “proceed from” my vision. Now I see how all power and divine knowledge and love come into Creation through Baha’u’llah and how the Light becomes available to my heart through the spirit of faith, How obvious it is too that, just as my heart can only “see” and contact my Creator through Baha’u’llah, so too my outer being can only contact or be aware of the spiritual realms or realities through my heart and its top unique degree of perception!

My Inner and Outer Needs

In my outer consciousness I see myself as an independent being with limited powers, and I think that my well-being and happiness are subject to my own failures or successes as a human person. But this is not true. What is happening to my soul may be likened to some of the earthly processes of creation: the blazing fire that purifies metals of their impairing dross; the sharp cutting and burnishing that tear away unneeded substances from the precious jewel; the relentless pruning and painstaking care that activated the growth of more perfect fruit; the patient discipline and persistent affection that can transform a wild animal into a lovable house pet; and the deep and tender love and concern that help to change an utterly dependent infant into a well-adjusted useful adult. From the tiny seed which God sows in the soil of His love, 78 (b), P&M 178, (see page 4c []) Baha’u’llah is working to cause each “heavenly gem” that is created in the World of Command, to “be” as a reality in the outer world as well as in the eternal spiritual world. It is by the power of His Spirit that this is happening - His Holy Spirit. 22(u), PUP 200 And from the unhappy mass of confused groping human creatures into whose “vitals” the corrosion of ungodliness is eating, 98(b), BWF 113 or GL 200, Baha’u’llah is destined to bring forth a lasting spiritual civilization that will produce the felicity of mankind and fulfill God’s purpose for man! 51(q), BWF 289

In ways I don’t see, all this affects my outer life, too. And this is the part of my life with which I am familiar. I know full well how my heart finds expression in my outer consciousness: in great heights of joy and exhilaration, at times, but at other times in depths of despair that are rightfully known as hell. My heart aches with longing for perfection and the unattainable; it starves for love and closeness of an understanding heart; it is tormented by an inability to communicate satisfactorily; it fights terrifying darkness and confusion; it writhes from a sense of

failure and frustration; it agonizes in remorse over its own imperfections and guilt; it flinches in terror from the physical pain and ailments that attack me; it burns with rebellion against the evil in people and the injustice of conditions; and it is cast into hopelessness and misery again and again. And of course, it also experiences exhilaration and joy at times.

This is my “heart” or emotional being, as I know it outwardly. But what about the needs and desires of my heart and soul, in its independent inner life, especially as it acts without the aid of my anatomy in that world of infinite, eternal, divine vision? For there, I remember, my soul sees and hears without the aid of physical eyes or ears, (see page 6 []) and has its own purpose - God’s purpose in creating me. There, too, my heart pursues desires of which I am unaware, and my inner being struggles to find satisfaction of needs to which I am blind in my outer consciousness. This is what it means to have two lives: inner, and outer. And this is why we must also “come into the knowledge of the verities of God.” 81(p), PUP 36

“Man should continue both these lines of research and investigation so that all the human virtues, outer and inner, may become possible. The attainment of these virtues both material and ideal is conditioned upon intelligent investigation of the realityForms must be set aside and renounced; reality must be sought. . . .

“The purpose of our subject is that just as man is in need of outward education he is likewise in need of ideal refinement; just as the outer sense of sight is necessary to him, he should also possess insight and conscious perception. . . . As human creatures fitted and qualified with this dual endowment we must endeavor through the assistance and grace of God and by the exercise of our ideal power of intellect to attain all lofty virtues . . . and become quickened and awake with the life and love of God.” 74(I), PUP 322

‘Abdu’l-Baha brings the whole matter into the outer human consciousness: science, with its “systematic and formulated knowledge,” must be developed, so we can understand not only the outer world of finite, time-bound limited perfections, but the infinite, eternal, diving world of which all souls are a part. For since we have reached the point where humanity’s outer life is to be carried beyond its current material state, I personally face the responsibility of helping to build God’s Kingdom here on earth 51(p,q), BWF 114 or GL 215; BWF 289 - “as it is in heaven.”

How dependent I am upon my Creator for knowledge of reality: for certainly without the celestial Light of Revelation that can come through the portals of my heart, I could not even imagine that such a thing might be possible, or have any inkling of what to do to participate in so glorious and achievement!

All of this is true and I “know” it. But it is truth too profound for my human finite mind to grasp or to act upon readily. This is why I want to learn from Him exactly what my heart needs, and how God wills to satisfy my deepest desires. For my heart is something of which I am dynamically aware and that I live with daily. My desires are deep and intense, and I recognize them as part of the real me. When they come into my outer consciousness, I naturally try to find

satisfaction and fulfillment for them in my outer life. However, my real needs are spiritual, so I know that in reality they demand spiritual answers. This is why I need Baha'u'llah's Guidance and Enlightenment - to explain what my heart demands for its daily and ultimate fulfillment, and what is available. How short-sighted I am as a human creature if I think answers can't be received!

“Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that . . . the portal of God's infinite guidance can ever be closed in the face of men?” BWF 104 or GL 68 (see page 1 [])

5. THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MY HEART AND WHAT FULFILLS THEM

“God has given man a heart and the heart must have some attachment. We have proved that nothing is completely worthy of our heart's devotion save Reality, for all else is destined to perish. Therefore the heart is never at rest and never finds real joy and happiness until it attaches itself to the eternal . . . Man must attach himself to an Infinite Reality so that his glory, his joy, and his progress may be infinite.” 54(s), SofW Vol. 7, 162

God and Baha'u'llah are the two Infinite Realities * ___ it is my destiny to attach myself and give my heart's devotion. This is the purpose of my life, and the fulfillment toward which I am moving in my spiritual or inner life. Therefore my heart's first need is

Conscious Knowledge of My Relationship to God and to Baha'u'llah

“O SON OF BEING! Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent.” HWA 17 #59, (see page 42 [])

First of all I learn that my heart is not mine to direct and do with as I please. It belongs to God. He has given the earth and everything pertaining to it to human beings to control, but He regards “the hearts of men as His own, His exclusive possession.” GL 206 He chose these elements of His creation for Himself had provided that “the hosts of revelation and of utterance can subdue: them. GL 279 I must keep in mind, then, that out of the whole world God has chosen my heart and made it “a seat for the revelation of His glory.” BWF 124 or GL 297

If I know this, I can understand that my heart is God's treasury and why I am urged not to allow “the treacherous hand of self to rob” me of the “pearls” or spiritual gems that He has “treasured therein,” 24(iii) GL 322 especially the pearls of His love which I am warned to guard, with His help. P&M 176 Many of those treasures have, in the past, been sealed within man's inner being, part of the “divine energies” that “lie . . . latent within him.” 33(m) (see page 16 []) But now God has, “through the Pen of the Most High, unlocked the doors of men's hearts.” GL96

In my heart He has enkindled a “mysterious Fire,” P&M 214, and made His love a “flame” that glows there. P&M 326 and if I know that that power is in my heart, “all the world's afflictions can in no wise alarm me.” P&M 208 In fact with His love active in my inner life, I can be sure of achieving heavenly fulfillment, because to know and love Him is the purpose of my

being. 34(a), BP'69, 117 or P&M 314, (see page 15h []) For God is "the Well-Beloved . . . (and the Desire of every understanding heart," BWF 27 or P&M 182; GL 35, 122 and 195 And I am trying for that kind of understanding. He is the Object of my heart's adoration, GL 310 whether I know, it or not. Certainly I do know (though I sometimes forget) that He has enravished my heart "with a word from His mouth." P&M 163 For it was Baha'u'llah's mission "to seize and possess the hearts of men, BWF 28 or GL212, and God has enjoined on Him "the duty of kindling the fire" of God's love in hearts. BWF 89 or P&M 107

so my heart and hopes in reality are set on Him, "the Manifestation of Him Who is the Unknowable." GL 30 I must keep this in mind! For Baha'u'llah states clearly that one who "followeth his mundane desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth," is "not to be numbered with the people of Baha." 86(m), GL 118 For

"Out of the Paradise of His Pen the breath of the All-Merciful hath continually been wafted to the hearts and souls of men," GL 144

and I need only to keep the portals of my heart open, now that the fragrance of His loving-kindness has enraptured me and the gentle winds of His mercy have inclined me in the direction of His bountiful favors." P&M 240 I should realize and that God that my "heart's Desire" has been attained, in being united to Baha'u'llah BWF 9 or GL6 and in this way brought into a dynamic awareness and relationship with God.

But I need to keep awakening my outer consciousness to this relationship. And this brings me to a second desire and need of my heart:

Active Remembrance, Thanking and Praise of God

"Meditate on what the poet hath written: 'Wonder not, if my Best-Beloved be closer to me than mine own self; wonder at this, that I, despite such nearness, should still be so far from Him. . . . Considering what God hath revealed, that 'We are closer to man than his life-vein,' the poet hath, in allusion to this verse, stated that, though the revelation of my Best-Beloved hath so permeated my being that He is closer to me than my life-vein, yet, notwithstanding my certitude of its reality and recognition of my station, I am still so far removed from Him. By this he meaneth that his heart, which is the seat of the All-Merciful and the throne wherein abideth the splendor of His revelation, is forgetful of its Creator, hath strayed from His path, hath shut out itself from His glory, and is stained with the defilement of earthly desires." BWF 97-9 or GL 185

Baha'u'llah has unveiled divine secrets and heavenly realities that I need to know and through the spirit of faith and the bounty of God, I have become acquainted with them. But since my heart is so forgetful, it must be "sanctified" lest it be deprived of beholding the beauty of God and stray far from the intended habitations of glory. BWF 13, GL 18-9 or Iqan 14-5. and today Baha'u'llah has been commissioned to cleanse "every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitation." BWF 104 or GL 67 I do have a longing heart. I long for the blessings of a spiritual consciousness, and to be in God's "Court and His Presence"

which sincere believers may indeed attain. But Baha'u'llah has stated clearly that there it would be “grievous . . . were aught else to be mentioned. . . , were man’s heart, his tongue, his mind, or his soul, to be busied with any one but the Well-Beloved.” BWF 24-5, GL 55 or Iqan 180 My outer consciousness cannot avoid being largely concerned or “busied” with other beings and material matters. But Baha'u'llah is describing the condition of the heart of a Baha'i. God has given me only one heart and it belongs to Him. “Suffer not the love of any strange to enter and dwell therein,” Baha'u'llah admonishes. BWF 46 or GL 237 Only filling my consciousness with my faith and my love of God can satisfy my heart when it aches with longing for perfection and the unattainable.

Has God provided for this need? Baha'u'llah states specifically that the Creator has strengthened me “to aid His Cause” and “made the flowers of knowledge and understanding to spring forth in the garden” of my heart. GL 303 Surely this should inspire gratitude and prompt my heart to thank and praise Him! And everything our precious Revelator has given has “called” God to our “remembrance.” P&M 73

Baha'u'llah sets and example of praise and thanksgiving throughout His many Prayers and Meditations; and He gives us an inkling of the heavenly power of real spiritual appreciation and thanks, in one of His special Meditations. P&M 329-32

Remembrance, gratitude and praise are obvious powers of my heart. But I must decide whether or not to use them. The Voice of God reminds me:

“Earth and heaven cannot contain Me: what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me, and is faithful to My Cause.” But “often hath the human heart, which is the recipient of the light of God and the seat of the revelation of the All-Merciful, erred from Him Who is the Source of that light.” BWF 98 or GL 186 So remembrance is a vital need of my being. Baha'u'llah urges:

“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.” GL 270 and His Cause is a reality in the outer world - there is no excuse for my forgetting that spiritual reality. Besides, Baha'u'llah says that remembrance of God quiets and gladden the heart, P&M 194, and is a healing medicine to believers’ hearts. P&M 78. And I have been urged to let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within my heart, and to “feed it with the oil of Divine guidance, and protect it with the shelter” of my constancy. BWF 66 or GL 325 And to give us an inkling of the potentialities of “remembering” God, we hear His call to God for mankind:

“Let their hearts, O my Lord, be carried away by Thy remembrance.” P&M 202

When I am fully aware of the Reality of God and of His manifested Glory, I shall remember Him, and my heart will overflow naturally with appreciation and glorification of Him. My feelings are only fully real-ized, or made real to my outer consciousness, when they are given expression in my outer life, so I need not only to feel but to express my remembrance, gratitude and appreciation of God.

And this brings me to another desire and need of my heart: the need for
Two-way Communication with God

“The greatest happiness for a lover is to converse with his beloved, and the greatest gift for a seeker is to become familiar with the object of his longing; that is why with every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God, his greatest hope is to find an opportunity to entreat and supplicated before his Beloved, appeal for His mercy and grace and be immersed in the ocean of His utterance, goodness and generosity.” BWF 368 or SAL 27 #2

Communion with God is not new to mankind. Every revealed Religion has mentioned it as a potential of the human heart. But we have never even dreamed of its possibilities nor been able to understand it clearly as two-way communication with our Creator. Every heart must cry out to God at some time, whether the cry finds expression in the outer consciousness or not. But never has God initiated communication in such a clear positive way as in this present Dispensation. Baha’u’llah calls this to our attention thus:

“Behold how the manifold grace of God, which is being showered from the clouds of Divine glory, hath, in this day, encompassed the world. For whereas in days past every lover besought and searched after his Beloved, it is the Beloved Himself Who is now calling His lovers and is inviting them to attain His presence. Take heed lest ye forfeit so precious a favor; beware lest ye belittle so remarkable a token of His grace.” 105(a), BWF 115 or GL 320

God speaks to every soul - every heart, that is - on earth today. He speaks through Baha’u’llah Who acknowledged His commitment in these words:

“Though the sword be ready to fall on my head, I call Thy loved ones with such a calling that the hearts are carried away towards the horizon of Thy majesty and grandeur.” P&M 170-1

Mine was on of the hearts that was “carried away,” so I know that call is very real.

Never before has man had the Voice of God recorded in such specific from that the inner ear and eye as well as the outer mentality and senses could respond to. Even the superhuman consciousness of Baha’u’llah, the Manifestation of God Himself, was astounded by the Revelation and communication that the Creator sent through Him to humanity, as noted in these words of His:

“What more can I say? What else can my pen recount? So loud is the call that reverberates from the Abha Kingdom that mortal ears are well-nigh deafened with its vibrations. The whole creation, methinks, is being disrupted and is bursting asunder through the shattering influence of the Divine summons issued from the throne of glory. More than this I cannot write.” WOB 112

I have only registered in my heart the faintest echo of this call and summons, but its what my inner ears have heard is the most powerful and revolutionizing thing that has ever happened

to me. The Supreme Creator breathed a breath of His own Spirit into Baha'u'llah, unveiling to mankind the mysteries of the infinite, eternal, divine realms of existence (for I am talking about spiritual Beings Who communicate in ways unknown to us). 22(m) Baha'u'llah spoke of the "call" in another way, thus:

"The Word of God hath set the heart of the world a fire; " adding, "how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame!"* ____, BWF 118 or GL 316

I thank God that the call did reach my heart and enkindled in it an irresistible desire to respond. But I don't commune with God as often as I should, nor have I learned what I should know about listening to His answers when I meditate and pray. "Purity of heart while communing with God . . . (has) been mentioned and described in all the heavenly Books." BWF 128 or GL 290 And when I read the definition of a pure heart that Baha'u'llah gives, I see how dark mine is:

"O My Brother! A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save God, that the true sun may shine within it and the eternal morning dawn." 104(aa), 7 VAL 21

Not only is my heart clouded with attachment to things other than true Divinity, but it lacks the kind of knowledge and wisdom that would make communication with God the greatest delight and benefit to me - knowledge that can only come direct from God. No wonder Baha'u'llah suggests that I pray:

"Purge Thou mine ear, O my Lord, that I may hearken unto the verses sent down unto Thee, and illuminate my heart with the light of Thy knowledge." P&M 142

Communication with my Creator is an urgent need and desire of my heart. Has God provided for this need? He has made prayer "indispensable and obligatory," DAL 26 #2. He has inspired both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha to reveal the kind of communication that can satisfy my heart hunger for communication with a truly spiritual Being. As a matter of fact, that soul hunger has been given to me so that I may be impelled to seek the joys and benefits of communication with God. My heart echoes wholeheartedly these inspired words in humble appreciation of this heavenly provision:

"I render Thee thanks, O Thou Who hast lighted Thy fire within my soul, and cast the beams of light into my heart, that Thou hast taught Thy servants how to make mention of Thee, and revealed unto them the ways whereby they can supplicate Thee, through Thy most holy and exalted tongue, and Thy most August and precious speech." DAL 28 #16

I have been reading God's Word and using revealed Prayers for some time now; and yet the consciousness in which I live and daily react is still predominantly concerned with my outer vision and awareness. I need much more of the inner "light" in which to gain a clear apprehension of God's purpose for man and an understanding of my part in that Plan. But of course the process of acquiring a working knowledge of the divine secrets and heavenly realities

that Baha'u'llah has unveiled is my life pattern throughout eternity. So this throws into sharp relief the abiding basic need and desire of my heart which is for
Celestial Light

“‘Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.’ It is this kind of knowledge which is and hath ever been praiseworthy, and not the limited knowledge that hath sprung forth from veiled and obscured minds. . . . Would that the hearts of men could be cleansed from these man-made limitations and obscure thoughts imposed upon them!” 57(b), Iqan 46-7

“Yea, these mentionings that have been made of the grades of knowledge relate to the knowledge of the Manifestations of the 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 veilings of sense and the conditions of this earth.” 41(w), 7 VAL 23-4, (see page 8, 11 and 29 [])

This statement is clarified as Baha'u'llah describes one of these “conditions of this earth” thus: “these energies” with which my Creator has endowed me lie latent within me and are obscured “by worldly desires.” 33(m), BWF 103 or GL 65-6, (see page 31) This accounts for the darkness of my outer consciousness - it results from the condition of my heart whose celestial light is hidden even from my own being.

But in a very practical sense I need “divine knowledge,” the kind that can only come from my Creator. For only God can explain the nature of my soul or of the Kingdom and environment where it dwells. And how can I hope to live intelligently if I don’t understand myself or the world of which my inner being is a part? And

“How can . . . mine heart, already powerless to apprehend the significance of its own potentialities, pretend to have comprehended Thy nature?” GL63

Baha'u'llah says,

“Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery.” BWF 19, GL 46-7, Iqan 98
and “no tongue, however deep its wisdom, can befittingly magnify Thy name, nor can the bird of the human heart, however great its longing, ever hope to ascend into the heaven of Thy majesty and knowledge.” GL3

Yet I was created specifically to know and worship God! 34(a), (see page 15h, 31 []) So my limitations do not excuse me from pursuing the Light that my heart so urgently needs. For as surely as I need light in my outer life for both body and mind, and for intelligent effective living, so also I need that precious spiritual light in living my inner life. Knowledge, I remember, is one aspect of spirit or the life force which animates my entire being, and I must cultivate my power of perception until I become conscious of the infinite, eternal divine world of which my soul is a part.

As a human being, I recognize my love power and my knowing power as two separate

energy forces, for, to an extent, at least, I can think without feeling, and at times I feel as if I had no intellect. I notice as I work how much I use my mentality without much emotion, or sometimes in a state of apathy which is the lowest expression of love power. And when my emotions are intensely involved, I seem to lose my power of abstract vision that characterizes the intellect, and if I use my mind at all, it is to rationalize my feelings, and this is certainly not the purpose of my glorious intellectual powers. This is how my human nature and outer machinery “naturally” works, however, when not directed otherwise by my soul.

This does not mean that my animal and human degrees of spirit are less of a divine endowment for earthly living than my higher powers, for when used for their intended purposes, they can be of heavenly benefit to me and to the world. For instance, it is through the animal spirit alone that my body follows habit patterns that can simplify life tremendously. And I only need the light of my intellect to insure successful dealings with most material matters. The light of the human mind is an obvious blessing to mankind, 33(p), BWF 314 and its amazing developments during the past century have thrilled us. They perhaps have also given us a false concept of the potentialities of the human spirit. It is true that man has been gaining a phenomenal control over nature through the use of his rational faculties, 36(w), PT 38 as was his destiny when created, (Gen. 1:26) Through human activities spurred by the human spirit, mankind has been led to the highest degree of materiality. 80(d), BWF 331 But since “knowledge is like unto wings” to the soul, 74(h), BWF 189 God has given man two of them: the human knowledge that the individual “discovers” and science provides; and divine knowledge gained only through the spirit of faith. And ‘Abdul-Baha stated positively that with the wing of science alone, man would come to an end of his progress and “fall into the despairing slough of materialism.” 65(p), PT 143 And this is exactly where humanity is today. In fact one of my own needs and desires is to find an escape from that “despairing slough.” I need the higher celestial Light of Reality.

From the viewpoint of human potentials, we learn that the intellect, when unaided by the spirit of faith, though highly useful, can also be relatively restrictive. We are urgently warned to “cleanse the heart . . . from the dust of that knowledge. 66(x), BWF 105, GL 264 or Iqan 192 Where it leads, there is the radiance of Divinity 32(j), BWF 104 or GL68 but there is also an absence of Divinity 33(q), SAQ 301, (see page 37 []) that can affect me tragically. It can strike a debilitating fear or burning anger into my heart. But when this happens to me, I should take it as a signal that my vision is limited. It should alert me to my need for that heavenly light wherein the divine purpose of what goes on here becomes visible.

Baha’u’llah has warned me that in this Day “the hearts of them that dwell on earth shall tremble,” GL 44, but that

“This is the Day . . . for which have been laid up those things which God, through a bounty beyond the ken of mortal mind or heart, hath destined for revelation.” GL 16 To grasp that revelation, however, I must use all of the powers of my heart. It is not

merely a matter of using faith as my highest power of perception. For in my inner life, what I know and feel are one. Knowledge gained by using this fourth degree of spirit is not a matter of cold abstract facts. It is light and wisdom to my heart, and awakens all sorts of heavenly feelings. Baha'u'llah says that to truly discover or apprehend the purpose God's Revelation would fill hearts with gratitude and gladness. BWF 140 or GL 175 In my heart, there is only one power, spirit - what I know and love are integrated into one heavenly reality. Faith is a portal to divine knowledge, but s already noted, (see page 15 g []), "the first sign of faith is love." 40(I), PUP 331 And of course love begets faith. For both come from the breath of the Holy Spirit. 39(x), SAQ 165, (see pages 15b and 15f []) this is why I am taught to pray:

"Illumine my brow" (the outer symbol of my center of knowledge?) "With the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy Kingdom of grandeur."
BP'69, 137-8

I need the effect of that inner light brought out into my outer consciousness.

This points up the difference between my outer human life and my inner spiritual existence. Both may involve the use of my spiritual powers of perception: imagination, thought, comprehension, memory, and the power to integrate in my immediate consciousness what both inward and outward powers perceive. 57(f,g), BWF 317-8 or SAQ 245 (see page 14 []) Both of my6 lives may express outwardly or not, in the material world, as I dictate. The difference, I find, Is in the kind of "light" that I use - the degree of spirit and kind of love that are involved. My human spirit is automatically activated in my outer life, and I "naturally" see things there in the light of my own intellect and experience. In this light, my heart responds to what I see as good: I am attracted to it naturally, just as I am revolted by what I see as "bad" or objectionable. But I must remember that at this level of vision I cannot face reality, because I am blind to the "divine secrets and heavenly realities" that Baha'u'llah has explained. This "I" is the self to whose powerlessness and poverty I bear witness daily when I use the Short Obligatory Prayer of Baha'u'llah. BP'69, 117 or P&M 314

My need for divine knowledge or celestial light is inexorable and ever present. But how bounteously God has answered that hunger and requirement through the Baha'i Revelation. I am assured that "a single word alone" from it can assure my heart, if I turn to God with all of the powers of perception with which I am blessed! P&M 190-1 Of course, like every need, it can only be fulfilled if I do my part.

Baha'u'llah suggests that as I am drawn out of the depths of my vain imaginations, "the light of certainty may shine brightly" above the horizon of my heart; P&M 53 and that if God purges my ear, my heart can be illuminated with the light of His knowledge. P&M 142 (see page 35) Never does our Revelator suggest that we can attain this celestial light without God's help.

But He has given me that kind of help. I am taught to speak to Him, saying:

"Magnified be Thy name, O Lord my God, inasmuch as Thou hast inclined mine heart to Thy voice, and called me to Thyself, and opened mine eyes to gaze on Thy

beauty, and illumined my heart with Thy knowledge.” P&M 121

Let me then heed Baha’u’llah’s warning:

“Suffer not your idle fancies, your evil passions, your insincerity and blindness of heart to dim the luster, or stain the sanctity, of so lofty a station.” BWF 67 or GL 327

What a lot of spiritual living and growing lies ahead of me! Baha’u’llah understood this about people - He says, in communing with His Lord:

“The plants that have sprung forth, O my Lord, in the hearts of Thy loved ones have withered away. Send down upon them, from the clouds of thy spirit, that which will cause the tender herbs of Thy knowledge and wisdom to grow within their breasts.” P&M 199

And this calls attention to another need of my inner being:

Spiritual Sustenance for the Life and Growth of My Soul

“I am, O my God, but a tiny seen which Thou has sown in the soil of Thy love, and caused to spring forth by the hand of Thy bounty. This see craveth, therefore, in its inmost being, for the waters of Thy mercy and the living fountain of Thy grace.” 78(b), P&M 178 (See page 29 [])

Baha’u’llah could have been speaking for all of the Prophets of God and Religion Founders of the past, when He refers to the answer to this need of the soul, as follows:

“We have caused the rivers of Divine utterance to proceed out of Our throne, that the tender herbs of wisdom and understanding may spring forth from the soil of your hearts.” GL 43

But now there is something special about the growth of hearts and unfolding of my inner being, expressed in these words:

“The hearts of Thy dear ones, however, will rejoice only at the Divine Springtime of Thy tender mercies, whereby the hearts are quickened, and the souls are renewed, and the trees of human existence bear their fruits.” P&M 199

And He adds:

“We fain would hope that the vernal showers of the bounty of God may cause the flowers of true understanding to spring from the soil of men’s hearts, and may wash them from all earthly defilement.” GL 82

This Day is the Springtime of human development and evolution! - am I fully conscious of what our glorious Provider offers to those who are fortunate enough to be living now?

Baha’u’llah urges me not to be numbered among those who read God’s words and fail to find His “hidden gift which is contained therein,” and which quickens souls and the hearts of His servants. P&M 83 With what compassionate understanding He teaches me to reach out for the currently available spiritual food, as He lets me share His communion with God that puts what His superhuman vision sees so clearly into these human words!

“Thou art He Who watereth the hearts of all that have recognized Thee from the plenteous stream and the fountain of Thy living waters.” P&M 178

“Purify, O my God, the hearts of Thy creatures . . . that Thy words may sink deep into them. I know not what is in their hearts, O my God, nor can I tell the thoughts they think of Thee. . . . 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.” BWF 92 or P&M 197-8, (see page 8 [])

Do I realize that this is what God has “summoned” me for? I do, in reality, long to have my heart “recreated” so that I may know myself to be the heavenly reality that Baha’u’llah says a soul is! How often do I ask God, as I have been taught:

“I am poor and desolate, O my Lord, and thou art the All-Possessing, the Most High. Have pity, then, upon me through the wonders of Thy mercy, and send down upon me, every moment of my life, the things wherewith Thou hast recreated the hearts . . . of all of Thy people who are wholly devoted to Thee.” P&M 242

I feel ashamed, as I answer this question.

As the Voice of God, He speaks to my heart, saying:

“O MY BROTHER! Harken to the delightful words of My honeyed tongue, and quaff the stream of mystic holiness from My sugar-shedding lips. Sow the seeds of My divine wisdom in the pure soil of thy hearts, and water them with the water of certitude, that the hyacinths of My knowledge and wisdom may spring up fresh and green in the sacred city of thy heart.” HWP 33-4 #33

How Baha’u’llah does put together my inner and outer lives! And how He helps me to see my heart life as the reality of my existence! I shrink from the truth as He addresses me at another time, saying:

“O BOND SLAVE OF THE WORLD! Many a dawn hath the breeze of My loving-kindness wafted over thee and found thee upon the bed of heedlessness fast asleep. Bewailing then thy plight it returned whence it came.” HWP 33 #30

How many spiritual opportunities for sustenance and growth have I missed, I wonder! Again He reminds me that I should bring myself to account each day before I am “summoned to a reckoning.” HWA 11 #31

And this brings me face to face with another urgent desire and need of my inner life: the need for:

Forgiveness and Purification of My Heart

“O SON OF BEING! Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.” HWA 17 #59 (see page 31 [])

As I gradually allow my heart to be recreated by partaking of the divine sustenance that my Creator has “sent down upon me, especially if I remember, thank, praise and commune with my Lord, through the spirit of faith and the “breath of the Holy Spirit,” 39(x), (see page 39 []) I do grow spiritually. My soul is “quickened,” my love for God increases, and my virtues are

brought out. 22(q), PT 59 I become aware of a conscience, and of a deep feeling of penitence in my heart. Consciousness of my own shortcomings and faults gives me an intense need and yearning for forgiveness. For, as Baha'u'llah has helped me to realize,

“my heart is prone to evil.” P&M 210

While from the spiritual viewpoint, ‘Abdu’l-Baha says that in creation and nature “all is good,” and “evil does not exist at all,” He also states that “when the natural qualities of man are used in an unlawful way,” which I admit that I often do, these qualities become “blameworthy.” 33(r), BWF 321 or SAQ 250-1 This means that I can and do display “blameworthy” qualities that indicate an absence of good ones that I should develop. He also explains that

“Briefly, the intellectual realities, such as all the qualities and admirable perfections of man, are purely good, and exist. Evil is simply their nonexistence. . . . Nevertheless, . . . 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.” 33(q), SAQ 301-2[363]

This is why all people, myself included, who are actually “souls,” or “celestial entities,” (see page 5 []) can be so beastly, unjust and cruel to each other. Essential to my growth is this growing sense of right and wrong, then.

But this sense generates in my thee undesirable and even destructive states of mind that can assert themselves in my heart:

a feeling of personal guilt that I allow to torment me;
a tendency to blame my fellow beings for their imperfections; and
a dark confusion when right and wrong are either inextricably combined, or not possible to know positively.

As I have matured, my concepts of right and wrong have changed considerably. And now that I have declared myself a Baha’i, I have new standards of evaluation. for one thing, obviously “right” action can only be action which helps toward the achievement of God’s purpose for man, and what hinders or interferes with that fulfillment is intrinsically “wrong.” But as a human being, I find myself following ingrained behavior patterns without ever subjecting them to this new test. In fact I deliberately repeat actions from habit that I know to be wrong.

To people whose hearts, like mine, are thus “prone to evil,” Baha’u’llah says:

“How vain, how contemptible, are the imaginations which your hearts have devised, and are still devising!: BWF 66-7 or GL 326

It is a process that goes on continually, so I urgently need to have my heart purified of such imaginations and of my unenlightened human and beastly desires. So I need a daily purification of my heart.

Baha’u’llah says that if my consecration to the Will of God is “complete,” “every trace of worldly desire will be washed away from thine heart,” GL 338

However, as with having any of my needs satisfied, I must do my part. I must accept the Will of God, and I can only do that when I know what it is.

Baha'u'llah makes special recommendations, though:

“Strive not after bodily comforts and keep your heart pure and stainless.” BWF 96 or GL 168

“Covetousness hath hindered you from giving a hearing ear unto the sweet voice of Him Who is the All-Sufficing. Wash it away from your hearts, that His Divine secret may be made known unto you.” BWF 97 or GL 168

“O MY SERVANT! Purge thy heart from malice and, innocent of envy, enter the divine court of holiness.” 84(mm), HWP 36 #42

“Illumine and hallow your hearts; let them not be profaned by the thorns of hate or the thistles of malice.” GL 334

And He says:

“Cleanse from your hearts the love of worldly things, . . . from your entire being whatsoever . . . may tempt you to follow the promptings of your evil and corrupt inclinations. Let God be your fear, O people. 76(ee), GL 275

and “Wash from your hearts all earthly defilements and hasten to enter the Kingdom of your Lord, the Creator of earth and heaven.” BWF 37 or GL 210

These are specific commands concerning my heart. They seem almost impossible of attainment. But God looks at my motive, and I am told that if my heart has the purest possible motive and is supported by deeds of stainless purity, I can hope that these will be acceptable to Him, D-Br93 even though I make many grievous and almost unpardonable mistakes.

It is for these inevitable mistakes, however, that I crave forgiveness - these, and the ignoble motives that stain my heart because I am human. I need not only forgiveness, but a “new heart” that will not repeat its errors.

Do I doubt that God supplies ample answers to this need?

Baha'u'llah reminds us of God's bounty by recalling that in the past

“whosoever acknowledged His truth and turned unto Him, his good words outweighed his misdeed, and all his sins were remitted and forgiven . . . Thus God turneth iniquity into righteousness, were ye to explore the realms of divine knowledge, and fathom the mysteries of His wisdom.” Iqan 113-4

And now I am told that

“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, . . . will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certainty envelop his being.” 93(f), BWF 104, GL 267 or Iqan 195-6

There is a real purpose for what my heart feels, and I should encourage these spiritual hungers! For when they crowd out all other desires,

“The 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 heart, a new heart, and a new mind.” * ____

Psychologists are discovering and revealing the maladies that can result from guilt, blame and confusion in the heart. Baha’u’llah tells me how to rid myself of these human miseries. But it is a long slow process, and I suffer mentally, spiritually and physically meanwhile.

This reminds me of another desire and need of my heart that can torment me in both my inner and outer living: namely, the need for

Healing for My Ailments of Body and Soul

“O thou pure and spiritual one! Turn thou toward God with thy heart beating with His love, devoted to His praise, gazing toward His Kingdom and seeking help from His Holy Spirit in a state of ecstasy, rapture, love, yearning, joy and fragrance. God will assist thee, through a Spirit from his Presence, to heal sickness and diseases.” DAL 56 #8 or TAB III, 638-0

It is not only my heart and soul that require God’s healing. The need shows in my outer life too. It is the general need of humanity today, too.

And healing is promised as never before. Baha’u’llah has done His part in making it available. We hear Him as He communes with God, saying:

“I yield Thee such thanks as can cause the sick to draw nigh unto the waters of thy healing.” P&M 273

“This is the Day whereon the helpless have been clothed with the raiment of confidence, and the sick attired with the robe of healing.” P&M 78

But again, I have a part to play if the need is to be answered as God has planned. Baha’u’llah teaches me to turn to God for healing, with these words:

“Behold. . . , O my Lord, . . . this ailing soul who hath set his face towards the ocean of Thy healing.” P&M 269

I recall, too, that He as stated that mere remembrance of God “is a healing medicine to the hearts of such as have drawn nigh unto His court. P&M (see page 34 []) But I must first be free and purified of the doubts that have been “instilled into the hearts of the people of this land.” GL 197

I thank God that I can feel confidence in my heart and pray that

“Thy Name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succor in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.” BP’69, 36 #24, P&M 262-3 or BWF 145

As I reread the above promise of [Baha’u’llah] ‘Abdu’l-Baha, I wonder if I might hope to heal some of the sicknesses and diseases of my loved ones or daily associates. This brings to my mind another deeply felt need and yearning of my heart: namely for

Ability to Help Others

“We must use our utmost endeavors in order that the Holy Spirit may influence minds and hearts.: 101(hh), PUP 316

“Today the greatest need of the world is the animating, unifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Until it becomes effective, penetrating and interpenetrating hearts and spirits, and until perfect, reasoning faith shall be implanted in the minds of men, it will be impossible for the social body to be inspired with security and confidence.” PUP 315

In reality, I am deeply concerned over the welfare and happiness of those I love. I sincerely wish that I could help them, and I worry about them when I cannot do so - I suffer anxiety, frustration and chagrin.

In the outer world I can sometimes give material help, but to satisfy their deeper desires as I long to seems beyond my capabilities. Everyone I am related to has the same heart needs that I have, and I tell myself that the fulfillment of those needs, as is true of mine, is a matter between each individual and his Maker. But this makes me feel helpless. So I find myself in the realm of human affairs agonizing over situations in which my human relations involve me. I even find myself angry or bitter toward the people involved, even those I love, because of their “blameworthy” behavior and other manifestations of their immaturity. Now that I understand their problem, I want to help them to grow! but I know that I can’t. And my heart cries out for relief from this kind of suffering.

Certainly in such states of mind I am of no help to anyone. But this is not what my Creator plans for me. He has provided what my heart needs.

Baha’u’llah, fully aware of God’s purpose and plan, in communing with Him said:

“I pray Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of all names and the Ruler of both earth and heaven, to grant that all who are dear to Thee may each become a cup of Thy mercy in Thy days, that they may quicken the hearts of Thy servants.” P&M 191

And, knowing that God answers this Prayer bounteously, He admonishes a believer to reach out for such power and to say:

“Grant, I beseech Thee, O Thou Who art the Everlasting King and the Sovereign Protector of all men, that I may be enable to manifest that which shall cause the hearts and souls of men to soar in the limitless immensity of Thy love, and to commune with Thy spirit.” 105(h), GL 311

If I am out of touch myself with the breath of the Holy Spirit in my heart because my immediate consciousness is clouded with anger or bitterness, I recall these instructions for a true seeker:

“With all his heart he should avoid fellowship with evil-doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low state, for none knoweth what his own end shall be.” BWF 106, GL 266 or Iqan 194

Let me remember too that what I see as a “low estate” in someone else may be only a closed heart waiting to be awakened, and let me hearken as Baha’u’llah calls:

“Open, O people, the city of the human heart with the key of your utterance. Thus have We, according to a pre-ordained measure, prescribed unto you your duty.” GI 304
 and “Make, then, mention of Thy Lord, that haply the heedless among Our servants may be admonished through thy words, and the hearts of the righteous be gladdened.” GL 38

Apparently I have more ability to help people tha[n] I am using. But my “utterance” won’t give real assistance, though, until my heart is “right.” And ‘Abdu’l-Baha described very clearly the heart of a “pure and spiritual” person, so this should be my goal: a heart beating with the love of God, devoted to His praise, seeking help from His Spirit, and in a state of ecstasy, rapture and joy.

And this brings me to a final insistent longing of my inner being and a craving of my heart: namely, for

Real Happiness and Joy

“What is needed is divine joyousness. The star of happiness is in every heart. We must remove the clouds so that it may twinkle radiantly. 73(1), B Ns #90, 7

The human life is an unending struggle for happiness, and “heaven” and “paradise” are words that personify that state of consciousness or of the heart.

“But the paradise and hell of existence are found in all the worlds of God,” BWF 323 or SAQ 259

and each of my three natures has its own “heaven.” To my body, physical well-being and the satisfaction of my immediate anatomical needs is happiness. To the human creature success and power may loom up as the happiness to be pursued. But ‘Abdu’l-Baha tells me that

“True happiness depends on spiritual good and having the heart ever open to receive the Divine bounty.” 85(fff), Pt 108

He says that if

“souls . . . sacrifice self, become detached from the perfections of the realm of man and free from the shackles of this ephemeral world, assuredly the splendors of the rays of divine union shall shine in their hearts and in the eternal paradise they shall find ideal relationship, union and happiness.” 84(oo), BWF 373

I learn that happiness is a by-product rather than a goal of my spiritual life. As I satisfy the needs of my heart in the ways that my Creator has provided, I find that happiness beyond anything I have ever imagined is achieved.

Baha’u’llah confirms this in these words:

“O SON OF MAN! The light hath shone on thee from the horizon of the sacred Mount and the spirit of enlightenment hath breathed in the Sinai of thy heart. Wherefore, free thyself from the veils of idle fancies and enter into My court, that thou mayest be fit for everlasting life and worthy to meet Me. Thus may death not come upon thee, neither

weariness nor trouble.” 84(uu), HWA 18 # 63

“Arise, therefore and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, (and will attain unto his heart’s desire.” BWF 115 or GL 321

I should now have a fairly clear idea of what is in my own heart - its longings and its needs; and [be] fully aware of that [the] fact that God has bounteously provided for them all, if I will but accept and use what He has supplied.

The foregoing reviews some of the divine Enlightenment about my heart that is available through Baha’u’llah, and it has given me a definite and enlightened understanding of how He defines the human heart. So now it will be interesting to note some of what He has revealed about prayer and meditation, because these have been mentioned as two “portals” of the knowledge, grace, guidance, revelation and other bounties of God, as well as[,] a means of increasing my awareness and understanding of all of His precious gifts.

“Every verse which this Pen hath revealed is a bright and shining portal that discloseth the glories of a saintly and pious life, of pure stainless deeds.” GL 96 (see page 1 [])

PART TWO - HOW PRAYER RELATES TO MY INNER NEEDS

1. HEAVENLY LIGHT ON THE REASON FOR PRAYER

“As to thy question, ‘Why pray? What is the wisdom thereof, for God has established everything and executes all affairs after the best order and He ordains everything according to a becoming measure and puts things in their places with the greatest propriety and wisdom - therefore what is the wisdom in beseeching and supplicating and in stating one’s wants and seeking help?’ Know thou, verity, it is becoming of a weak one to supplicated to the strong One and it behoveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the glorious, bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to Him and seeks bounty from His ocean this supplication is by itself a light to his heart, and illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exultation to his being.” BAL 26 #1

Moreover, Baha’u’llah tells us [that]

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

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

“God grant that thou who art the fruit of My Tree, and they that are associated with thee, may be shielded from its evil consequences.” GL 133

This makes it clear why mankind has been taught to pray: “Thy will be done,” Matt. 6:10 and alerts me to be careful about what I pray for, since I am not able to foresee consequences of what I request from Him. And “Abdu’l-Baha assures me that

“God will answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, illimitable. He answers the prayers of all His servants.” PUP 241, DAL 31#25

I have sometimes doubted this. Often my prayers seemed to be ignored, but were later answered in ways other than I had expected or requested. And at other times[,] nothing happened, and I had to accept the fact that my petition was not granted. His answer was No! Perhaps I was not praying, on these occasions, as God’s “servant”! For ‘Abdu’l-Baha explains that

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

answer. Assuredly!” PUP 242

This is one thing that makes the revealed Prayers so precious: since they are all “in accord with divine wisdom” I know beyond doubt that each and every petition that I utter in repeating them is destined to be fulfilled.

But of course my heart has other needs in addition to having its requests answered. Since the human soul

“is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him,”
34(f), BWF 122 or GL 158-9

what more urgent need do I have, both to help me to identify what is in my heart, and to fulfill the purpose of my being, than the need for the love of God?

‘Abdu’l-Baha tells me how prayer is related to the love of God in these clear words:

“If one friend feels love for another he will wish to say so. Though he knows that the friend is aware that he loves him, he will still wish to say so. . . God knows the wishes of all hearts, but the impulse to pray is a natural one, springing from man’s love to God . .

“Prayer need not be in words but in thought and attitude. If this love and desire are lacking, it is useless to try and force them. Words without love mean nothing. If a person talks to you as an unpleasant duty, do you wish to converse with him? . . .

“In the highest prayer, men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear Him or hell, or hope for bounty or heaven. . . . When a man falls in love with a human being, it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficult is it to keep from mentioning the Name of God when one has come to love Him. . . . The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God.” BNE 105

Prayer “causes a connection between the servant and the True One, because in that state of prayer man with all his heart and soul turns his face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking association and desiring His love and compassion.” DAL 27 # 2

The essence and source of prayer is love of God, and my heart belongs to Him. But I was born without any conscious awareness of Him whatever, and it is the business of my earthly life to “real-ize” or make real to my outer being, the relationship that exists between me and my Creator. While prayer can do this, I have even had to learn how to pray. And I am still learning. Always there has been and will be an instinctive inner drive to reach out to God, and the most important element of any prayer is the love or consciousness of God that it expresses. Prayer and meditation are talents of the soul, given as answers to specific needs. But they must be cultivated as any talents are: first by recognition of Prayer and meditation as realities, next by use, and finally through instruction by a master in their usage.

Prayers were a reality in my early life. As a child I was taught to “say my prayers” at my mother’s knee, and could do so with a child’s innate faith, love of God and untested purity of

heart. This was before my reasoning power, absent in infancy, 53(h), BWF 337-8 had become very active. The same is true of humanity as a whole in the childhood of the race. But now that time is past, both for me and for mankind. The world of souls is entering its state of maturity. 25(nn), GL 77 So now, we must have understanding to replace blind faith, enlightened devotion to God instead of simple intuitive responses, and humanly tested detachment and purity that come from a disciplined spiritual growth in the earthly realms.

“Though in infancy the signs of the mind and spirit appear in man, they do not reach the degree of perfection, they are imperfect. Only when man attains maturity do the mind and the spirit appear and become evident in utmost perfection.” BWF 312 or SAQ 233

Since childhood I have had many loves - my heart which “must have some attachment (see page 31 []) has been attached to various activities, causes and individuals, and that is as it should be. But my heart was not “at rest,” and Never found real lasting joy and happiness until it attached itself to Baha’u’llah. Now I know that that was because nothing is completely worthy of my “heart’s devotion say Reality” 54(s) See page 31 []) - the infinite, eternal divine Reality that underlies everything is existence and is its Source and Purpose. My attachment to that Reality must be wholehearted, too, if I am to experience spiritual progress and fulfillment.

That does not mean that I must be indifferent to my outer environment, even though it is finite, time-limited, and imperfect. It is something real that faces me. I must be involved in the realm of human affairs, for my soul “must traverse all condition.” 44(aa), BWF 313 or SAQ 233 - I must be emotionally involved, too, because my “heart must have some attachment.” 54(s), Sof W Vol. 7, 162 (see above) Each of my three natures must be fed, be active, experience its degree of feeling, and fulfill its purpose, if I am to develop normally and to avoid frustration; and this means that my knowing power and love power must be challenged and brought into action in the physical world and the world of human affairs, as well as in the spiritual world.

What is wholehearted attachment to Baha’u’llah, then?

It is a state of consciousness where I am fully aware not only of the physical activities and qualities of existence and of their human or superhuman causes and consequences, but also of the divine secrets that He reveals to explain the heavenly purpose of what is happening around me; and aware too of Himself and of God as the Ultimate Infinite Realities that underlie outer appearances and that every heart seeks and was created to recognize and worship. Whole-hearted attachment to Divinity is a state of enlightened understanding. For

“First and foremost among . . . 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 creatures to know and recognize the one True God.” 35(m), BWF 121-2 or GL 194 (see page 15e [])

So now, to make my prayer real and satisfying to my own heart, I seek the understanding of a mature reasoning mind. This is why it is such a bounty to have “heavenly teachings applicable to

the advancement in human conditions” and applicable to my own intellectual development; and all of the precious insights that “have been revealed in this merciful age.” 1(g), FWU 10

But I must study those teachings and accept His Revelation as my Source of authentic knowledge. And I must learn what He teaches me about my own heart in order to ask God for the answer of its needs (which can only come from Him through His Manifestation). Certainly I am aware that Baha’u’llah can unveil to my outer consciousness the real needs and desires of my heart, as well as their intended fulfillment and opening the portals of my heart and consciousness to that celestial Light is what makes my spiritual being grow.

2. REVEALED PRAYERS - THE ESSENCE OF CELESTIAL LIGHT

Seeing this, throws into sharp relief the preciousness of His revealed Prayers. For Baha’u’llah prays from that kind of spiritual understanding or consciousness and enables us to do the same. What He says in regard to “I,” “me,” “my,” and “mine” is what is true of my inner being or heart, whether I know it or not. And saying it - or, more accurately, feeling it as I say the words expresses something in my heart and opens my outer consciousness momentarily, at least, to its truth and reality.

Do I appreciate this celestial bounty? Appreciate! For instance, He gives me a choice of three Obligatory Prayers to use daily. Why? To point out an Obligation of my being? It is true that “Abdu’l-Baha said that I should

“Know. . . that prayer is indispensable and obligatory and man under no pretext whatsoever is excused therefrom unless he be mentally unsound or an insurmountable obstacle prevent him.” DAL 26 #2 (see page 35-6 [])

Are those Prayers given men, then, to enable me to fulfill this Obligation with a minimum expenditure of energy and time? Certainly not! He is putting into words [so] that my human consciousness can grasp what my soul really longs to express, and the desires of my heart that God is ready to fulfill. Of the three, the Long Obligatory Prayer obviously contains the most Light - Light of such infinite, eternal and divine power that the human consciousness almost shrinks from it!

How well do I avail myself of the bounty that these Prayers offer? This is a question that I should “ponder in my heart.”

For instance, can I actually feel the unconscious desire that is in my heart, and know that God provides,

that my prayer shall burn away the veils which have shut me out from His beauty?

Do I know that this can happen, and

the, at least while I am praying, I shall be led away from my material concerns to the ocean of His Presence?

And do I understand (BP’69, 120-6 or P&M 318-22)

that I pray to God through Them Who are the Day-Springs of His invisible Essence that God sees me turning toward Him and do I know how it feels to be rid of all attachment to any one save Him and to be clinging to His cord through whose movement the whole creation has been stirred up?

that as I pray I offer myself as His servant, ready to do His desire - not grudgingly, but wishing naught else except His good pleasure?

that I wholeheartedly ask God to do with me, His servant, as He wills and pleases, regardless of whether I find it pleasant or unpleasant?

that I am committing myself to whatever He reveals as being the desire of my heart and beloved of my soul, no matter how contrary it may be to my own human whims and wants?

that instead of asking Him to approve and fulfill my hopes and efforts as is “natural” to a human being, I ask that He look only upon His own will?

that actually, in my heart, I desire only what He has desired and love only what He loves, whether I know it or not?

that God shall make my prayer a fountain of living water (can such a thing be possible?) Coming forth from my inner being that is destined to live forever? - one small part of me that I may be assured is worthy of that infinite, eternal, divine world of existence that is my destiny?

that this fountain of living waters may empower my entire being with such spiritual consciousness that I shall speak of God in my outer life just as I would of any other reality of my environment?

that as I pray, I am hastening to my most exalted home beneath the canopy of God’s majesty and within the precincts of His mercy?

that in prayer, I, though definitely a transgressor, am seeking the ocean of His forgiveness, the court of His glory and the orient of His wealth?

that as I pray, my whole being, and even the limbs and members of my body, are stirred up in their longing to worship God and in their yearning to remember and extol my Beloved?

that I am testifying to everything that has been revealed by the Tongue of God’s Commandment in the kingdom of His utterance and the heaven of His knowledge? - and doesn’t that mean even the Greater World to which I can have no access and of which I could have no knowledge were it not for Baha’u’llah?

that in this state of consciousness I see my own poverty and powerlessness, as a human creature, so clearly that it is a joy and ineffable privilege to be able to beg of my Creator all that is “with” Him, so that I may magnify His bounty and riches and manifest His power and might in ways that will transform my life?

If these words “sink deep” into my growing spiritual consciousness, surely I’ll eventually

begin to see myself in this new celestial Light, and I'll move out of that world of illusion where 'Abdu'l-Baha says human beings habitually live! 53(r), PT 110

Surely too my conscious knowledge of my relationship with God and with Baha'u'llah will expand and grow under the power of this Prayer! Have I begun to realize that

my heart speaks to its Creator through Baha'u'llah, having been empowered to do so by the Day-Springs of God's invisible Essence?

that I am able to implore God for what my heart needs because connecting it to its Maker there is the Ocean of God's mercy and the Day Star of His grace?

that Baha'u'llah is God's Most Great Name through which the truth has been made real and applicable to this little human entity that I call "me"? And that through that Name God has subdued the whole creation?

that Baha'u'llah is the Hidden Mystery, the Treasured Symbol, through Whom the letters B and E (Be) have been joined and knit together - an essential factor in all of God's current creating?

that He is the One Whose name has been set down by the Pen of God in the past and been mentioned in all of the Books of God or Scriptures - Baha'u'llah, the Lord of the Throne on high and of earth below? (See page 25 [])

that His presence in the "wilderness" of a godless world has brought God's footsteps down to the outer world of space, and that His words, like those all of the Creator's chosen Ones have "uttered in this immensity," have announced the divine Presence so that now it is possible for me, if God so ordains, to gaze on His beauty and observe whatsoever is in His book?

And finally, do I experience the delight of bringing into my immediate consciousness such facts about God as

that I am consciously recognizing and relating myself to the Lord of all names and Maker of the heavens, the Desire of the world and the Beloved of the nations or peoples who have been believers down through past ages?

that separation from Him and the fire of His love have melted cold hearts and set the whole world aflame? (Certainly I am not immune!)

that I acknowledge His Authority, and my responsibility to obey His behests and to know that He shall always remain unconstrained in His bidding, no matter what foolish request His creatures may make of Him?

that there is no God but Him, and that He is Almighty, All-Bountiful, and the Ordainer forever?

that His forgiveness has emboldened me, His mercy has strengthened me, His call has awakened me, and His grace has raised me up and lead me to Him? Otherwise I would not be a Baha'i standing at the gate of the city of His nearness, nor have set my face toward (or ever have seen) the lights that are shining from the heaven of His will?

It is a heart-thrilling experience to renew my awareness of God's relation to me that this Prayer gives, and I should welcome daily the opportunity to do so through each revealed Prayer and especially through this one which plots a straight course to devotion and complete dedication to His Will. And at its end I find myself making one final request of Him that is tremendously satisfying:

“I implore Thee by the signs of Thy Kingdom and the mysteries of Thy Dominion to do with Thy loved ones as becometh Thy bounty, O Lord of all being, and is worthy of Thy grace, O King of the seen and the unseen!” BP'69, 127 or P&M 322

Do I fear that God may not answer this request? Surely I know better than that! Could the purpose of these words be to remind me that whatever personal desires may be in my heart, known or unknown, what God is going to “do” with me and my loved ones is even more divine and glorious than anything I can visualize or wish for?

What potentialities of spiritual consciousness are embraced in that one heavenly Prayer? What possibilities of realization are encompassed between the covers of a Baha'i Prayers! I could benefit immeasurably by going through them and testing my understanding of their words and truths verity by verity and petition by petition! For every day, in my dealings with the outer world, egocentric fancies and vain human imaginings creep into my feelings and veil what I “knew” yesterday. This is the nature of the human consciousness which is blacked out every night in sleep. This is one reason, then, that my Creator has made daily prayer “indispensable and obligatory” in my spiritual life.

How strange that I should need to be coaxed to pray! For in reality I see that prayer can answer every need of my heart, including the following ones that I have noted.

3. PRAYER AS AN EXPRESSION AND REALIZATION OF MY RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

In my outer life I often ignore that relationship completely. But to my heart, the relationship is an essential reality. So I must bring an awareness of it into my outer consciousness continually.

I know, from what Baha'u'llah reveals, that a love relationship exists between the real me and my Creator - a relationship that is more potent and significant than all of my combined earthly relationships. For human beings behave in ways that can distress and even destroy me, and those I love are often inaccessible when I need them. But God disappoints no one who seeks Him, nor does He keep back from him anyone who desires Him. BP'69, 55 #40 or P&M 250 And His own Voice speaks to me saying,

“Unasked, I have showered upon thee My grace. Unpetitioned, I have fulfilled thy wish. In spite of thine undeserving, I have singled thee out for my richest, My incalculable favors.” GL 322

and I have Baha'u'llah's assurance that “Ready is He to answer whosoever calleth upon Him,” BWF 57 or PDC 43

But the human consciousness reacts at times as though nothing were real except the outer world and life. This is why we find our environment and conditions so unsatisfactory, for this is not a successful or fulfilling way to react or live.

“We must look higher than all earthly thoughts; detach ourselves from every material idea, crave for the things of the spirit; fix our eyes on the everlasting bountiful Mercy of the Almighty, Who will fill our souls with the gladness of joyful service.” 101(dd), PT 39

“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.” 15(v), GL 193-4

Baha’u’llah teaches me to address these words to my Creator, by way of making my heart realize its true relation to God:

“My soul delighteth in its communion with Thee, as the suckling child delighteth itself in the breasts of Thy mercy; and my heart panteth after Thee even as one sore athirst panteth after the living waters of Thy bounty, O Thou Who art the God of mercy, in Whose hand is the lordship of all things!” P&M 195

Prayer is a means of feeling more dynamically the love that is in my heart, and it causes that love to grow. And this is “doing my part” (some of it, at least) in accepting the Assistance my Creator has provided for fulfilling the purpose of my being. In reviewing the treasures of my little Baha’i Prayer Book, I find twenty-one Prayers that are particularly helpful in answering this first basic need of my heart. (Baha’i Prayers for General Use: numbers 1, 2, 15, 16, 33-40, 52, 55, 56, 58, 65, 67, 76 and 77)

The need and even desire of the heart to express its love of God and awareness of God as a reality can be unrecognized and ignored in my outer human consciousness very readily. This is why I have been commanded to pray, and been given the most powerful and effective prayers on earth. Baha’u’llah says,

“Whatever duty Thou hast prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves.” GL 4-5

Every Writing of Baha’u’llah extols and glorifies God; every Prayer praises Him in some way and reminds the heart of this vital relationship.

4. VERBALIZING THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD THAT MY HEART REQUIRES

One veil of humanness is forgetfulness of God. (see page 32-3) But Baha'u'llah reminds me:

“Thou hast gained admittance into the Paradise of God’s Remembrance through thy recognition of Him Who is the Embodiment of that Remembrance amongst men.”

“Blessed are they that remember the one true God.” GL 110

To strengthen my remembrance of God, I need to recall and heed Baha'u'llah's warnings as well as His admonitions. For instance, He says:

“Delight not yourselves in the things of the world and its vain ornaments, neither set your hopes on them. Let your reliance be on the remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. He will ere long, bring to naught all the things ye possess . . . Forget not His covenant with you, and be not . . . shut out as by a veil from Him.” 55(pp), GL 127-8

“neither suffer your hearts to be deprived of remembering your Lord, nor your ears of hearkening unto the sweet melodies of His wondrous, His sublime, His all-compelling, His clear, and most eloquent voice.” BWF 35 or GL 107

Speaking as the Voice of God, He urges me to sanctify my heart that I may remember Him, GL 313, and if this seems difficult, He tells me that remembrance of Him “cleanseth all things from defilement.” GL 294 the simple act of remembering God! He begs people to strive for a prayerful consciousness,

“that your hearts may be attuned to His remembrance, that your souls may rest confidently upon His grace and bounty.” BWF 124 or GL 297

Of course when I am in trouble, I do turn to God,

“In the darksome night of despair, my eye turneth expectant and full of hope to the morn of Thy boundless favor and at the hour of dawn my drooping would is refreshed and strengthened in remembrance of Thy beauty and perfection.” B’69, 107 # 88

As Baha'u'llah says, “he who is destitute of all strength remembereth his master.” P&M 205 But let me not wait until then to remember God in prayer! The glorious potentialities of this state of consciousness have been brought to my attention. So let me use these precious words, because they do express what my heart feels and desires:

“Praise be to Thee for having enabled me to turn my face towards Thee; for having set my soul ablaze through remembrance of Thee . . .” BL 310

“I pray Thee, O my Lord, . . . to rain down . . . the overflowing rain of Thy mercy, that it may cleanse us from the remembrance of all else by Thee. . . “ GL 301

“Send down, then, upon me, out of the clouds of Thy generosity, what will purge out from me the remembrance of any one except Thee . . . “ BP’69, 139 or P&M 48

“O Lord my God ! . . . I beseech Thee, by Him Who is the Fountain-Head of Thy Revelation and the Day-Spring of Thy signs, to make my heart to be a receptacle of Thy

love and of remembrance of Thee.” BP’54, 97 or P&M 56

Remembering God is a sure way, too, to increase my consciousness and love of God.
And what on earth is more important than that?

“Communion with Thee enableth me to dispense with the remembrance of all Thy creatures, and my love for Thee empowereth me to endure . . . harm.” P&M 195

Prayers that can intensify remembrance of my relationship to God and to Baha’u’llah are numbers 53, 57, 70, 72 (page 90) and 73 (page 91 of Baha’i Prayers.)

5. REMEMBRANCE OF GOD GENERATING GRATITUDE THAT MY HEART NEEDS TO FEEL

“I give thanks to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast suffered me to remember Thee.” P&M 195

Remembering God and His goodness activates a thankfulness so deep that it demands expression, and payer, among other things, [that it] may become a spontaneous expression of my gratitude to God. So Baha’u’llah urges that I “commune intimately with His Spirit, and be of the thankful.” 49(w), BWF 109 or GL 280 And my heart is inspired to do so, by Baha’u’llah’s many admonitions of this sort. GL 172 He reminds me to render thanks to God for having caused the rivers of Divine utterance to proceed out of His throne, GL 43 (see page 40) and for having aided and strengthened me to recognize and aid God’s Cause. GL 291-2 and GL 303 He urges that as a Baha’i[,] I “appreciate the value of these days,” GL 110, and render thanks unto my Lord, “the Expounder, the Most Manifest”; GL 117 and that I especially thank Him for the fact that I have

partaken of His highest gift, BWF 122 or GL 195 been invested “with such high honor,” GL 306 and have attained my heart’s Desire. BWF 9 or GL 6 (see page 32)

Baha’u’llah has bestowed special favors on us as a bounty on His part and a mercy from His presence, that we may “be of those who are grateful.” BP’69, 132 And speaking as the Voice of God, He says:

“Thus have the showers of My bounty been poured down from the heaven of My loving-kindness as a token of My grace; that ye may be of the thankful”. GL 140

He even says that we should be “thankful in adversity.” BWF 136, ESW 93 or GL 285

Thankfulness goes hand in hand with other virtues that souls are to develop. For instance,

“... resignation to whatever the Almighty hath decreed, contentment with the things His Will hath provided, patience, nay, thankfulness, in the midst of tribulation, and complete reliance in all circumstances, upon Him.” BWF 128 or GL 290

“Know thou, that I have . . . fully revealed to thee My Word . . . Be then content with My pleasure and thankful to Me.” W/G 94(e)

In the face of these admonitions, and with the realization that love and gratitude to God are aspects of the soul’s fulfillment that strengthen each other, my heart cries out in prayer through these inspired words:

“My God, my Adored One, my King, my Desire! What tongue can voice my thanks to Thee?” BP’69, 11 # 1 or P&M 264

“I yield Thee thanks, O my Lord, that thou has wakened me from my sleep, and stirred me up, and created in me the desire to perceive what most of Thy servants have failed to apprehend.” BP’54, 74 or P&M 216

“O God, my God ! I yield Thee thanks inasmuch as Thou has made me to drink of Thy Sealed Wine from the hand of the bounty of Thy Name, the Self-Subsisting.” ESW 105

I love especially, too, to use the Prayers of Praise and Gratitude in the Baha’i Prayer Book (pages 56-600).

6. GRATITUDE, CALLING FORTH PRAISE OF GOD THAT MY HEART NEEDS TO FEEL

“Praise be to Thee . . . for having aided me to proclaim Thy Name and to sing Thy praises”; GL 310

For “Exalted art Thou above the description of anyone save Thyself, and the comprehension of aught else except Thee . . . I testify that Thou hast been sanctified above all attributes and holy above all names.” BP’69, 122-5 or P&M 318, 320

But “Happy (are) the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise.” GL 138
Baha’u’llah glorified His Lord, and exemplifies and describes the praise of God that I need to learn, in such words as these:

“Praise be to God, the All-Possessing, the King of incomparable glory, a praise which is immeasurably above the understanding of all created things, and is exalted above the grasp of the minds of men.” BWF 28 or GL 60

“The conceptions of the devoutest of mystics, the attainments of the most accomplished amongst men, the highest praise which human tongue or pen can render are all a product of man’s finite mind and are conditioned by its limitations.” BWF 29 or GL 62

“How lofty hath been . . . (God’s) incorruptible Essence, how completely independent of the knowledge of all created things, and how immensely exalted will it remain above the praise of all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth.!” BWF 94 or GL 261-2

He teaches me to say:

“Too high art Thou for the praise of those who are nigh unto Thee to ascend unto the heaven of Thy nearness.” BP’69, 124-5 or P&M 320

Yet “Most of the verses of the Qur’an indicate, and bear witness to, this spiritual theme . . .” ‘Neither is there aught which doth not celebrate His praise’ . . .” Iqan 140
Now that God has given us Baha’u’llah Whose “tongue is the Fountain-head of the

waters of Thy praise,” P&M 131, lest I be excluded from the privilege of conscious praise of God, my heart echoes His words. Then I realize that those reveling words express what I really feel in the depths of my inner being. As I read, then, I find myself praising God for having “delivered His creation from the nakedness of non-existence and clothed it with the mantle of life”; GL 77 for having “unlocked the doors of men’s hearts through the Pen of the most High”; GL 96 (see page 31) and for “the wondrous revelation” of His “inscrutable decrees.” BWF 31 or GL 88 I do sincerely “render thanks unto God, . . . exalted be His glory,” for the bounty of having “been adorned with the ornament” of His praise; GL 110 and I realize that my heart does “contain. . . treasures” of His “remembrance and praise,” P&M 102 waiting to be brought into my outer consciousness.

I find this a lifelong learning process, however. For as my consciousness or Divinity grows, I can truthfully say:

“Every time I attempt to make mention of Thee, I am hindered by the sublimity of Thy station and the overpowering greatness of Thy might”. P&M 125

But I have that incomparable Book call Prayers and Meditations, and scarcely one of its 399 pages does not voice some sort of praise of God. And while these are far above my human powers of spontaneous expression or even understanding, I find that they still express thrillingly what my heart feels. Gratefully, then, I repeat these heavenly words:

“O my God! How can I ever befittingly mention Thee or sufficiently praise Thee, that Thou hast manifested Him. . . ? “ BWF 72 or P&M 51

For, like every spiritual activity, prayer and praise of my Creator must be learned, and Baha’u’llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha are ideal Instructors; and I have divine assurance that “none would have the power to deter” me “from celebrating His praise” if I do my part. GL 314

So that least I can do is to try to express what is in my heart by appropriating as my own and joyously using some of the petitions that have been revealed, such as these:

“. . . Incline mine ear to the sweet melodies of the birds that warble their praise of Thee, amidst the branches of the tree of Thy oneness: P&M 5

“. . . Send down upon me from the clouds of Thy mercy that which will purify me of all that is not of Thee, that I may be worthy to praise Thee and fit to love Thee.” BWF 144 or P&M 13

“Knit . . . (me heart) to Thy most great Ocean, that from it may flow out . . . the crystal streams of Thy glorification and praise” BP’54, 97 or P&M 36

So it is that I begin to cherish this praise as do “such as have drawn nigh” to God’s court; P&M 132 and find myself wakening “every morning to the light of Thy remembrance and praise.” BWF 75 or P&M 103-4 It becomes natural, then, to express gratitude, thus

“For having empowered me to be steadfast in Thy love, and to speak forth Thy praise and to extol Thy virtues.” BP’69, 58 # 43 or P&M 110

But also I am very human, and [my] appreciation of God must keep growing. So [I] ask

daily to be fortified to “unloose” my tongue, P&M 162 “that it may make mention” of God and sing His praise.” P&M 142 For it is only through this fortification that I may do my best to help God’s Cause and to speak His praise in doing so. P&M 165

I still must deal with an imperfect world and meet severe tests, so I treasure and joyously use this petition:

“I implore Thee, O my Lord, . . . to grant that I may flee for shelter to Thy door, and speak forth Thy praise.” P&M 122

For with His praise on my lips, the rulings of God’s decree can in no wise fill me with sorrow. P&M 214 W/G 105(g)

Baha’u’llah speaks of early believers who were “so carried away by the sweet savors” of divine inspiration “that every single member of their bodies intoned” God’s praise and vibrated to His remembrance. Bp’69, 170 #23 or P&M 142 And He prayed for us all in these words:

“O Thou Who art the Beloved of my soul and the Fountain of my life! . . . Aid them, than, by Thy strengthening grace, to exalt Thy word and to blazon Thy praise.” P&M 149-50

And He gave us this petition to use, whereby we may realize a little of what it means to truly praise God:

“O Thou Who art the Delight of our hearts and the Object of our adoration! Were the clouds of Thy decree to rain down upon us the darts of affliction, we would, in our love for Thee, refuse to be impatient. We would yield Thee praise and thanksgiving, for we have recognized and are persuaded that Thou hast ordained only that which will be best for us . . . “ P&M 135

How joyously, then do I comply with His request that I say daily:

“Praise be to Thee, O my God, that Thou has aided me to remember Thee and to praise Thee, and hast made known unto me Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy signs, and hast cause me to bow down before Thy Lordship, and humble myself before Thy Godhead, and to acknowledge that which hath been uttered by the Tongue of Thy grandeur.” PB’69, 126 or P&M 322

All prayer is praise of God, and it can find expression in a single moment, when my heart turns to Him and say: “Allah’u’Abha” or “Ya Baha’l’Abha!”

7. PRAYER IS THE HEART'S OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

“O SON OF LIGHT! Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it.” HWA 8 #16

Communication is defined as a process by which meanings are exchanged through a common system of symbols. Communion between two beings involves mutual participation and is an act or instance of sharing. It is the outward expression of an inner unity or ability of two beings to give to each other, share and receive. This is a most precious unity, and nothing in life is more important than developing it.

Prayer is a way of doing so, for

“Prayer is ‘conversation with God.’ . . . It creates spirituality, generates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets the attraction of the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence.” SofW Vol. 9, p 103-4, W/G 104(jj)

The need for prayer and its potentialities both must be taught, and as a soul I must learn to recognize my need and God's glorious provisions for fulfilling the need.

I know what human communication is. Soon after my birth my parents and other associates began speaking to me as a human being. I gradually learned their words or the “system of symbols” by which our ideas or the “meanings” of our thoughts and feelings could be

exchanged. If anyone doubts the inexorable need for communication of this sort, reading the life of Helen Keller will dispel those doubts. Not only is it essential for physical beings to communicate in order to stay alive physically, but there is a similar necessity for minds and hearts to communicate, and this demands a mastery of “symbols” of expression that “rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds” ; BP’69, 93 #75 (see page 15f [])) for it is through such means that hearts can communicate, especially with the Supreme Being.

Prayer answers the need for that kind of communication. That kind of divine communication we call communing with God. The Oxford Dictionary defines this word as “holding intimate intercourse (with a person, or on’s own heart)”; and Webster’s Dictionary says that commune is to “communicate intimately (for instance, with nature).” thus while words may be involved, the communication itself actually transcends the mental symbols of language, for communing is an activity of the spiritual world or consciousness. A new “system of symbols,” almost, is needed.

Baha’u’llah is teaching me such a system in His revealed prayers. He uses words that have been used and have the same meanings in all revealed religions. He also adds new symbolic terms and meanings. His communication or communing is in human words, it is true, but it involves and expresses spiritual feelings and significances that transform each into a prayer or meditation - a true communication with the Almighty God. Thus He is expanding mankind’s means and understanding of my satisfaction of the need that I have for this kind of communication; and He is revealing some of its latent potentialities.

Like my human teachers, He has been speaking to me in His terminology, the language of divine significances, and gradually I am learning His “system of symbols” by which the needs of my heart and yearnings of my soul can be expressed.

Babies are taught to communicate before they can possibly understand the significance of words. They learn the meanings of words by using them. The mother says to the little one “Don’t cry! - tell me what you want! Water? Milk? Are you cold? Sleepy? - Want to go to bed? Wee, say please!” This is the way a child learns to recognize and name his needs, and is taught to ask for their fulfillment. Baha’u’llah teaches me in the same way. If I listen and respond, I can begin to recognize and name my needs; and instead of complaining about my miseries, I can learn to ask my heavenly Father for what I lack.

God, through His Manifestations, has been instructing mankind in this way since the time of Adam. In each age He speaks to man. But His Word must be reiterated again and again, for it takes time for the inner ear of man to be attuned to so lofty a Word, and for hearts to listen as they should. Baha’u’llah assures us, however, that

“... 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 al men.” 25 (ppp), GL 97

It is just that

“... in this day . . . The reins of every community have fallen into the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire. On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His holy Word a dead letter.” 25 (sss), Iqan 29

His pleading reaches my heart, however, as He says:

“Open your ears that ye may hearken unto the word of God.” 24(hhh), HWP 41 #53

“Thine ear is a sign of My bounty, let not the tumult of unseemly motives turn it away from My word that encompasseth all creation.” 24(iii), GL 322

For “Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame. . . .” 24(uu), GL 141

‘Abdu’l-Baha calls attention, too, to the fact that now “the Word of God has assuredly been explained and has become an evident sign . . . “ 99(k), BWF 360

If I long for two-way communication with God, I should recognize that He speaks to me, even before I am ready to communicate. So I should be listening for His Voice. For

“From His retreat of glory His voice is ever proclaiming: ‘Verily, I am God; there is none other God besides Me.’ . . . “ BWF 21-1 or GL 49

And today Baha’u’llah speaks as the Voice of God, saying:

“This is the Voice of God, if ye do but hearken”. GL 33

For “the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the Divine Being.” 24(aaa), BWF 23, GL 52-3 or Iqan 176, 178

“Whoso hearkeneth to . . . (these sanctified Beings) call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God . . . “ BWF 21 or GL 50

I hear Him pleading:

“Strive, O people, to gain admittance into this vast Immensity . . . in which His (God’s) voice hath been raised . . .” 85(iii), BWF 35 or GL 107

“Incline thine ear unto the voice of thy Lord, the Lord of all mankind . . . “ BWF 52, ESW 59

“Thus hath spoken the Lord, thy God, ere the day of lamentation arriveth.” GL 115

It is possible that I do not hear or understand those Words?

It is not new to learn that God addresses mankind through His Word, in what comes to us as divine Revelation and as the Words of His Manifestation. Religionists have long been aware of the Communications between God and His divine Prophets. It is well known, for instance, that

“‘To some (Apostles) God hath spoken’” BWF 23, GL 52 or Iqan 176
that “God talked” with Abraham; Gen. 17:3 and that Moses “conversed” with God.
BP’69, 170 or P&M 144.

We know that through the Founder of each revealed Religion the Creator has addressed

mankind; and that through this communication

“God speaketh the truth and leadeth the way.” Iqan 206

But the Scriptures that we call the “word of God”, are really only humanly recorded traditions and reports of what God has said in long-gone ages of the past. And the fact that Christianity, for instance, is divided into contradictory sects testifies to the fact that there is a lack of comprehension of what God has communicated to humanity in its early stages of development. This means that more enlightenment and understanding are needed today.

That fact does not belittle the divine Revelations of the past. In gratitude for them, I speak to God saying:

“I render Thee thanks, . . . that Thou hast taught Thy servants how to make mention of Thee and revealed unto them the ways whereby they can supplicate Thee, through Thy most holy and exalted tongue, and Thy most August and precious speech.” P&M 283

But I am still more grateful now for the new Revelation which enables me to understand the part that the Manifestation of each succeeding age has played in establishing increasingly dynamic Communication between God and His creatures. For now I know the Manifestation of each Dispensation is the Intermediary and teacher Whom the limited and imperfectly developed minds and hearts of man have always required both for hearing and for answering God’s Voice. Baha’u’llah explains that:

“The first station (of the Manifestation of God), which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself.” BWF 103 or GL 66

“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.” BWF 24, GL 55 or Iqan 179-80

So I listen to God Himself speaking in this Day when “The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society,” and know that nothing else “but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it.” as He calls to heedless hearts saying:

“O MOVING FORM OF DUST! I desire communion with thee.” HWP 29 #21

“O WEED THAT SPRINGETH OUT OF THE DUST! . . . why with thine heart defiled with desire and passion dost thou seek to commune with Me and to enter My sacred realm? Far, far are ye from that which ye desire.” HWP 45 #68

And I cringe until I hear the same loving Voice address me thus:

“O SON OF GLORY! Be swift in the path of holiness, and enter the heaven of communion with Me.” HWP 24 #8

“The heaven of communion”: with God - how my heart reacts in longing to that potentiality! And I recall that admonition, and can utter this petition in all sincerity from the

depths of my heart:

“Grant, I beseech Thee, O Thou Who art the Everlasting King and the Sovereign Protector of all men, that I may be enabled . . . to commune with Thy Spirit.” 105(h), GL 311 (see page 47 [])

I remember how precious prayer has been at certain times in my life, and marvel that I should have allowed my heart to be “defiled” with earthly desires to the point of diminishing my desire for that great bounty.

Once there was the “lord’s Prayer” that satisfied my desire for communion with God and some of these words resound in my heart with new meanings in this petition that ‘Abdu’l-Baha has taught me to use:

“Give us our daily bread and grant Thine increase in the necessities of life; that we . . . may commune wholly with Thee,. . . “ BP’69, 13 #3
ending with:

“O God, O God! . . . make us submissive and worshiping servants, communing with Thee.” BP’;69, 156-7 #19

Baha’u’llah now, as my Instructor in a new phase of communication with God, sets and example for me by His own communing with Is Maker, and we are privileged to listen as He meditates and prays on our behalf in such words as these:

“O Thou . . . Whose voice is the true life of Thy lovers, the words of Whose mouth are as the waters of life unto all who are in heaven and on earth,” BWF 144 or P&M 13

“Many a slumberer hath been awakened by the sweetness of Thy voice.” BP’69, 71 #55, BWF 146 or P&M 32

“Some . . . were so enraptured . . . (by it) that they forsook all . . .” P&M 97

He praises such listeners thus:

“He is a man of hearing who hath been lead to hearken unto Thy speech. . . “
P&M 269

“Great is his blessedness whosoever hath. . . caught the accents of Thy voice.”
BP’69, 20 #11 or P&M 117

And He prays for us all in such words as these:

“Leave Thy servants not to themselves, O my Lord! Draw them through the influence of Thine utterances unto the Dawning-Place of Thine inspiration, and to the Fountain of Thy Revelation, and to the Treasury of Thy wisdom.” 105(f); P&M 118-9

“O my Lord . . . assemble Thy loved ones beneath the shadow of the tree of Thy oneness, that they may .l . . catch the accents of Thy voice.” P&M 44-5

“Cause them, moreover, O my God, to hearken to Thy most sweet voice. . . “
BWF 86 or P&M 28

“ . . . I call unto Thee with my tongue and the tongues of all that are in heaven and

on earth, and beseech Thee with my heart and the hearts of all that have entered beneath the shadow of Thy names and attributes . . . “ P&M 93

How can my heart not respond to such power? I find myself on my knees repeating:

“O my Lord, my Best-Beloved, the Mover of my actions, the Lode-Star of my soul, the Voice that crieth in mine innermost being, . . . GL 310 (see page 32 []) “I have tasted of the sweetness of Thy speech, and . . .” P&M 114 “I ask Thee, by Thy Most Great Name . . . to grant . . . that Thy wondrous voice may reach my ear . . . “ BP’69, 86 #70

Prayer today is entering a new phase because it is to be definitely recognized as a two-way communication. In the past I prayed somewhat by rote, as I was taught in childhood (when I remembered to do so) with periodic agonized appeals to “the Help in Peril” when divine assistance seemed urgently required. But in this Day, a new communication has been initiated by my Creator Himself: “the Beloved Himself . . . is now calling His lovers” 105)a) (see page 34 []) and voicing an explicit desire for communion with them - and I am one of His lovers HWP 29 #21 (see page 68 [])

How breath-taking that is!: that the Almighty God desires communion with me!

“The Call of God hath been raised. . . “ BWF 10; GL 10

“He Who is the Everlasting Father calleth aloud between earth and heaven.” BWF 6 or PDC 104

“Some responded to Thy call and, without the least hesitation, obeyed Thy summons.” P&M 113

“Happy is the man that hath heard Our voice, and answered Our call.” GL335 Truly, “in this Day . . . the Voice of the Most High is calling” GL 163

That Call initiates a communication with is both a need of my inner being and the fulfillment of the greatest yearning of my heart, although this is a fact of which I was unaware until it was brought to my attention. But communion with the Infinite, Eternal Divine Being is an art. I learn that

“Among . . .(the virtues and attributes that I must reflect) are trustworthiness, truthfulness,” (and) “purity of heart while communing with God” BWF 128 or GL 290

And I hear Baha’u’llah’s counsels:

“O my brother! Take thou the step of the spirit, so that, swift as te twinkling of an eye, thou mayest . . . in one breath commune with the heavenly Spirits.” Iqan 43

“O MY SON! . . . He that seeketh to commune with God, let him betake himself to the companionship of His loved ones . . .” HWP 42 #56

“Nigh is He unto such as commune with Him.” BWF 57 or PDC 43

I also listen to His heavenly communion with our Creator begging on our behalf:

“These . . . (believers) Thou hast graciously enabled to have fellowship with Thee

and to commune with Him Who is the Revealer of Thyself.” BP’69, 170 or P&M 144

“Help them, then, O God, . . . that they may turn with all their affections toward Thee and my enjoy . . . intimate communion with Thee. . . “ BWF 150-1 or P&M 159 -60
Now, however, the value of that communion is not merely the glorious fact of establishing communication with my lord and King. For He brings glorious news to my heart, which Baha’u’llah mentions in His meditating, thus:

“Through that Call Thou didst announce unto all Thy servants the advent of Thy most great Revelation and the appearance of Thy most perfect Cause.” 99(h), BWF 93 or P&M 295-6

Do I imagine that this Call is of no concern to me - that to answer it is not only a need and responsibility of my soul, but the joy of my heart? If so, let me recall how Baha’u’llah has described the Call and its effects on creation:

“By Thy call . . . they who recognized Thy unity have sought the shadow of Thy most gracious providence, and the sincere have fled far from themselves unto Thy name, the most exalted, the all-glorious, through which Thy verses were sent down, and Thy word fulfilled, and Thy proof manifested, and the sun of Thy beauty risen. . . “ BWF 162 or P&M 206-7

“Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided, separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation. . . “ 99(h), BWF 93 or P&M 295

What kind of a mind and heart do I have if I can ignore or leave unanswered, a Communication of that magnitude and import?

How shall I answer such an incomprehensible summons? I am grateful for Baha’u’llah’s divine Enlightenment, explaining what has happened, assuring me that I have the capacity to understand God’s Word, and giving me the key that opens the portals of my heart to His Voice:

“Know ye from what heights your Lord, the All-Glorious is calling? . . . Nay, by My life! Did ye but know it, . . . your spirits would be so transported by His Word as to throw into commotion the Greater World - how much more this small and petty one! Thus have the showers of My bounty been poured down from the heaven of My loving-kindness, as a token of my grace.” 24(jjj), GL 139-40

“This is the Day when every ear must be attentive to His voice.” BWF 132 or GL 205

“The understanding of His (God’s) words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.” 25(qqq), Iqan 211

(see page 17 [])

“In this day, whosoever rendeth not asunder the veil of his idle imaginings will

assuredly fail to hear the Voice of God. Well is it with them that, with the aid of the power of God, have shattered the idols of their fancies and, with ears attentive to His call, have risen from the dead.” 65(m), B World Vo. 2 p 63

So I can (and should) joyously use these words to express what is in my heart:

“O God, my God! . . . Thy call hath awakened me.” BP’69, 124 or P&M 320

“Thy Call hath attracted me and the Voice of Thy Pen of Glory awakened me.

The stream of Thy holy utterance hath enraptured me and the wine of Thine inspiration entranced me.” Bp’69, 85 #69

What does God say to me and to all who are fortunate enough to hear His call?

“O YE PEOPLE THAT HAVE MINDS TO KNOW AND EARS TO HEAR! The first call of the Beloved is this: O mystic nightingale! Abide not but in the rose-garden of the spirit. O messenger of the Solomon of love! Seek thou no shelter except in the Sheba of the well-beloved, and O immortal phoenix! Dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal.” HWP 22 #1

Baha’u’llah says:

“It behoveth whosoever hath hearkened to the Call of God . . . to arise and cry out: ‘Here am I, here am I, O maker of the heavens! . . . ’” GL 163

This response, however, is not to be made once for all time. As His call is timeless, it is repeated daily. So Baha’u’llah teaches me to pray:

“O Lord, make me heart Thy call . . . !” BP’69, 29 #17

And with my fellow-believers I earnestly pray, as Baha’u’llah suggests, that we may

“avoid the land of denial, and advance into the ocean of acceptance, so that we may . . . wing our flight unto the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God.” 24(fff), Iqan 160

I Pray, gratefully using the Words He has given me, in response to His Call:

“Lord! He is a poor and lowly servant of Thine, enthralled and imploring Thee, . . . praying fervently to Thee, . . . calling to Thee . . . With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee, at dawn-tide and in the night-season.” BP’69, 137-8 #6

How blessed I am, in being taught to address my invisible Lord and heavenly Father so effectively! Baha’u’llah provides such adequate instruction for my communication and communing!

But will God answer me - does He answer me - when I pray?

Never let me doubt it! For I am told to address Him as:

“the prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God” BP’69, 86#70

“The God of strength and power Who are meet to answer them that pray Thee”

BP’69, 100 #80 or P&M 60

“the Almighty, the Most Powerful, Who are wont to answer the prayers of all

men. . . , who hearest and art ready to answer” BP’69, 102-#81 or P&M 247-8
And I am taught to affirm, in communing with Him:

“Thou disappointest no one who hath sought Thee” BP’69, 55 #40 or P&M 249
(see page 56) [])

and “Who is there who hath cried after Thee, and whose prayer hath remained
unanswered? Where is he to be found who hath reached forth towards Thee, and whom
Thou hast failed to approach? . . . I bear witness that Thou hadst turned toward Thy
servants ere they had turned toward Thee, and hadst remembered them ere they had
remembered Thee.” P&M 254

Prayer-answering power is inexhaustible and dependable, because it is the power of the
Creator Himself. My prayer releases the flow or determines “the course of the divine bounty
which is ever ready to serve those who have learned how to draw on it.” (New Ear 108) I should
be careful, then, about what I ask of God. For I recall what Baha’u’llah said about God’s decrees:
that harm may result from changing what has been ordained that “will be greater than if the
decree had remained unaltered.” So when I petition God, I remember His admonition that “all
should willingly acquiesce in what God hath willed and confidently abide by the same,” GL 133
(see page 49 []) and add to my request, “If it be Thy will.” It is so important to pray, “thy will
be done”! The Voice of God today urges:

“O SON OF SPIRIT! Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be
content with what We have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if
therewith thou dost content thyself.” HWA 8 #18

Sometimes, too, God answers “NO”:

“Spirit has influence: Prayer has spiritual effect: therefore we pray. . . God will
answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, illimitable . .
. His mercy is all-encircling . . . (but) it is evident that it would not be well for us if all
prayers were answered as asked. The affairs of the world would be interfered with,
energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for, which is in accord
with Divine Wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly!

“For instance, a very feeble patient may ask for roast meat. The doctor is kind and
wise. He knows it would be dangerous to his patient, so he refuses to allow it. The doctor
is merciful; the patient is ignorant. Through the doctor’s kindness the patient recovers; his
life is saved. Yet the patient may cry out that the doctor is unkind, not good, because he
refuses to answer his pleading.” PUP 241-2

How can I resist the heavenly opportunity to communicate with my Maker, my Adored
One, my King, my Desire? The more I pray, the more I am attracted to God, and I am told that

“By these attractions one’s ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is
widened the water increaseth and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes
agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of

stating one's wants." DAL 26 # 1

Yes, prayer is communication with God, and is the to my spiritual life what human communication is between a helpless child and its mother. I need to check my prayer life. Am I realizing the full potentialities of this portal to heaven?

As I communicate with God, what greater blessing can I request than what is expressed in this petition? -

"I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy most sweet voice and by Thy most exalted Word, to draw me ever nearer to the threshold of Thy door . . ." BP'69, 161 #21 or P&M 288

8. PRAYER OPEN THE PORTALS OF MY INNER BEING TO CELESTIAL LIGHT

"O Thou Who art the Lord of all names and the Maker of the heavens! I beseech Thee . . . to make of my prayer a fire that will burn away the veils that have shut me out from Thy beauty, and a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence. O Thou . . . by the fire of Whose love the whole world hath been set aflame!" BP'69, 120-2 or P&M 317-8

Baha'u'llah has, as noted (see page 18 []) assured me that "the means of access " to God's Presence has been "made available unto all crated things." BWF 30 or GL 63 If I can imagine the fulfillment and bliss that a soul can experience from being in God's Presence, when I learn that God is there waiting for me to "see" Him, and that that "access" can be gained through prayer, I shall certainly want to understand this glorious truth and learn how my prayer can be "made" such a fire and light. For this is what I pray for in the Long Obligatory Prayer that Baha'u'llah has given to mankind for everyday use. It establishes a goal or ideal that is irresistibly desirable. My prayer can and must become a fire and a light.

Let me consider what these two words mean:

fire - active principle operative in combustion, flame, incandescence: state of combustion, burning, fig. excited: conflagration, destructive burning. (Oxford Dictionary)

1a: the phenomenon of combustion manifested in light, flame and heat

2.: fuel in combustion

3a: a destructive burning

4.: BRILLIANCY, LUMINOSITY (Webster's Dictionary)

light - the natural agent that stimulates the sense of sight; sun's direct or diffused rays, daylight; mental illumination, elucidation. (Oxford Dictionary)

natural agent that stimulates the sense of sight;

medium or condition of space in which sight is possible (opp. darkness)

appearance of brightness (NORTHERN LIGHTS);

sensation peculiar to the optic nerve;

amount of illumination in place, one's fair or ordinary share of this;

vicacity in person's eyes;

favoring aspect;

sun's direct or diffused or reflected rays, daylight (Webster's Dictionary)

Both fire and light, in the spiritual sense are explained fully in the Baha'i Revelation.

The basic definition of spiritual fire is the love of God; and spiritual light is spiritual illumination or elucidation. As I think about these realities, it is noteworthy that the light emanates from the fire, as is true in earthly existence of the relation between fire and light!

Baha'u'llah identifies "fire" as love in the realms of spirit, in such statements as the following:

"the fire of Thy love hath been kindled throughout Thy dominion". P&M 116

"The fire of Thy love . . . burneth continually within me." P&M 269

'Thou . . . causest the dawn to appear, by the Lamp which Thou didst light with fire of Thy love" P&M 32 sec XXVIII

"Thou art He the fire of Whose love have set ablaze the hearts of them that have recognized Thy unity." P&M 212

In "THE VALLEY of LOVE . . . the heaven of ecstasy is upraised and the world-illuminating sun of yearning shineth, and the fire of love is ablaze . . ." 7 VAL 8

"And a spark of the fire of Thy love is enough to set ablaze a whole world." P&M 245

"Grant, O my Lord, that the fire of Thy love . . . may inflame them in Thy Cause". P&M 67

And finally I recall His saying:

"O My servants! . . . Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts. Feed it with the oil of Divine guidance, and protect it within the shelter of your constancy." BWF 66 or GL 325-6 (see page 34)

And I know that the "oil of Divine guidance" comes as a result of petitions, and that my constancy must find expression in remembering God through meditation and prayer.

"Love of God" is used in two ways: in referring to love that God feels, and in mentioning our love for Him. In the first sense we find that life itself is a process compared to combustion,

and the reality of love is something to which we are subjected with dynamic results, perhaps because love is the active principle operative in connection with the process that takes place in our very existence since love is “the principle of God’s purpose for man.” 34(a,b). Baha’u’llah refers repeatedly to the Fire of God’s love, in this sense, as He meditates. He mentions Himself as God’s “Lamp” which the Creator did light with the fire of divine love, a Lamp whose flame God feeds with the fuel of heavenly wisdom. P&M 32-3 He addresses His Lord, as He communes with Him, as “Thou, my God Who settest my soul on fire,” PP&M 269 and “thou by the fire of Whose love the whole world hath been set aflame.” BP’69, 122 or P&M 318 (see page 75 []) Again He refers to the “Fire which blazeth and rageth in the world of creation”; BP’69, 72-3 #56 or P&M 76 which remind me that fire can destroy as well as to give light. Since it can be destructive it not used for its intended purpose, I must be sure to establish the right relation with this powerful Force. Baha’u’llah asks the Creator to “have pity . . . upon those hearts which have been consumed by the fire of Thy love, and been touched by . . . tribulations.” P&M 335

Baha’u’llah teaches us to recognize and seek this Fire as a reality. He gives us prayers to use, affirming that the soul may be “enkindled” by it. (BP’69, 51 #27, 81 #65, 143 #10) And “set aglow with” it. (50 #36 and 156 # 19) ‘Abdu’l-Baha speaks to a believer as “thou who warmest thyself by the fire of the love of God,” and tells us, about this spiritual reality, that we must be “born of its quickening” and baptized with “the living fire”. BWF 261 We learn too, that it is through the Fire of God’s love that we are tested. For “pure gold shineth . . . in the fire of tests.” Tests are the means of our growth, if we meet them in the “right” way. But they are often bitterly unpleasant. This is when I find myself rebelling against this “Fire”. But the voice of God explains:

“My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit.” HWA 15 #51

When I lack the vision to see God’s providence, light and mercy in what I don’t like, or in what I am too spiritually blind to see as manifestations of His love, then instead of being [en]kindled, warmed and set aglow by the Fire, what registers in my heart, is rebellion and a dynamic rejection of what I should accept with radiant acquiescence.

God warns that this can happen when He says

“O CHILDREN OF THE DIVINE INVISIBLE ESSENCE! Ye shall be hindered from loving Me and souls shall be perturbed as they make mention of Me. For minds cannot grasp Me nor hearts contain Me.” HWA 19 #66

Baha’u’llah reveals the fact that love is one spiritual reality that emanates from God, and that reflects in souls, in varying degrees, since souls are created to be as mirrors that have the capacity to reflect God’s qualities or attributes. “Abdu’l-Baha enlarges on this idea by saying the dross of “worldly desires” must be “blotted out from the face of mirrors” (my outer consciousness?) Before it can reflect the divine “light and glory”. BWF 103 or CL 65-6 He also

states, of this fire of the love of God, that

“In the world of existence there is indeed no greater power than the power of love.

When the heart of man is aglow with the flame of love, he is ready to sacrifice all - even his life. In the Gospel it is said that God is love.” PT 179-80

He then goes on to define four evidences of this power whose reality is centered in and emanated from the Creator Himself: (a) love of God that is God; (b) love of God for His children; © love of man for God; and (d) love of man for man. This explains that “love of God”, as we use it, can mean either His love [for us] or our love for Him. And of course, love of material realities that attract me is a first reflection of this power. What reflects in my lower nature and outer human consciousness, which is a very clouded part of my soul-mirror, is an extremely limited degree of love that we recognize as self-love. For my physical survival, a degree of this is needed. But when people are not delivered from “the fire of self”, Baha’u’llah points out that it can burn “so fiercely that at every moment they seem to be afflicted with fresh torment.” Iqan 77 I note too that, if unchecked, “the fire of negation and denial” ESW 131 in my own being can cause my heart to burn with hatred ESW 32 bitterness and resentment against God Himself. Iqan 10 Baha’u’llah pointed out the evil cause by flames from “the fires of unbelief” that burned in the hearts of infidels in the past. Iqan 121 He said that chastisement in the next world as well as torment here can result from the fire of the infidels’ misbelief.” Iqan 233

I am quite aware that the effects of fire can be painful. Baha’u’llah spoke, in His meditations, of the souls of believers being “burnt up by the fire of their yearning after Thee,” P&M 7 and it is true that “whenever I ponder my evil doing and God’s benevolence, “my heart melteth within me, and my blood boileth in my veins.” BP”69, 127 or P&M 322 My conscience can be quickened in an agonizing way. but I remember that Baha’u’llah has said that until I burn with the fire of love, I shall never commune with the Lover.” 7 VAL 9 And besides, I know that through Baha’u’llah, God has separated “light from fire, and truth from denial.” P&M 125 And this makes the way safe for me.

And oh, how precious are the benefits of that Fire!

“If you take bars of iron and tie them together, no matter how closely, they will not become one. But when a metallurgist comes on the scene, he takes the ten bars, melts them in the furnace and casts them in one mould; only through this fiery furnace will their atoms commingle with each other, become united and inseparable.

“This is the work that Baha’u’llah has done and is doing. He has not tied together the iron bars - the religions of the world - with the rope of indulgent tolerance or ordinary amenities of human necessities, which are liable to break at any time, but with the fire of the Love of God. He has melted them first and the cast them in one [mold] of spiritual brotherhood. He has rendered the most marvelous service to the world of humanity.

Baha’u’llah is the Divine Metllurgist, and those who have deep insight and look around

the world witness the workings of the principle of fusion.” ‘Abadu’l-Baha, SofW Vol. 15, 208

The potentialities of this commingling, melting and unification are heavenly beyond imagining, and I do long for some of that divine Fire to spark my prayers and burn away the veils that hamper my vision, and to open the portals of my heart to “the Divine Light that can give us sight for the invisible things,” 93(aa), PT 69 (see page 17 []) and [S]piritual Truth. So I heed these instructions:

“Turn to God, supplicate humbly at His threshold, seeking assistance and confirmation, that God may rend asunder the veils that obscure your vision. Then will your eyes be filled with illumination, face to face you will behold the reality of God and your heart become completely purified from the dross of ignorance, reflecting the glories and bounties of the Kingdom. FWU 76

And “when the true lover and devoted friend reacheth the presence of the Beloved, the sparkling beauty of the Loved One and the fire of the lover’s heart will kindle a blaze and burn away all veils and wrappings.” 7 VAL 36

What a promise!

Many such fires are converted into Light through God’s Manifestation, and through Him, we learn the light can likewise become a fire. ESW 173

“It is the warmth that these Luminaries of God generate, and the undying fires they kindle, which cause the light of the love of God to burn fiercely in the heart of humanity.” IQAN 34

What a bounty it is, then, to know that this undying Fire “glows on the Sinai of this mysterious and transcendent Revelation”, BWF 66 or GL 325 and is available to me!

Baha’u’llah, the current Luminary of God, explains how to clear the mirror of my heart when He says that the veils of the satanic self must “be burned away at the fire of love,” 7 VAL 11 and urges me to “Burn away, wholly for the sake of the Well-Beloved, the veil of self with the flame of the undying Fire”. 76(dd), BWF 118 or GL 316 He says:

“In they soul of love build thou a fire and burn all thoughts and word entire”. 7 VAL 28

He goes on to say, “Out of the clay of love I molded thee” 42(d), HWA 7 #13 (see page 22 []) this may be why He speaks of my “soul of love”; love is the basic potential of my being. But the first form of the “clay” that shows, is self-love “for self-love is kneaded into the very clay of man” SDC 96 and only through “true religious faith” and prayer, can the earthly desires and selfish concerns be burned away. This is where prayer comes in!

In communing with God, Baha’u’llah acknowledges His responsibility and duty of kindling the fire of God’s love in hearts. BWF 89 or P&M 107 (see page 32 []) The fire of that love is there potentially. I know that in my it “doth smoulder”, but - dear God! I do indeed beg to have it “set aglow with the flame of the celestial love and spirit”! BP’69, 109 #89 So well has

Baha'u'llah fulfilled His duty, that I know that that flame can consume “all human traits and limitations” IQAN 79 and that if I am “kindled with the fire of His love” my words will “set on fire” those hearts that hear me GL 335 For the remembrance of His Name “is able to set on fire the hearts of all men and burn away the veils that intervene between them and His glory.” GL 286-7

But I must open my heart, respond to that heavenly conflagration, and receive its benefits. This is why I must pray. For prayer opens portals in my heart and outer consciousness, exposing me to this reality. Using the precious Words I have been given, I cry out from the depths of my heart:

“O my Lord, my Best-Beloved, the Mover of my actions, the Lode Star of my soul, the Voice that crieth in mine inmost Being, the Object of mine heart’s adoration! Praise be to thee, for having enabled me to turn my face towards Thee, for having set my soul ablaze through remembrance of Thee, for having aided me to proclaim Thy Name and to sing Thy praises . . . GL 310 (see page 58 [])

“Ignite, then, O my God, within my breast the fire of Thy love, that its flame my burn up all else but my remembrance of Thee.” P&M 161

It is true that “by the fire of the Love of God the veil is burnt which separates us from the Heavenly Realities.” PT 82 But I still need a special kind of light to see what is so disclosed. And just as the light of the sun enables me to discern the beauties of the material world around me, so too I need light from the Sun of Reality to make the beauties of unseen worlds visible.

I naturally view life in the light of my intellect. That ability is “born of the Divine Light” PT 69 - it is “the illumination of the Holy Spirit (that) gives to man the power of thought.” 22(r), PT 59 (see 5(f)) But “it is only the Divine Light that can give us sight for the invisible things.” PT 69

“A man may have attained to a high degree of material progress, but without the light of truth his soul is stunted and starved. Another man may have no material gifts, may be at the bottom of the social ladder, but, having received the warmth of the Sun of Truth, his soul is great and his spiritual understanding is enlightened.” 70 (a), PT 31
And now, that God,

“The constellation of love and wisdom and power is once more shining from the Divine Horizon to give joy to all who turn their faces to the Light of God.” 19(ii), PT 34
So I understand ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s admonition to “let not the things of the body obscure the celestial light of the spirit.” PT 45

Since the portals of God’s grace are open, and the means of access to His Presence have been made available, and the revelations of His matchless Beauty are imprinted on the realities of all beings, BWF 30 or GL 63(see page 1 []) I pray for the light that enables me to see and recognize what is available.

What and where is that “celestial light”? This brings me to Baha'u'llah's definitions of

the word.

He is not the first to speak of spiritual light, though it has never before been so fully defined. The Bible speaks of light as coming from a “sun” and “moon”, which would one day “be turned into darkness and . . . blood. (Joel 2:31 and Act 2:20) Baha’u’llah has had to explain, however, that this is a symbolic use of the words, and does not refer to the sun and moon of our physical world. It is spiritual light to which the Bible refers. As a basis of understanding the realities referred to, ‘Abdu’l-Baha reveals this important and revealing fact:

“The physical universe is . . . 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.” 80(e), PUP 264

In other words:

“The world spiritual is like unto the world phenomenal. 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.” PUP 7-8

We are told further that in the

“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 shown upon humanity, illumining the realm of thought and morals, conferring the bounties of the divine world upon man . . 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 . . . imbues humanity with archetypal virtues.” 71(h), BWF 254-5

Scriptures refer repeatedly to the Word of God and the Being Who embodies the Word, and also each divine Revelation, as the Sun of Truth or Sun of Reality. It is a reflection of the fire or a beam of light from the Sun, that I ask God to make of my prayer, so that it may burn away obscuring veils and lead me to the very Presence of God.

But my prayer comes from me. One might question, then, how it can become part of the light from that mysterious Sun of Reality or the Word of God. But this has been fully explained.

For one thing, I learn about myself, the real me, that

“The All-loving God created man to radiate the Divine Light and to illumine the world by his words, action and life.” 32(g), PT 113

For “Man is the perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth, and is the center of radiation; the Sun of Truth shines in this mirror.” 17(g), BWF 311 or SAQ 228-9

And, as previously stated (see page 27 []),

“the Perfect Man, the Prophet, is One. . . Who has the purity and clearness of a perfect mirror - One who reflects the Sun of Truth. Of such a One we can say that the Light of Divinity with the heavenly Perfections dwells in Him.” 17(g)’ AbBa in Lond 10

For “To man is given the special gift of the intellect by which he is able to receive a

larger share of the light Divine. The Perfect Man is as a polished mirror reflecting the Sun of Truth, manifesting the attributes of God.” 41(t), PT 25 (see page 17 [])

“As the sun is to the body of man, so is the Sun of Truth to his soul.” 39(u), PT 31

“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 . . . The mission of the Prophets of God has been to train the souls . . . and free them from the thralldom of natural instincts and physical tendencies.” 28(t), PUP 304 (see page 27)

Whether the Sun of Reality refers to God, the Supreme Light Source, or to His Manifestation in Whom we can see Its perfect reflection, the important point is that I must develop a definite relationship with the Sun.

“Only the reality of man can become the mirror wherein the lights of God are revealed.” 32(h), PUP 324-5

thus each revealed religion is, in its time “a manifest Light”, 95(v), BWF 198 from its Founder Who is the eternal Bringer of Light. Gradually, however, its radiance becomes dimmed even as the time comes each day for the setting of the earthly sun. Then the “darkness of ignorance and heedlessness concerning the realm of eternity” and our relationship to God, encircles the universe. 99(g), BF 352 And this lasts until

“The Sun of Truth appears again on the horizon of the world shining into the eyes of those who sleep, awakening them to behold the glory of a new dawn.” 1(d), PT 32

“For every age requireth a fresh measure of the light of God.” GL 81

And “in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity.” GL 87

The “corrosion of ungodliness” that we observe “eating into the vitals of human society” should alert us to the period of winter darkness that has encompassed mankind. 98(b) (see page 29 []) We see people still clinging to their traditional religious forms, but from these “the light of reality is obscured.” 98 (a), PUP 216

“Just as . . . mists and vapors conceal the phenomenal sun, so human imaginations obscure the Sun of Truth.” 65(l), PUP 75

What mankind as a whole does not realize is that

“The glorious Sun of Truth has once again risen in the East . . . The light of the unity of mankind is beginning to illumine the world, and soon the banner of Divine harmony . . . will be flying high in the Heavens. Yea, the breezes of the Holy Spirit will inspire the whole world.” 99(I), PT 109 (see page 27 [])

But I know this! For I have recognized that

“The world is illuminated with the lights of the orb of manifestation; for in the ‘year eighty’ (1863) the world attained to the new light and the wonderful life.” BWF 176 I have had conferred on my the honor of recognizing Baha’u’llah, BP’69, 57 #42 or BWF

149, P&M 94 and have already experienced from Him the mental illumination and elucidation that have enable me to know where the “light” I seek may be found. I know that Religion Founders are

“The Luminaries of Truth and the Mirrors reflecting the light of divine Unity in whatever age and cycle they are sent.” Iqan 97

Thus I revere Abraham who invited people of the earth to “the light of righteousness;” Iqan 10 and Moses Who was commissioned to shed upon souls “the light of divine guidance;” Iqan 54 and likewise Jesus Who brought still more “light that hath shone forth from the horizon of the Will” of the Lord. BWF 49 or ESW 47 I am aware also that Muhammad brought “justice which turned into light the darkness of the earth,” and that since then He has “enraptured” million of hearts, ESW 81 even though other millions “deprived themselves of the light of heavenly grace” that He made available. Iqan 117

Thanks to the divine elucidation that Baha’u’llah has provided, I recognize that

“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 . . . Through Them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by Them is revealed the light that can never fade.” BWF 19-20, GL 47 or Iqan 100

For each of these Beings has been “led by the light of unfailing guidance,” BWF 104 or GL 67, and “Out of every manifestation of His invincible power oceans of eternal light have outpoured.” 29(nn) or ll(ee), BWF 28 or GL 61 So “I praise and glorify . . . the first fire which was lit from the Lamp of Pre-Existence in the lantern of singleness,” 7 Val 2 knowing that this “Lamp” is the Prophet of God in each Age. But, in addition, I know that now

“The Master of the house hath appeared within His home, and all the pillars of the dwelling are ashine with His light, and the action and effect of that light are from the light-giver.” 7 VAL 22

I know too that “The light that is she from the heaven of bounty” rests upon Baha’u’llah. ESW 1-2 For I recognize that this is a new Day. And as I face my Creator in prayer or meditation, I gladly use these illuminating words about this Day of God:

“I testify that the light it sheddeth proceedeth out of the glory of the light of Thy countenance, and is begotten by the radiance of the mor of Thy Revelation.” P&M 273 For now “. . . within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of the Most Great Light.” 15 * ___, BWF 116, GL 117 or Iqan 100 Through Baha’u’llah, the Creator is turning “darkness into light.” ESW 8 For God has enabled Him to unravel mysteries, and to shine with the lights of divine inspiration and Revelation. BWF 71, P&M 49 Not only has the Supreme Pen caused “worlds to appear”, but He has “bestowed ideal light on the eyes,” BWF 177 to enable us to envision those worlds. How grateful I am, to have actually experienced this!

As a Baha’i I do indeed know what the “light” is that I seek to “make of my prayer.” And

it can happen, even though my prayer must come from me, must be an outpouring of my own heart and not merely the reading of Another's words, however divine. My prayer must come from what I know and feel in my inner-most being. But this may well be a combination of knowledge and emotions that I am unaware of, in my outer consciousness.

Baha'u'llah gives a new concept of knowledge. I recall that He says that the kind of knowledge that is "praiseworthy" is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth:" 57(b), Iqan 46-7 (see page 36 []) and that it is in hearts, but "hidden under the veilings of sense and the conditions of this heart:. 41(w), 7 VAL 23-4 (see pages 8, 11, 27 & 36) what an exciting thought! - that there is some of that there is some of that mysterious heavenly light in my heart, waiting to be called forth through prayer and meditation! This is what I am asking for, then - that my prayer may become a vehicle to bring that God-given light into my outer consciousness and to lead me to the ocean of God's presence. How on earth can I neglect that kind of praying?

It is because I am associated with people in whose hearts I find only the human "fire of misbelief and denial" and no warmth from the "fire of God's love?" Am I drawn into their ways of thinking and viewing life?

Baha'u'llah has called attention to such rejection, saying:

"Each time the Most Mighty Instrument hath come, and that Light shone forth from the Ancient Dayspring, He was withheld by the ignorant. . . who, even as clouds, interposed themselves between Him and the world." ESW 63

Always, then, there are those who do not cultivate or use their inner vision or the spirit of faith, and remain blind to the dazzling light of a new Revelation. Even some of the Babis were in this class, and about them Baha'u'llah said:

"The blind in heart . . . are impotent, no matter how long the Sun may shine upon them, either to perceive the radiance of its glory, or to appreciate the warmth of its rays." BWF 34 or GL 106

Such people cannot see that "today the light of Truth is shining upon the world in its abundance." 91 (m), AbBa in Lond 3 In fact they have rejected and persecuted Baha'u'llah. But God forbid that I should become one of them or even be influenced by them. For I love 'Abdu'l-Baha, and have heard him pleading: "let all strive to grow in the light of the Sun of Truth; 19(hjj), PT 37 And I have recognized and adore Him Who is the Day Spring of this Light. GL 199 I remember that 'Abdu'l-Baha has said:

"The bestowals of God which are manifest in all phenomenal life are sometimes hidden by intervening veils of mental and mortal vision which render man spiritually blind and incapable" (those, I ask that my prayer may become a fire and burn away!) "But when those scales are removed and the veils rent asunder, then the great signs of God will become visible and" I shall "witness the eternal light filling the world." 4(m), 64(a), BWF 266

And I have heard the Voice of God speaking to my heart.

“O SON OF SPIRIT! With the joyful tidings of light I hail thee: rejoice! To the court of holiness I summon thee: abide therein that thou mayest live in peace for evermore.” 83(dd), HWA 11 #33

Let me review, then, some of the qualities of holiness and peace-giving virtues that I may partake of in this spiritual condition of world, simply by opening the portals of my heart and calling into action my latent divinity through prayer.

First of all there is knowledge which must reflect as awareness constantly in my immediate consciousness; for it is the beginning of every reaction that takes place there in my everyday living. On what kind of knowledge or awareness do I base my reacting? Baha'u'llah draws a sharp line between the “Divine Knowledge” that “welleth out from the fountain of divine inspiration”, and the human knowledge that is the product of my lower nature (“satanic”) 55(kk), PUP 289 and prompted by “selfish desire.” 3© Of course it is the first kind that I long for and must have in order to achieve the purpose of my being.

I recall Baha'u'llah's statements (see page 1 []) that

“the fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun hath been made manifest.” 74(1), Iqan 29-30 (see page 1 []) The doors have been opened, and I have been given access to that precious kind of light for God's first “purpose in sending His Prophets” is “to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding.” GL 79-80

and He points out a clear potentiality of my own being, than, in saying:

“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.” 25(ooo) Iqan 49

I know that the light is available to me, but I must seek it. I must pray in order to open the portals of my heart and to bring the new-born illumination into my outer consciousness. For He has warned me, too, that

“Only when the lamp of search . . . is kindled within the seeker's heart . . . 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, . . . through the trumpet-blast of knowledge . . . awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of heedlessness.” 93(ff), BWF 107, GL 267 or Iqan 195-6

Again I see that God has provided what my heart needs for growth, progress and fulfillment, but I must do my part. How can I ignore that “trumpet-blast of knowledge,”

especially when Baha'u'llah Himself has prayed so earnestly for me to respond, in such words as these:

“Illumine, O my Lord, the eyes of Thy servants, and brighten their hearts with the splendors of the light of Thy knowledge”. P&M 275

“O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of knowledge.” BP’69, 111

“O Beloved One, Thou giver of light to the world! “ BP’69, 86 #70

“Praise be unto Thee, O my God, that we have wakened to the splendors of the light of Thy knowledge.” BP’69, 18 #10 or P&M 233

“Thy knowledge”! If I have the faintest inkling of the value of God’s knowledge or knowledge of God, I certainly shall seek that “light” through prayer, every day of my life. Hasn’t Baha’u’llah told me “that the beginning of all things is the knowledge of God”? 23(ii), GL 5 - and that “the highest and last end of all learning” is “the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge”? GL 199 I have a natural desire for knowledge; but do I understand the value of recognition and sustained awareness of the Light-Bringer? Let me meditate on this verity:

“Wert thou to explore the sacred domain of truth, thou wilt find that all things are known only by the light of His recognition.” Iqan 91

In discussing “heaven” and the “immortality of the spirit,” He defines “true paradise,” the paradise ‘Abdu’l-Baha speaks of as being “delivered through the light of faith from the darkness of vices” (engrossment in carnal desires, etc.), and as acquiring “the divine perfections, the eternal bounties, and everlasting felicity.” BWF 324 or SAQ 259-61 For these virtues, then, I pray, and know that I have access to them as the portals of light are opened within my heart.

Since the purpose of my being is to acquire knowledge and love of God, it is not surprising to find Baha’u’llah asking the Creator again and again to illumine eyes with the light of knowledge (P&M 38, 228, 275, etc.). This is a primary need of my being, because my vision, which depends on light, must function before I can react. Perception is the first step in reacting, and every step of living is a reaction. I recognize, gratefully, then, that the light of knowledge is the first radiation from the Sun of Reality that manifests in my living. But simultaneously with that light as part of my spirit, comes the warmth that the Fire of love or emotional energy reflects; for awareness of every stimulus carries with it a feeling. What I see clearly enough to cause a conscious reaction, always makes me feel something. If awareness come through the sensations of my outer being, my feeling is one of pleasure or pain, which are positive or negative manifestations of that “heat.” And if it comes via an inner awareness, it stirs a liking or dislike, an attraction or revulsion, a love or a hatred - all of which are positive or negative manifestations of my love power. So I must remember that knowledge and love are two manifestations of one Spiritual “sun”, and are twin powers.

Actually, love is the most desirable of all virtues because all others are a by-product of this divine radiance. Knowledge is a light that God casts into the heart and in this sense is a

unique quality. Yet even knowledge, or at least understanding which is a high degree of knowledge, is one with love. For when I love someone, I note that my awareness of that person increases, and my knowledge of his reality grows and transcends an ordinary acquaintance with him. So love is both Light and Heat from the fire of God's love. No wonder Baha'u'llah admonishes us thus:

“Hearken ye to the Call of this wronged One. . . and illumine your heats with the light of His love.” BWF 132 or GL 205

this is why I am taught to pray “illumine my brow (the symbol of the seat of knowledge) by the light of adoration . . . and of prayer. . . “ BP’69, 137-8 (see page 39 []) and to ask God to “bestow upon me a heart which, like unto glass, may be illumined with the light of God's love.” BP’69, 96 #77 I pray thus especially when anxiety overtakes me, for I know something that Baha'u'llah quotes: namely, that “Love is a light that never dwelleth in a heart possessed by fear.” 7 VAL 55

He reminds me that fear is used here in the sense of lack of faith and dread of worldly terrors. Certainly fear of God is not what is referred to here, for about one who “feareth not God,” Baha'u'llah has said: “God will make him to fear all things: whereas all things fear him who feareth God.” *ibid.* Indicating the relation of knowledge of the fear of God, Baha'u'llah says:

“And . . . confirmed by the Creator, the lover . . . will enter THE VALLEY OF KNOWLEDGE and . . . turn from the darkness of illusion to the guiding light of the fear of God.” 7 VAL 11

It is my sincere desire to be one of those God-fearing believers about whom Baha'u'llah has said:

“Methinks the lamp of Thy love is burning in their hearts, and the light of Thy tenderness is lit within their breasts.” BP’69, 106 #85 or P&M 3

Prayers that ask for the celestial light that can come through the portals of my heart are too numerous to mention. There are so many kinds of light, as I have seen! We have been given two whole glorious books of Prayers; and in every petition I ask for some kind of radiance from the Sun of Reality and Truth. I must answer my own question, then, as to which prayers to use to answer my need today, in addition to an Obligatory One.

In terms of human experience, what makes it important to understand that knowledge in earthly affairs corresponds to something called light in the realms of infinitude, eternity and divinity, is the fact that the human mind can only grasp knowledge beam by beam. In other words, each law, principle or truth that I grasp is only one single beam of the divine illumination toward which I am slowly groping my way and which Baha'u'llah has made available. I live in relative darkness where idle fancies and vain imaginations appear as truth and dictate my behavior to a large extent. What I know now is partially adequate for earthly living. But each insight or inspiration that I receive as I read or meditate on the creative Word of God, each

answer I receive from praying, enlarges my incipient understanding of reality. It lights up some dark area of human vision, and confusion, large or small, where idle fancies and vain imaginations have been seen as truth and have dictated my behavior.

So I thank God wholeheartedly for these portals of light!

9. ACCESS TO THE SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE THAT MY HEART NEEDS

In the world of nature I note that every plant and animal organism has its own identity and yet is composed of specific chemical elements. I note, too, that the Creator places each plant and animal organism in surroundings that provide an abundance of those same chemical elements because they are needed to activate its growth and to maintain its vitality during its life-time. And in each is implanted a need for sustenance, which in the animal organism we call hunger and thirst.

Hunger is the outer picture of what exists in the spiritual realm, as already noted, since “the world spiritual is like unto the world phenomenal, and each is “the exact counterpart of the other.” PUP 7-8 (see page 80 []) For instance, in the phenomenal world, as a being of the spiritual world, my body is a unique entity, and my own identity. but I remember that while my physical being was created of chemical element, I, a “living soul,” was created from elements of the spiritual world: namely, “the essence of knowledge . . . (and) the clay of love”. 42(d), HWA 7 #13 (see pages 21-2) I have heard the Voice of God telling me that He “breathed within me a breath” of His own Spirit, 70(g), HWA 8 #19 (see page 27 []) which is infinite, eternal and divine; and that out of “the wastes of nothingness,” and from “the clay of His command He made me appear.” 58(e), HWP 32 #29 Hunger, then, expresses the dependence of my being on Him from Who is derived the sustenance of all things. BWF 121 or GL 166 (see page 4 [])

So, too, I may expect to find in the unseen world of spirit with which my soul is surrounded, the elements that went into my creation: knowledge and love; divine spirit; and God’s command or Will. to put it even more simply, these ingredients are summed up at times as the “water of life.” It is a divine reality that is far beyond my powers of comprehension; for Baha’u’llah teaches me to admit in these words:

“I know not what the water is with which Thou hast created me, or what the fire Thou hast kindled within me, or the clay wherewith Thou hast kneaded me.” P&M 12

Baha'u'llah makes every effort to help me understand that such “water”, “fire” and “clay” as are in my own being are supplied in abundance by my spiritual surroundings. But like all nourishment, I must reach out and take these spiritual elements that are needed to maintain the growth and vitality of my soul. He also makes it clear that the need and desire for such sustenance are part of my make-up, that they are a counterpart of my physical hunger and thirst.

But how am I, a human creature, with such limited powers of perception, going to recognize and connect with the means of my soul's sustenance and fulfillment?

Baha'u'llah has unveiled an invisible, eternal world of infinitude and divinity. And He does for me what a loving mother of a blind child might do as she points out and names the invisible objects to which the little one must relate, using terms of the child's own experience. Thus Baha'u'llah, in terms of my own human experience, points out and names the elements of my spiritual environment to which I must relate. He directs me to partake of the “food” that my inner being craves.

We human creatures have very few words and an extremely restricted vocabulary by which a superhuman Enlightener can discuss the invisible heavenly realities that face us. He is limited to terminology that has meaning to us. when He does use unfamiliar names of spiritual realities such as soul, spirit, divinity or Manifestation of God, Baha'u'llah carefully defines them in words that we can understand. But in speaking of an unnamed reality in the intangible world of spirit of which we should become aware, He resorts to naming its counterpart in our visible world.

For instance, He mentions thirst and hunger as qualities of the soul, and of water, food and nourishment in naming the intangible sustenance for which I hunger and thirst, assuring me that the Creator has bounteously provided these.

This is not mere poetic language. It is “symbolic,” but every symbol refers to a definite reality existing in the unseen spiritual world. However, my intellect is incapable of grasping the full significance of His words. So first my heart must listen attentively to His Voice, and then I must prayerfully meditate on His Teachings. I must consciously and dynamically use my spirit of faith and call on the inner light of my soul, so that my whole being may apprehend and feel what He is introducing and explaining.

Study of the Revelation, prayer that I may understand it, and deep thought about what is revealed, are inexorable needs of my being. Unrecognized hungers and thirsts may torment me, otherwise. And if I live on, unaware both of the needs of my soul and of the sustenance by which my hungers can be satisfied and my heart be nourished, starvation could result.

The blind child who rejects or ignores his mother's patient efforts to acquaint him [with] his environment, is going to remain pitifully ignorant and be unable to take his rightful place in the human world. and by the same token, if I ignore Baha'u'llah's patient efforts to acquaint me with my invisible spiritual environment, I shall remain pitifully ignorant. Even if I gain every academic degree that universities offer, and though I master all human learning, I shall still be

unable to take my rightful place in the spiritual world here or hereafter.

So first let me listen to what Baha'u'llah says about the "water of life" for which my soul thirsts, because He wrote that "from this Pen there floweth out unto all created things the water that is life indeed." P&M 281. And I have learned to thank God for having quickened me with it when "I was as one dead" BP'69, 111 #1 or P&M 264 CLXXIII This "Water" is characterized by heavenly attributes, and has a divine Source and Purpose; and these I must "see", to a degree at least, in order to be in touch with the reality of this sustenance. I can get an inkling of God's heavenly provision as I ponder on the following kinds of "water" that have been mentioned:

the waters of God's Beauty: "my soul rejoiceth at having partaken" of them P&M 96

the waters of God's bounty: one who is "athirst panteth" for them. P&M 195

Baha'u'llah asks God to supply seekers with them (and we know that Baha'u'llah only asks for what God is ready to give). P&M 152 I am told that "A sprinkling" of these waters "can cause the entire creation to attain unto true wealth." P&M 246 How marvelous!

the waters of constancy: I am lovingly invited to drink my fill from these "crystal" waters. BWF 11 or GL 13

the waters of detachment: "that have flowed out from the Supreme Pen" can cleanse my soul. Baha'u'llah says that "now is the time" to do so. "Cleansing" myself should precede every prayer. ESW 12

the waters of God's eternity: Baha'u'llah asks God to give believers to drink of them from the hands of His graciousness. BP'69, 159 #20 or P&M 66 Can I doubt that they are available?

the waters of God's favors: "whoso hath quaffed" them "can fear no trouble." P&M 154 what an irresistible promise!

the waters of God's grace: quenches "the thirst of heedlessness", I am told. BWF 64 or GL 323 God has guided His lovers to them, P&M 307 and he who was athirst has "hasted to attain" them. P&M 241 shall I not be one of these?

the waters of God's knowledge: Baha'u'llah asks God to give me "a draught" of those "soft-flowing waters." BP'69, 65 #49, P&M 72, BWF 91 or P&M 109 and I know that His petitions are answered!

the water which is Life indeed: "the Hand of Divine bounty" proffers it to me! BWF 36 or GL 213 In fact from one viewpoint the Manifestation of God Himself is this Water of Life that God confers on His creation. BWF 72 or P&M 51 Of course the "life" referred to is more than the earthly life. For Baha'u'llah is talking about

the waters of everlasting life: which "have gushed out of the Will of the All-Merciful," GL 30 which "have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men" GL34 and "of which believers have quaffed." GL 145

the waters of God's love: preserved Baha'u'llah through His persecutions, P&M 187 He

called every “thirsty” one to “direct his face towards” those “living’ waters. BWF 143 or P&M 8 How can I resist the promise of closeness to God extended to “whoso hath quaffed” these waters? P&M 268

the waters of God’s loving-kindness: Baha’u’llah teaches me to pray that I may quaff these from the fingers of His mercy. BP’69, 68-9 # 52 or P&M 30

the waters of God’s mercy: Our Creator has summoned me to these, down through the ages. ESW 8 As a seedling growing in the soil of God’s love, I should know that I crave, in my “inmost being” these waters; P&M 178, and am taught to pray to be “enabled to partake of the living waters” of God’s mercy and grace. P&M 124

the living waters of God’s pardon: I am sometimes ashamed even to seek them, ESW 6 but I know this is wrong, because “. . . all forgiveness floweth, in this Day, from God . . .’ . . .” GL 36

the waters of God’s praise: the “fountain-head” of these waters is Baha’u’llah’s tongue P&M 131 (see page 61 []) How can I pray if I deny myself spiritual renewal therefrom?

the waters of God’s presence: Baha’u’llah said only these can quench the thirst suffered because of separation from God P&M 58 Yes, I do long for these “waters”!

the waters from the springs of purity: From these the peoples of the earth have deprived themselves. Baha’u’llah says its is because of their “fanciful and unseemly thoughts,” BWF 14-5, GL 21 or Iqan 19 Dear God, don’t let this happen to me!

the waters of redemption: some Christians drank these at the gracious hands of Jesus SDC 84 and benefitted notably. How glorious to partake of them at the generous loving hands of Baha’u’llah!

the waters of reunion: of these, in this Day, true servants of God partake GL33 Baha’u’llah called himself the “Cup” from which these pure waters may be quaffed BWF 37 or GL 210 What a blessing!

the living waters of wisdom: by these the growth of the Faith is to be fostered, Baha’u’llah said. GL 97 Let me pursue them steadfastly so that I can contribute to that growth! These “living waters” are realities of the spiritual world.

But I, in my spiritual blindness, must seek them out, learn to appreciate and enjoy them, and consciously partake of them, just as primitive man has had to do in relation to unpolluted water in the material world. Baha’u’llah assures me that it is plentiful; that streams of it “have gushed from the rocks, through the sweetness of the words uttered” by my Lord, “the Unconstrained”. GL 139

“This is the flowing water ye were promised in the Qur’an, and later in the Bayan, as a recompense from your Lord, the God of Mercy. Blessed are they that quaff it.” GL

46 How can I ignore such a bounty?

He teaches me to pray thus: "O my Lord! Give me to drink of the living waters . . ."

P&M 24 & 26 and to express my hunger thus:

"O Lord my God! . . . I implore Thee . . . to enable me to drink deep of the living waters through which Thou hast vivified the hearts of Thy chosen ones and quickened the souls of them that love Thee". BP'69, 56 #41, BWF 143 or P&M 6

I recognize that those waters have enabled every one that has partaken of them to rid himself of all attachment to anyone save God. P&M 240 And He remonstrates with me lest I "be willing to forego the Ocean Whose waters refresh, by virtue of the Will of God, the souls of men." GL 293 For He assures me that a "drop of that water would suffice to quicken the dead." BWF 72 or P&M 51-2

It is devastating to think of what I shall miss if I ignore the water of life. But still worse is what happens if I try to satisfy my spiritual thirst in wrong ways! He says "the corrupt doers . . . drink of the tainted water and know it not." GL 41 Can this happen to me? God help me!

Moreover, it is not only for myself that I am urged to partake to this water. We Baha'is have a tremendous responsibility to mankind. About us. Baha'u'llah, in communing with God has said:

"Praise be unto Thee, O my God! . . . I . . . extol Thee, in the name of all them that are dear to Thee, for that Thou hast caused them to be born again, by reason of the living waters which have flowed down out of the mouth of Thy will. " BWF 147 or P&M 42

"Give them, then, to drink what will quicken their hearts." P&M 239

And again, He speaks directly to us, saying:

"O Friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men." GL 196

To those who lack the vision for initiative to seek the "living waters of the spirit" for themselves, I must be a carrier of the divine elixir. for Baha'u'llah tells me to

"Obstruct not the luminous spring of thy soul with the thorns and brambles of vain and inordinate affections, and impede not the flow of the living waters that stream from the fountain of thine heart." BWF 66 or GL 323 (see page 79 [])

He even teaches me to ask God to "make of my prayer . . . a fountain of living waters." BP'69, 122 or P&M 318 (see page 58 []) and finally He admonished:

"O friends! Drink your fill from this crystal stream that floweth through the heavenly grace of Him Who is the Lord of Names. Let others partake of its waters in My name, that the leaders of men in every land may fully recognize the purpose for which the Eternal Truth hath been revealed, and the reason for which they themselves have been created." BWF 114 or GL 215

“How crystal this cool water that the Cup-Bearer bringeth! How bright this pure wine in the hands of the Beloved! How delicate this draught from the Heavenly Cup! May it do them good, whoso drink thereof, and taste of its sweetness and attain to its knowledge.” 7 VAL 59

How could I possibly be interested in any other kind of wine, once I have tasted this “choice wine of inner significances and utterances,” BWF 204 this “wine of Reunion” that has been unsealed, GL 28 this “wine of Divine Unity . . . which the hand of God” has proffered? BWF 102 or GL 191

Wine symbolizes a potion that changes the consciousness, and water is a basic source of life. so we find these two words often used symbolically as a remedy both for man’s unrecognized thirst and for his ailing consciousness. They represent his essential sustenance. But Baha’u’llah also speaks specifically of spiritual food. And as a spiritual being, I can enjoy and experience the reality of spiritual nourishment as vividly as I can enjoy the deliciousness of food. I am not highly developed spiritually until I do enjoy it! So I am taught to ask God to cause me to taste the divine sweetness of His remembrance and praise; BP’54, 177 or P&M 82-3 and this points out the fact that remembering God in prayer is one of the ever present sources of spiritual sustenance, always available when intangible soul-hungers assail me.

‘Abdu’l-Baha point out that Christ’s Apostles at the “Lord’s Supper . . . ate heavenly food . . . that . . . consisted of the love of God, the knowledge of God, the mysteries of God and the bestowal of God.” BWF 391 He quoted Jesus as saying

“‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst!’” SAQ 113

He said that “the spirit breathing through the Holy Scriptures is food for all who hunger.” PT 56 Baha’u’llah spoke of and described “God’s bread” which Muhammad promised His followers, saying

“We nourish your souls for the sake of God . . . This bread shall never be withheld from them that deserve it, nor can it ever be exhausted . . . O the pity! That man should deprive himself of this goodly gift, this imperishable bounty, this everlasting life. It behooveth him to prize this food that cometh from heave, . . . Iqan 22-3 “spiritual sustenance . . . bountifully provided.” Iqan 200

In the past when bread was considered “the staff of life,” the Scriptures were the “bread” of spiritual vitality. But never in the past has there been such a rich heavenly repast as is now spread before humanity! Baha’u’llah’s teachings are indeed

“like a table provided with every kind of fresh and delicious food. Every soul can find, at that table of infinite bounty, that which he desires.” BWF 290

God has repeatedly sent down the food of His utterance out of the heaven of His bounty, ESW 8 but now Baha’u’llah invites me to “abide under the shadow of the green and goodly Tree, and partake of the fruit thereof.” BWF 100 or GL 189 However, like a child who is accustomed

to live on bread and water, I am unacquainted with such delicacies! So ‘Abdu’l-Baha teaches me to pray:

“O our Lord! Turn our faces unto Thy divine face; feed us from Thy heavenly table by Thy Godly grace . . . BP’69, 157

Fro I must be taught to enjoy the untried delights of my new repast! So Baha’u’llah instructs me to ask God to feed me “from the cups of joy,” BWF 154 or P&M 234 and to let His beauty be my food. P&M 126 and BP’69, 78 #61 or P&M 261 What a lot I have to learn about these new delicacies!

This makes me realize how dependent I am on God or Baha’u’llah for everything I need in my spiritual life! Not only am I told repeatedly that nourishment for souls comes from God, 99 (n), GL 105 & 220 but like a child who has no inkling of the value of nutrients or of what his body needs, I am taught to ask for what has been provided for my spiritual growth and well-being, thus:

“Nourish me from the breast of Thy mercy” BP’69, 16 #7

“O my God, . . . of the fruits of the tree of Thy being enable me to taste” BP’69, 77 # 60 or P&M 258

“O my God! . . . nourish me from the Table Thou didst send down” BP’69, 61 #54 or P&M 75

“With the fruits of the Tree of Thine Eternity nourish me” BWF 154 or P&M 234

“I beseech Thee . . . to nourish me with the wine of Thy knowledge and the living waters of Thy love and pleasure” P&M 78 (Do I realize how spiritually intoxicating God’s knowledge can be?)

I may not know what to ask for, but I know that I do desire whatever it is that can answer this urgent plea:

“If it be Thy pleasure, make me to grow as a tender herb in the meadows of Thy grace, that the gentle winds of Thy will may stir me up and bend me into conformity with Thy pleasure, in such wise that my movement and my stillness may be wholly directed by Thee.” P&M 240

That mind that I “made up” in my immaturity, and that ego will that is determined to pursue its own short-sighted goals, both need to grow, for I know that there is no fulfillment other than in conformity with God’s pleasure and Will. No wonder Baha’u’llah prescribes for a would-be maturing soul that

“in all these stages he must cling to the robe of obedience to the commandments, and hold fast to the cord of shunning all forbidden things, that he may be nourished from the cup of the Law and informed of the mysteries of Truth.” 7 VAL 40

Yes, spiritual sustenance requires heavenly food beyond anything that is familiar to me. I can only beg that it be given me and that I may learn to enjoy and assimilate it.

“The Lord’s Prayer”, which Jesus revealed nearly 2000 years ago, asked the

Creator to “Give us this day our daily bread.” Luke 11:3 Today the Master has repeated for me the same petition but added a bit of the new dimension of life, namely its purpose . . . So it is my joy to express my need and to open the channel of supply, by repeating:

“Give us our daily bread and grant Thine increase in the necessities of life; that we may be dependent on none other but Thee, may commune wholly with Thee, may walk in Thy ways and declare Thy mysteries. Thou art the Almighty, and Loving and the Provider of all mankind.” BP’69, 13 #3

Never let me doubt that without the spiritual sustenance for the life and growth of my soul, I would cease to exist. For “All existence is dependent on Him, and from Him is derived the sustenance of all things.” 31(s), GL 166 (see page 4 []) In fact,

“All creatures that exist are dependent upon the Diving Bounty. Divine Mercy gives life itself. As the light of the sun shines on the whole world, so the Mercy of the infinite God is shed on all creatures. As the sun ripens the fruits of the earth, and gives life and warmth to all living beings, so shines the Sun of Truth on all souls, filling them with the fire of Divine love and understanding.” 79(p), PT 25 “God . . . is like the sun.” 69(q), PUP 307

So I pray that I may

“Be well watered with the abundant rain falling from the clouds of the Testament of God,” so that I may bring forth fresh and ripe fruits which are beneficial to the hearts and souls.” 79(R), TAB 1, 181

For “The heart must of necessity be spiritual. A tree must be fruitful; it may be very tall, very verdant, but yield no fruits. The fruits of the tree of . . . human life are the love of God, magnetic, spiritual susceptibilities, heavenly illumination, the knowledge of God, praiseworthy attributes, good morals and conduct. A person whose tree of life produces such fruits is a Baha’i; otherwise he is of the earth, earthy, self-occupied, and following the dictates of his own desires, and is man only by name. As . . . Christ says: ‘Ye shall know the tree by its fruits.’” 79(s), SofW Vol. 7, 151

Prayer and meditation give me access to the spiritual sustenance that is so bountifully supplied and that my heart must have for its well-being and happiness. Almost any prayer opens the channel, because whatever I ask God for, His answer will provide exactly what my heart needs.

10. PRAYER: A CHANNEL FOR FORGIVENESS AND PURIFICATION ESSENTIAL TO SOUL GROWTH

“How great, how very great, are the revelations of thy wondrous power in all things! They are such that the lowliest among Thy creatures hath been made by Thee a manifestation of thy most August attribute, and the most contemptible token of Thy handiwork hath been chosen as a recipient of Thy most mighty name. Poverty, as decreed by Thee, hath been made the means for the revelation of thy riches, and abasement a path leading to Thy glory, and sinfulness a cause for the exercise of Thy forgiveness.” P&M 326

Baha’u’llah points out that forgiveness comes through God’s Manifestations:

“‘the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.’ This is . . . the power of God’s chosen Ones!” Iqan 134, Mark 2:3-12

But in communing with God He acknowledges the Creator as the divine Forgiver, as He says: “I yield Thee such thanks as can cause Thee to forgive all sins and trespasses.” P&M 331 while to us, He says, speaking as the Voice of God”

“O FRIENDS! Verily I say, whatsoever ye have concealed within your hearts is to Us open and manifest as the day; but that it is hidden is of Our grace and favor, and not

of your deserving.” HWP 43 # 60

Do I realize this particular “grace and favor”? Do I even know how many “sins and trespasses” I commit, since by this very grace and favor they are so often hidden? Certainly there are times, especially when, in prayer, “Lowly and tearful I raise my suppliant hands” to my Maker and cover my face in the dust of His Threshold that is “exalted above the knowledge of the learned, and the praise of all . . .” BP’69, 137 #6 then, indeed it can sweep over me that I am [in] desperate need of forgiveness. with all of the divine illumination that God has “cast” into my heart, and with all of the heavenly sustenance that He has provided, surely I should be a better person than I am! I should know enough to be able to react spiritually and work toward the fulfillment of God’s purpose for man. He has told me the purpose of my being and named the powers by which I am destined to achieve that purpose, so I should know the right and wrong ways of using my powers. And ‘Abdu’l-Baha says that to use my powers “in an unlawful way” in “blameworthy.” 33(r), BWF 320-1 or SAQ 250 (see page 43 []) I must admit that I do this - sometimes unconsciously, and sometimes even deliberately. This is where my “sins” begin. I know that they are ever-present, so I urgently need forgiveness for them.

“Abdu’l-Baha reminds me that “it is first ‘to know’ and then ‘to do’”. 74(a), BWF 38

Since encountering and accepting Baha’u’llah, I have been blessed with a large measure of divine knowledge. But to carry out all that I know, to behave as I should in order to achieve God’s purpose for me - this is another matter. For this I need God’s help. For quite obviously I constantly behave in wrong ways and pursue goals which are not those that Baha’u’llah has set before me.

I can blame my environment for some of my wrong attitudes and behavior, some of my indifference to God, some of my blindness and failures. I am part of humanity, and Baha’u’llah characterizes its condition clearly, saying that “The corrosion of ungodliness has been eating into the vitals of human society, 98(b) (see page 29 & 82 []) and that for a long time “the doors of hope have been shut against the hearts that long” for their Maker: P&M 8 In this Day, hearts “are afflicted with a torment that none can avert.” GL 41 Moreover, my own “waywardness” has removed my heart” far from God” too, and condemned it to “remoteness” from Him. BWF 98 or GL 186 (see page 33 [])

Yet I am told that within every atom there is “a door” that leads the seeker “to the station of absolute certitude”. Do I realize this? To perceive it, I must look at life “with the eye of God,” BWF 107, GL 267 or Iqan 195 whereas my real outlook is based on my own limited and egocentric powers of perception. The radiance of Go’s attributes, in reality, “appears and is visible in worlds and souls”, 9(m), BWF 322 or SAQ 257 (see page 15g []) but the divinity in my environment and my associates is the last thing that my human vision makes me aware of. Human beings ignore that “radiance” for doubts have been “instilled into hearts” in this Day. GL 197 (see page 43 []) Baha’u’llah said about people that the human heart has become so blind that nothing “can shake off its torpor.” GL 39

“Witness how they have entangled themselves with their idle fancies and vain imaginations. By My life! They are themselves the victims of what their own hearts have devised, and yet they perceive it not.” BWF 132 or GL 204-5

I have to recognize that the above is true of me as part of humanity, too. In short, I am sharing the “evil” that characterizes the present condition of mankind. for although ‘Abdu’l-Baha has said that “all beings . . . were created perfect and complete from the first . . . their perfections appear in them by degrees.” 34(w), BWF 312 or SAQ231 At present “Man is in the highest degree of materiality”, (see page 99 []) but he is only “at the beginning of spirituality.” 80(d), BWF 311 or SAQ 272 (see page 38 [])

If I am aware of being sinful and about to ask God for forgiveness, perhaps I should understand what “evil” is in reality. “Abdu’l-Baha explains:

“Evil is imperfection. Sin is the state of man in the world of the baser nature, for in nature exist defects such as injustice, tyranny, hatred, hostility, strife: these are characteristics of the lower plane of nature. These are the sins of the world . . . through education we must free ourselves from these imperfections.” 55(jj), PT 177-8

This condition of hearts makes my heart long for forgiveness.

Injustice, tyranny, hostility and strife actually exist and they generate hatred in me because I was created to love and desire Divinity. Like the rest of the world, I have assumed that such evils are inevitable evils and that I cannot hope to remedy them. Being a victim of them is part of what makes people slump down hopelessly into their own evil ways.

I’m sure that it is ignorance that makes me accept my own imperfections smugly and be content to do nothing to overcome them. But never let me imagine that God is unaware of my transgressions, for I hear His voice saying:

“O REBELLIOUS ONES! My forbearance hath emboldened you and my long-suffering hath made you negligent. . . “ 55(hh), HWP 44 # 65

If I am blaming my heedlessness on my environment or on the evils of society, I should heed Baha’u’llah as He admonishes me: “Cleanse thine ears from the idle sayings of these rejected people.” Iqan 144 “For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.” BWF 119 or GL 143

Do I look around at people who reject Baha’u’llah and who actually work against or violently deny His Cause, and feel disheartened by what they are “getting away with”? If so, let me meditate on these words of my Beloved:

“God, assuredly, dominateth the lives of them that wronged Us, and is well aware of their doings. He will, most certainly, lay hold on them for their sins. He, verily, is the fiercest of avengers. Thus have We recounted unto you the tales of the one true God, and sent down unto you the things He hath preordained, that haply ye may ask forgiveness of Him, may return unto Him, may truly repent, may realize your misdeeds, may shake off your slumber, may be roused from your heedlessness, may atone for the things that have

escaped you, and be of them that do good.” GL130

Let me also replace my petty human ideas with this glorious truth:

“In our outward dealings. . . We have treated alike the righteous and the sinner, that perchance the evil-doer may attain the limitless ocean of Divine forgiveness. Our name “the Concealer” hath shed such a light upon men that the forward hath imagined himself to be numbered with the pious. No man that seeketh Us will We ever disappoint, neither shall he that hath set his face towards Us be denied access to Our court.” GL 271-2

God is merciful to immature souls. Baha’u’llah, communing with Him, says:

“Praise be to Thee, O Concealer of the sins of the weak and helpless! Magnified by Thy name, O Thou that forgivest the heedless ones that trespass against Thee!” BWF 132, GL 204

But being offered divine education and having outwardly accepted it, how can I hide behind the excuse of helplessness or even heedlessness? Weak, I am! But as I contemplate the truth and acknowledge the infinitude, eternality and divinity of God, I am overwhelmed with my own unworthiness. As I compare what I am with what the soul is intended to be, I am filled with remorse, anguish and hopelessness. I begin to wonder how my Creator can possibly tolerate, much less forgive, my heedlessness and sins, and to wonder how He can really purify my dark consciousness and unloving heart!

However, this is wrong, too. If I think that God reacts in the way human beings do, this is certainly a very unenlightened vain imaging. Baha’u’llah assures me that

“The inmost essence of all things voiceth in all things the testimony: ‘All forgiveness floweth, in this Day, from God, Him to Whom none can compare, with Whom no partners can be joined, the Sovereign Protector of all men, and the Concealer of their sins!’ ” GL 36 (see page 91 [])

And if I cannot grasp that divine awareness with only the mind of a Manifestation can encompass, these words should reach my heart:

“To pardon shortcomings is an attribute of the Lord of forgiveness. Thank God, thou art . . . a recipient of pardon and forgiveness”. TAB III, 696

He tells me, too that

“The sea of forgiveness hath moved and the waves of pardon and beneficence have submerged the people of sin.” TAB I, 190

Can I possibly doubt that this bounty will not be extended freely to me then, however great my transgressions?

Forgiveness is the first of three (?) provisions of God with which He has notably blessed me:

His forgiveness emboldened me:

His mercy strengthened me;

His call awakened me;

His grace raised me up and led me unto Him.

For who, otherwise, am I that I should “dare to stand at the gate of the city” of His nearness, or “set my face toward the lights that are shining from the heaven” of His will? BP’69, 124 or P&M 320 (seepages 55 & 72 []) And in my heart, I do stand there longingly, whether I realize it in my outer consciousness or not. The step that I must take daily is to knock at the door of His grace, asking for forgiveness and seeking “the river of everlasting life”. For in my present embryonic spiritual condition I am, indeed an “evanescent soul.” BP’69, 124 or P&M 320.

I suffer from remorse and feelings of guilt when I know that I have sinned. So I responded long ago when I was taught to call on God daily with some version of what Jesus is reported to have taught His followers to say: “forgive us our sins; for we also forgive . . . “ Luke 11:4. If I imagine that this portal-opening petition is needless now that I am “grown up,” I am wrong, especially as it mentions my part of the Covenant that I should emulate God, and reflect in my own heart the compassion that I seek for myself from Him. ‘Abdu’l-Baha gives us a modern version of this petition:

“O kind Father!! Confer Thy blessings. Consider not our shortcomings. Shelter us under Thy protection. Remember not our sins. Heal us with Thy mercy. We are weak; Thou art mighty. We are poor; Thou art rich. We are sick; Thou art the Physician.”

BP’69, 48-9 #34

He says to

“Be thoughtful concerning your own spiritual developments and close your eyes to the shortcomings of one another.” BWF 366

We ask God to pardon and not to look at our shortcomings, BP’69, 111-2 #92; BP’69, 34 #22 and we see that He does overlook the shortcomings of humankind. BP’69, 46 #32. So we should heed His admonition:

“If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin. He, verily, is the Concealer, the Lord of grace abounding.” ESW 55

“O SON OF MAN! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be . . .” HWA 10 #27

“O SON OF BEING! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others! Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me.” HWA 10 #26

As always, I find that although God’s bounties are infinite, eternal and divine, I must do my part in order to benefit from them. Certainly I must be ready with forgiveness instead of criticism when my fellow beings show forth their imperfections and immaturities. And I must be sufficiently aware of my own, to beg for absolution for them.

Actually, it seems that the more mature and spiritual a soul is, the more conscious he is of

his own imperfections, and the more he longs for forgiveness! I hear Baha'u'llah admonishing "a distinguished divine whom people highly respected, to pray in these words:

"By Thy glory! I know not for which sin to beg thy forgiveness and implore Thy pardon, nor from which of mine iniquities to turn aside unto the Court of Thy bounteousness and the sanctuary of Thy favor. Such are my sins and trespasses that no man can number them, nor pen describe them." ESW 8

And I listen to the soul-shaking Meditation of Baha'u'llah Himself as even He pleads humbly before His God:

"Beneath the ocean of Thy forgiveness, faced with the restlessness of the leviathan of glory, immerse me, for my sins have utterly doomed me." BWF 154 or P&M 234

Oh, what do I know of "sins", and my own need for forgiveness?

It seems that more enlightened souls are vividly aware both of their need for God's forgiveness and of its eternal availability. Certainly the more I understand of God's purpose and how He plans for it to be fulfilled, the more clearly do I understand what evil is, and how constantly I need protection from it and absolution for my own iniquities.

I understand that in the material world there are acts that take place in that single point of time called now, and that I can observe them in their entirety in time. Actually all behavior takes time, even if its measure is only one short moment. My intellect makes me aware of time as a definite dimension of reality. So I see that what I desire requires time to acquire, that what I long to have happen takes time to develop, that what I want to become demands time in which I may grow and change. But since I actually live and react in only one point of time called now, this means that what I want is a future goal to be pursued, moment by moment and reaction by reaction. So before I can acquire the heavenly virtues that I desire, then, I must face my current imperfections. Before what I long for can happen I must cope at present with it not happening. And while some day I shall achieve what I want to be to date I am "sinful," disobedient and veiled from God, in spite of my best efforts to be otherwise. And so I must keep asking for forgiveness! I must each morning recognize through prayer and meditation that as a human creature I still face separation and remoteness from my Beloved. Every day, then, I should ask Him to make of my prayer a fire, that will burn away what veils my vision. Every day, I must seek to bring His beauty into my outer consciousness so that I shall yearn to "observe whatsoever" is in His Book. After my human perceptions have been closed off during sleep, when I awaken each morning to resume my outer life, I must start afresh in my search for knowledge and love of God. My spiritual consciousness must be established "from scratch"! I need to remember anew that here in the wilderness of man's heedlessness, God has walked, that I have been made aware of His footsteps and His words, "Here am I! Here am I!" I must bring Baha'u'llah back, anew, into my immediate consciousness as "the Treasured Symbol," Whose beauty is God's beauty. P&M 71 I need to re-experience the effects of "the gentle winds of the

Dawn” of God’s Manifestation. BP’69, 126 or P&M 321. And prayer can do all of this for me.

I should face every day realizing that “my trespasses have kept me back from drawing nigh” to God, and “my sins have held me far” from the court of God’s holiness; BP’69, 125-6 or P&M 321 that “My back is bowed by the burden of my sin”. Ibid. 126-7 or 322 and my heedlessness destroys my spiritual efforts to fulfill my true purpose and to carry out my noble resolutions. How can my spiritual life proceed without forgiveness and the purification of my heart?

“By Thy Beauty, O thou the Desire of the world! I blush to lift up my face to Thee, and my longing hands are ashamed to stretch forth toward the heaven of Thy bounty.” BP’69, 127 or P&M 319

Midway between the immature souls who suffer torments of guilt hopelessly and those who are assured of heavenly forgiveness, I cling to the instructions that come through the new portals of light. And as I listen, I realize that I must do something, too, to enable His forgiveness to have its full effect. For Baha’u’llah admonished:

“Cleanse from your hearts the love of worldly things, from your tongues every remembrance except His remembrance, from your entire being whatsoever may deter you from beholding His face, or may tempt you to follow the promptings of your evil and corrupt inclinations. Let God be your fear, O people, and be of them that tread the path of righteousness.” GL 275

These are all things within my power to fulfill. So am I doing my part? This question, faced squarely, could make me wonder again if I am worthy even to ask God’s forgiveness, even as the realization of my need for it grows. Then I hear Baha’u’llah praying for us - for me! And this opens another portal of light in my heart - new light on God’s purpose and intention, because I know that a Manifestation of God only asks what He knows God plans and wills to do. What joy it is, then, to read these words:

“Purify, O my God, the hearts of Thy creatures with the power of Thy sovereignty and might, that Thy words may sink deep into them.” BWF 92 or P&M 197 (see page 41)

“I entreat Thee . . . O my God, by Thy name by which Thou hast separated between truth and denial, to purify their hearts of all evil suggestions. . . .” BP’69, 57-8 #42, BWF 90 or P&M 107

“Illumine, O Lord, the faces of Thy servants, that they may behold Thee; and cleanse their hearts that they may turn unto the court of Thy heavenly favors . . .” BP ‘69, 57-8 #42 BWF 149 or P&M 95

What heavenly forgiveness is available! Moreover, I hear God’s own Voice calling to me:

“O SON OF BEING! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.” HWA 11 #31 (see page 42 [])

‘Abdu’l-Baha’s admonition reaches my heart, too:

“Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world, and beacons of light to disclose the mysteries of the Kingdom to those with understanding hearts.” DAL 30 #21 or PT 61

My heart responds, as I turn to my Beloved to seek the purification and forgiveness that it needs for its very life, and certainly for its growth. Gratefully I avail myself of the wide choice of revealed petitions by which I may effectively supplicate my Lord. If I am overwhelmed with my own guilt, these words may open to me the portals of heavenly absolution:

“Thou seest the sinner, O my Lord, who hath turned towards the dawning-place of Thy forgiveness and Thy bounty, and the mountain of iniquity that hath sought the heaven of Thy mercy and pardon. Alas, Alas! My mighty sins have prevented me from approaching the court of Thy mercy, and my monstrous deeds have caused me to stray far from the sanctuary of Thy presence . . . O misery, misery! As mine iniquities waxed greater and greater, Thy forbearance towards me augmented, and as the fire of my rebelliousness grew fiercer, the more did Thy forgiveness and Thy grace seek to smother up its flame . . . I know not, O my God, which among my evil doing to mention before the billowing ocean of Thy favor, nor which of my trespasses to declare when face to face with the splendors of the suns of Thy goodly gifts and bounties.” ESW 5-7

“I am he, O my Lord, that hath confess to Thee the multitude of his evil doings . . . I have made haste to attain unto the ocean of Thy forgiveness . . . GL 311

Or it I am to immature to realize the multitude of my evil ways, and am blaming them on my environment, I can pray:

“Deliver me from the ills that have encircled me, and wash me thoroughly with the water of Thy graciousness and mercy, and attire me with the raiment of wholesomeness, through Thy forgiveness and bounty.” BWF 145 or P&M 22

How easy it is to approach Him thus:

“Thou seest, O my Lord, . . . this transgressor seeking the ocean of Thy forgiveness.” BP’69, 122 or P&M 319 (see page 54 [])

“Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil conscience within me.” BWF 153, BP’69, 76 #59 or P&M 248

“Thou art that All-Bountiful Who art not deterred by a multitude of sins from vouchsafing Thy bounty.” P&M 246

And as I open the portals of my heart to this great bounty, I think of myself as a part of a great unenlightened humanity, all so in need of pardon! So I pray:

“I . . . entreat Thee, O my God, to rain down, from the heaven of Thy will and the clouds of Thy mercy, that which will cleanse us from the noisome savors of our transgressions, O Thou Who hast called Thyself the God of Mercy.” P&M 82, BP’ 69, 176-7

“I beseech Thee . . . to send down, from the right hand of the throne of Thy grace,

upon all that dwell on earth, that which shall wash them from the stain of their trespasses against Thee. . . “ P&M 99

I love several special prayers for forgiveness that are in Baha'i Prayers, on pages 30-4, 51,-2, 94-5, number 18 through 22; and page 76. And I find and love these words that seem to express the inexpressible feelings of my soul:

“O Thou Who art the All-Knowing! Wayward though we be, we still cling to Thy bounty; and though ignorant, we still set our faces toward the ocean of Thy wisdom. Thou art that All-Bountiful . . . the flow of Whose gifts is not arrested by the withdrawal of the peoples of the world. From eternity the door of Thy grace hath remained wide open. A dewdrop out of the ocean of Thy mercy is able to adorn all things with the ornament of sanctity.” P&M 245-6

What a heavenly bounty, to be able to open the portals of my heart, through prayer, to the light of divine absolution, and to know that I can be forgiven - if I ask!

“Verily, the breezes of forgiveness have been wafted from the direction of your Lord, the God of mercy; whoso turneth thereunto, shall be cleansed of his sins, and of all pain and sickness. Happy the man that hath turned toward them, and woe betide him that hath turned aside,” ESW 46-7

11. PRAYER; ACCESS TO A MEANS OF HEALING WHATEVER MY AILMENTS MAY BE

Turning to “the breezes” of the forgiveness of my Lord, The God of mercy, is the first step of being cleansed not only of my sins but “of all pain and sickness.”

Sin, pain and sickness are here closely connected. Isn't sin a kind of moral or spiritual sickness? So a vital concern, after being forgiven I certainly want to seek healing for the spiritual ailment that cause me to sin.

However, the kind of healing that people pray more often for is healing of physical miseries. Perhaps one reason for pain is to remind us that we need help. Whether my misery is

physical, mental, emotional or spiritual, that pain serves as the same signal: I need help and healing. I need to turn to God and to petition Him for my health and well-being.

I am reminded that

“Jesus passed by a Jew who was sick of the palsy and lay upon a couch. When the Jew saw Him he recognized Him and cried out for His help. Jesus said unto him: ‘Arise from thy bed; thy sins are forgiven thee.’ Iqan 133-4

In recalling this incident, Baha’u’llah point out that both kinds of healing are within the power of a Manifestation of God. Jesus made this physical demonstration of His power to a primitive unlightened people. But today I should not need such an outer showing of divine power, for I know that

“All true healing comes from God! . . . Unless the spirit be healed, the cure of the body is worth nothing. All is in the hands of God, and without Him there can be no health in us!” PT 19

“In God must be our trust. There is no God but Him, the Healer, the Knower, the Helper . . . Nothing in earth or heaven is outside the grasp of God.” DAL 56 #10

Here is another portal that has been opened wide to alert my heart to its potential power for receiving an additional blessing - that of spiritual healing.

“Without the help of God man is even as the beasts that perish, but God has bestowed such wonderful power upon him that he might ever look upward, and receive, among other gifts, healing from His divine Bounty.” PT 20

“Look upward”. Yes, it is a matter of perception. So much healing is within my own grasp, if I can only “see” and accept it! ‘Abdu’l-Baha made this clear when He said:

“Now, if thou wishest to know the divine remedy which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the divine kingdom, know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Guard them sacredly.” BWF 376

“Should these sublime teachings be diffused, mankind shall be freed from all perils, from all chronic ills and sicknesses.” BWF 347-8

And He says:

“When thou wilt compare the teachings of the Beauty of Abha with the requisitions and necessities of the present time, thou wilt conclude that they are to the sick body of the world the swift healing antidote; nay, rather they are the remedy of everlasting health.” BWF 381

Speaking of the “manifestations of the quickening power release” by Jesus’

“Transcendent, . . . all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit,” Baha’u’llah said:

“We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things. Through Him the leper recovered from the leprosy of perversity and ignorance, Through Him . . . the unchaste and wayward were healed. Through His power, born of Almighty God, the eyes of the blind were opened, and the soul of the sinner sanctified . . .

“We bear witness that through the power of the Word of God every leper was cleansed, every sickness was healed, every human infirmity was banished.” And He explained that “leprosy may be interpreted as any veil that interveneth between man and the recognition of the Lord, his God.” GL 85-6

Now I am taught to “regard the world as a human body which though at its creation whole and perfect hath been afflicted . . . with grave disorders and maladies”. BWF 57-8, or ESW 62 or GL 254-5 And

“Each time that Most Mighty Instrument” (a Manifestation of God) “hath come, and that Light shone forth from the Ancient Dayspring, He was withheld by ignorant physicians who, even as clouds, interposed themselves between Him and the world. It failed, therefore, to recover, and its sickness hath persisted until this day.” ESW 62-3 or GL 255 (see page 84)

“We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable, afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned.” BWF 36 or GL 213

“Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day . . . At one time it hath been agitated by contentions and disputes, at another it hath been convulsed by ward, and fallen a victim to inveterate diseases. Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness . . . “ GL 39

But “The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy.” BWF 36 or GL 213
I thank God for having been born in this glorious age, for

“This is the Day whereon the helpless have been clothed with the raiment of confidence, and the sick attired with the robe of healing. . . “ P&M 273

When I read that what “the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith,” BWF 57-8, ESW 62 or GL 254-5 I might still feel hopeless about such a condition ever coming about. But then I remember that Baha’u’llah has introduced the science of reality, and the human intellect has been given to souls to enable them to understand that level of truth. And as I study the science myself, I can see how all mankind must eventually find its healing here. I certainly know that my prayers for healing, both personal and world-wide, can and will be answered, too.

In the physical worlds the body seems to struggle unsuccessfully with illness. No matter what remedies I apply, I become sick again, and know that finally my body will be overcome with ailments. It makes me long for Baha’u’llah to put His hands on me as Jesus did for those who came to Him for healing. But then I realize that just as dominion over nature has come through long ages of man’s efforts, so too our potential physical health and healing can only develop as many does his part to bring it about.

“Abdu’l-Baha points out that

“There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the use of remedies, of medicines; the second consists in praying to God and in turning to Him. both means should be used and practiced. Illness caused by physical accident should be treated with medical remedies; those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, will be healed by spiritual rather than by physical treatment.” BAL 53 #1 or BWF 375

“Abdu’l-Baha says that it is possible to cure by foods, aliments and fruits; but as today the science of medicine is imperfect, this fact is not yet fully grasped. SAQ 298 He also states that when I am sick, healing may result “from the entire concentration of the mind of a strong person” upon me, when I expect with all of my “concentrated faith that a cure will be effected from the spiritual power of that strong person” and when there is a “cordial connection” between the two of us. And He gives a scientific explanation of the power of faith in such a case by saying:

“From the effect of these mental impressions and excitement of the nerves is produced, and this impression and this excitement of the nerves will become the cause of the recovery of the sick person.” SAQ 294

He also states that emotions can have an effect in either healing or causing a malady, for

“when a sick person has a strong desire and intense hope for something, and hears suddenly the tidings of its realization, a nervous excitement is produced, which will make the malady entirely disappear. In the same way, if a cause of terror suddenly occurs, perhaps an excitement may be produced in the nerves of a strong person, which will immediately cause a malady. the cause of the sickness will be no material thing, for that person has not eaten anything, and nothing harmful has touched him; the excitement of the nerves is than the only cause of the illness.” SAQ 294-5

This may seem as though my health or illness is in human hands. But speaking for myself, I feel a need to pray in the case of physical illness, first, that I may find a doctor who merits my faith; or, that if I trust some “strong person” to heal me that trust may not be misplace. Because, frankly, it frightens me to put my health in another’s hands.

But what I find especially intriguing in the foregoing verities is the references to an “excitement of the nerves.” Even expert doctors don’t seem to understand exactly what “nerves” are or how they may be put under control. so I listen eagerly as “Abdu’l-Baha explains:

“The powers of the sympathetic nerve are neither entirely physical nor spiritual, but are between the two. The nerve is connected with both. Its phenomena shall be perfect when its spiritual and physical relations are normal. When the material world and the divine world are well co-related, when the hearts become heavenly and the aspirations become pure and divine, perfect connection shall take place. Then shall this power

produce a perfect manifestation. Physical and spiritual diseases will then receive absolute healing.” DAL 58 #14

This seems to indicate that the powers of the sympathetic nervous system serve as a connection between my physical being and my spiritual being. This leads me to search for some other enlightenment on such a connection, and I study with deep interest the following explanation: (see page 4 [])

“The connection of the spirit with the body is like that of the sun with the mirror. Briefly, the human spirit is in one condition; it neither becomes ill from the diseases of the body, nor cured by health; it does not become sick, nor weak, nor miserable, nor poor, nor light, nor small. That is to say it will not be injured because of the infirmities of the body, and no effect will be visible even if the body becomes weak or if the hands and feet and tongue be cut off, or if it loses the power of hearing or sight. Therefore it is evident and certain that the spirit is different from the body, and that its duration is independent of that of the body; on the contrary, the spirit with the utmost greatness rules in the world of the body, and its power and influence, like the bounty of the sun in the mirror, are apparent and visible.” BWF 328 or SAQ 266

I notice that “Abdu’l-Baha in speaking to Christians (which He was doing in giving the above explanation), uses the terminology of the English Bible which, according to dictionaries, equates “soul” and “spirit”. The Christian Revelation gave no definition of a “soul”, and made no distinction between a “soul” and the power that animates it. Man was sometimes called a human or rational soul, 39(y) (see pages 15e and 1 []) and “spirit” was a term applied also to a being. I must decide in the foregoing quotation whether “the human spirit” means the human soul or the human degree of that power that He has defined as manifesting in five degrees (see page 15f) And to me the statement becomes intelligible in terms of Baha’i enlightenment, only by substituting “soul” for “spirit”. He is saying then, what He has explained at other times: that the soul and the body are in different worlds or conditions, one being a spiritual reality and the other being a material entity. 33(w), SAQ 301 The spiritual “powers of the sympathetic nerve” comes from the soul that is spiritual, and the material powers of that nervous system find expression in the material body. “Normal” relations of these powers, of course, are that the greater or source power should dominate and control the material expressions, or what happens in the body. An abnormal condition would develop if my body were to dictate to my soul, or my physical powers were to dominate over my spiritual ones.

Come to think of it, isn’t this exactly what happens when I “sin”? Isn’t it exactly what happens, too, when I let my enjoyment of sense pleasure, via my body powers, overrule my innate or even develop intelligence to the point of getting sick or gaining too much weight?

My human nature, with it rationalizing, my point out that I often “get away with” letting my human desires overrule the best wisdom of my heart. But if I do, this is only an evidence of how often God protects the immature and weak! However ‘Abdu’l-Baha urged:

“Be isolated from the grades of self and desire, so that . . . thou mayest be healed from every disease and sickness.” TAB I, 190

How does the “excitement of the nerves” fit into this picture? When I am operating only on the animal or even degrees of spirit, I am ignoring the full potential of my soul. My “soul is ever endowed with full strength” BWF 338 and “spirit with the utmost greatness rules in the world of the body”. But my top degree of spirit or the wisdom of my divine nature is not always activated when I react. It can be veiled by “the conditions of this earth”, 41(w) (see pages 8, 11, 36 { }) or simply ignored. It can be rendered totally inactive by the desires of my lower nature if I choose to react in a human or beastly way. In such a case “the full strength” of my soul is throttled, and the nerves that can and should carry higher spiritual power into my outer being are not activated. This is why the “excitement of the nerves” is necessary. That is how my top degree of spirit is “turned on”.

Faith, being a top level power of perception, in a doctor or healer, activates my highest degree of spirit and opens my outer being to the healing powers that are available through my nervous system and from the Holy Spirit whence my soul derives its powers. So does unselfish love. So does delight in heavenly realities or in what seems heavenly to me. For love of divinity is the highest power of my being.

As for terror, that is something I feel when I give way to fear in a way that negates all that I know and believe as a spiritual being. This is a different kind of action on my nervous system. It throws me into another state of consciousness where the spiritual and physical relations suddenly become abnormal. For when I experience that kind of terror, it is caused by allowing my animal instinct of self preservation to outweigh all my other feelings and degrees of spirit, and to negate my spiritual knowledge that “nothing save that which profiteth” me can befall me. 32(b), ADJ 69 what more tangible cause of dis-ease, physical, mental or emotional, can there be than that?

With the foregoing explanation I can understand quite clearly what Baha’u’llah says about the cause of sickness:

“That a sick person showeth signs of weakness is due to the hindrances that interpose themselves between his soul and his body, for the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments . . . In like manner, every malady afflicting the body of man is an impediment that preventeth the soul from manifesting its inherent might and power.” BWF 120 or GL 154

I see that I need to pray, then, that that “impediment” be removed! I’d like to be able of myself to remove what veils my heart, but for this I often need God’s help. So I pray, and ask that my prayer become a fire that will “burn away the veils” that prevent my soul from manifesting its inherent might and power. For

“If one has fever and you give him medicine, the fever will vanish; but if the spirit is afflicted with the disease of ignorance, it is difficult to remove that disease. For

example, if the spiritual health is afflicted with the love of the world, spiritual medicine must be given. These medicines are the devices and commands of God, which will have effect upon it.” DAL 59 #17

Certainly I have ample instructions and advice urging me to depend on God - both to obey His command and to seek His help and healing. How Humbly and lovingly ‘Abdy’l-Baha pleads:

“If sorrow and adversity visit us, let us turn our faces to the Kingdom and heavenly consolation will be outpoured. If we are sick and in distress let us implore God’s healing, and He will anser or prayer.” 83(jj), DAL 10 #10 or PT 111

“Trust in the assistance of thy Master, and ask what thou wishest of the gifts of thy Lord, the Unconstrained.” DAL 9 #4

“In all thine affairs put thy reliance in God, and commit them unto Him.” DAL 9 #7

Baha’u’llah speaks for God Himself, too

“O BEFRIENDED STRANGER! . . . The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not.” HWP 33 #32:

I am warned too, however:

“Let no one imagine that these words imply that man should not be thorough and careful in his undertakings. God has endowed man with intelligence so that he may safeguard and protect himself. Therefore he must provide and surround himself with all that scientific skill can produce.” DAL 11, #15

“Scientific skill” includes human doctoring. It includes what Baha’u’llah offers now, too. By using His counsels, I am alerted that I can heal some of my own ills. For instance, He mentioned the dissensions that divide people - certainly these can be the cause of my worst spiritual maladies. ‘Abdu’l-Baha emphasized this repeatedly saying:

“The hearts should be purified and cleansed from every trace of hatred and rancor and enabled to engage in truthfulness, conciliation, uprightness and love toward the world of humanity . . . Consider love and union as a delectable paradise, and count annoyance and hostility as the torment of hell-fire.” BWF 356

‘Abdu’l-Baha taught that “peace is health and construction; war is disease and dissolution.” BWF 232 or FWU 20. And Baha’u’llah, speaking on a world-wide basis, said that if we “heal the dissensions” that divide us, we would no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of our cities and territories demand. WF 40 or GL 250-1

With additional reference to physical health, I have these divine admonitions, and I should pray for spiritual power to fulfill them:

“O friends of God! Experience hath shown how much the renouncing of tobacco, wine and opium, giveth health, strength and intellectual enjoyments, penetration of judgment and physical vigor . . . Therefore strive that the greatest cleanliness and

sanctity, which is the great desire of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, should be resplendent among the Baha’is, and that the companions of God should surpass the rest of mankind in all conditions and perfections; that they may be physically and morally superior to others; that through cleanliness and purity, refinement and health, they may be the chief of wise men and that by their affranchisement, their prudence and control of their desires, they may be the princes of the pure, the free and the wise.” DAL 57-8 #12

There is so much sickness and suffering in the world that I have often wondered what God’s Will is in the matter! “Abdu’l-Baha answers this question for me thus:

“If the health and well-being of the body be expended in the path of the Kingdom, this is very acceptable and praiseworthy . . . But if the health and welfare of man be spent in sensual desires in a life on an animal plane. . . then disease is better than such health; may, death itself is preferable to such a life. If thou art desirous of health, wish thou health for serving the Kingdom. I hope thou mayest attain a perfect insight, and inflexible resolution, a complete health and spiritual and physical strength in order that thou mayest drink from the fountain of eternal life and be assisted by the spirit of Divine confirmation.” BWF 376

From this I understand that the purpose behind what I pray for determines whether or not my request is in accord with God’s Will. Certainly the above assures me that He desires that I should have every kind of health and strength if I plan to use them in working to achieve His purpose for man. I can count on this, because God loves me. For

“the creative foundation in all its degrees and kingdoms is an expression or outcome of love.” BWF 232 or FWU 20

Summarizing, I feel that in praying for my or every kind of healing, I should ask to be lifted above the lower levels of consciousness, and that my material and divine natures shall be so “well correlated,” that my heart may become heavenly and my aspirations pure and divine. for then the relation of my physical and spiritual powers shall be “normal”, and shall “produce a perfect manifestation.” This is how “physical and spiritual diseases” may “receive absolute healing.”

Baha’u’llah said, in communing with His beloved Lord:

“I yield Thee such thanks as can cause the sick to draw nigh unto the waters of Thy healing.” P&M 329

And I find myself so drawn. He prayed for all souls, and that includes me, in such words as these:

“O Lord my God! . . . Heal Thou the sicknesses that have assailed the souls on every side. . . “ BWF 145 or P&M 22

‘Abdu’l-Baha added His prayers, too:

“ Lord! . . . Illumine the hearts, make the eyes seeing, render the ears attentive, resuscitate the dead and heal the sick.” BP’69, 34#22

“Have mercy, O Lord, on the feeble, make whole the sick, and quench the burning thirst.” BP ‘69, 109 #89

Moreover, these two illumined Souls have bequested to me a wealth of petitions by which I may open the portals of my heart to life-giving powers and divine healing, such as these:

“O God! O God! Thou beholdest this weak one begging the strength of Thy Kingdom! . . . This thirsty one longing for Thy fountain of the water of eternal life! This sick one invoking Thy perfect recovery through Thy boundless mercy, which Thou hast specialized for Thy chosen servants in Thy Supreme Kingdom!” B”’69, 154 #17

“I beseech Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of the worlds, . . . by Thy Name. . . through which the imperfect have been perfected, and the abased exalted, and the tongue of every stammerer unloosed, and the sick made whole . . . - I beseech Thee to aid us . . . P&M 173 (for) I am sick; sprinkle upon me the healing waters of Thy grace.” P&M 103

“O Thou, the Merciful One! O my Lord! . . . Preserve me from the suggestions of myself and desire, and guard me from every sickness, trial, difficulty and ordeal.” BP ‘769, 66-7 #51

“O Lord my God ! . . . I entreat Thee to strengthen me by Thy power which hath encompassed the heavens and the earth, and to guard me from all sickness and tribulation.” BP ‘ 69, 79-80 #73, BWF 153 or P&M 224

“O Thou Whose . . . trial is the healer of the sicknesses of them who have embraced Thy Cause . . .!” P&M 132 “Behold . . . , O my Lord, . . . this ailing soul who hath set his face towards the ocean of Thy healing.” P&M 269 (see page 45)

There are longer prayers especially for healing that can open still more portals of light and power in my heart; in Baha’i Prayers, pages 35 to 40, numbers 23 through 27. And the index in Prayers and Meditations list others.

Do I question the efficacy of prayer in healing? If so, let me memorize and repeat daily this precious assurance:

“Thy Name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succour in both this world and the world to come. Thou verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.” BP’69, 36 #24 or P&M 262-3

12. PRAYER CALLING DIVINE POWER INTO MY EFFORTS TO HELP OTHERS

I find that I worry about my loved one, even though I claim to have faith and, daily, “lay

all my affairs” in God’s hands. I know that worry does them no good and only pulls me down into low negative levels of consciousness. Worry is a bad habit that grows by use, too. The more I worry, the smaller are the things that I worry about. For the material man or human nature “lets himself be worried and harassed by little things.” What I long for is to be so spiritual that I shall that I shall be “calm and serene under all circumstances.” 68(mm), or 103(s), So W Vol. &, 154

There is nothing I can do to be of value to my loved [ones] as effective as to be good-natured and to pray for them. My prayers can keep my spirits high, and help my loved ones too.

“Supplication and prayer on behalf of others will surely be effective. When hearts are united, when faces are turned towards the Kingdom of Abha, surely enlightenment will be the result.” DAL 35 #39

Prayers and “high gear” or spiritual thoughts can have a tremendous effect on those I love. To think positively as I feel my love for them should be my goal.

“Love is the foundation of every thing . . . These waves from our minds go forth and create movement and thought in other minds. From one strong thought of love what great results may be produced!” 77 (ii),S of W Vol. 7, 107-8

Especially I should use the revealed prayers, for they are of the most positive and powerful thoughts and supplications in the world. Baha’u’llah says:

“Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all me. whoso reciteth . . . the verses revealed by God, . . . though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner of later exercise its influence upon his soul.” 105(c)BWF 123 or GL 295

I should think of reciting the verses of our heavenly prayers as the highest expression of love and helpfulness. Using them will also broaden the foundation of my emotional consciousness, too, as I find myself praying for others besides my own loved ones. And praying for mankind is one way to promote its oneness.

“What profit is there in agreeing that universal friendship is good, and talking of the solidarity of the human race as a grand ideal? Unless these thoughts are translated into the world of action, there are useless.” 73(I),PT 16

I must remembers particularly to pray for those individuals whom I dislike or I regard as enemies. It is “natural” to love and pray for those whom I find lovable, but not for others.

“All over the world one hears beautiful sayings extolled . . . But all these sayings are but words and we see very few of them carried into the world of action. On the contrary, we perceive that men are carried away by passion and selfishness, each man thinking only of what will benefit himself even if it means the ruin of his brother.” 81(o), PT 79-80

Dealing with someone who has injured me is a severe test, for I naturally want to retaliate when I have been mistreated. But what good does it do to say that I love or feel friendship for the whole human race if I don't show these feelings in my everyday association with my fellow-beings. It may be impossible for me to treat an obnoxious person as a friend, as Baha'is are told to do, DAL 110-1 #6 but it is never beyond my power to pray for him.

Do I find people disagreeable and disgustingly weak? I am told specifically to pray "that the ill-natured become good-natured and the weak become strong." DAL 34 # 35.

I remember that as a true seeker I "should forgive the sinful and never despise his low estate, "because it is impossible to foresee what temptations or evil ways I may succumb to, for "none knoweth what his own end shall be." BWF 106, GL 266 or Iqan 194 (see page 47 []) So I should "pray for the remission " of my enemy's sins, no matter how justified I may feel in being outraged at his behavior. Baha'u'llah does say, though, that the true seeker should "with all his heart . . . avoid fellowship with evil-doers" even while praying for them. *ibid.* and in this Day when we are trying to build the World Order of Baha'u'llah, I am reminded that I "should treasure the companionship of them that have renounced the world;" BWF 106, GL 265 or Iqan 194 and this certainly includes all souls who have enrolled as Baha'is, no matter how immature or outwardly unlovable they may be.

"They who follow Me must strive, under all circumstances, to promote the welfare of whosoever will arise for the triumph of My Cause, and must at all times prove their devotion and fidelity unto him. Happy is the man that hearkeneth and observeth My counsel. Woe unto him that faileth to fulfill My wish." GL 207

It is true that

"A person thru his own actions and deeds makes himself loved or disliked by the people; or through his own unselfish conduct, etc. . . . suffers himself to become favored and beloved at the threshold of God." 104(r), S of W Vol. 7 168

The unlovableness of disagreeable and ill-natured individuals, whether or not they are Baha'is, and the weakness of selfishness, are qualities that are naturally revolting to every soul that has been created to recognize and love Divinity. so let me pray that I may outgrow these character deficiencies in myself. And meanwhile I must engage in the prayer for such of my associates who are still struggling with these faults. 'Abdu'l-Baha, who was constantly at the mercy of unjust and hard-hearted individuals, admonishes me:

"Therefore, I say unto you pray - pray and turn your faces to God, that He, in His infinite compassion and mercy, may help and succour these misguided ones. Pray that He will grant them spiritual understanding and teach them tolerance and mercy, that the eyes of their minds may be opened and that they may be endued with the gift of the spirit. Then would peace and love walk hand in hand through the lands, and these poor unhappy people might have rest." PT 116

And if praying for such people seems hopeless, let me make this affirmation as I pray:

“Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into clam, and doubt into certainly.” BP’69, 55 #40 or P&M 249

“Through His bidding” - does that mean God acts on Baha’u’llah’s requests? Whatever the meaning, I know that God’s Will is His Will. So what a joy it is to take my desires to Him Who, like Jesus, reveals my heavenly “Father - God manifested in man.” 26(k), PT 26 the Divine Reality and Power that brings “man into contact with the Source of all life”! 15(cc), PT 58 In prayer and meditation I do this.

I have a responsibility too, to serve other souls by petitioning God in this way.
‘Abdu’l-Baha described the duty of Baha’is in such words as these:

“I hope . . . certain souls may arise who may prove radiant lamps to the world of humanity and a merciful spirit to the phenomenal body; that they may be the cause of the purification of souls and the means of their sanctification of hearts; . . . that they may arise in such wise as to live by the divine teachings and exhortations . . . as to sparkle like the morning star from the horizon of holiness.” 102(I), S of W Vol. 7 151

“Man is he who forgets his own interests for the sake of others . . . Consider how the greatest men in the world . . . have forfeited their own comfort, have sacrificed their own pleasure for the well-being of humanity.” 72 (f), FWU 42-3

Baha’u’llah voiced our responsibility in these few powerful words:

“Ye are the shepherds of mankind; liberate ye your flocks from the wolves of evil passions and desires, and adorn them with the ornament of the fear of God.” 91(I), BWF 35 or ESW 29

And the beloved Guardian brought it down to even more specific terms:

“How . . . staggering the responsibility that must weigh upon the present generation of the American believers at this early stage in their spiritual . . . evolution, to weed out, by every means in their power, those faults, habits, and tendencies which they have inherited from their own nation, and to cultivate * ____ and characteristics that are so indispensable to their effective participation in the great redemptive work of their Faith.” 103(o), ADJ 17

“Above all, they (young Baha’is) should set a high example . . .; chastity, politeness, friendliness, hospitality, joyous optimism about the ultimate future happiness and well-being of mankind, should distinguish them and win over to them the love and admiration of their fellow-youth.” 104(dd), BNs #188, 4

These words set forth the specific ways we can bring spiritual help to those with whom we associate, and so I should pray for myself that I may be given strength and the will to present that kind of aid. It makes me wonder if I am ready to do my part, when I say that I long to help those who need assistance! But ‘Abdu’l-Baha speaks so lovingly, so encouragingly, to stir the depths of my yearning! -

“Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within

himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow-men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.” 103 (v),SDC 2-3

From the depths of my heart, I respond to this: no, there is no greater bounty than being the cause of happiness to those I love and indeed to all mankind! And as I try to do my part, I remember that

“The world is like the body of man - it hath become sick, feeble and infirm> Its eye is devoid of sight, its ear hath become destitute of hearing and its faculties of sense are entirely dissolved. The friends of God must become as wise physicians and care for and heal this sick person, in accord with the divine teachings in order that - God willing - it may perchance gain health, find eternal healing and that its lost powers may be restored; and that the person of the world may find such health, freshness and purity that it will appear in the utmost beauty and charm.” BWF 356

As a Baha’i I have learned that I must teach the Cause of God “for God hath prescribed unto everyone the duty of proclaiming His Message.” GL 278 I long to perform this duty and to serve my fellow-beings as a good physician would. I pray: “Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones,” and I struggle to achieve this goal. Conscious that my soul is reinforced spiritually as I sleep. I pray in the morning:

“I beseech Thee by the potency of thy will and the compelling power of Thy purpose, to make of what Thou didst reveal unto me in my sleep the surest foundation for the mansions of Thy love that are within the hearts of Thy loved ones, and the best instrument for the revelation of the tokens of Thy grace and Thy loving-kindness.”

BP’69, 54#40 or P&M 249

This should open a portal of assistance that will enable me to reveal some of those divine qualities and attract the hearts I am trying to reach. But somehow my results are disappointing and frustrating! So I need to try harder to follow this precious counsel:

“If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utter kindness and good-will. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of man.” ESW 15 or GL 289

A kindly tongue! - I must beseech God to guide me, too, because as a human being I am naturally “irascible,” GL 159 and rejection by one I am trying to help does not activate in me the kindness and patience that a Baha’i teacher must have.

All human relationships are difficult because all human beings - myself included! - are imperfect. Here we are, in this cycle of divine Unity, inflicting such woes on each other, that we flee from human association and then suffer agonies of loneliness! We cause each other all kinds of anguish and sorrow, and expose each other to all sorts of conditions that run counter to God’s

will. And in the face of such conditions as these, how can I really hope to “serve” God’s loved ones?

I pray for the “grace” that I need, gratefully using these words:

“O Lord, my God and my Haven in my distress! My Shield and my Shelter in woes! My Asylum and Refuge in time of need and in my loneliness My companion! In my anguish my Solace, and in my solitude a loving Friend! The Remover of the pangs of my sorrows and the Pardoner of my sins! Wholly unto Thee do I turn, fervently imploring Thee with all my heart, my mind and my tongue, to shield me from all that runs counter to Thy will, in this, the cycle of Thy divine Unity.” BP’69, 108 #89

I’ll never know what a marvelous “shield” the portals of my heart can bring into my being, until I include such affirmations in my petitions!

Who are those that I long to help? And what are their conditions that I want changed? It matters not, for nothing is beyond the power of God to change!

Do I worry and grieve over loved ones who have passed on to the next life? “Spiritual instinct,” surely never given in vain, prompts us to pray for the welfare of those of our loved ones, who have passed out of the material world. PT 90 I learn that it is both right and effective to do so. I am urged to ask for the progress of departed souls. I am told that they, in turn, who are nearer to the Divine court than we are, are allowed to intercede for us; DAL 35 #40 that

It is permitted to ask for advancement, forgiveness, mercy, beneficence, and blessings, for a man after his death, because existence is capable of progression. That is why in the prayers of Baha’u’llah, forgiveness and remission of sins are asked for those who have died.” BWF 329 or SAQ 268

And a final admonition from my divine Enlightener points to the portal through which the superhuman power that I need may come, and sends me to my knees:

There are so many individuals around me in all kinds of trouble whom I long to assist, but I can find no human way to relieve their distress. It is heart-breaking to feel so helpless! What a precious bounty it is, then, to have this sure - even though imperceptible - way of bringing them what they need! Gratefully I shall use such petitions as the following. For I know they would not have been given to us if they were not sure keys to open the portals of protection, exaltation, inspiration and joy to those who are in trouble:

“O God! My God! Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion . . . gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy hold Kingdom . . .” BP’69, 65-6 #50

“O Lord, my God! Lowly are these servants of Thine, exalt them in Thy Kingdom on high; . . . gladden their hearts with Thine inspiration, O Lord of all beings! “ BP’69, 84 #68

“ . . . write down for them (Thy servants) what will cause all hearts to exult and all eyes to be gladdened.” P&M 77

I remember, too, that “All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!” BP’69, 106 #86

In Baha’i Prayers I find the following special Prayers that can be divinely potent in helping others: page 75-8 #42’ 65 #49; 65-6 #50; 83-4 #68; 92 #74; 105-6 #85; 111 #91; and page 111-2 #92. In Prayers and Meditations, I can use the index to find almost any kind of prayer I might desire - both Prayers voiced by Baha’u’llah as His own petitions which assure me of His divine confirmations, and those He revealed for me to use.

What undreamed of blessings can be mine as I follow the heavenly invitation to open these portals for new power to enter my heart? This is what ‘Abdu’l-Baha felt:

“The voice of the kingdom of God has been raise. May you attain supreme capacity and magnetic attraction in this realm of might and power, manifesting new energy and wonderful accomplishment, for God is your assister and helper. The breath of the Holy Spirit is your comforter and the angels of heaven surround you. I desire this power for you. rest assured that these bounties now overshadow you.” 104(ee), PUP 17-8 May I open my heart to them through prayer!

13. PRAYER: SOURCE OF REAL HAPPINESS AND JOY IN MY LIFE

“Man’s utmost desire seem to be to obtain for himself a livelihood, comfort of mortal type and to be content with simply the physical enjoyments which constitute the happiness of the world of animals, and not the happiness of the human world.

“The honor of man is dependent upon another type; the happiness of man is of another kind; the benediction of man is through the glad tidings of God. The honor of man if through the love of God, and man’s greatness is dependent upon servitude to God. . . . If a man becomes bereft of these Divine bestowals, and if his joy and happiness be confined to the material kind, then what distinction or difference is there between the animal and man, for the animal happiness is greater in magnitude, as its means of livelihood are more feasible! Man must strive in order to acquire natural livelihood, and in order that he may be comfortable; but man’s need is the acquisition of the Bounties of

God.” S of W Vol. 15, 163

The most important part of my reacting is my feelings - the way my love power is called into action. This I may try to hide. I may refuse to express my feelings as I react, or I may try to control them. My action may even deny or misrepresent what I actually experience. But it does not prevent the experience of feeling. In my inner being my feelings register and report what my spirit registers and this is something that I can neither completely conceal nor falsify. When I am furious, it shows in some way, if only inwardly. While self-control is admirable, it may be actually harmful, too, if not impossible, to appear pleased when I am angry. Those who know me, at least can probably “see through” my efforts to hide my real feelings. This is not the “right” way to deal with my destructive emotions, because they are destructive to me even if I do not express them. Destructive feelings should be changed; and they can only be replaced or gotten rid of by raising the level of my perception and seeing what faces me in a different light - specifically in the light of God’s purpose and of all that Baha’u’llah has revealed.

I want to be happy, and for the growth of spiritual consciousness I must learn to be joyous. For

“Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. But when sadness visits us we become weak, our strength leaves us, our comprehension is dim and our intelligence veiled . . . If we suffer it is the outcome of material things, and all the trials and troubles come from this world of illusions.” 53(r), PT 109-10 (see page 54)

It is easy to see the divinity of what I am dealing with when I am happy. But I am not happy when my desires are frustrated, or my needs are interfered with. when I’m faced with a “terrible” situation, what makes it “terrible” is its absence of divinity, for I was created to relate to and love perfection - justice, mercy, harmony and all of the other attributes of God. It is useless for me to try to pretend that I am not outraged by injustice, revolted by cruelty and made miserable by discord and opposition. But my destiny and current responsibility is to develop the spiritual outlook and understanding that will enable me to react with compassion or sympathetic grief than with anger and rebellion. I need my highest powers in control in the hope of helping to correct what needs to be remedied or improved. This is why I must learn to use my top level vision, and to keep my eyes directed toward what Baha’u’llah has revealed.

My outlook as I react reflects the level of perception where I am functioning at the time. But I have a general outlook on life that shows, too. I talk about optimists and pessimists, or I speak of a person being “negative” in his feelings. And what I am talking about is the person’s characteristic spirit.

The level of my soul development to date shows in my general emotional attitudes. these have developed from reacting at habitual levels of vision.

A person who is predominantly aware of his physical environment, as every soul is at the

beginning of his life, will inevitably show a spirit of self-concern and protectiveness of the ego, as he reacts. This is a form of self-love, and it is the kind of feelings I experience when I am activated by my animal degree of spirit. This produces what I call a “low gear” reaction. Happiness here is mere physical satisfaction.

But as the intellect develops, the value of cooperation becomes apparent. When I reached this stage of growth I began to manifest what is called a cooperative spirit. Those two kinds of spirit struggle for supremacy in a person until he matures to the point of wanting to cooperate even at the cost of self-denial.

As my rational power were trained, my innate desire to know (an aspiration of my divine nature) began to be satisfied by acquiring knowledge. I learned to love and enjoy the activity of my intellect. This can become a characteristic spirit or way of expressing emotional energy.

The human being, standing between the higher and lower natures of man (soul and body), 50(b), PUP 460 (see page 15b []) is motivated by both animal impulses and divine aspirations. So I may find a kind of happiness in either kind of fulfillment.

“God gave this power (the intellect) to man that it might be used for the advancement of civilization, for the good of humanity, to increase love and concord and peace. But man prefers to use this gift to destroy instead of to build, for injustice and oppression, for hatred and discord and devastation, for the destruction of his fellow-creatures.” 53(I), PT 42 (see page 16)

These wrong uses of the intellect are “natural” to the human creature because he is still motivated by animal instincts and beastly desires as well as divine ones. He actually expects to derive happiness from injustice, oppression, etc..

I see that in me my intellect may serve either of my two natures, and I can experience both kinds of “happiness.” For instance, my rational faculties and mind can prompt me to seek knowledge and understanding only of the material world and establish my outlook on life at that level of vision, and then cause me to rationalize everything from that viewpoint. I can enjoy that as long as things go “my way.” This is the natural human way of reacting but I can use my rational faculties in another way too: I can think about God, and reason and imagine about the divine secrets and heavenly realities that Baha’u’llah has revealed. This is a truly spiritual reaction. In the first use of my human powers, my love power expresses in self-love - I love and delight in what is pleasant to me. This is how the human nature reacts, and I shall react that way unless I choose to think differently. But it is not spiritual reacting nor the highest expression of my powers. On the other hand when I stop and think about God or any other heavenly realities, my mental powers must be supplemented by the spirit of faith and the best that is in my heart. By using my highest degree of spirit I can experience the highest kind of happiness.

“Know that there are two kinds of happiness, spiritual and material.

“As to material happiness, it never exists; nay it is but imagination, an image reflected in mirrors, a specter and shadow. Consider the nature of material happiness. It is

something which but slightly removes one's afflictions; yet the people imagine it to be a joy, delight, exultation and blessing. All the material blessings, including food, drink, etc., tend only to allay thirst, hunger and fatigue. They bestow no delight on the mind nor pleasure on the soul; nay they furnish only the bodily wants. So this kind of happiness has no real existence.

"As to spiritual happiness, this is the basis of the life of man, for life is created for happiness, not for sorrow; for pleasure, not for grief. Happiness is life; sorrow is death. spiritual happiness is life eternal. This is a light which is not followed by darkness. This is an honor that is not followed by shame. This is a life that is not followed by death. this is an existence that is not followed by annihilation. This great blessing and precious gift is obtained by man only through the guidance of God . . .

"This happiness is the fundamental basis from which man is created, worlds are originated, the contingent beings have existence and the world of God appears like unto the appearance of the sun at mid-day.

"This happiness is but the love of God . . .

"Were it not for this happiness the world of existence would not have been created." DAL 17-8 #10

The human spirit derives happiness from personal pleasure and achievement of all kinds, from human cooperation that does not involve self-sacrifice, and from any kind of glorification of the ego. It is not "wrong" to appreciate these things. It is [j]ust that I must not be satisfied with those fleeting superficial pleasures or call them happiness.

"Man's supreme honor and real happiness lie in self respect, in high resolves and noble purposes, in integrity and moral quality, in immaculacy of mind. 85 (aaa), SDC 19 So if satisfaction from satisfying my material needs and accomplishing my egocentric objectives is the only happiness that I can feel and show, I am experiencing and revealing only human development - only the human degree of spirit. some degree of this development is common to all civilized human adults. But this level of power is not the spirit of Baha'u'llah's world Order. It is not what I call "being spiritual."

The kind of spirit that I am trying to develop comes from so clear an understanding of God's purpose and of my own heavenly potentialities that I cannot be outraged, infuriated or made miserable by the current absence of divinity in worlds and souls, because I see them as incomplete development instead of as sin or evil. But without that understanding and when functioning at the human level of development, I'll always hate the imperfections of my environment and associates.

As an unenlightened human being, I am "made" happy or miserable by what I react to. But spirit comes from within and is a limited manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and this is my real source of joy, life and development. So when I pray "O God, refresh my spirit," I am not asking merely for a stimulus which I can humanly enjoy,. Instead, I am asking that my whole being,

with its reacting machinery and powers, be vivified and aroused to spiritual expressions beyond their usual human levels of operation. I am asking for my whole outlook on life to be extended to new heights where heavenly joy may become part of my inner being and the star of happiness may twinkle radiantly.” 73(1), BNs 7 #90 (see page 47 [])

When I encounter a Baha’i who has experienced that heavenly “refreshing and gladdening” of his spirit, I am noticeably moved by his spirit, if I am at all spiritually perceptive. I sense that that person is not as “negative” as he may once have been. He is not as “irascible” as the human stage of soul development makes people. CL 159 (see page 119) This is what I am asking for when I use that petition.

“Purify my heart” - of what? Of self-concern, egocentricity and all of the imperfections of the animal and human natures. I am asking for the spiritual growth that results from the divine illumination of my powers. What a marvelously comprehensive little supplication that is! If I offer it in the spirit of faith, I shall indeed “lay all my affairs” in God’s hand and recognize Him as my Guide and my Refuge.

With Him as my Guide when confusion faces me and my Refuge when trouble bombards me, I have a limitless defense against unhappiness.

But how wise ‘Abdu’l-Baha was to suggest that as I face my Maker I affirm the elimination of sorrow, grief and anxiety from my consciousness as I face my Maker. This opens the portals of my heart to let that star of happiness shine forth. And otherwise this potentiality might never be realized!

I shall always have to face unpleasant things - they are my tests and the means of my growth. In fact man is told clearly that

“Through suffering he will attain to eternal happiness which nothing can take from him To attain eternal happiness one must suffer.” 56(aaa), PT 178

Meeting these tests strengthens my spiritual muscles and develops the inner strength that every soul must have. But I don’t need to dwell on the imperfections of my environment. I don’t need to let them torment me. If they persist as something to be dealt with, let me face and analyze what I am reacting to, and then answer this question: am I viewing the matter with my highest degree of spirit - with my spirit of faith and with the very best powers withing me? And especially, am I seeing what faces me in the light of God’s purpose and of the whole new spiritual dimension of life that Baha’u’llah has unveiled?

I have a basic spiritual development to date. I know that it is somewhere above blind self-love that puts my own comfort and pleasure above all other considerations. I hope that I have at least started my spiritual growth and am using my higher-than-human degrees of spirit so that gradually love of God will replace my self-love. Self concern will always give me negative feelings in regard to “sin” and “evil”, or to what I see as hateful and revolting. For it is these that threaten my well-being and devastate my environment. But Baha’u’llah gives me prayers to use in which I affirm that

“Armed with the power of Thy love, the hatred which moveth them that are against Thee can never alarm me; and with Thy praise on my lips the rulings of Thy decree can in no wise fill me with sorrow.” 105(g), P&M 214, (see page 62 [])

“Armed with the power of Thy name nothing can ever hurt me, and with Thy love in my heart all the world’s afflictions can in no wise alarm me.” P&M 208 (see page 31 [])

“Armed with this love, I am afraid of no one, though all the peoples of the world unite to hurt me.” P&M 309

I realize that it was Baha’u’llah Who said these words which were true of Him, and that I cannot feel what He did. But at least He embodies the Ideal toward which I am destined to progress, so I certainly should pray to become imbued with selfless love and make every effort to use my top degree of powers, those of my divine nature. I am taught:

“Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me.” 84(ss), BWF 122 or GL 294

“When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed freedom! For self is the greatest prison.” 84(tt), DAL 70 #1

This is what I must pray for, because in prayer I open the portals of my heart and invite the breath of the Holy Spirit to enter and to take possession of my whole being.

“Happy are the righteous that have attained unto the most great truth; happy are the wise that have recognized the straight path of God and turned unto His Kingdom; happy are the glad and sincere, the lamps of whose hearts burn with the knowledge of the All-Merciful and are protected from the rough winds of tests and sorrows; happy are the brave whose hearts the power of the oppressor cannot daunt: happy are the clear-sighted that have turned their faces to the Imperishable and are named among the Immortals in the realm of power and glory.” 85 (hhh), B. World Vol. 2, 63

the fact is, I need divine Enlightenment in order to understand my own happiness-potential. I have been conditioned to enjoy and to be “made happy: by so many transitory things, that I would never even dream of the heights of bliss that I can reach if they were not revealed in such heavenly counseling as this:

“The life of man is . . . divine, eternal, not mortal and sensual . . . His life is intended to be a life of spiritual enjoyment to which the animal can never attain . . . The happiness of man is in the fragrance of the love of God.” 72(g)

“O SON OF WORLDLINESS! Pleasant is the realm of being, wert thou to attain thereto; glorious is the domain of eternity, shouldst thou pass beyond the world of mortality; sweet is the holy ecstasy if thou drinkest of the mystic chalice from the hands of the celestial Youth. Shouldst thou attain this station, thou wouldst be free from destruction and death, from toil and sin.” 84(22), 104 (gg), HWP 46 #70

The domain of eternity! I forget that this is where my soul was created and where it lives

- in an embryonic condition now, but preparing its own glorious future. Spiritual happiness is something I shall take with me too!

“All men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought They that are the followers of the one true God shall, the moment they depart out of this life, experience such joy and gladness as would be impossible to describe, while they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed.” 89(m), GL 171

The worth of my deed! How can I now the true value of my reactions?

“The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be release from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world my attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth my attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness.” 100(q), BWF 33 or GL 99

He says:

“Strive, therefore, with heart and soul, to follow the precepts of the Blessed Perfection, and rest assured that if ye succeed in living the life He marks out for you . . . everlasting joy in the Heavenly Kingdom will be yours.” 104(t), PT 114

“Happy indeed is the man that hath turned towards the sanctuary of Thy Presence, and rid himself of all attachment to any one except Thyself.” P&M 269

My prayers take me into “the sanctuary of God’s presence” and open the portals of my heart; and it is thus that I realize a kind of joy that I never dreamed of in my unenlightened human consciousness. For, as already noted, “true happiness depends on spiritual good and having the heart ever open to receive the Divine bounty.” 85(fff), PT 108 (see page 48 [])

‘Abdu’l-Baha tells me that “supplication To God at morn and eve is conducive to the joy of hearts,” DAL 33 #31 and can cause even my face to be lightened with a radiance. DAL 27 #3 One wonderful thing about prayer is that it demands and expands both faith and love of God, which are one. 5(s), PT 180 (see page 15g []) And “for those who believe in God, who have love of God, life is excellent” - its eternal values become apparent, making transitory pleasures insignificant by comparison. 73(h), SAQ 282

What is my general outlook on life? - do I see it as “excellent”? The consciousness of its excellence takes possession of my heart as I pray. Fear and bondage to selfish desires dissolve as I pray too, for to truly pray I must over-rule all of the influences of my animal nature and activate my spiritual susceptibilities; and

“It is divinely intended that the spiritual susceptibilities of man should gain precedence and over-rule his physical forces. In this way he becomes fitted to dominate the human world by his nobility and stand forth fearless and free, endowed with the attributes of eternal life.” 47(ccc), PUP 258

The admonitions I am given will stimulate my “spiritual susceptibilities, so I listen eagerly to these admonitions:

“O SON OF MAN! Rejoice in the gladness of thine heart, that thou mayest be worthy to meet Me and to mirror forth My beauty? HWA 12 #36

“Happy is the man who will arise to serve My Cause, and glorify My beauteous Name.” GL 69

“Endeavor and supplicate and pray God that, day unto day, thy firmness and steadfastness may grow and that thy countenance may radiate through the light of guidance.” DAL 30 #20

“Turn the anguish of your separation from Him into the joy of an everlasting reunion, and let the sweetness of His presence dissolve the bitterness of your remoteness from His court.” BWF 115 or GL 320

“O YE PEOPLE THAT HAVE MINDS TO KNOW AND EARS TO HEAR! . . . Abide not but in the rose-garden of the spirit . . . dwell not save on the mount of faithfulness. Therein is thy habitation, if on the wings of thy soul thou soarest to the realm of the infinite and seekest to attain thy goal.” 84(mm), HWP 22 #1

There are so many kinds of happiness in the spiritual life! And I open the portals of my heart to all of them when I pray. So I cherish the potent petitions such as the following, which are among our spiritual treasures:

“Praise be unto Thee, Who art . . . my Joy and the Joy of all them that love Thee . . . P&M 266-7 by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God!” BP’69, 76 #59, BWF 153-4 or P&M 248 (see page 123 [])

“O Lord my God! I entreat Thee . . . to rain down, out of the heaven of Thy mercy and the clouds of Thy tender compassion, what will gladden the hearts of Thy servants, who have turned towards Thee. . . “ BP’69, 65 #49 or P&M 72

“O Thou compassionate Lord! . . . Render our souls joyous and happy through Thy glad-tidings.” BP’69, 44 #31

“O Lord! Grant unto us Thine infinite bestowals and let Thy light of guidance shine. Illumine the eyes, make joyous the souls and confer a new spirit upon the hearts.” BP’69, 43 # 30

“O my Master . . . let the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence bring my joy . . . “ BP’69, 76 #59, BWF 154 or P&M 248

“Turn our faces toward the beauty of Thy oneness and gladden our bosoms with the signs of Thy divine unity . . . Reveal then Thyself, O Lord! By Thy merciful utterance and the mystery of Thy Divine Being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls . . . “ BP’ 69, 93 #75

It matters not what the state of my consciousness, what troubles torment me, if I can bring myself to my knees, and open the portals of faith in my inner being, God can refresh

and gladden my spirit and transform my feelings and outlook.

If I am in despair, I use these potent words:

“In the darksome night of despair, mine eye turneth expectant and full of hope to the morn of Thy boundless favor and at the hour of dawn my drooping soul is refreshed and strengthened in remembrance of Thy beauty and perfection.” BP’69, 107 #88 (see page 58 [])

If I am feeling inadequate of helpless, cut off perhaps, from divine guidance, these words stir and express what is in my heart:

“O God! O God! This is a broken-winged bird and his flight is very slow - assist him so that he may fly toward the apex of prosperity and salvation, wing his way with the utmost joy and happiness throughout illimitable space, raise his melody in Thy Supreme Name in all the regions, exhilarate the ears with this call, and brighten the eyes by beholding the signs of guidance!”

If I am in grief, feeling drained of spiritual strength, I turn to my heavenly Refuge, supplicating:

“From the cups of joy, proffered by the hands of Thy tender mercies, feed me, for manifold sorrows have laid mighty hold upon me.” BWF 154 or P&M 234 (see page 94 [])

If I am depressed and if my consciousness of God seems to be dimmed I can whole-heartedly beg my Lord:

“Gladden the bosom wherein the fire of Thy love doth smolder and set it aglow with the flame of Thy celestial love and spirt.” BP’69, 109 # 89 (see page 79 [])

Or if my faith seems to waver and I need something to reinforce my spiritual vision, these words express desires and name answers far beyond what my human consciousness could even conceive:

“Let my heart be dilated with joy through the spirit of confirmation from Thy Kingdom, and illumine my sight with seeing the hosts of success following one another and descending upon me from Thine Omnipotence.” BP’69, 75 #58

Yes, prayer is a real and definite source of happiness and joy of the highest type that exists. The simple reading, and feeling as I read, any of the revealed prayers that are listed under “Spiritual Qualities” in Baha’i Prayers, can have an almost immediate effect in elevating my emotional tone; because lifting my spirits and consciousness from human concerns to spiritual ones is in itself a soul-satisfying experience.

Baha’u’llah, using the editorial “We,” gives us the following words in telling how, in an agonizing crisis in His life, turning to God transformed His consciousness:

“By Him Who hath My being between His hands! Notwithstanding these showers of afflictions and unceasing calamities, Our soul was wrapt in blissful joy, and Our whole being evinced an ineffable gladness.” Iqan 250-1

The human counterpart of this experience is what has been called radiant acquiescence - an inner contentment and joy that characterize the consciousness of God's purpose for me. Heavenly realities have been verbalized through our revealed prayers - the fact, for instance, that He stands ready as my Guide to direct me to its fulfillment and as a Refuge to protect and comfort me in times of fear or human revulsion. What I need and what God is ready to give me, then, is summed up in this one prayer:

“O God, refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge. I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved, I will be a happy and joyful being. O God, I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me, I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.

“O God, Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord.” BP'69, 80 #64

God offers everything that a soul can desire or aspire to. Let me keep my heart wide open to those heavenly bounties, and draw heavily on His divine treasury for the fulfillment of His purpose in my being!

“Where you to ponder, . . . you would surely find the portals of understanding unlocked before your face, and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled before your eyes.” 5(bb), Iqan 52
And “pondering” brings us to meditation.

PART THREE - HOW MEDITATION RELATES TO MY INNER NEEDS

1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMAN THINKING AND MEDIATION

“The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the mediation referred to in the words ‘One hour’s reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship’ must be observed.” Iqan 238

“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 to the stations of absolute certitude.” 5 (cc), BWF 107 (see page 73 [])

“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 . . . , may be made manifest unto you.” 5(dd), Iqan 16-7

Meditation, especially upon what has been divinely revealed, is continually admonished in the Baha’i Writings. In fact we are told:

“Were men to meditate on these words which have flowed from the Pen of the Divine Ordainer, they would, one and all, hasten to embrace the truth of this God-given, and ever-enduring Revelation, and would testify to that which He Himself hath solemnly affirmed.” GL 82

“Judge ye fairly . . . and behold that which hath been sent down from the Throne on high, and meditate thereon with innocent and sanctified hearts. Then will the truth of this Cause appear to you as the sun in its noon-tide glory. Then will ye be of them that have believed in Him.” BWF 34 or GL 105

I read instructions to mediate, in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha’u’llah alone, on pages 13, 70, 98, 105, 148, 153, 161, 216, 260, 272-3, 333, 338, and 343; and this is only one book. We cannot be reminded often enough of the importance of meditating:

“Ponder in thine heart upon the unsearchable wisdom of God, and meditate on its manifold revelation.” GL 162

Pondering is another word for the same activity. So Baha’u’llah said:

“Ponder a while these holy words in your heart, and, with utter detachment, strive to grasp their meaning . . . and . . . perchance you may cause the bird of the human heart to wing its flight away from the abodes of heedlessness and doubt unto the nest of faith and certainty, and drink deep from the pure waters of ancient wisdom, and partake of the fruit of the tree of divine knowledge. Such is the share of the pure in heart . . .” Iqan 5-6

Again and again I am told, “Ponder in thy heart . . . ! - for instance in the same book it appears on pages 46, 58, 76, 117, 120, 124, 152, 157, 165, and 307. Sometimes where special

understanding is important He enlarges on the way to “ponder”, as, for instance, when He reveals a special prayer that is needed, saying:

“Recite this prayer . . . and ponder thereon with a heart rid of all attachment, and with ears that are pure and sanctified, be attentive to its meaning, that haply thou mayest inhale the breath of detachment. . . “ ESW 9

Pondering with a pure heart or meditating may be difficult to learn, but the rewards are so tremendous that I certainly want to acquire the ability! For ‘Abdu’l-Baha says:

“Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries . . . This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God. this faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty, inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out; through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God.” PT 175

What is this faculty of meditation? And what is the difference between meditating and ordinary human thinking? Dictionary definitions don’t enlighten me notably because both words are defined as reflecting. But there are basic differences between the two. In fact the pondering or reflecting that the Baha’i Writings speak of as meditation is a different reality from the “natural” human thinking that is common to all of us human creatures. For each of these two uses of my mind is activated by a different power and purpose, even though their action patterns may both be called thinking or reflecting.

My thought powers are clearly defined by ‘Abdu’l-Baha when he names the degrees of spirit manifested in a soul. (see page 15b [])

Baha’u’llah gives basic enlightenment about how man’s three degrees of spirit function and names the powers of the mind. He does not often mention man’s intellect, although in addressing “the learned men of the Bayan”, He did entreat them “not to depend upon their intellect” or even on their own “comprehension and learning. * Iqan 248 [* this is the only mention of “intellect” shown in the Concordance of Baha’u’llah’s * ____] But “the rational faculty” He glorifies immeasurable. He states that the power of the senses and indeed of vision itself “is derived from it and acteth in dependence on it,” and that it is impossible for man to “comprehend its mysteries or to appreciate its value.” GL 164-5 He praises understanding even more, saying that it is the first and foremost among the limitless favors vouchsafed by God unto mankind. Although, as already noted, He says that God’s “purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God,” He adds:

“This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation.” 16(a), 35(m), BWF 121-2, or GL 194 (see pages 153 and 52 [])

Obviously, though, the intellect is a precious adjunct of man’s understanding, for it has helped him to discover the secrets of material creation and thus to develop the human sciences.

“Man. . . , by his understanding or intellect, has been able to gain control of and adapt some . . . natural laws to his own needs. By the power of his intellect he has discovered means by which he not only traverses great continents in express trains and crosses vast oceans in ships, but, like the fish, he travels under water in submarines, and, imitating the birds, he flies through the air in airships.” 51(n), PT 42

But the intellect can discover only secrets of material existence - not the divine or spiritual secrets or heavenly realities of existence. In fact it has been pointed out that man misuses this divine gift, and that it becomes a destructive power when misused and made the servant of injustice, oppression, hatred, discord and devastation. 53(I), PT 42 (see pages 16 and 124 []) This happens when man depends on his intellect alone, for without the next higher powers of perception, the rational soul or human spirit is oblivious of divine realities and spiritual values. 39(y), see pages 15e and 110 []) Unassisted by the spirit of faith and intuition, the intellect of itself is a limited power.

This is where meditation is clearly differentiated from ordinary thinking. For meditation, like prayer, is an activity of my heart or “whole personality including intellectual as well as emotional functions or traits.” (see page 20, definitions) As when I pray, I must use all of the powers of my heart - my highest degree of love power as well as my top level knowing power (see page 39). “the light of adoration” must illumine my brow and vision as I meditate, for when I am reflecting on heavenly realities the love which I was created to feel is automatically activated. Meditation is a joyous activity, then. For when I am so engaged, I am seeing the best there is, and loving it with my whole heart. If negative thoughts and feelings come into my consciousness, I may be sure that I am not turned heavenward and am reflecting some limitations or the imperfections of humanness as all ordinary human thinking does.

It is the spirit of faith, of course, coupled with the inner vision of the soul, that I must use in meditation. And love of divinity is part of that innate wisdom and power.

When Baha’u’llah unveils divine secrets and heavenly realities, He uses terms that convey truth in abstract form. My intellect can grasp the abstract fact that such realities exist, without understanding them. For “the mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete.” 52(c), BWF 337 (see page 14 [])

but I am told that the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. It has the power to understand spiritual truth. “The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless.” *ibid.* (see page 14 []) what my heart knows transcends my intellectual comprehension, although as an awakening soul I need both.

The rational faculty functions by the aid of my five sense, and uses what these senses report as premises upon which to reason, imagine, draw conclusions and “comprehend”. This is the limit of the understanding of my intellect. But “the soul is free from all agencies.” (*ibid.*) And I have already learned that I have inner powers of perception (see page 15b []) and my powers of comprehension and understanding “perceive and act in two different ways” . . .

through instruments and organs,” and without them. 47(yy), BWF 326 or SAQ 263 (see page 11, 15 [])

The result is that

“man’s power of thought consists of two kinds. One kind is true, when it agrees with a determined truth. Such conceptions find realization in the exterior world; such are accurate opinions, correct theories, scientific discoveries and inventions. The other kind of conceptions is made up of vain and useless ideas . . . which have no reality . . .

“In the same way, there are two sorts of spiritual discoveries. One is the revelations of the Prophets, and the spiritual discoveries of the elect. The visions of the Prophets are not dreams; no, they are spiritual discoveries and have reality . . .” 65(j), SAQ 290-1

Serving as Divine Mirrors, They beam Their truth directly into hearts.

“The other kind of spiritual discoveries is made up of pure imaginations.’ *ibid.*

It is natural for human beings to “imagine” about what their senses report. but the other kind of discovery is made only by conscious spiritual effort based on my highest degree of spirit. How wonderful it is to learn, though, that spiritual discoveries are possible!

Of course it is not new, to be able to make spiritual discoveries through meditation.

‘Abdu’l-Baha pointed this out, saying:

“About one thousand years ago a society was formed in Persia called the Society of the Friends, who gathered together for silent communion with the Almighty. They divided Divine philosophy into two parts: one kind is that of which the knowledge of which can be acquired through lectures and study in schools and colleges. The second kind of philosophy was that of the Illuminati, or followers of the inner light. The schools of this philosophy were held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, from that central Light the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected in the hearts of these people.” PT 173

Always this kind of reflection or meditation has been fruitful. For

“When divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest . . . when divine instruction and guidance appear . . . a new spirit is realized within, a new power descends and a new life is given . . . eternal happiness will be unveiled, . . . spiritual delight will be attained.” PUP 299

“Wonderful bounties descend . . . everlasting glory surrounds him. All the signs of reality and greatness are there.” PUP 298-9

Currently there are many exponents of this kind of meditation, and they experience definite results from practice of this type of spiritual discovery. Many such teachers have set themselves up as leaders of groups, with no commitment to any religion or to divine revelation. Many are emphasizing material features of what they teach, indicating that physical posture can intensify the reflection that is their goal. And even in this, there can be some truth, because

Baha'u'llah reveals that

“So long as no external impediment interveneth between them, the body will, in its entirety, continue to reflect the light of the soul, and to be sustained by its power.”

46(tt), BWF 121 or GL 154

In speaking of the “followers of the inner light” who require enlightenment by “meditating and turning their faces to the Source of Light,” ‘Abdu’l-Baha said:

“These people . . . attain to a superlative degree of power, and are entirely freed from blind dogmas and imitations. Men rely on the statements of these people; by themselves - within themselves - they solve all mysteries. If they find a solution with the assistance of the inner light, they accept it, and afterwards they declare it; otherwise they would consider it a matter of blind imitation. They go so far as to reflect upon the essential nature of the divinity, of the Divine revelation, of the manifestation of the Deity in this world.” PT 174

When the spirit behind these activities is a deep and sincere desire to discover truth and when the efforts are backed by the spirit of faith and intuitive wisdom, meditation becomes a great power. I can develop it, too!

To what subject matter are these faculties of meditation directed in such groups? On what subjects may I hope to acquire enlightenment by meditating?

“Some of the great questions unfolding from the rays of the Sun of Reality upon the mind of man are: the problems of the reality of the spirit of man; of the birth of the spirit; of its birth from this world into the world of God; the question of the inner life of the spirit and of its fate after its ascension from the body . . . also . . . the scientific questions of the day, . . . these are likewise solved.” PT 174

If I am tempted to be guided by such human teachers, who claim no assistance from divine Revelation and observe no commitment to any revealed religion, I should remember these words of Baha'u'llah:

“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.” GL 317-8

We are now in a new cycle, and

“the former springtime has returned, . . . the lights of God shone forth, the effulgent Sun of Reality returned and became manifest, the realm of thoughts and kingdom of hearts became exhilarated, a new spirit of life was breathed into the body of the world . . . “
FWU 12

But now “though a good action is praiseworthy, yet if it is not sustained by the knowledge of God, the love of God, and sincere intention, it is imperfect.” SAQ 346-7

“The world and its vanities and its embellishments shall pass away. Nothing will

endure except God's Kingdom which pertaineth to none but Him . . . " GL 125

So great are the potentialities of meditation that what happens to those who learn the art makes some believers think that God talks to them direct[ly]. Such souls belittle God in a dangerous way; they lack a true concept of "the inaccessible heights of His station" 9(d), P&M 86-7 and fail to recognize Him as the "impenetrable Mystery" that He really is. Others, enamoured of what comes into their own consciousness through reflecting and meditation know that it is from their own inner beings, and so may either consider themselves each a "Christ" or conclude that man is all-sufficient unto himself without either God or His Manifestation. Such people are even more wrong. This is what has caused man to establish so many new "cults" - some as phases of Christianity and others that are frankly a product of nothing but "liberal" human thought. I note, however, that most of these are esoteric beliefs that le[ad] out to ever expanding mysteries, instead of giving universal Truth and clear explanations of the Great Unknown such as Baha'u'llah gives. Man today is hungry for Truth, and meditation is a definite reflecting power that opens the door to mysteries of the unseen worlds, to any pure heart however unenlightened. But we don't get the whole truth that way.

"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 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." 3(f), GL 317-8

That, however, does not negate the benefits of meditation. In speaking of the "unique capacity" with which the Creator has invested every soul, that of knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory", Baha'u'llah went on to say:

"This twofold distinction conferred upon him hath cleansed away from his heart the rust of every vain desire, and made him worthy of the vesture with which his Creator hath deigned to clothe him. It hath served to rescue his soul from the wretchedness of ignorance. This robe with which the body and soul of man hath been adorned is the very foundation of his well-being and development. Oh, how blessed the day when, aided by the grace and might of the one true God, man will have freed himself from the bondage and corruption of the world and all that is therein, and will have attained unto true and abiding rest beneath the shadow of the Tree of Knowledge!" GL 77-8

It is a matter of level of consciousness: those who use only their rational faculties (the human spirit) can never rise above the product of their own thought, no matter what heights of intellect they may reach. And those who bar faith [] from their hearts (the higher-than-human

spirit) will never be capable of recognizing Baha'u'llah. God's own Voice, speaking perhaps of Baha'u'llah as His "eyes" sates clearly:

"If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me. Ye will, otherwise, be never capable of recognizing Me, though ye ponder My Cause as long as My kingdom endureth, and meditate upon all created things throughout the eternity of God . . . " GL 272-3

Never in the life of mankind have the potentialities of prayer and meditation been so great as they are now, because never before has "the ocean of spiritual life" been made so accessible to hearts as Baha'u'llah has been commissioned to do. For while all "the Prophets of God have been the servants of reality" 19(ee), PUP 291; (see page 5 and 10) and have unveiled truth and aspects of the spiritual worlds, Baha'u'llah has come to guide us into "all truth", 1(a), John 16:12-3 and we are in "the greatest of all centuries . . . the century of the Revelation of the reality" of those worlds. 1(c), BWF 225

"That which raised these . . . (Prophet of God) 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 . . . 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 the teachings; whilst some of those simple men (the Prophets, often of humble birth, to all appearance ignorant, unknown men of no importance in the eyes of the world) 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!" PT 164

Never could meditation contribute so much to the spiritual growth of human beings as now, because never before has their thought capacity been so great nor the available Light so full and intense.

Now we understand that

"Man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight: when the power of insight is being used the outward vision does not see . . . " PT 175

"Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit - the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation." PT 175

But "The influence of the wisest philosophers, without this Spirit Divine, has been comparatively unimportant, however extensive their learning and deep their scholarship." PT 164

When I have been so blessed as to have recognized Baha'u'llah and accepted His Revelation as the Source of all truth, why on earth would I ever think about turning to a human guide or enlightener”?

Summing up the difference between human thought and true meditation, I clearly see again my three levels of consciousness and the area of thought that is open to each of my three natures as they function at those levels:

III. My divine nature can discover and meditate on the divine secrets and heavenly realities that Baha'u'llah has unveiled, and thus gain a clear apprehension of the *____

II. My human nature can reason and imagine about any reality whose existence it has recognized, but cannot, of itself, discover or become acquainted with divine realities.

I. My animal nature cannot think at all, but provides and awareness of the acts and attributes of material things that register on the senses.

In order to learn to meditate, I need to know how to block off the activities of my intellect and human thinking. The more accustomed I am to using my rational powers or human spirit, the more necessary this is. For I am told:

“O SON OF DUST! Blind thine eye, 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.” HWP 25 #11

My intellect is the origin of human thinking whereas meditation involves my higher-than-human powers and activates my spiritual vision. It is a function of my inner being. I note these instructions:

“O MAN OF TWO VISIONS! Close one eye and open the other. Close one to the world and all that is therein, and open the other to the hallowed beauty of the Beloved.” HWP 26 #12

“O SON OF THE THRONE! Thy hearing is My hearing, hear thou therewith. Thy sight is My sight, do thou see therewith, that in thine inmost soul thou mayest testify unto My exalted sanctity, and I within Myself may bear witness unto an exalted station for thee.” HWA 14 #44

Shall I be content, then, to live with and reflect on only the outer word - that is, only what concerns my physical being (which is animal in nature) or what my limited human powers make me aware of?

Thinking is a natural and pleasant activity.

“Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man, they are life waves moving in the sea without result.” PT 175

And the kind of thinking that is natural and pleasant often produces that variety of thoughts. In fact many thoughts arising from my natural desires and impulses can be tragically destructive. “But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the inner light and characterized with divine attributes,” PT 175-6 a different kind of thoughts will be produced - a kind that will result in blessings and confirmations of faith.

A key to constructive thinking is given in this truth:

“The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. . . But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts.” PT 176

Perhaps in choosing the level of my vision is where I need “the wine of renunciation” from Baha’u’llah, to divert consciousness away from the vision and concerns of my human nature and to life my spirits to those “lofty heights of detachment” in order to learn what true meditation is. I am “thinking” a large part of my waking hours, and most of my mental processes are activated by my outer environment and human nature. I sometimes think I have little or no choice about what I must think about. But what I think and feel is determined by what I see, and I do have a choice about how I view every stimulus to which I react. I can see it:

physical acts and attributes (which my senses register):
a behavior pattern with a cause and consequence (which my human vision takes in);
 or divine purpose-and power behind what my senses and human vision take in, (which is part of every reality and which explains its behavior and being).

I should form the habit of contemplating what I read, long enough to see all of its phases. Perhaps it is a matter of pausing an extra moment for contemplation. The Psalmist of ancient times said, “Be still and know that I am God”. Psalms 46:10 It is good advice. My heart says, “Be still and remember your real purpose! Keep that vision of reality!”

I need to remember that my best guidance and inspiration depend on at least a moment of quiet detachment that can connect my outer consciousness with my inner illumination.

“Baha’u’llah says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon; the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for man to do two things at one time - he cannot both speak and meditate.” PT 174

May a “Wrong” reaction could be forestalled if I would take time to relax and contemplate what faces me with the eyes of faith and intuition. That is a practical kind of meditation! It takes conscious effort to establish such a habit, because it is “natural” to forget about my inner being when outer conditions claim my full attention. But if I don’t “stop and think”, if I don’t take time to consider probable results of my reaction or to check my behavior with my real purpose, I am not even using my intellect as I should?

Do I use lack of time as an excuse! Do I think of meditation as something I'll "do when I have time"? How long does it take to say, think or feel, "Allah'u'Abha"? In that instant I can contemplate the Glory of God and transform a mental process from something destructive into a meditative process that may bring a flash of heavenly inspiration. I can do this in any reaction. I should put my heart into every reaction!

Baha'u'llah has unveiled so much divinity, so many heavenly realities, for me to reflect on! Certainly I can find a pattern for learning some of the benefits of meditation. It might well start with a determination to follow this advice that 'Abdu'l-Baha gave to those who "desire to approach the presence of God and to become informed of the realities and precepts of God":

"investigate and study the holy scriptures word by word so that you may attain knowledge of the mysteries hidden therein. Be not satisfied with words but seek to understand the spiritual meanings hidden in the heart of the words . . . It is not the reading of the words that profits you; it is the understanding of their meanings. Therefore pray God that you may be enabled to comprehend the mysteries of the divine testaments."

PUP 454-5

He especially recommended study of the Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah for reflecting "upon the inspiration of the Messengers of God". BWF 251 Of course, daily heart-felt use of the revealed prayers should be included, and I should add more contemplative reacting in my daily routine! Baha'is should certainly, as spiritual food, read and meditate on at least a paragraph of our precious Writings every day. "Let them not satisfy themselves with mere hearing but reflect upon that which proceedeth from this oppressed One," Baha'u'llah said. BWF 202 The more we reflect, the more we shall love Baha'u'llah.

The thrilling part of meditation is that it enables me to discover spiritual realities and divinity within my own being! For Baha'u'llah has admonished His servants thus:

"O My servants! Deprive not yourselves of the unfading and resplendent Light that shineth within the Lamp of Divine glory. Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts . . . Guard it . . . so that the evil whisperings of the ungodly may not extinguish its light." BWF 66 or GL 325-6 (see page 76 [])

2. MEDITATION, A DOOR TO SELF KNOWLEDGE, SELF DEVELOPMENT

As already noted, 'Abdu'l-Baha explained meditation in these simple words:

"It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed." PT 174 (see page 5)

"A man may converse with the ego within him saying: 'May I do this? Would it be advisable for me to do this work?' Such as this is conversation with the higher self." 9Abdu'l-Baha's words quoted) PT16-79

When Baha'u'llah speaks of "the light that shineth in your radiant hearts," (see page 142 []) it is a promise that there can be value in addressing my inner being. For this is how I may discover what is hidden there "under the veilings of sense and the conditions of this earth".

41(w), 7VAL 24, (see pages , 11, 27, 37, 83 and 111 { })

When I meditate I consciously reach toward the divinity of my soul or inner being.

It is thrilling to realize that the spiritual light that is closest to me is in my own heart! For Baha'u'llah says that my heart is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God. BWF 105, GL 264 or Iqan 192 It is quite appropriate then, that I should turn inward at times to this source of divine illumination. It is a way too, of keeping in touch with my own reality.

"Know that the reality of man . . . is the revealer of the secrets of things, and it is the knower of the realities of that which exists. These discoveries corresponding to the reality are similar to revelation which is spiritual comprehension, divine inspiration, and the association of human spirits." SAQ 291

What glorious potentialities! These words make me want to understand my reality. I have been "conditioned," experience by experience, to see myself in a certain way, and this is deeply ingrained into me. This is what "I know" most vividly about myself. To change this composite concept of myself is very difficult. The picture of me stands, with its inhibitions, guilt complexes, habit patterns, fixed emotional attitudes, human desires and objectives and all of my pathetic limitations; and, real or not, it acts as a motivating background and energy drive in all of my reacting. But this is not my reality!

For Baha'u'llah reveals the soul as something totally unlike my concept of myself. I long to realize - that is, make real to me - the truth as it is revealed. How can I "face" the reality of my own being? How can I know myself to be what my Creator describes as a living soul?"

First of all, I must recognize that my concept of myself has proceeded from my limited human vision as I have lived and confronted my material environment. It was quite firmly established before I could hear, much less comply with, what the Voice of God commands in this new Age"

"Enter thou My presence, that thou mayest behold what the eye of the universe hath never beheld, and heart that which the ear of the whole creation hath never heard, that haply thou mayest free thyself from the mire of vague fancies, and set thy face towards the Most Sublime Station." 5 (z), ESW 130

The "most Sublime Station," of course, is Baha'u'llah's, as the divine Enlightener for this glorious new age. And since I have set my face in that direction and apprehended this Reality, I long to behold and hear what eyes and ears have never before been able to perceive.

I have faith in what Baha'u'llah has revealed about the reality of man. But to realize this truth in relation to my own reacting and being, requires the use of every power of perception at my command. Meditation can be a means by which I can experience that realization. What must I do to see myself as a soul?

I must reject my human concepts of myself, and replace or alter everything I “know” about the human me, to conform to the over-all picture that Baha’u’llah presents. I must coordinate my spiritual life and experiences in a way that will make them predominate over my conditioned human consciousness and behavior.

Long ago I accepted mentally the concept of my being “a living soul”, a spiritual reality. I am referring to my “soul” when I speak of my inner being. So I realize that I live not only in what happens to me in this outer world, but in activities that take place in an invisible unknown world where that inner being functions. I can believe that such activities are caused by the drive and compulsions of my soul’s divine purposes, called into action by the spiritual forces of the heavenly kingdom to which all souls belong. This is where the Holy Spirit has its effect, where my powers and potentialities press outward for development and realization. This is where my divine nature struggles to respond to divinity, and, in the struggle, slowly takes shape. Here I slowly become a totally spiritual being.

I can believe that this is taking place, but feeling it, experiencing it, is something else. Yet it is something that can happen as I pray or meditate. For feeling and experiencing are two actions that my soul itself consciously performs.

My outer behavior seems to manifest very little of “the heavenly gem” and “celestial being” that the Creator’s Revelation affirms every soul to be. But “the imperfect eye beholds imperfections.” 53(q), DAL 116 #19 or PUP 89 Besides, now I know that what I see as imperfection in any person is only the soul’s immaturity. For through divine enlightenment I understand that every human reality is created in seed form, SDC 107 that its first appearance and form are limited to what the animal spirit has thus far generated; 31(w), (see page 98-99) and that from the time of its creation, as its higher degrees of spirit are activated, the soul is destined to “traverse all conditions”, 44(aa), SWF 313, SAQ 233 (see page 51 { })

Naturally, though, its human state and development are its most obvious condition during its earthly lifetime. And I find it a heavenly revelation to learn that this human aspect of me is not my whole being or ultimate reality. It is most heartening to know that I have a divine nature that is in the process of taking shape, and that this is my reality. It is exciting to be told that I am gradually acquiring a knowledge of love and growth in the spiritual world that are far beyond what is encompassed by my human consciousness.

From a practical viewpoint, though, it seems that I am constantly forced to think about what I must deal with in the world of human affairs. I would not be living intelligently if I did not reason, imagine, remember and wonder about what faces me here and now. And generally speaking, this seems to call forth only my human degree of spirit. When, then, do I use my higher-than-human powers? How is my divine nature activated or developed? If this is my reality, how do I “face” it?

There are several answers to these questions. Prayer and meditation are two activities which employ the powers that distinguish a soul from a human creature: my intuitive powers, my

creativity that enables me to do what I have never done before, my innate spiritual intelligence and convictions, my latent talents and virtues, and my ability to believe in and respond to what is *___ - in short, my spiritual susceptibilities. *___ manifest in my earthly life; but in meditation and prayer their action is purely spiritual. When I am in a very low state of consciousness, I sometimes try to pray or meditate my way out of it. At other times I am worried, angry or tormented with anxiety, and don't have time or inclination to pray, but as I go about my duties my thoughts go on and on. If I have a problem, I try in this way to think out a solution. Sometimes I can reach a purely rational conclusion that solves the problem. But there are many difficulties that have no solution at the level of rational thinking and human feeling. This is especially true of human relations problems, because they involve spiritual beings. Often only a spiritual solution is possible for that kind of situation. Thoughts at the human level of consciousness - that is, imagining and reasoning based on my personal viewpoint - then become what 'Abdu'l-Baha has called "useless". He says they "are like waves moving in the sea without result." PT 175 (see page 140 []) In fact sometimes the most I can hope for from this kind of human thinking is that it shall have no result. for when expressed and put into action, such mental activity can stir up conditions resembling a wild stormy sea that wreaks havoc on all in its wake. For instance, when I am worried, angry or tormented with anxiety, I may rail out unreasonably at anyone who is near and use my mind only to rationalize my destructive feelings, or my imagination to picture all sorts of horrible possibilities. And this only increases my problem - it does not solve it.

Meditation, of course, is offered as an alternative.

How can I gear out of such human thinking and reflecting and engage in spiritual meditation [?]

The very word, reflecting, is a key to the answer in my human thinking I am reflecting, in both senses of the word, on a very limited aspect of reality. I am reflecting and thus creating in my own consciousness only the imperfections and illusions that I must deal with. I need to turn my thoughts to heavenly realities. After commenting that the imperfect eye beholds imperfections, 'Abdu'l-Baha adds [that the] alternative. Baha'u'llah has told us with almost terrifying positiveness that we should view our fellow-beings with a sin-covering eye (see page 101) and here is my instruction for seeing souls, myself included, as they are in reality:

"The eye that covers faults looks towards the Creator of souls. He created them, trains and provides for them, endows them with capacity and life, sight and hearing; therefore they are the signs of His grandeur." BAL 116 #19

Pondering "in my heart" a few words from the revealed Writings can always open the portals of my heart to new understanding and celestial vision. This is when I can feel "the fountain of living waters" whereby I may live as long as God's sovereignty endures, bubbling up within me, and bringing into outer expression my deepest spiritual feelings. This will not only make me able, but will create a desire in me, to "make mention" of God "in every world" or

condition where I find myself living. BP' 69, 122 (see page 53)

The creative Word is the most precious gift of God upon which to reflect. Everything that a prayer does for me can be intensified or compounded if what I "say" is a revealed Prayers, and I repeat slowly, meditating along the way. For during such times of sublime awareness, my inner being responds, and the desires and realness of my soul loom up as far more potent and active than those of my human nature. This then, is one process by which my divine nature is strengthened and my spiritual reality takes definite form. In this way, virtues of which I am unaware begin to develop. Later, when unsuspected spiritual resources assert themselves, I know that this inner growth has been taking place.

Meditating on any revealed truths as I read the creative Word can have an additional spiritual effect on me.

I must keep in mind, though, that it is my heart, employing its highest mental powers rather than my mind alone with its cold abstract reasoning, that does this meditating. Unless feeling - specifically faith, love and devotion - are activated, my highest degree of spirit is not involved.

Of course I love reasoning and imagining about life, and I should. The question is: on what premises do I base my reasoning?

On what kind of light am I reflecting? If I think about life in terms of my own human concepts of it (which include personal feelings, idle fancies and vain imaginings), the result will be a rationalizing and strengthening of my illusions. But when I base my reflections on revealed verities and sue them as my premises, then "will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop: my being." 93(ff), BWF 107 or GL 267 or Iqan 196 (see page 85)

Many of my miseries in life are caused by clinging to my illusions and trying to solve my problems with my human spirit alone. For spiritual living, though, I must activate the full endowments of my divine nature. Spiritual vision alone can initiate a spiritual or "high gear" reaction. That kind of reflecting causes me to release the clutch of my human nature and to accelerate action of my spirit of faith and selfless love. It takes me out of the drive of human thought which, unaided, generated "idle fancies and vain imaginations." Meditation or reflection on divine secrets and heavenly realities gears me into an entirely different activity or spirit. It causes me to do exactly what, as already noted, Baha'u'llah has admonished: "close the eye of human vision to the world and all that is therein, and open the other to the hallowed beauty of the Beloved." HWP 26 #12 (see page 140 []) It helps me to hear with His hearing and see with His sight, as I am told to do. HWA 14 # 44 (see page 140[]) Nothing else, except prayer, makes me so vividly aware of being "a living soul," or feel so keenly the joy of having been created to know and to love Divinity.

What is waiting to be brought out from my inner being? This is for me to find out! Talents. Latent capacities and virtues. Everything that manifests and expresses my relation to

God. Whatever spiritual wisdom or “light” he may have “cast”[?] into my heart or even that has been personally acquired and perhaps forgotten. Everything that my soul has learned and experienced from its inner life when not functioning through the agency of my body-and brain.

In short, when I meditate I open the portals of my inner being and bring into my outer consciousness unrecognized developments of my own divine nature and reality. I also gain cognition[s] and an awakening realization of certain elements of the spiritual world that Baha’u’llah reveals and which constitute my real environment. And as I react to these, I am actually living in that spiritual world. For man lives in the various worlds or conditions that “proceed from his won vision.” 80(a), 7 VAL 18 (see page 15e []) the meditative faculty, then, is being recognized as an ability to communicate with the realized the reality of unseen existences - both on’s own soul and the Great Unknown of which souls are a part. Its potentialities are beyond imagining!

By using the special mental faculty, memory, meditation has enabled me to discover another potentiality of my inner being: I can re-experience the ecstasies that have marked my highest levels of spiritual consciousness in the past. For example, if I have had the supreme spiritual experience on Pilgrimage of praying at the Holy Shrines and there covering “my face in the dust of that Threshold” of God that is “exalted above the knowledge of the learned and the praise of all” that glorify God BP’69, 137 (see page 97) as I repeat that Tablet of Visitation, I may stop and meditate on these words, and find myself transported to that ecstatic state that was too heavenly for my human consciousness to fully encompass at the time; and I can gain a new awareness of what facing the reality of my own inner being can mean. Such experiences have made clear to me the meaning of these words:

“Were the breezes of Revelation to seize thee, though wouldst fee the whole world, and turn unto the Kingdom, and wouldst expend all thou possessest, that thou mayest draw nigh unto this sublime Vision.” ESW 56

How blessed I am to have had my heart touched by those heavenly breezes! But unfortunately a human creature cannot remain for long on the spiritual heights. so I must guard against losing the exhilaration and glorious certitude that I felt when I originally turned “unto the Kingdom,” for veils do develop and the conditions of this earth can certainly bring my consciousness down to destructively negative levels.

My immediate consciousness varies tremendously from day to day. It reaches exhilarating heights of insight or joy, and plunges me into terrifying depths of darkness and despair. Baha’u’llah pleads:

“Suffer not your idle fancies, your evil passions, your insincerity and blindness of heart to dim the luster, or stain the sanctity, of so lofty a station (see page 40 []) “Ye are even as the bird which soareth, with the full force of its mighty wings and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of the heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the earth below it, and, having been entrapped in the mesh of

its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came.” BWF 76 or GL 327

It is the human creature that is impotent, but my soul is not. So it can prevent this from happening to me. Like every spiritual experience, such flights are eternal, for ‘Abdu’l-Baha tells me that “In the world of spirit there is no retrogression.” 83(hh), 87(w), PT 90 so through meditation, I can return to those heights of consciousness at will and bring back, stronger than ever, the resolutions of my heart such as to avoid materialism and to expend all I possess for God’s Cause. For such desires are an ever-growing part of my awakening divine nature. And they are longing to be brought out and expressed.

Though meditation I am put in touch with the part of me that “sees without the help of the physical eyes, hears without the aid of the physical ear, and travels without dependence upon physical motion . . . in the realm of vision.” 47(zz), PT 86 (see page 11).

I want to learn how to open my outer consciousness to the best that is within me and to stimulate its expression in my outer reactions. I long to put myself in touch with my own reality and to be made dynamically aware of the heavenly aspirations and dreams, the God-given yearnings, that are latent and deep within my heart. For until this happens, the knowledge and thoughts of my human nature tend to suppress a part of the endowment with which God blesses every soul: namely, that innate spiritual intelligence or, in ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s words, “subjective” knowledge “which is the knowledge of being, . . . intuitive, . . . the cognizance and consciousness that man has of himself.” 39(p), SAQ 180 and that “wellets out from the fountain of divine inspiration. 3(c), Iqan 69 (see page 85)

A dawning consciousness of these subjective knowing powers is another spiritual discovery of the new age. It is another evidence of the new “light” that the Sun of Reality is shining into hearts. In the human thought world these subjective powers are asserting themselves. For instance, I encounter what whole segments of humanity have begun to realize in this century: namely, the power of positive thinking and what has been called “new thought”. This is an evidence of an awakening to new and higher uses of the heavenly fit that distinguishes man from the animal. Unconsciously, prompted by the light that God has cast into hearts, 57(b), Iqan 146 (see pages 36 and 83) souls are beginning to use the gift of understanding for its ultimate and intended purpose: to know and recognize divinity. 35(m) (see pages 15e, 52 etc. []) I see this is current literature, and in the development of new religious sects that have no idea of the source of their new light.

We need to use our mental faculties in apprehending and understanding what Baha’u’llah has unveiled in the human reality. And of course once we know what He has revealed, meditation does this. Another evidence of the discovery of these subjective powers on an intuitive basis is the fact that meditation and its resulting inspirations are being advocated by pseudo-scientists, philosophers and religionists alike, as a simple means of gearing into certain higher-than-human powers. Some, such as current developments of Hindu beliefs, recognize this

gift so definitely (Vedanta, for instance) that they believe it to be the only connection with God that is necessary. Sects are built on affirmations of intuitive convictions of individuals, too.

The abilities that are being apprehended are centered in the soul's meditative power. Experimentation with hypnosis expresses another attempt to reach the inner consciousness of man and to deal constructively with his subconscious mind. Other experiments are being conducted to teach "the subconscious" to impart knowledge to students while they sleep, for instance, or to free souls from destructive habits.

Researchers in the fields of psychic phenomena and mysticism are using such terms as super[-]consciousness, inter[-]consciousness, supra[-]consciousness, etc., in definite recognition of the unknown part of man and in attempts to contact and learn directly from the soul itself, but without knowing what the soul is.

An intensive research is under way, too, to establish, through using the mysterious and unfathomed subjective powers, to prove that souls still exist after death. Many feel that the fact has been irrefutably proved through actual communication with "departed" souls. But the power behind this research is psychic power generated by the human spirit. In this research, God is ignored as the source of knowledge, so what is developed is not divine knowledge. Even if divine inspiration plays a part, we have to accept Baha'u'llah's definition of the two kinds of knowledge and recognize that the human motive-force behind the effort is largely "the whisperings of selfish desire." 3(c), Iqan 69 (see page 85)

Our Creator has given us many ways to become aware of our own souls. Even the physical need for sleep has been utilized as a potential portal through which celestial light may be realized in its realness. What happens to me "in the state of sleep: is cited as an example of the soul manifesting its powers "without instruments and organs," as already noted.. 47(yy), BWF 326 or SAQ 262 (see page 15 []) Then I am told that in this state the soul's "penetration is increased, its flight is higher, and its intelligence is greater." 46(qq), BWF 326 or SAQ 264 than what I experience in my outer consciousness. Therefore, since meditation is an effort to get in touch with that part of me, I listen eagerly to what has been revealed about my "state when asleep."

"Verily, I say, this phenomenon is the most mysterious of the signs of God amongst men, were they to ponder it in their hearts." GL 152

"Now there are many wisdoms to ponder in the dream, which none but the people of this Valley (of wonderment) can comprehend in their true elements. First, what is this world, where, without eye and ear and hand and tongue, a man puts all of these to use? Second, how is it that in the outer world thou seest today the effect of a dream, when thou didst vision it in the world of sleep some ten years past? Consider the difference between these two worlds and the mysteries which they conceal, that thou mayest attain to divine confirmations and heavenly discoveries and enter the regions of holiness." 7 VAL 32-3
Personally, as a human being, I am usually unaware of the vision of visions that my soul

enjoys during sleep. They are not automatically communicated to my outer consciousness. But if, as ‘Abdu’l-Baha directs, I consciously put questions to my inner being, I certainly should listen to what is revealed. And if, occasionally I am blessed with a real spiritual vision, I want to understand what Baha’u’llah has revealed about this phenomenon (see page 15 []) For apparently it is possible for what happens within my inner being during sleep, to be brought out, when I awaken, into my outer consciousness either as a “vision,” as inspiration, a solution to a practical problem, or some other kind of “guidance.”

I can “think” without effort or volition, but this last fact given me an inkling of how valuable it would be if I could use my thought power in a different way and a channel could be opened between my inner and outer centers of consciousness! And it also indicates that such a thing is possible, since, by the mercy of God, it sometimes happens.

Since the “light” that I obtain from such experiences can be regarded as direct rays from “the Moon of Divine guidance,” or the actual reflections from the “Sun of Prophethood” Itself, GL 179 I can understand how G[g]uidance is given. ‘Abdu’l-Baha also advises me to “consider the world of dreams” wherein “the body of man is immovable, seemingly dead, not subject to sensation” or to outer stimuli. For at this time

“the eyes do not see, the ears do not hear nor the tongue speak. but the spirit of man” or my soul “is not asleep; it sees, hears, moves, perceives and discovers realities.

Therefore it is evident that the spirit of man is not affected by the change or condition of the body. Even though the material body should die to spirit continues eternally alive, just as it exists and functions in the inert body in the realm of dreams.” 43(o), PUP 300-1

____ Spirit, here, is used as defined in the American dictionaries, as synonymous with soul. So He is saying that though during my waking hours I, as a soul, react to external conditions or to what happens to my body, this relationship is suspended during sleep:

“When man is asleep, his soul can in no way be said to be inherently affected by any external object.” GL 160

So during this time, my soul behaves as if my body were dead and is left “free from all agencies,” 74(e), BWF 337 and performs “actions . . . beyond the means of instruments and organs.” BWF 326 or SAQ 263 What I, as a soul, takes place in [a/the] world “different and apart from” the world where I live when awake. GL 152 What do I do there? I dream; my soul dreams. In speaking of this phenomenon, Baha’u’llah says:

“Behold how thy dream thou hast dreamed is, after a lapse of many years, reenacted before thine eyes. Consider how strange is the mystery of the world that appeareth to thee in thy dream. Ponder in thine heart upon the unsearchable wisdom of God, and meditate on its manifold revelations,” GL 162

This introduces me to the world where my soul lives. I am told that although man’s human vision functions only in the present, a soul “in sleep . . . sees the future:.. BWF 326 or SAQ 264 A soul in other words, “is a power that is free” BWF 337 of both time and space: “in

sleep, in the twinkling of an eye, he traverses the East and the West.” BAF 326 or SAQ 264

I realize, therefore, more positively the revealed truth already noted that “the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own,” BWF 337 and lives in a timeless, placeless world, a spiritual world. In my human consciousness I stand in one spot and at one point of time, with memory enabling me to recall something of my past or of the road I have traveled, and with my intellect visualizing what is ahead. But what my inner being or soul see must be like the vision I have when I travel by air and look down on the whole scene of my everyday living. Spiritual vision and the “world of vision” itself are both shown thus to be realities, infinite and eternal, heavenly.

I am challenged, thus, to learn more about myself from getting into connection with my inner being living there. These words second the challenge:

“Verily I say, the human soul is exalted above all egress and regress. It is still, and yet it soareth; it moveth, and yet it is still. It is, in itself, a testimony that beareth witness to the existence of a world that is contingent, as well as to the reality of a world that hath neither beginning nor end. Behold how the dream thou hast dreamed is, after the lapse of many years, re-enacted before thine eyes. Consider how strange is the mystery of the world that appeareth to thee in thy dream. Ponder in thine heart upon the unsearchable wisdom of God, and meditate on its manifold revelations.” GL 161-2

Personally, I dream often, but seldom are those dreams “fully realized,” GL 152 or “re-enacted” before my eyes GL 162 in the contingent world. This means that there must be different kinds of dreams. A dictionary might make these clear, so I note these definitions:

dream, noun 1: a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep

2a: a visionary creation of the imagination: DAYDREAM

b: a state of mind marked by abstraction or release from

reality: REVERIE

c: an object seen in a dreamlike state” VISION

3: something notable for its beauty, excellence, or enjoyable

quality

4: a goal or purpose ardently desired: IDEAL

When Baha’u’llah speaks of “dreams”, He is revealing truth about phenomena of the spiritual world - dreams that are related to the soul. He tells me that while my body is sleeping my soul has dreams. In relation to the foregoing definitions, these dreams are VISIONS, something seen “in a dreamlike state” - a spiritual state that is different from that of physical sleep. VISIONS can be experienced as “a series of thoughts, images or emotions.” Or this definition could refer to the kind of dream of which I am vaguely conscious when I awaken from sleep. The latter type of dream[s] should be recognized as meaningless as a revelation of reality. Science reports that all people regularly have such dreams, some remembered, and some never reaching the human consciousness at all. The fact that these can be scientifically observed, described and analyzed testify to the fact that they are strictly a physiological phenomenon. Yet

even though only the body participates in these dreams, this is confusing, because every dream is a kind of thought action.

What has been revealed about reality, however, dispels the confusion. First of all, when, during sleep, I, as a soul, am neither participating nor expressing myself in my physical activities, my body and brain are left free to operate as self-directed machinery. We are told that “the soul animates the body,” 46(rr), PT 133 (see page 4 []) ruling it with great “power and influence,” in a connection similar to that of the sun giving its light to a dark mirror. 44(bb), BWF 328 or SAQ 266 Just as the life of the sun goes on, whether the mirror is there or not, so the life of the soul, with its own visions and inner experiences, goes on whether directing the body or not. But the connection between the body and its life source is never broken until death. So even when my soul is functioning independently of my body, it is still responsible for my power, my animal degree of spirit, and my individual conditioning as imprinted on my brain cells, that animate and control my physical being. And this is possible because the soul or spirit of man can “manifest itself in all forms at the same time.” 74(b), PUP 301

Do these powers which belong jointly to the real me and to my body enable my anatomy to “think” by its own powers? My dreams prove that it can and does create “a series of thoughts, images or emotions,” without any help from me. And what explains this ability is the fact that

“In the human organism there is a center of intellection.” 51(j), PUP 412 (see page 12)

It is part of the “instrument”, BWF 326 or “agency” BWF 337 through which a soul functions. And I see from the dictionary that intellection is “an exercise of the intellect.” ‘Abdu’l-Baha says:

“Among other human forces, the power of ideation or faculty of intellection is material.” 58(k), PUP 319

This means it is an activity of my machinery that I can and do control when I am awake but the acts automatically, just as my lungs do, when I sleep. The center of intellection involves the brain mechanism which records, files and recalls all experiences of the human creature, thereby producing what we know as memories, habits, the “association of ideas,” conditioned emotional attitudes, mental concepts, etc. Science has been proving that it is possible, through mechanical activation of specific brain cells, to “turn on” recordings there in a way that reactivates thoughts, images and emotions experienced in the past. Another power of this center of “intellection” is called association of ideas. And without the mechanical stimulus, the amazing filing machinery of the brain can direct thoughts from one subject to another during sleep. So human dreams are produced by the reactivating of memory pictures and the associating of ideas. Many ideas are irrelevant when taken out of their original context, and this accounts for the fact that dreams of this kind are usually irrational, and often totally unrelated to reality.

I learn that my body has two types of activity; actions performed under my direction when I am awake, and actions performed instinctively to maintain its own health and well-being.

Scientists tell us that what goes on in the brain as we sleep is produced by a kind of activity of physical action and that sleep helps to relieve nervous tensions that build up from experiences in the realm of human affairs. Apparently the formation of the “thoughts, images or emotions” that are produced as physiological phenomena has this unique purpose or significance only. To be prophetic in any way, at least part of a dream must originate in the world of spirit.

In between these spiritual and physical dreams that occur during sleep, as a human being I have DAYDREAMS and REVERIES when I am awake: “a visionary creation of the imagination,” that reflects in my human consciousness. These I experience in “a state of mind marked by abstraction or release from reality,” BWF 337 release, at least, from the reality of temporal or human conditions that are interfering with some “goal or purpose ardently desired.” This is also how my IDEALS are formed: through imagination and love, my heart soars on the wings of faith, above all hindrances, determined to pursue my desired goal or purpose. If I believe that in time it can be achieved, my dream becomes an IDEAL. Without faith and determination, however, such dreams probably won’t “come true”.

Daydreaming, however, that meets the requirements of spiritual meditation can become a powerful force in fulfilling the aspirations of my heart.

Daydreams and reveries are similar to meditation but there are important differences. Both involve desires and aspirations of my heart, and may embody IDEALS. But the distinction between them is a matter of level of vision.

As a human being, I set limited goals for myself, but I do have my dreams in the sense of “purposes ardently desired,” and ideals. Where do they come from? - - from my human nature or from my latent divinity? I cannot be sure. My goal is to keep growing until my humanness is completely overruled by my divine nature. And until that happens my inner reality, the real self, is not fully developed.

The fact is that all of my desires originate in my inner being and are activated by a real need, but I don’t know the desires and potentialities of my soul that are struggling for realization until my Creator reveals them to me. In reality, virtues struggle to grow and to replace character deficiencies. Creativity yearns to produce something of value. And above all, my heart constantly cries out for love, for divinity, and for conscious communion with its Lord and Creator. Heavenly forces beyond imagining are demanding expression within me.

But, as a human creature, influenced also by my animal nature, what I envision in my daydreams and aspirations necessarily falls far short of the God-given objectives of my heart. This is why I must turn my consciousness heavenward and add another dimension to my daydreams to change them into constructive meditation. For then as an enlightened Baha’i, I may gain true illumination from the experience especially if I am basing my reveries on God’s words or verities that represent God-given ideals. What I envision then I can be sure is something more than the promptings of my human nature or ego will. True guidance can often come in this way.

My ideals are goals that are just beyond my reach but that I am struggling hopefully to

achieve. Between my human nature with its personal desires and the ideals of the infinite eternal divine world that Baha'u'llah has unveiled, there is a big gap. It is the gap between human consciousness and God-consciousness. No matter how much I want to react with divine virtues, my human consciousness is burdened by impulses and emotions stemming from my animal nature, and my behavior is seldom ideal or perfect. Neither are my daydreams. I still have many a "goal or purpose ardently desired" inspired by human nature. Sometimes I don't even think to check whether or not such longings are fully harmonious with God's purpose for man. At the level of my human vision I dream of reaching these goals and may even "meditate" on ways of achieving what I so ardently desire. But as a Baha'i I dream of fulfilling the real purpose of my life; and this keeps me turning heavenward.

This explanation of dreams may seem irrelevant to meditation or to how meditation relates to awareness of the soul's relation to God. But perhaps it shows that most dreams are not in any way related to divine guidance nor can they provide light on any invisible reality. At least it draws a line between the physical and spiritual experiences, and if what the soul dreams ever finds its way into my outer consciousness, I can understand why Baha'u'llah teaches me, however unaware I may be of such a revelation, to pray that what God "didst reveal unto me in my sleep[" are "[t]he surest foundations" for my inner growth. BP'69, 54#40 (see page 118 []) How trilling it is to learn that revelations from God come to me when I am asleep! This could be when He casts light into my heart! 57(b), Iqan 46-7 (see pages 36 & 83)

For other reasons too, I should "ponder in my heart" this spiritual phenomenon. If I have never had a vision or this kind of "dream" which Baha'u'llah says is a spiritual reality, it must be because no channel between my inner being and outer consciousness has been opened to put me in touch with this part of my inner life. But obviously one purpose of meditation is to establish communication there - - to allow me to put questions to my spiritual consciousness and to experience "the spirit answering," and light breaking forth in some inspiration or insight. PT 174 (see pages 5 and 143) What endless potentialities of meditation are opened to me by that simple experience!

For instance, if I ask my soul or spirit a question about what I am longing for or dreaming of, it is obvious that when I receive a God-given answer, the gap between God-consciousness and my human feelings will tend to diminish. For it is very clear to me now, that all of the truth that I have accepted in the past, augmented by the light that God has cast directly into my heart, is available there and can be reflected in the answers my heart gives. Thus as a Baha'i, in true meditation, I face the reality - the totality of what I deal with, with its dimension of divine purpose, instead of dreaming of some aspect of it that I ardently desire as a human being. The dimension that is missing, of course, in human aspirations and even traditional religious "dreaming", is divine purpose.

A clear apprehension of this dimension is impossible through intellectual awareness. It is something I must feel in my heart. So I seek to commune with what I really feel in the world of

spiritual vision and purpose. Through meditation, I connect my outer consciousness with that spiritual world in a real and practical way. It wipes out for the moment the insurmountable distance between “heaven” and what actually exists [that] I must deal with in the outer world of pain, inadequacy and obstacles. For in this activity the vision of my heart connects me with God and His whole Plan and with the heavenly purpose and potentialities that underlies all human “experiences”. Thus meditation is a simple technique for spiritualizing my consciousness, and for realizing my relation to God.

But however simple, the techniques or art must be learned. And this is not easy.

One condition that makes meditation difficult is my own immaturity. In relation to my eternal spiritual potentialities, the time is very short since in seed form, my soul was conceived and planted in the soil of God’s love. 78(b), P&M 178 (see pages 29 and 40 []) And with all of my striving and being tested, I have not attained an outstanding growth “in the meadows” of God’s grace. I have humanly resisted conformance with His pleasure so “my movement and my stillness” are far from being “wholly directed” by Him. P&M 240 (see pages 94-5) Therefore when I “put certain questions” to my spirit and my spirit answers, PT 74 (see page 143) I may find that my spirit or soul is still reflecting very little divinity or influence of the Holy Spirit. What I gain from meditation is only such light as has come into my heart from the Holy Spirit. for

“By the power of the Holy Spirit, working through his soul, man is able to perceive the Divine reality of things.” 22(w), PT 85

Human daydreaming or reveries that are equated with meditating can take place without any God-consciousness, for in such mental activity, the thinker is in communication only with the human spirit. This is not always the meditation that ‘Abdu’l-Baha advocated. Dreams and hopes based at that level of consciousness can lead to wrong goals and false motivation.

But I do have two sure ways of opening a direct line of communication to the Holy Spirit: (1) through prayer, and (2) through reading, feeling and assimilating the Word of God. so daydreaming when combined with prayer or reflecting upon words of Baha’u’llah can help me to learn the art of meditation.

*___ me to heighten my aspirations, spiritualize my ideals and expand my consciousness of the realness of God and His relation to me. What a loss I inflict on myself then, if I neglect to open my outer consciousness to the portals of that light, through meditation!

The foregoing stirs a tremendous curiosity and desire, a longing to experience the divine confirmations and heavenly discoveries. To do so is part of living in “the regions of holiness” and kingdom that has come “on earth as it is in heaven”.

As I meditate on the potentialities of my inner life, I wonder about pure communications between souls, too, especially in the light of the fact that the soul “has great perception without the intermediary of any of the five senses, such as eyes or ears.” SAQ 292 It is not surprising to learn, then, that

“Among spiritual souls there are spiritual understandings, discoveries, a communion which is purified from imagination and fancy, an association which is sanctified from time and place.” 77(kk), *ibid*.

I have experienced something of the sort occasionally, when I have found myself unconsciously responding through intuition, to what a person close to me is feeling or even thinking. This sense, when developed to an unusual degree is called telepathy, just as the power to visualize some future event, frequently evidenced in experiencing a premonition, when extraordinarily powerful, is called precognition or clairvoyance.

Such unexplained mental powers are recognized by intellectuals as actually existent, and are attributed to “extra sensory perception” (ESP) or referred to as “psychic powers.” If they seem stronger now than in the past, or are being given more attention than ever before as researchers struggle to discover scientific laws that may be involved, we could attribute the fact to “the vibration influence” of the new World Order by which mankind’s life is being revolutionized. 86(a), BWF 35 or GL 136 Where there was oblivion or even condemnation of so-called psychic powers, now there is keen interest; and this may be because “out of Stillness Motion hath been engendered . . . by the potent energies which the words of the Almighty have released throughout the entire creation.” 24(tt), 86(f), BWF 96 or GL 168 Souls reflect the new Light without knowing its source, and in strange and individual ways find themselves “impelled to attain the court of the Beloved” 40© *ibid* or awakening to new evidences of the spiritual world.

“At the time of the appearance of each Manifestation of God, extraordinary progress has occurred in the world of minds, thoughts and spirits. For example, in this divine age see what development has been attained in the world of minds and thoughts, and it is now only the beginning of its dawn.” 27 (1), SAQ 86-7

But to unenlightened human beings who are aware of psychic powers as a source of personal benefit or even as an adjunct of the human nature that glorifies the ego, Baha’u’llah has said:

“O SON OF DESIRE! . . . Thou, without the least effort didst attain thy goal, and without search hast obtained the object of thy quest. Yet, notwithstanding, thou didst remain so wrapt in the veil of self, that thine eyes beheld not the beauty of the Beloved, nor did thy hand touch the hem of His robe. Ye that have eyes, behold and wonder.”
HWP 29 #21

I may expect to find my inner perceptions being spiritually illumined though meditation and as long as I do my communing under Baha’u’llah’s guidance, and in the light of His Teachings, I can be immeasurably benefitted by whatever He offers as guidance and inspiration. But ‘Abdu’l-Baha has warned against an effort to exploit obvious psychic powers for psychic phenomena are unlike spiritual guidance:

“To tamper with psychic forces while in this world interferes with the condition

of the soul in the world to come. These forces are real, but, normally, are not active on this plane. The child in the womb has its eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc., but they are not in activity. The whole purpose of life in the material world is the coming forth into the world of reality, where those forces will become active. They belong to that world.” BNE 198

About the fact that they sometimes appear in souls in their earthly lifetime.

Baha’u’llah says:

“God, the Exalted, hath placed these signs in men, to the end that philosophers may not deny the mysteries of the life beyond nor belittle that which hath been promised them. For some hold to reason and deny whatever the reason comprehendeth not.” 7 VAL #3

Under ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s guidance, Dr. Esslemont wrote:

“While admitting the reality of ‘supernormal’ psychic faculties, He (‘Abdu’l-Baha) deprecates attempts to force their development prematurely. These faculties will unfold when the right time comes, if we only follow the path of spiritual progress which the Prophets have traced for us.” BNE 198

As for communion between souls, already thinkers are commenting on wordless communication between those on earth as a reality to be recognized and cultivated. Also great efforts are being made to establish scientific proof of the reality of communication here and now with “departed souls.” Before I can understand this phase of my own inner experiences or potentialities, I shall probably have to gain a clearer apprehension of my own reality, for even with all of Baha’u’llah’s explanations, a soul still remains “a mystery of His mysteries”, 34(c), GL 160 a “reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel.” 34(f), BWF 121 or GL 158 When ‘Abdu’l-Baha was asked if a “departed soul” can converse with someone still on earth, His answer was

“A conversation can be held, but not as our conversation. There is no[t] doubt that the forces of this plane. The heart of man is open to inspiration; this is spiritual communication. As in a dream one talks with a friend while the mouth is silent, so is it in the conversation of the spirit.” PT 179

This at least suggests that meditation can bring us very close to loved ones who passed on, including the central figures of our Faith. We are taught, and our spiritual instinct prompts us, to pray for such loved ones, and told that in prayer there is a mingling of stations or conditions. So why shouldn’t we expect the same contact between souls through meditation? ‘Abdu’l-Baha said to Baha’is before He left Paris, “our souls are always together.” PT 172 When I fully realize this truth, I shall awaken to the joy of having an ever-present Divine Exemplar and Guardian. Baha’u’llah certainly promised He would be with us after His ascension. GL 137

“Those who have passed on through death have a sphere of their own not removed from ours: their work of the Kingdom, is ours; but it is sanctified from what we call time and place.” DAL 124 #5

Two things that I can expect to acquire through meditation (which is defined by ‘Abdu’l-Baha as a form of communication) are inspiration and insight. Baha’u’llah mentions souls in the next life who radiate “light” that is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. He says:

“They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits.” 29(mm), GL 157

Through what portals and from what sources have my flashes of inspiration and bursts of insight come, often unsolicited? What bounties of this sort are being radiated into my inner being? May not such “leavening” account for what scientists or inventors experience when they discover truth that contradicts accepted “facts” or produce something previously unheard of? And if that heavenly guidance can come unsought, with what assurance I should seek it? Meditation can open channels of inspiration and creativity beyond imagining! It works hand in hand with prayer, when I seek guidance or wisdom. Either and both together can help in making apertures for illumination from “the lantern of iron” to which Baha’u’llah likened my heart. 41(w), 7VAL 23-4

By soliciting from my inner being an answer to a material need or though a conscious search for spiritual enlightenment, divine assistance, to supplement my limited human powers, may be available through meditation. So I should cultivate this ability and learn the art of communing with my own spirit. Earthly life presents problems - I need all the help that is available in solving them. And as a Baha’i I need spiritual aid in carrying out my responsibilities. I have been born into the spiritual world order that is in the process of being built, and I must do my part. a baby born into the physical world must open his eyes and become acquainted with the marvels of the illimitable universe of which he is a part so that he may make his contribution and take his rightful place in the world of affairs. Similarly, I must open my inner eyes and familiarize myself with the world of spiritual affairs so that I may fulfill my purpose here:

I have precious guidance in this area on which I should reflect.

“Man is like unto this lamp; but the effulgences of the kingdom are like the rays of the lamps. Man is like unto the glass; but the spiritual splendors are like unto the light within the glass. No matter how translucent the glass may be, as long as there is no light within, it remains dark . . . No matter how handsome and perfect the body may be, if it is deprived of the spirit and its animus, it is dead.” PUP 297

“Through meditation doors of deeper knowledge and inspiration may be opened. Naturally, if one meditates as a Baha’i he is connected with the Source; if a man believing in God meditates he is turning in to the power and mercy of God; but we cannot say that nay inspiration which a person not knowing Baha’u’llah or not believing in God, receives is merely from his own ego. Meditation is very important, and the Guardian sees

no reason why the friends should not be taught to meditate, but they should guard against superstitions or foolish ideas creeping in.” BNs#210, Aug. ‘48 page 3

What an inestimable blessing it is to be connected with “the Source”! This, of course, is what insures the value of “speaking with your own spirit.” It reflects, with the full power of my divine nature the light and love that result from that precious connection. To be sure that I bring only truth into my outer consciousness; I must keep open the portals of my heart to “the Bounty of God and luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestation” - in short, to the Holy Spirit. 22(o), SAQ 124 How could I even think of turning to any other Enlightener or spiritual leader, when I am already connected to the Source of all power and Light? “By the power of the Holy Spirit alone is man able to progress”. 22(z), PT 163 Some specific beams of that light to which I should open my outer consciousness often, are these:

“O SON OF SPIRIT! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.” 36(z), 56 (ww) HWA 9 #22

“O SON OF MAN! Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits, wherefore hast thou turned away and contented thyself with that which is less good? Return then unto that which is better for thee in the realm of high.” HWA 9 #21

Then, through prayer, and with brief meditation to season my everyday reactions, I must make a way for the divinity there to express in my outer thought, feelings and reactions. The goal is to center my consciousness and dwell in that realm where the spiritual World Order is being built.

“Entrance into the Kingdom is through the love of God, through detachment, through holiness and chastity, through truthfulness, purity, steadfastness, faithfulness, and the sacrifice of life.” 83(bb), SAQ 232

and these are natural expressions of the Bounty of God with which He has willed to entrust my soul!

Let me sum up, then, how meditation can give me access to self knowledge and stimulate self-development. It helps me to understand myself because one of its requisites is an awareness of the difference between my reality and my human nature. The first, I am trying to develop - my reality or divine nature. The other - my human nature - I am trying to outgrow. It is so “natural” however, for me to be human, that I must struggle constantly to change, to overcome my human impulses that originate in my lower nature, by bringing out something more glorious than I have ever felt before. First it is to know, and then to do; so first I must be aware of my inner and my outer beings, and of my spiritual potentialities as contrasted with my conditioned human reality. Then through meditation I must recognize both realities, and open a channel between the two. This will enable me to apprehend my own divinity and help me to give precedence to the divine impulses that the Holy Spirit awakens in my heart.

When I ask questions of my inner self, and contemplate what is in my heart or emotional

being, I must be sure that I am turned heavenward and not communing with my ego or the human part of me; because the test of true meditation is expressed in this admonition:

“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 This is the meaning of the power of the Holy Spirit.”

4(o), PT 166

And to warn me against ordinary human thinking, Baha’u’llah says:

“Rid thyself of all attachment to the vain allusions of men, and cast behind thy back the idle and subtle disputations of them that are veiled from God.” 65 (I), GL 303

This is one way to take full advantage of the portals of celestial light that my Creator has provided.

I must have the assistance of the Holy Spirit to which those portals give me access, and its breath comes to me as I read and stirs my heart as I meditate, on these words of my Beloved:

“O My servants! Deprive not yourselves of the unfading and resplendent Light that shineth within the Lamp of Divine glory. Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts. Feed it with the oil of Divine guidance, and protect it within the shelter of your constancy. Guard it within the globe of trust and detachment from all else but God, so that the evil whisperings of the ungodly may not extinguish its light . . .

“O My servants! Could ye apprehend with what wonders of My munificence and bounty I have willed to entrust your souls, ye would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves - a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being.” 101(z), BWF 66-7 or GL 326-7

and this need, too, can be ministered to by meditation.

3. REALIZATION AND CONSCIOUS AWARENESS OF MY RELATION TO GOD

“He Who is the eternal King hath spoken: ‘He hath know God who hath know himself.’” BWF 117 or GL 178

Everything I know about my reality involves a relationship with God - my purpose is His purpose for me, my powers and spirit are derived from his powers and His Holy Spirit, and my “right” behavior patterns, acts and attributes are those He planned for me so that I may fulfill His

purpose. Even the attributes and acts that contribute to developing my reality, are planned and designated by Him. As I meditate on my reality, I become vividly aware of this relationship.

The relationship with a Being Who is invisible, infinite, eternal and divine - all qualities beyond the grasp of my mentality - becomes understandable only as I confront His qualities as embodied in Baha'u'llah. For His spirit is the Mediator between God and man. 22(n), PT 58 (see page 27)

“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 Manifestation of . . . God . . . God is His Essence and in His own Self hath ever been unseen, inaccessible, and unknowable. By Presence, therefore, is meant Presence of the One Who is His Viceregent.” 26(j), ESW 118

So the answer to my petition: “make of my prayer . . . a light that will lead me to the ocean of Thy Presence,” is that I am drawn to the Presence of Baha'u'llah. In meditating on His words and in being moved by their power, I do indeed experience the Presence of God For this enables me to know my Creator in the only way that “He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can ever be known. 26(g), BWF 21

As I “ponder” on the divine secrets and heavenly realities that Baha'u'llah has revealed, the flashes of insight and illumination that He inspires and the spiritual discoveries I make, produce a dynamic awareness of God's providence and concern for me. This, then, is one way I can realize (make real to me) the infinite eternal and divine relationship between us, since I know that

“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.” 28(w), PT 63

The more I meditate on what Baha'u'llah reveals, the more real God and His purpose for me become. For

“God has sent forth the Prophets for the purpose of quickening the Soul of man into higher and divine recognitions.” 28(v), PUP 304

And I know that

“The Source of infinite grace . . . hath caused those luminous Gems . . . to appear . . . that They may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His . . . Essence.” 28(u), BWF 19

How does that action of God[‘s] relate to my mental activity? To be enlightened, must I think about God all the time, and try to elevate my consciousness to heights so far out of this world that I shall not want to return to the dull monotony and painful miseries of earthly life? That isn't practical! But as I confront what I must deal with, I should use my mind and heart to apprehend its newly revealed dimension: namely the divine purpose-and-power that underlies every situation. It is a matter of calling into action my spirit of faith and of viewing what I call

monotony and miseries, in the light of what the Sun of Reality reveals.

Am I annoyed by the faults of my associates? Am I depressed by my own short-comings? Am I angered by an immediate situation that faces me or infuriated by the evils and injustices of life? If so, I am in “second gear” - that is, using only my human degree of spirit, and seeing things in the light of my rational vision. I am not using my highest powers of perception or emotional response. This is when meditation can be helpful. For to meditate I must activate the spirit of faith and face “the light of adoration” in God’s court of holiness “and of prayer” to His Kingdom of grandeur. Then I may find myself asking: “Is there any Remover of difficulties save God?” BP’69, 106 #86

We call this a prayer; but isn’t it really more a subject for meditation?

It is a question the enlightened soul answers very positively, and one that I as a human being, need to ask my inner being, when my human nature is suggesting that the difficulties that I face be removed in some human way.

“Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! His is God!

All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!” * _____

This is listed as a prayer, but it is very specifically a subject for meditation; and one that Baha’is are all taught to use.

In mentioning it in God Passes By, (page 119) Shoghi Effendi relates an incident that caused Baha’u’llah Himself to use it. He was viewing the human scene with heartbroken sadness - a scene to which nothing that faces me could possibly compare; and He commented thus, from a rational viewpoint, on the blind, heedless people who rejected and persecuted Him! “What relation can there be between this people and Him Who is the Countenance of Glory? What ties can bind them to the One Who is the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable?” The one to whom these words were addressed described his response to this outcry thus: “I stood rooted to the spot, lifeless, dried up as a dead tree, ready to fall under the impact of the stunning power of His words.”

I am reminded that I naturally form negative human evaluations of the world of human affairs, with much less justification than Baha’u’llah had, and want to rail out in more violent[ly] ways than He did. But think of the hopelessness of existence if there were not a divine purpose and reality behind such human evils!

The rest of the story is that Baha’u’llah finally told his listener to “Bid them recite” that Remover of difficulties prayer; and to

“repeat it five hundred times, nay a thousand times, by day and by night, sleeping and waking, that haply the Countenance of glory may be unveiled to their eyes, and tiers of light descend upon them.” GOB 119

The story adds: “‘He Himself . . . recited this same verse, His face betraying the utmost sadness.’” *ibid.* If the Perfect Man uses this pattern as a reaction when facing the ultimate in human evil and its most vicious and cruel expressions, surely I should be able to help myself by

doing the same to overcome my negative feelings against human faults that irritate or anger me.

I'll never have a simpler pattern for helpful meditation than this. I hope that I can open a channel to my heart in this way where potential love and awareness of God's supremacy is apprehended without having to repeat that little verity five hundred times. But I should reflect on it as many times as is necessary until I am released from material human reactions of anger or revulsion that arise from the instinct of self protection of my love of the ego.

In my prayer book that "prayer" of the Bab is followed by another affirmation upon which to reflect:

"Say: God sufficeth all things above all things, and nothing in the heavens or in the earth but God sufficeth. Verity, He is in Himself the Knower, the Sustainer, the Omnipotent." BP'69, 107 #87

When I experience the change in my outlook that can result from reflecting on these verities in the light of faith and adoration of God, I shall have an inkling of the value of meditation in its very simplest form.

Thinking about God as merely an abstract exercise of the mind, is not spiritual meditation. a purely rational mind or human spirit can and often does have its own egocentric reasoning and imaginations about the Source and purpose behind what is happening. But that use of the intellect can produce only more resentment and revulsion. If this is "reflecting," it is reflecting on the wrong aspects of reality. Baha'i meditation is a special kind of reflection. I experience it only when the mirror of my heart is turned to the Sun of Reality and I am viewing the heights that Baha'u'llah has unveiled. This use of my mental powers, and only this kind of thinking can release my consciousness from the dominance of my natural human concepts and vision.

And this, of course, is the basic purpose and value of meditation. It changes my outlook, and this in turn can change my destructive or unhappy feelings. Nothing else can! And with different feelings based on spiritual vision, I react and behave differently. I behave in the "right" way - God's way - and activate the "right" qualities - virtues, that is to replace my character deficiencies. This is how I am able to reflect the attributes of God. If I am turned earthward, and functioning in my "lower" nature, how can I expect to reflect or manifest divinity? I should ask myself: what do I want to reflect in my own being? For what I think and feel about is what fills my immediate consciousness and establishes what I am reflecting and thus becoming, at the present moment.

Baha'u'llah has established patterns for such transformations of consciousness in the Obligatory Prayers He has provided. In one, I am taught to speak of when I ponder my evil doings and God's benevolence; and as I pause to do so, the portals of my heart open and the light and Sun of Reality floods even my outer consciousness. I feel something that I cannot describe, but that Baha'u'llah has put into comprehensible symbolic terms that my inner being can respond to: "my heart melteth within me, and my blood boileth in my veins. BP'69, 127 #3 or P&M 322

This is where I should turn off my reasoning powers and give free rein to those powers that transcend the rational thought powers; for there is no intellectual experience that can encompass what meditation can bring into my consciousness or awaken in my heart. What part of my heart “melts”? - my cold intellectualism? My unfeeling rationality? The heavy fog of my illusions? I need not analyze it! Let me just experience what can happen! Let me relax my body-and-brain and become quiescent as a human creature for a few moments. Let my inner being realize the dynamic power that radiates from the Fire of God’s love through the portals that faith has opened there. When I can meditate in this way as I pray, I am doubling the benefit to be received from the revealed prayer that I use.

For instance when I pray to reach the ocean of His presence I should stop to meditate or understand what such a relationship involves. Then, in the light of what is revealed about “perpetual union with God,” I shall understand that while this sublime bounty is possible, to earn it I must regard my desires “as utter nothingness beside His Purpose, “because it involves “the complete surrender of one’s will to the Will of God.” 92(q), BWF 134 or GL 337 Deep in my heart, this is something I long for. but my outer being and human nature place their faith in my own mind and ego will, and are revolted by the idea of self-surrender. So to avoid inner conflict, I should meditate more, recognizing that my divine nature can have its way only after battling my humanness and consciously conquering it. This calls for steadfast reflection on God’s purpose - my real purpose - and perhaps a prayer to keep the portals of my heart open and the power of the Holy Spirit accessible.

It is these earthly desires that cause me to close off the channel to my inner divinity with its portals of light. Then it becomes mandatory that I resort to prayer and meditation. When I find myself “shut out from His glory” and my heart forgetful of its Creator,” BWF 98 or GL 185 I need to turn inward to feel the power of Baha’u’llah’s spirit and re-open my heart to some simple words upon which to reflect. For instance, if my mind is occupied with a struggle to gain some personal objective or with resentment toward some interference in my path, I might recall and reflect on this little verity to bring the reality of God back into my consciousness:

“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 ‘Blind is the eye which doth not perceive Thee.’” 10(s), BWF 117 or GL 178

I know that as Source and Sustainer of my life, my Best-Beloved is “closer to me than mine own self” or my “life-vein”. BWF 97-8 or GL 185 (see page 32 []) And yet I can be oblivious of His relation to me and unaware of the power, and sustenance that animates me! Baha’u’llah has explained that this is because “the heart . . . is forgetful of its Creator . . . and is stained with the defilement of earthly desires.” *ibid*. So I should ask myself - my soul or “spirit” - in this transaction that I am involved in, to what phase of God’s relationship to me am I blind?

Spiritual blindness is caused either by lack of development of the eyes, or by being veiled or without light. But my spiritual eyes were opened when I accepted Baha’u’llah; and with the

portals of my heart unclosed to the Sun of Reality, an inner consciousness and recognition of the divine secrets and heavenly realities must exist or at least should always be possible for me.

Meditation is the answer.

As I reflect or “ponder in my heart” the light can “break forth” and the reality or spiritual truth of any situation can be revealed. PT 174 (see page 143)

There is another question too that I should ask myself as I meditate. With access to Baha’u’llah’s Spirit and Revelation, can I afford to close my inner eyes to reality in these times of growing stress and mounting tests?

Our beloved Guardian, nearly a half century ago, wrote us these words:

“Who, contemplating the helplessness, the fears and miseries of humanity in this day, can any longer question the necessity for a fresh revelation of the quickening power of God’s redemptive love and guidance?” WOB 60

And today, these miseries are obviously more severe! He continued:

:May we not, therefore, recognizing as we do the necessity for such a revelation of God’s redeeming power, meditate upon the supreme grandeur of the System unfolded by the hand of Baha’u’llah in this day? May we not pause . . . to reflect upon the sanctity of the responsibilities it is our privilege to shoulder? WOB 61

If I don’t recognize my responsibility to myself to develop and maintain a spiritual consciousness, I should reflect on the sacred responsibilities I have agreed to shoulder. I am told that what alone can secure the triumph of our beloved is “the extent to which our won inner life and private character mirror forth” what Baha’u’llah has revealed. Wsp of Guid 25 One of the basic realities with which our godless society has lost touch is this dynamic relation[ship] that exists between God and His creatures. My life and character should unfailingly mirror this forth, both by the radiant acquiescence and obedience I display in relation to God’s Will, and by my emotional attitudes that express my joy and security in my relationship to Him.

When I say, in daily prayer, “I testify . . . that Thou art God,” in what form do I make that testimony? This is something I should reflect on constantly until a wide channel is built that will bring the inner reflections of light from the Sun of Reality into my outer consciousness, until its radiance shines forth and becomes a part of what my daily life and character “mirror forth.”

In heavenly words of illumination the Voice of God has described my relation to Divinity - for instance, in The Hidden Words of Baha’u’llah from the Persian, pages 38, 40 and 46, numbers 45, 46, 52 and 70. Others describe His relationship to me, as in The Hidden Words of Baha’u’llah from the Arabic, pages 4-7 number 3015. Meditating daily on these few precious gems from the ocean of divine wisdom should produce the heavenly reflection in my feelings and behavior that I need.

It helps, too, to meditate on specific evidences of my Creator’s relationship to me, for they are definite proofs of both the reality of God and of the interaction between His Being and my soul. So I reflect on these words which I address to my Maker and which He Himself has

given me as truth:

“Thy forgiveness hath emboldened me, and Thy mercy hath strengthened me, and Thy call hath awakened me, and Thy grace hath raised me up and led me unto Thee.”

BP’69, 124 or P&M 320 (see pages 55, 72, 101)

For there is no other way to account for the fact that I stand, a declared Baha’i, at the gate of the city of God’s nearness and have set my face toward the lights that are shining from the heaven of Thy will. (see pages 100-1 [])

And if I think it “doesn’t matter” whether or not I shut myself out from the glory of His presence or rid myself of what veils me from His beauty, I should stop and wonder about the meaning of these words that I have been admonished to use in daily communion with God;

“my sins have held me far from the court of Thy holiness, . . . and my heedlessness . . . and separation from Thee” have “destroyed me and remoteness from Thee hath consumed me.” BP’69, 126-7 or P&M 321-2 (see page 103)

If this has happened in the past, do I want it to continue? Certainly heedlessness can destroy the God-consciousness that is the most precious fruit of my earthly living, and remoteness from Him can consume the faith that is one of my most valuable assets. So for my own sake alone I need to allot some time, even if it is only odd moments to reflecting on the relationship that actually exists between my inner being and my Best-Beloved.

I have the great bounty of being able and invited to “testify unto that whereunto have testified . . . the Concourse of high, and the inmates of the All-highest Paradise, and beyond them the Tongue of Grandeur itself from the all-glorious Horizon” - to testify that God actually exists and is divinely related to me through Baha’u’llah, “the Hidden Mystery and Treasured Symbol.” BP’69, 125 or P&M 321 (see page 54[]) Shall I then waste hours of my life feeling and behaving as though that relationship were not a reality?

Mediation changes words that express mental concepts, into divine realities that my heart can apprehend in a dynamic spiritual experience. They can accuse my inner being to recognize and react to the realities that they symbolize. And if I want words that are particularly potent in making me conscious of God and His relation to me, contemplation, paragraph by paragraph, of the verities on this subject in Prayers and Meditations by Baha’u’llah, offers a life-long opportunity. For as suggested by the title of the book and as exemplified in these Writings that reflect to me vividly the pure superhuman consciousness and Spirit of a Manifestation of God, prayer and meditation support and complement each other.

What is meditation? It is not so much a technique I can learn for using my mind nor merely a special procedure or pattern to be followed in thinking. What defines meditation as a spiritual potentiality for Baha’is, concerns subject matter. When I reflect on earthly life, human thoughts result and my mind gives back earthly thoughts. But when I reflect on spiritual life, as unveiled by the divine secrets and heavenly realities, the spirit of faith and all of my higher-than-human capacities make this an act of my soul. It is my heart, and not just my mind,

that does the kind of reflecting. And, an expanding spiritual consciousness results from that activity.

There is no subject on earth for meditation so inspiring, so potent in opening the portals of my heart, and so spiritually electrifying, as the verities and prayers of Baha'u'llah. Reflection on them insures the expansion of a consciousness of my deep, eternal and progressive relationship with God and Baha'u'llah.

God's relationship to me underlies my entire existence and being, and it is infinite in scope, endless in time and divine in character. But I, as a conscious self-determining human being, am only in the process of developing an awareness of my relationship to Him. I am only slowly awakening to the reality of the bond between us and to the glories of such a relationship. Yet awareness of myself as a spiritual being and of God as my Creator, Lord and Ultimate Objective, constitutes the basis of my spiritual life and development. It therefore needs to be stimulated and intensified. And prayers and meditation can do the.

The faculty of meditation involves my spiritual powers and potentialities, and not just the powers of my intellect or rational faculty.

“Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed - turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects - so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit. May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven.” PT 176

In the next pages some of the most precious verities and most needed petitions are quoted as subjects of productive meditation. As I reflect on them my the light they offer open new portals in my heart! PT 175 (see page 141 [])

4. THE ACTION OF RELATING CONSCIOUSLY TO GOD

My heart need to realize and express its relationship to its Creator.

When my heart longs to praise my Best-Beloved, I may meditate on these words:

“Exalted, immeasurably exalted art Thou, O my Beloved, above the strivings of any of Thy creatures, however learned, to know Thee; exalted, immensely exalted art Thou above every human attempt, no matter how searching, to describe Thee! For the highest thought of men, however deep their contemplation, can never hope to outsoar the limitations imposed upon Thy creation, nor ascend beyond the state of the contingent world, nor break the bounds irrevocably set for it by Thee. How can, then, a thing that hath been created by Thy will that overruleth the whole of creation, a thing that is itself a part of the contingent world, have the power to soar into the holy atmosphere of Thy knowledge, or reach unto the seat of Thy transcendent power?” P&M 327-8

“Thy might beareth me witness, O my Well-Beloved! The entire creation hath been called into being to exalt Thy triumph and to establish Thine ascendancy, and all the bounds that have been set by Thee are but the signs of Thy sovereignty, and proclaim the power of Thy might. How great, how very great, are the revelations of Thy wondrous power in all things! They are such that the lowliest among Thy creatures hath been made by Thee a manifestation of Thy most August attribute, and the most contemptible token of Thy handiwork hath been chosen as a recipient of Thy most mighty name. Poverty, as decreed by Thee, hath been made the means for the revelation of Thy riches, and abasement a path leading to Thy glory, and sinfulness a cause for the exercise of Thy forgiveness. By them Thou hast demonstrated that to Thee belong Thy most excellent titles, and unto Thee pertain the wonders of Thy most exalted attributes.” P&M 325-6

“Glory be to Thee, o my God! The power of Thy might beareth me witness! 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. Magnified, therefore, be the marvelous evidences of Thy transcendent power! Magnified be the potency of thine exalted might! Magnified by the majesty of thine all-encompassing greatness, and the energizing influence of Thy will! Such is Thy greatness that wert thou to concentrate the eyes of all men in the eye of one

of Thy servants, and to compress all their hearts within his heart, and wert Thou to enable him to behold within himself all the things Thou hast created through Thy power and fashioned through Thy might, and were he to ponder, throughout eternity, over the realms of Thy creation and the range of Thy handiwork, he would unfailingly discover that there is no created thing but is overshadowed by Thine all-conquering power, and is vitalized through Thine all-embracing sovereignty.” P&M 90

“I am well aware, O my Lord, that I have been so carried away by the clear tokens of Thy loving-kindness, and so completely inebriated with the wine of Thine utterance, that whatever I behold I readily discover that it maketh Thee known unto me, and it remindeth me of Thy signs, and of thy tokens, and of Thy testimonies. By Thy glory! Every time I lift up mine eyes unto Thy heaven, I call to mind Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; and every time I turn my gaze to Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. and when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence.” P&M 271-2

Especially I must take time to meditate if and when I use the Long Obligatory Prayer which can be such a special blessing to me. (see pages 54-5 []) As I ponder on these words addressed to my Beloved:

“Thou seest, O my God, how my spirit hath been stirred up within my limbs and members, in its longing to worship Thee, and in its yearning to remember Thee and extol Thee.” BP’69, 123 or P&M 319

let me meditate on the reality of what God sees in my heart. As I reflect on this, all that He sees deep down beyond the reach of my human consciousness and on my testimony “to that whereunto the Tongue of Thy commandment hath testified in the kingdom of Thine utterance and the heaven of thy knowledge, both become vivid, dynamic realities to me. Then, mysteriously praise and remembrance of Him automatically flood my outer consciousness and take possession of my entire being.

Then I do, indeed, give praise to Him, with all of the sincerity of my soul, that the fragrance of His loving-kindness has “enraptured me,” and the gentle wind of His mercy “have inclined me in the direction” of His bountiful favors. {&M 240 (see page 32 [])

When I Need to Feel consciously More Gratitude, let me meditate on the following:

“Do you realize how much you should thank God for His blessings? If you should thank Him a thousand times with each breath it would not be sufficient, because God has created and trained you. He has protected you from every affliction and prepared every gift and bestowal. Consider what a kind Father He is . . . He has given us a kind father and compassionate mother, . . . refreshing water, gentle breezes and the sun shining

above our heads. In brief, He has supplied all the necessities of life although we did not ask for nay of these great gifts . . . He has created us in this radiant century, a century longed for and expected by all the sanctified souls in past periods . . . The philosophers of history have agreed that this century is equal to one hundred past centuries. This is true from every standpoint. This is the century of science, inventions, discoveries and universal laws. this is the century of the revelation of the mysteries of God . . . Therefore you must render thanks and glorification to God that you were born in this age. Furthermore you have listened to the call of Baha'u'llah . . . You were asleep; you are awakened. Your ears are attentive; your hearts are informed. You have acquired the love of God. You have attained tot he knowledge of God. This is the most great bestowal of God 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 Baha'u'llah has brought you divine happiness . . . Render continual thanks unto God so that the confirmations of God may encircle you all.” DAL 35-6 #41

“Wherefore be thankful to God, for having strengthened thee to aid His Cause, for having made the flowers of knowledge and understanding to spring forth in the garden of thy heart. Thus hath His grace encompassed thee, and encompassed the whole of creation.” GL 303 (see pages 33 and 59 [])

“Render thanks unto God, inasmuch as ye have attained unto your heart’s desire, and been united to Him Who is the Promise of all nations.” BWF 9 or GL 6 (see page 32 [])

When I Need to Remember Him more dynamically, I can begin by recalling some of His Words to me, go on to reflecting on one or two of Baha'u'llah's Meditations, and finally turn to Words of instruction to me; for instance:

“O SON OF BEING! Make mention of Me on My earth, that in My heaven I may remember thee, thus shall Mine eyes and thine be solaced.” HWA 13 #43

“Unlock, O people, the gates of the hearts of men with the keys of the remembrance of Him Who is the remembrance of God and the Source of wisdom amongst you.” 27(r), BWF 124

When I am Hungry for Two-way Communication with My Lord, here are some suggestions for meditating:

“Every living thing that exists in the universe is immersed in an ocean of mysterious power. What we call ‘life’ is capacity to transform energy, not capacity to produce it. The world contains no engines of self-contained character; each form of existence is sustained by drawing upon the inexhaustible reservoir of force, and each in turn contributes some share to the mysterious store.

“Human beings in their physical nature are bound by the same limitations and conditions as operate upon the animal. Our ignorance may believe that man is independent and free, but the scientist’s vision rises above conceit to perceive the successive links by which the power of life is connected from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man.

“We differ fundamentally from all visible types of life, however, in that men receive and transform energy on many levels. When the body is nourished and sheltered, the feelings, thoughts and aspirations reach out for sustenance, and the consciousness receives the quality of immaterial food, for which it seeks. Within ourselves we are continually developing and altering those elements of the non-physical self by which the mental, ethical and spiritual values are instinctively selected. Man’s universe of values is an infinite universe, even though you and I have become aware of only the small area in which our personality has become accustomed to dwell.

“No man can transform for his own spiritual uses more than one level of values at a time. If we habitually exclude all save a few interests, our capacity to seek larger values becomes weakened, and by the lack of seeking we end by insisting that the world of the soul is limited, darkened, and devoid of inspiration.

“Communion with the Infinite is the most vital gift of human life. It means the opening of windows to the light of truth, to the warmth of love. All men commune daily, but most men commune with objects of finite interest. The miser communes with his material wealth. The self-centered man of affairs communes with the problems and opportunities of his business or profession. The devoted parent communes with his child. The sick man communes with his pain and weakness. The statesman communes with the evolving life of his nation. communion is a faculty inherent in man; it is the spiritual equivalent to the taking in of nourishment for the physical organism. But how few in this day practice communion as a source of joy, of inner integrity, or renewal for the powers of hope and faith and truth! Why do we live in a darkened corner of the universe, when the heavens of consciousness are flooded always with the light from God?

“To become conscious of this divine bounty of communion; to practice it day by day as the great musician perfects his power to evoke beauty from a violin - this is the essence of life, for all other gifts and talents become worthless if we fail to commune with God.

“There is a mighty saying from the East: ‘Those who forget God, He causeth to forget themselves.’ that is, if we commune with lower interests exclusively, we lose the capacity to receive pure Light within the mind and soul. Little by little, our horizon shrinks, little by little the sunlight ceases to shine in the heart. At moments of relaxation from the day’s work, we look within, and what we see is frequently depressing.

“Our capacity to enter into communion is like the capacity of a mirror to reflect.

The mirror reflects only the objects toward which it is turned, and likewise one communes with the interest uppermost in his heart. Freedom of will, potentiality of spiritual development, consist in our power to turn the mirror of meditation upon truth at its source, shutting out the myriad conflicting realities of worldly life for at least a few recreative moments day by day.

“What is the Infinite with which man must learn to commune? Is it an infinity of variety, like the universe of space and time? Is it an infinity of knowledge, like a great library full of books? Is it an infinity of emotions, like the possession of a thousand different friends? No, not if we turn to those who illumine history with their power to commune with God. These great souls have found a Revealer of the Infinite - a Prophet whose life and message brings God within our human capacity to know, to love, to obey. Not by extension of knowledge but by singleness of purpose do we enter into the true communion with kindles eternity within the humblest human heart. By rising above our daily habits which degrade our energy to physical levels, by centering our aspirations upon one point of worship, by transforming our stubborn characters with new capacity to receive truth in terms of enhanced daily life - it is here that we can enter the secret portals of communion and tread the eternal path that leads from the man of flesh to the man of spirit, reborn in the likeness of God. For the Prophet, the Messenger, is the perfect man, and until we have a true standard of perfection we know not where to turn for guidance upon this chaotic earth. Relig for Mankind 208-11

How reassuring are the words of this Commune revealed by Baha'u'llah:

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

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

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

of Thee, amidst the branches of the tree of Thy oneness.” P&M4-5 (see page 62 [])

“Forget all else save God, be in communion with Him, supplicate and pray to Him to make thee conqueror over the material things, impressed by the bounties of the Kingdom, commemorating the name of thy Lord, pure from all else save Him, and imbued with the spiritual attributes of those who are holy . . . then shall thy breaths have effect upon the hearts . . . DAL 30 #22

“Draw nigh unto God and persevere in (thy) communion with (or prayer to) thy Lord, so that the fire of God’s love may glow more luminously in the heart, its heat grow stronger and give warmth to that region and its sound reach the Supreme Concourse.” DAL 28 #14

Baha’u’llah quoted a sermon by ‘Ali, the first ‘Imam of Islam, thus:

“He saith: ‘And there shall appear upon the tablet of thine heart a writing of the subtle mysteries . . . ; and the bird of thy soul shall . . . gather the fruits of communion in the gardens of “Then feed on every kind of fruit.”’” 7 VAL 3

Also He wrote:

“And . . . confirmed by the Creator, the lover . . . will privily converse with his Beloved; he will set ajar the gate of truth and piety, and shut the doors of vain imaginings. He in this station is content with the decree of God, and seeth war as peace, and findeth in death the secrets of everlasting life. With inward and outward eyes he witnesseth the mysteries of resurrection in the realms of creation and the souls of men, and with a pure heart apprehendeth the divine wisdom in the endless Manifestations of God.” 7 Val 11-2

Don’t these heavenly potentialities inspire me to pursue and try to master the art of meditation?

5. CELESTIAL LIGHT MADE AVAILABLE

Every Baha’i has special access to “the splendor of that light” that Baha’u’llah has introduced into the human thought world and that “is in the hearts . . . hidden.” 42(w), 7 Val 24 (see pages 8, 11, 36, and 111 [])

“The Source of infinite grace . . . hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to

appear out of the realm of spirit . . . They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge . . . and by them is revealed the light that can never fade . . . BWF 19-20, GL 47 or Iqan 100
 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that Most Great Light . . . “ 28(u) and 13 (g), BWF 116, GL 177 or Iqan 100 (see page 161 [])

And through Baha’u’llah, “the Object of all knowledge . . . the Day Spring of this Light . . . every hidden thing hath been revealed.” BWF 59, ESW 129 or GL 147 - “the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved,” HWP 51 end par [?]. “Him Whose light embraceth all things.” GL 147

So much spiritual light can have a blinding effect on some people. “the imperfect eye beholds imperfections,” 53(q), DAL 116 #19 (see page 145) and the ego turns away from such resplendent light, unwilling to admit the limitations of its vision. This is why Baha’u’llah say, ““His beauty hath no veiling save light . . . ”” 7 Val 39 It takes top level vision to face spiritual light. I am assured, however, that

“Every discerning eye can, in this Day, perceive the dawning light of God’s Revelation.” GL 271

And from that “dawning light”, my heart may derive my much needed Enlightenment. so I should seek it constantly. For by this Revelation “darkness hath been turned into light.” BP’69, 167 or P&M 9

““The light hath shone forth from the horizon of Revelation, and the whole earth hath been illumined at the coming of Him Who is the Lord of the Day of the covenant!”” ESW 133-4

Baha’u’llah says that

“Two . . . (verses) will suffice to serve as a light for men of mind and heart.”” 7 VAL 60

For “These pages . . . are shining and manifest as the sun, and glowing and luminous as light itself.” ESW 146

How, then, can human beings be in such darkness? Baha’u’llah answers this, saying:

“Had they sought with a humble mind . . . they surely would have been guided to the light of the sun of Truth and would have discovered the mysteries of divine knowledge and wisdom.” Iqan 28

And in communing with His Lord, He said:

“I testify that if Thy servants were to turn towards Thee with the eyes Thou didst create in them and with the ears wherewith Thou didst endow them, they would all be carried away by a single word sent down from the right hand of the throne of Thy majesty. That words alone would suffice to brighten their faces, and to assure their hearts, and to cause their souls to soar up to the atmosphere of Thy great glory, and to ascend

into the heaven of Thy sovereignty.” P&M 190-1 (see page 40 [])

‘Abdu’l-Baha brings this truth down to a personal challenge to me by saying:

“If the soul identifies itself with the material world . . . (and) remains in this station . . . it ([the] soul) will be the recipient of this darkness; but if it (the soul) becomes the recipient of the graces of the world of the mind, its darkness will be transformed into light . . . until it reach the apex.” 44(cc)Div. Philosophy 121; RofM ‘56 Edition, 16

Of course truth, or light that reveals reality, is the very source of “the graces of the world of the mind: - and of the heart, as well.

So I have the choice, reaction by reaction, of identifying with material [the] world or of opening the portals of my heart to the new light - the light of God’s purpose - which is involved in every situation that I deal with. Every day I may “make up my mind” by the light of my own intellect and personal outlook, or I may turn, through meditation, to the inner wisdom of my heart where loftier vision and deeper understanding of what faces me may be activated.

Or, still better, in a real test it may start a more productive kind of meditation if I turn to the Writings for a word of divine inspiration. For without spiritual light in a severe test, my human emotions can be bitterly destructive.

The voice of my Beloved pleads with me and assures me:

“O BEFRIENDED STRANGER! The candle of the thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. HWP 33 #32

“O SON OF BEING! Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee.” HWA 6 #11

“O SON OF BEING! . . . within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it . . . “ HWA 6 #12

“O SON OF THE SUPREME! . . . I made the light to shine on thee its splendor. Why dost thou veil thyself therefrom?” HWA 11 #32

For

“if the hearts of all . . . were . . . to be brought face to face with that Day Star of unfading glory and attuned to His Will, each would find itself . . . radiant with His light”, BWF 95, GL 263

a light whose “splendor has eclipsed” all the previous “suns of utterance.” ESW 29

That light is so abundant that I need never be in dark confusion. It is shining from the heaven of God’s will, P&M 320 and “is shed from the heaven of bounty.” ESW 1 (see page 83 []) For God has manifested Baha’u’llah “with a light that hath encompassed all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth.: ESW 96 Am I aware of this light and of the divine realities it reveals? How much I see depends on how I use and train my spiritual eyes to turn heavenward.

For

“Verity, the blind are deprived of witnessing the lights and are unable to distinguish between the stone and the holy, precious pearl.” BWF 207

Each soul must keep the portals of “his heart open through faith in those God-given gifts. I must seek them, turn the mirror of my consciousness toward them, and “magnify” them in my own being. I must ponder and reflect on them, and not allow my human spirit, with its spiritual limitations to dominate my consciousness., for when I do, I lose sight of the glories of reality. I must recognize and realize the wonders of what Baha’u’llah has unveiled. For only spiritual vision can transform my human consciousness and activate my potential “heavenly power” to replace my “satanic strength”. 24(eee), BWF 113 or GL 200

It is important for me to keep in mind that, as one of God’s servants, who has been attracted and “set aglow with the fire of God’s love, I am “seeking confirmation” from His “wondrous Kingdom,” am longing for the descent of His bestowal, and am deeply “desiring illumination from the Sun of Reality.” BP’69, 50 #36 To seek this kind of fulfillment through active faith, earnest prayer and sincere efforts to meditate, is my own responsibility, and dependent upon my own volition. Only thus shall I be able to achieve the purpose of my being.

How gently Baha’u’llah suggests:

“Shall we not free ourselves from the horror of satanic gloom, and hasten towards the rising light of the heavenly Beauty?” Iqan 38

It is usually not possible nor necessary to set aside a large amount of time for daily meditation. But many of my routine activities are somewhat mechanical, and leave my mind free to ponder or reflect as I move about. Such mental activity the, can be converted into meditation if I can select some brief truth or beam of celestial Light as a subject of reflection. This can be especially valuable when some unpleasantness faces me or my human spirit leads me into rationalizing and dwelling on my negative feelings. For instance, if I am depressed or if my consciousness is merely not glowing with reflected light from the Sun of Reality as it should be, I can use little quotes like these as subjects of meditation:

“If . . . (a soul) be faithful to God, it will reflect His light”. 47(eee), BWF 121 or GL 159

As a means of being faithful to God, perhaps I should listen as His Voice speaking such words as these:

“O SONE OF SPIRIT! . . . My light is manifest to thee, it cannot be obscured.”
HWA 8-9 #20

but “Not until thou does purify thine heart . . . can the brightness of the light of God shed its radiance upon it . . . “ BWF 46 or GL 237

This will probably stir a desire in my heart that can best be expressed as a petition, since meditation can naturally become communion with God. Simple requests like these may come into my consciousness for use in that communion:

“O my Lord . . . extinguish not the lamp which Thine own fire hath lit.” P&M 69

“Deliver me from darkness, make me a brilliant light”. BP’69, 16 #7

“Thou . . . hast lighted Thy fire with my soul, and cast the beams of Thy light into

my heart.” P&M 283 (see page 4 [])

“O Lord! Praise and thanksgiving be unto Thee, for Thou hast . . . illumined my eye by beholding the lights . . . “ BP’69, 151 #15

“Behold . . . O my God, how I have fled from myself unto Thee, and have abandoned my own being that I may attain unto the splendors of the light of Thy Being . . . “ P&M 336

Thus, simply by the power of thought, when based on love and the spirit of faith, and connected to a few tiny beams from the Sun of Truth, I can “change my mind” or immediate consciousness. Even if a serious problem or test is facing me, the same pattern can be effective, if I select more specific counsels from my Beloved upon which to reflect, such as the following:

“O SON OF MAN! If adversity befall thee not in My path, how canst thou walk in the ways of them that are content with My pleasure? If trials afflict thee not in they longing to meet Me, how wilt thou attain the light in thy love for My beauty? HWA 15 # 50

“Guard thyself, lest darkness spread its veil over thee, and fold thee away from His light.” BWF 61, PDC 31

“The Lamp of God is burning; take heed, lest the fierce winds of your disobedience extinguish its light.” BWF 96 or GL 167

“O banished and faithful friend! . . . chase the gloom of remoteness through the morning-light of My Divine presence.” BWF 64-5 or GL 323

“Verily God hath made adversity . . . a wick for His lamp which lighteth earth and heaven.” ESW 17

“thou mayest, through the power of God and the light of divine guidance, distinguish the Morn of everlasting splendour from the darksome night of error.” Iqan 151-2

“O Lord! [L]et the light of faith shine.” BP’69, 43 #30

“Wherefore, put thy hand into thy bosom, then stretch it forth with power, and behold, thou shalt find it a light unto all the world.” 7 VAL 59

This shows the potentialities of the kind of thought control that we call meditation - how my human consciousness and its potential “satanic strength” can be completely transformed into heavenly helpfulness! But it requires that I direct my consciousness to the light that Baha’u’llah has provided, and open the portals of my heart to it through the spirit of faith and trust.

I should practice this when I find myself in a negative state of mind in reacting to one or more of my close associates. The human nature is inescapably “irascible,” GL 159 (see pages 199 and 126 []) because the rational soul is quick to recognize imperfections and to resent the evil or injustice prevalent in all human beings. But nothing makes so much trouble in human relations or is so destructive to my own peace of mind and spiritual progress as resentment, faultfinding or anger that can so easily “fill my mind.” to divert my thoughts and emotions at

such times, meditating on little gleams of truth that have shone within my heart can have heavenly results. For instance, let me ponder this statement:

“the letters of negation, . . . far . . . removed from the holy fragrances of Thy knowledge, and . . . forgetful . . . of the wondrous splendors of the dawning light of Thy beauty, which are shed from the heaven of Thy majesty, must needs exist in Thy realm, so that the words which affirm Thee may thereby be exalted.” P&M 325

If I found perfection in my fellow-creatures, would I ever struggle to search for God?

“the Almighty hath tried, and will continue to try, His servants, so that light may be distinguished from darkness . . . “ Iqan 8

This recognition of good and evil is part of my growth. Awareness of imperfection and perfection is one way of recognizing divinity; and experiencing my own limitations can make me understand the limitations of my associates.

But hating what faces me leaves no room for the love of Baha'u'llah.

“Even as the clouds prevent the eyes of men from beholding the sun, so do these things hinder the souls of men from recognizing the light of the divine Luminary.” Iqan 72

However, as I meditate, in the spirit of faith, it is possible that compassion may be stirred in my heart, and a desire for God's help may replace my faultfinding. then I'll welcome such words as these:

“May their eyes be opened to behold the light, and may they be freed from the darkness of ignorance.” BP'69, 149 #13

As I meditate on these words, instead of harboring anger and resentment, I begin to feel myself linked in a kind of unity with those whom I was blaming and critici[z]ing. And that bond will be strengthened if I stop to reflect on other words of my Beloved Lord, such as these as He addresses all souls who are attuned to His voice:

“O ye moth-like lovers of His light! Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flames.” BWF 116 or GL 321

My objective undergo a mysterious kaleidoscopic change during this brief meditation! My original negative feelings that were natural human reactions were based on seeing the object of my revulsion as a force interfering with something that I humanly desired. But as I reflect on “His light”, I can feel its flame consuming my wrong emotional attitude. I become conscious of a yearning to indeed consecrate myself to the fire of God's love. I can strengthen and feed this desire too, by dwelling for a moment of this beam of light that puts us human creatures in our right perspective:

“He is truly wise whom the world and all that is therein have not deterred from recognizing the light of this Day . . . “ BWF 96 or GL 168

What marvels can be achieved by a few moments of meditation! And by asking myself what glorious goals my Beloved may have planned as part of His purpose for me! Listening as

His Voice speaks, I can realize that I want nothing on earth to interfere with His plan for me, whatever self-sacrifice it may involve:

“O SON OF MAN! Ponder and reflect . . . a martyr in My path . . . (may) become the manifestation of My command and the revealer of My light in the highest Paradise . . . Judge thou aright, O servant!” HWA 14 #46

O, the blessings of that celestial light! Let me not neglect the precious benefits from it that can be mine through the portals of mediation!

6. THE SHOWERING OF GOD’S BLESSINGS:

My Creator has provided bountifully for my every need. Mediation is one means by which I contact and receive His gifts.

When I hunger for spiritual sustenance, Baha’u’llah gives me endless food for thought. His words of guidance - light and power to my inner being - I have but to heed and digest. His petitions frequently name definite potentialities of the spiritual life that I need to accept and assimilate. Just as my inner physical ear enables me to maintain my physical balance, my inner spiritual ear can give me a sense of spiritual balance or poise, when tuned into such words as the following; they can give me a new outlook!

“What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasures, on the diversity and the cost of the ornaments with which ye deck yourselves?” BWF 41 or GL 252

He follows such stimuli with admonitions that initiate soul-satisfying communion with my Beloved. Constantly He invites such feeding of my inner being:

“O My servants! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which, in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime, are being showered

upon you.” BWF 95 or Gl 167

“O MY BROTHER! Hearken to the delightful words of My honeyed tongue, and quaff the stream of mystic holiness from My sugar-shedding lips.” HWP 33 #33 (see page 42 [])

“O MY SERVANT! . . . This is the river of everlasting life that hath flowed from the well-spring of the pen of the merciful; well is it with them that drink!” HWP 35 #37

“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.” BWF 96-7 or GL 169

“Meditate on this, that thou mayest drink in the waters of everlasting life which flow through the words of the Lord of all mankind. BWF 134 or GL 338

As a human being I must spend so much time and energy working to supply the needs of my outer being that I tend to forget that my soul also thirsts and hungers for what it needs for its well-being and very life, its own life-giving elements and spiritual sustenance. To understand and fill such needs is a responsibility of mine that I cannot afford to neglect. Human sciences are delving into the “hidden hungers” which people struggle ineffectually and in totally irrational ways to satisfy. They present questions which doctors or scientist cannot answer. But for me as an enlightened Baha’i, I know better than to allow myself to be a victim of “compulsive eating” or of unlawful drinking, to try to satisfy my inner needs, I know enough, too, not to try to satisfy my soul with the fare or provisions that my ego craves. I know that I can overload myself with what my body and human nature demand and still leave my inner being unnourished and my heart starved.

Before I complain of unsatisfied desires or hidden hungers, I should check my spiritual diet and remember that God has “sent down” the food of His utterance out of the heaven of His bounty, ESW 8 (see page 94 []) and provided “the waters of everlasting life” which alone can quench the thirst of my total self.

A simple loving warning from ‘Abdu’l-Baha, when meditated on, certainly stirs a response:

“If our chalice is full of self there is no room for the water of life.” PT 136

And here He communes with hearts and, as a believer, I must look into my heart for a response:

“O beloved of God! Know ye that the world is like unto a mirage which the thirsty one thinks to be water; its water is a vapor; its mercy a difficulty; its repose hardship and ordeal; leave it to its people and turn unto the Kingdom of your Lord the Merciful. Thus the light of mercy and beneficence may shine upon you, the heavenly table descend for you, your Lord may bestow upon you the greatest gifts and favors, whereby your breasts may become dilated, your hearts gladdened, your souls purified, and your eyes enlightened. O beloved of God! Is there any giver save God? . . . He shall

open unto you the doors of His knowledge, fill your hearts with His love, rejoice your spirits by wafting of His holy fragrances, illumine your faces by the Manifest Light and elevate your names among the people.” BWF 386

Reflecting on such verities can move my heart to seek communion with God Himself, using such words as these:

“I testify that Thou hast created me, and nourished me and brought me up, and fed me, and sustained me, that I may recognize Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy signs, and the Revealer of Thy clear tokens.” P&M 228 (see page 86 [])

“Let my food, O my Lord, be Thy beauty, and my drink the light of Thy presence.” P&M 126 (see page 94 [])

For though “Thy name . . . the fountains of wisdom have burst forth, and the heavenly table hath been sent down.” BP’69, 38 #26

When my heart languishes in need of forgiveness and purification, let me reflect on these words:

“The sinner, when in a state wherein he hinds himself free and severed from all else save God, must beg forgiveness and pardon. It is not allowable to declare one’s sins and transgressions before any man, inasmuch as this has not been, nor is, conducive to securing God’s forgiveness and pardon. At the same time such confession before the creatures leads to one’s humiliation and abasement, and God -exalted be His glory! - does not wish for the humiliation of His servants. Verily He is compassionate and beneficent! A sinner must, between himself and God, beg for mercy from the Sea of Mercy and ask forgiveness from the Heaven of Beneficence.” BWF 193-4

The words of the Voice of God addressed to “rebellious ones” who are not aware of either their Perilous ways” or their need for forgiveness, are worthy of mediation too:

“O REBELLIOUS ONES! My forbearance hath emboldened you and My long-suffering hath made you negligent, in such wise that ye have spurred on the fiery charger of passion into perilous ways that lead unto destruction. Have ye thought Me heedless or that I was unaware?” 55(hh) HWP 44 # 65 (see page 99 [])

Baha’u’llah reminds me that “idle fancies have debarred men from the Horizon of Certitude, and vain imaginings withheld them from the Choice Sealed Wine.” ESW 44 This is something for me to meditate on, too. I should reflect with all of the powers of my soul, and ask myself - my inner self that is more spiritually enlightened than is my human consciousness: Am I allowing my reasoning and imagining or egocentric emotions to withhold me from that mystical transformer of hearts that He calls “Choice Wine” and that He has unsealed “with the finger of might and power”? 100(t), BWF 127 or GL 332 My human ways of thinking lead me into that “idle fancies.” Meditation can extricate me from the hold that my human spirit or lower nature has on my outer consciousness and immediate feelings.

A special kind of understanding - that of the heart - develops from meditation - an inner

knowing that can supersede human thinking and intellectualizing. This capacity is so precious that it is called “first and foremost” among “the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind.” 35(m), BWF 121-2 or GL 194 9see page 52) Mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms have no understanding. BWF 338 They obey the laws of nature or Will of God without volition or consciousness. But I have a choice: between conscious obedience with results in divine fulfillment, or disobedience, deliberate or unconscious, which leads only to imperfection and frustration.

The precious powers of my intellect are a door to conscious knowledge, but only a door. A working knowledge of the “right” ways to react and live can only be acquired through experimentation or the spirit of faith giving its assistance to my rational faculties. What I know by the light of my intellect is not enough to control my emotions, nor does it give me an understanding of reality, especially of the reality of right and wrong. For to understand what actions and qualities are “right” or in conformance with God’s laws, I must have a clear apprehension of His purpose.

Freedom to experiment leaves me able to humor my animal nature and to disregard or disobey the laws of spiritual life, and this is where sin and punishment come in - they result from making “wrong” choices in the one area where man has free choice: namely, in deciding between his own “good and bad actions.” 36(s), SAQ w87 (see page 7 []) The unenlightened soul can refuse to accept Truth and remain spiritually blind; or the immature soul can ignore what he know in his heart. In either kind of disobedience such a person uses his intellect to rationalize his behavior. But that is the wrong way to use a spiritual power. To put myself back on the “right way” in such wrong-doing, Baha’u’llah teaches me to face my Creator, recognize myself as a “sinner . . . the essence of error,” a “weak” and “poor” soul, but a soul “advancing toward the sea of thy gift . . . the kingdom of Thy power and . . . the sun of Thy wealth,” and to beg forgiveness. BWF 194 And of course I must not make the same mistake again. On the other hand, to the understanding heart or mature soul disobedience is unthinkable, intolerable. For such people, there is no greater torture than being veiled from God 104(hh), BWF 324 or SAQ 260 Remorse, guilt and self-condemnation are feelings that develop en route to that maturity-goal.

The destructive results of disobeying spiritual laws, which we recognize as retribution or punishment are not evidences of God’s wrath and vengeance, as primitive peoples, in the throes of developing a God-consciousness have been led to believe, but simply part of the divine Plan for establishing justice on earth and for teaching truth through actual experience. For “justice . . . consists of two pillars, reward and retribution.” BWF 200

“O people of God! The trainer of the world is justice.” *ibid.* “And the tent of the order of the world is hoisted and established on two pillars: reward and retribution.” BWF 198

Justice is what we shall experience when all of the true laws of life are obeyed. This will be the fulfillment of the prayer, “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” This will be the

new world order of Baha'u'llah, and Baha'is are building its early beginnings now. We are going through a period heralded by the statements that

“truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom of every command shall be tested.” BP'69, 130 #4 And

“The time is at hand when whatsoever lieth hid in the souls and hearts of men will be disclosed.” ESW 107

The good hidden in souls and hearts is being disclosed through revelations, inspirations, and guidance obtained through prayer and meditation. And the evil is being disclosed through what 'Abdu'l-Baha called tests that we * ____

In explaining the pattern of being “tested”, 'Abdu'l-Baha states that my susceptibility to evil is proved when I fall into the tests, and they “are continued until the soul realizes its own unfitness, then remorse and regret tend to root out the weakness.” SofW, Vol. 6 p. 45 This is when I need forgiveness: remorse and suffering from guilt have served their purpose once I have recognized and learned from my mistake. Once I am wholeheartedly resolved never to repeat that mistake, my assurance of God's forgiveness floods my inner being with gratitude and gives me the power and determination to live by my resolve. What a heavenly bounty He has made available!

“Since Thou hast, O my God, established Thyself upon the throne of Thy transcendent unity, and ascended the mercy seat of Thy oneness, it befitteth Thee to blot out from the hearts of all beings whatsoever may keep them back from gaining admittance into the sanctuary of Thy Divine mysteries, and may shut them out from the tabernacle of Thy Divinity, that all hearts may mirror Thy beauty, and may reveal Thee, and speak of Thee.” P&M 324

Becoming conscious of God's forgiveness, through mediation gives me a fresh start. It can lift me out of my destructive negative emotions and help me to grow into the next level of consciousness where, with mature understanding, all I desire is to please God and conform to His Will.

That kind of understanding is promoted by meditation too - an understanding of my heart that is far beyond what intellectual activity alone can generate, regardless of how great a scholar of the Baha'i Writings I may be.

The following are spiritually moving words that may inspire me as I meditate on the wonders of forgiveness, on my inescapable need for its, and on my Lord's heavenly compassion:

“My God, my God! If none be found to stray from Thy path, how then, can the ensign of Thy mercy be unfurled, or the banner of Thy bountiful favor be hoisted? And if iniquity be not committed, what is it that can proclaim Thee to be the Concealer of men's sins, the Ever-Forgiving, the Omniscient, the All-Wise? May my soul be a sacrifice to the trespasses of them that trespass against Thee, for upon such trespasses are wafted the sweet savors of the tender mercies of Thy Name, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful.

May my life be laid down for the transgressions of such as transgress against Thee, for through them the breath of Thy grace and the fragrance of Thy loving-kindness are made known and diffused amongst men. May my inmost being be offered up for the sins of them that have sinned against Thee, for it is as a result of such sins that the Day Star of Thy manifold favors revealeth itself above the horizon of Thy bounty, and the clouds of Thy never-failing providence rain down their gifts upon the realities of all created things.” 56(zz), GL 310-1

“One gleam from the splendors of Thy Name, the All-Merciful, sufficeth to banish and blot out every trace of sinfulness from the world, and a single breath from the breezes of the Day of Thy Revelation is enough to adorn all mankind with a fresh attire.” ESW10 or P&M 2252

God’s forgiveness is intangible. How can I be assured of it? If I ask this question, I have this answer upon which to meditate:

(Through) “Thy Name . . . thou didst show forth Thy tender mercies unto Thy servants and revealedst Thy forgiveness amidst Thy creatures.” BP’69, 37-8 #26 or P&M 237-8

All I need to do is to open the portal of my heart to this blessing.

When other kinds of healing are needed, when I am in a state of mind that is destructive - feeling of rebellion, anger, fear, anxiety or confusion, etc., - let me remember that healing and purification of my outer consciousness should be sought from the Divine Restorer through reflection and prayer, and especially by reflecting on His transforming and love-awakening words. For “Abdu’l-Baha is the Authority, as previously stated of the fact that “the divine remedy which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the Divine Kingdom . . . is the precepts and teachings of God.” BWF 376 (see page 106 [])

This means that I must open both my mind and heart to the Divine remedy. And I need it every day of my life, for “my heart is prone to evil.” So I am grateful for such petitions as these:

“I implore Thee, O my God, by Thy mercy that hath surpassed all created things, and to which all that are immersed beneath the oceans of Thy names bear witness, not to abandon me unto my self, for my heart is prone to evil. Guard me, then, within the stronghold of Thy protection, and the shelter of Thy care.” P&M 210 (see page 42 [])

“I implore Thee . . . to send down . . . from the clouds of Thy mercy the rains of Thy healing upon this suckling, whom Thou hast related to Thine all-glorious Self in the kingdom of Thy creation. Clothe him, then, O my God, by Thy grace, with the robe of well-being and health, and guard him O my Beloved, from every affliction and disorder, and from whatever is obnoxious unto Thee.” P&M 236-7

“Keep him safe also, O my God, by the power of Thine immeasurable majesty, from all Thou abhorrest.” BP’69, 62 #46 or BWF 145, P&M 22

“O Thou Who art . . . the Healer of the souls that have recognized Thee! Rain

down . . . upon us from the heaven of Thy mercy and the clouds of Thy gracious providence that which will cleanse us from the faintest trace of evil and corrupt desires, and will draw us nearer to Him Who is the Manifestation of Thy most exalted and all-glorious Self.” P&M 299

I use these petitions, one at a time, and slowly, so that I can meditate and reflect on their power and beauty. For only so do I open my heart and consciousness sufficiently to receive their inherent infinite, eternal and divine blessings. I must remember that “the splendors of the morning light” are illuminating the cosmic realms and that Baha’u’llah has yielded to God such gratitude “as can direct the steps of the wayward” towards the. P&M 329 I do long to be guided by that heavenly light!

But I must turn [to it]. My heart must respond and fulfill my part of God’s heavenly Covenant. Do I realize this responsibility? Here is a question I should ask my inner being, a question for reflection and meditation: How fully am I responding to God’s bounties?

I have learned that one who is a true seeker . . . must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul . . . from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments.” 66(x), BWF 105, GL 264 or Iqan 192 (see page 38 []) And this means I must no longer cherish and pursue ignoble objectives nor desire and love what does not reflect Divinity. for since my destiny is to know and to worship Absolute Perfection, “Abdu’l-Baha has warned me against choosing an object of my heart’s devotion that is transient and imperfect. 54(s), SofW Vol. 7, 162 (see page 31 []) The restlessness and frustration, the active disappointment and disillusionment, that can result from doing that, can be sickening. How many times must I be reminded to cleanse my heart of the love of worldly things? 766(ee), GL 275 (see page 44 [])

Love is the most important thing in my life, the most essential ingredient of my being. Was I not “molded out of the clay of Love” divine love - by my beloved and loving Creator? 42(d); HWA 7 #13 (see pages 22, 79 and 88 []) Only this kind of love, then, unfailing attachment to the Infinite can sustain my being and promote my spiritual health. I am dependent on the highest kind of love to maintain the activity and growth of my divine nature. And certainly my “glory, . . . joy and . . . progress” are assured only as I respond to and reflect that kind of love in my everyday experiences. This is why I must * ___ rative that I attach myself “to an Infinite Reality” 54(s), (see above) - Baha’u’llah and what He has unveiled, and to God Himself. And to the radiance of Their attributes which “appears and is visible in worlds and souls.” 9(m), BWF 322 or SAQ 257 (see page 131 [])

Let me commune with my Beloved and draw strength from such promises as these:

“O SON OF THE SUPREME! To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire and seek thine own?”
HWA 9 #23

“When you call on the Mercy of God waiting to reinforce you, your strength will

be threefold.” 77(mm), PT 39

“If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you.” 77(nn), BWF 126 or GL9

My greatest need for spiritual power is in my dealings with other people.

Well do I realize that “the greatest need of the world is the animating, unifying presence of the Holy Spirit.” PUP 315 (see page 56) I have noted, too, ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s admonition that I use my “utmost endeavors in order that the Holy Spirit my influence minds and hearts.” 101(hh), PUP 315 (see page 46 []) I am so terribly conscious of this need in my associates! So I have gratefully followed His suggestion that I pray for them - pray and turn my face to God, “that He, in His infinite compassion and mercy, may help and succour these misguided ones . . . grant them understanding, and teach them tolerance and mercy, that the eyes of their minds be opened and that they may be endued with the gift of the spirit”, PT 116 (see page 117), the animating, unifying Holy Spirit.

This much is not too difficult. It often seems as though all of my human relations problems would be solved if God would only anser the prayers of that sort that are offered. He will, too! But people change only through growth, and growth is slow. Growth also is partly dependent on environment. Do I realize that as part of my loved one’s environment, I may be a real obstacle to their growth? It is their souls, the latent divine nature in each human being, that need “the animating, unifying presence of the Holy Spirit.” So I may well ask myself and meditate on the question of what effect I am having on the inner experiences or souls related to mine. Am I taking advantage of the mysterious power of intoning “the verses of God”? I should, because their sweetness can not only kindle my own soul to the point of forgetting other people’s faults, but, as promised, can also attract “the hearts of all men” and even cause their hearts to “throb”? 105(c), BP’69, 3, BWF 123 or GL 295 (see page 115 []) when I pray for the, do I pray and think appreciatively about them? Mine are not true prayers if they are not offered lovingly. Perhaps I need to concentrate on faith and love which are an essential ingredient of meditation, before I shall be able to really and wholeheartedly pray for them.

Meditation can have a constructive effect in the world of hearts or inner consciousness far beyond human comprehension. I recall that it is possible for my “brow”, symbol of my inner consciousness, to be illumined with “the light of adoration . . . and of prayer” in God’s “court of holiness,” BP’69m 137 #6 (see pages 39 and 87 []) and this, is where all souls live and grow; so I may be sure that the same illumination is available to all people. Perhaps, the, my adoration and prayers *___ may become part of their immediate inner environment, “waves . . . that go forth and create movement and thought in other minds.” 77(ii); SofW Vol. 7, 107-8 (see page 115) If I really love someone, this love should fill my consciousness without being clouded by fault-finding or thoughts of what I don’t like in that person. For “love is the foundation of everything”, *ibid.* - the foundation, that is, of the reality of every human being of the growth of every soul, and certainly of the oneness of mankind that I ma trying to promote.

Spiritual meditation can have incomprehensible effects on souls. As I send forth thoughts of approval to someone, or fill my consciousness with selfless love for that person, I forge a link between our souls, and immeasurably strengthen the spiritual potentialities of our relationship.

By the same token, too, thoughts about a person that are mixed with selfish or critical feelings can be tragically destructive too.

What determines the quality and effect of “the waves that go forth” from my mind to “create movement and thought in other minds”? To answer this I must examine my own emotions as I meditate or pray. Criticism, bitterness, anger and condemnation, are all based on self concern or, at best, on an oblivion of the divinity of the soul that is under attack. My human nature is irascible egocentric, and inevitably evaluates all stimuli in terms of their effect on the self. That part of me dislikes many qualities in other human beings [or] can confuse a person’s qualities with his reality, [and the] spiritual growth of those around me as well as my own.

So if I petition God to change other people, it is an “idle fancy” that the fault is not in me. Let me reflect a little on my own need to change! The precious little verity, Thy name is my healing, should be in the background of my consciousness every time I call or reflect on the name of God. I need to be healed of such fancies. And the light of His name is All-Pervading and has “shed its radiance upon the universe.” BWF 100 or GL 189 And “led by the light of the name of the one true God,” I shall be able, as Baha’u’llah urges, to deliver myself from “the darkness” of my own encompassing egocentric consciousness and hateful feelings. BWF 96 or GL 168

Emerging from that darkness, I find that the outlook of an enlightened consciousness as it “faces reality” and views life and human beings with the eyes of the heart and in the spirit of faith, is as different from the human faultfinding view as what an aviator beholds as he soars in outer space is different from what we see at earth-level. The enlightened heart and divine nature can see people as embryonic souls, divine beings in the process of a long slow development. At that level of consciousness, in the light of eternity, I can understand what Baha’u’llah has revealed about the human reality! What I really desire is to help them, not just selfishly to be made happy. My divine nature can feel only compassion for other people’s faults which are so like my own.

Mediation, of course, is not ordinary human thinking and feeling. It is an activity of the divine nature, and one that I certainly should cultivate in my attitudes toward my associates. Meditation requires and develops the kind of celestial light that I urgently need in dealing with my fellow-beings. Let me start my meditations by reflecting on the ideals established for human relationships by the following admonitions and promises:

“Be . . . a shining light in the firmament of thy generation.” BWF 136, ESW 93 or GL 285

“Burn away . . . the veils of self with the flame of the undying Fire, and with faces joyous and beaming with light, associate with your neighbor.” BWF 118, GL 316

“Through . . . (your acts) the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole

earth.’ GL 305

“Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.” BWF 136, ESW 94, GL 385

“Verily, I say unto thee, every soul which ariseth today to guide others to the path of safety and infuse into them the Spirit of Life, the Holy Spirit will inspire that soul with evidences, proofs and facts and the lights will shine upon it from the Kingdom of God.” 49(o), BWF 369

“On him shall . . . descend the Concourse of high, each bearing aloft a Chalice of pure light.” BWF 109, GL 280

“Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow-men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.” 103(v), SDC 2-3

As the light of heaven penetrates my inner being, meditation can open the portals of my outer consciousness and let that light shine out and be shared with my fellow-beings.

But I sometimes grow discouraged because of lack of response in those I long to help. All too often what happens in my outer life does not immediately reflect the process and results of my meditation or my would-be helpfulness toward other souls. When this is the case, let me remember that every object or situation in the material world has originated in the unseen world of purpose and power. There plans are made but “it takes time” - much time, often - for action in the realm of thought to show results in the material world. Patience and faith - these are part of what my heart needs. It is being trained to experience and feel. These virtues are part of my divine nature that meditation can help me to develop.

7. EXULTATION AND FULFILLMENT

Happiness is not the purpose of life. It is rather a by-product of achieving God's purpose. And living is movement and progress, often through pain, toward that goal.

The attainment of any purpose produces a sense of fulfillment that is a dynamic joy. Every achievement carries in its wake some degree of happiness that over-balances its cost.

The Creator had a purpose in not creating us as automatons. It was, we are told, that a soul shall "ascend" from a state of imperfection towards its potential divinity, and advance from the frustrating limitations of time and imperfection towards its potential divinity, and advance from the frustrating limitations of time and imperfection toward an ever-increasing realization of eternity. His plan is that we shall progress from a finite restricted condition out into the infinitude of spiritual reality and attainment. A special provision of His Cause is that the onward movement of all human beings shall be "by virtue of their own innate powers." 36(r), GL 71 (see page 24 []) so among the most vividly joyous experiences of my life are those which involve taking a step of progress and feeling that I have done so by my own powers.

This perhaps is where the ego begins to develop a pride in depending on "self" and to lose its sense of being related to God. Not that self-reliance is wrong - I need it! But I also need to know, and life teaches me readily enough, the ceiling level of my human powers. It is important for me to realize the fact that these powers, like electricity coming from a power house, are completely dependent on the Power Source. If the connections is cut for a single moment, the power is gone. Or if at certain points only part of it is "turned on, I shall be left in the dark, or powerless.

This is why Baha'u'llah has taught me to say, daily, "I testify to my powerlessness and to Thy might", BP'69, 117 E 1 or P&M 314, or to beg all that is with Him "that I may . . . declare my powerlessness, and manifest" His power and might. BP'69, 123 or P&M 319 (see page 54 [])

) The “I” that speaks here is my soul.

Fortunately the contact between me and my Power Source is not left to me to make or maintain. It will never be broken, because God established it in creating me. But I can and do, consciously or unconsciously, control what degree of power is activated in my immediate consciousness, reaction by reaction. For I have free volition to determine what degree of spirit is “turned on” there, or what powers of perception I shall use. This is why it is so important to understand the potentialities of the three degrees of spirit that respectively activate my three nature. (see page 15b [])

Each degree of power is 100% adequate for [Th] achieving of the purpose of the “nature” that it generates. But the purpose of a higher nature is not going to be achieved unless its distinguishing energies are activated. This is why Baha’u’llah says that all that I “potentially possess can . . . be manifested” only as a result of my own volition. 56(vv), BWF 119 or GL 149 And when I don’t choose to use my needed latent abilities, frustration and misery result. In short, as surely as accomplishing my objectives gives me joy, failure to achieve a goal can cause me unhappiness.

For example, since maximum survival and body comfort are goals of my animal nature, I experience satisfaction in every move that contributes to the goal of physical survival, both of my anatomy and of the human species. But, however enjoyable that satisfaction is, I must not make it the primary pursuit of my earthly life, because physical survival is only one of my basic objectives, and has only limited value in relation to my total fulfillment.

“Consider how difficult for man is the attainment of pleasures and happiness in this mortal world. How easy it is for the animal . . . Therefore consider how base a nature it reveals in man that . . . he should lower himself into the animal sphere . . . How debased the soul which can find enjoyment in this darkness, occupied with itself, captive of self and passion, wallowing in the mire of the material world . . . What ignorance this is! “ 55(GL), PUP 179-80

Of course as a human being, I use my spiritual powers in pursuing my material objectives, and I should. But I must beware of giving undue importance to material objectives because these are of temporary value, and are often shortsighted and selfish. As a living soul, though, I am activated by a purpose that is infinite, eternal and divine, and I should never lose sight of this God-given motivation or work against it. For if I fail to pursue the spiritual objectives that Baha’u’llah has set before me, I shall not only suffer unimaginable frustration and retribution but I shall miss the greatest bliss and ecstasy that life offers.

“The physical happiness is limited; its utmost duration is one day, one month, one year. It hath no result. Spiritual happiness is eternal and unfathomable. This kind of happiness appeareth in one’s soul with the love of God and suffereth one to attain to the virtues and perfections of the *___ DAL 15 #7

“Spiritual enjoyments bring always joy. The love of God brings endless happiness. These are joys in themselves and not alleviations.” BAL 16 #9

One value of meditation is that it requires all of my powers and their highest expressions, and helps to avoid that loss. It aids me to “ascend to spiritual heights of consciousness and achievement for which I am equipped, and thus to participate in the delights and exultation that are part of God’ plan and purpose for man.

“The point is this, that . . . to bring spirits (souls) within the bonds of serenity is a most arduous undertaking . . . It necessitates a divine and holy potency, the potency of inspiration, the power of the Holy Spirit.” 69(uu), PUP 271

This is why I need religion. For it alone can enlighten me about the Holy Spirit.

“The greatest bestowal of God in the world of humanity is religion; for assuredly the divine teachings of religion are above all other sources of instruction and development of man. Religion confers upon man eternal life, and guides his footsteps in the world of morality. It opens the doors of unending happiness and bestows everlasting honor upon the human kingdom. It has been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind.” BWF 270

Let me reflect, then on these words of ‘Abdu’l-Baha:

“If the heart turns away from the blessings God offers, how can it hope for happiness?” 68(GL), PT 108

and remember what has been promised by the Voice of my Beloved:

“O SON OF WORLDLINESS! . . . sweet is the holy ecstasy if thou drinkest of the mystic chalice from the hands of the celestial Youth.” * ___4(ww), 104(GL), HWP 46 #70 (see page 128 [])

As a matter of fact, when I realize how easily meditation on a few sips from that “mystic Chalice” can activate the faith and love that are part of my inner consciousness, I wonder how I can allow anything to prevent a daily practice of reflecting at least briefly on the light that His words can convey to my outer consciousness!

For instance here is a call that I cannot afford to ignore:

“O My servant that believest in God! . . . Emerge from behind the veil, by the leave of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful, and seize . . . the Chalice of Immortality, in the name of thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High, and quaff thy fill . . . The moment thou touchest the Cup with thy lips, the Concourse on high will acclaim thee saying, ‘Drink with healthy relish, O man that hast truly believed in God!’ and the inhabitants of the Cities of Immortality will cry out, ‘Joy be to thee, O thou that hast drained the Cup of His love!’ . . .” GL 148-9

And these beams of light are worthy of deep thought:

“The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is the sealed Wine of His name. Happy is the man that turneth unto Him, and drinketh His fill, and exclaimeth: ‘Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of the signs of God!’” GL 34

“‘He Who is the Best-Beloved is come! He hath . . . unlocked to the face of men

the doors of His ancient Paradise.’ Let all eyes rejoice, and let every heart be gladdened, for now is the time to gaze on His beauty.” BWF 115 or GL 319-10

“Behold how this wronged One is now . . . calling aloud and summoning all men to Him Who is the world’s Ultimate Desire, the Summit and Day Spring of Glory. Happiness is man that hath hearkened to the voice of Him Who is the Lord of the Kingdom of Utterance.” GL 345

“The Ancient Beauty hath . . . drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy and be filled with gladness.” 100(q), BWF 33 or GL 99 (see page 128 [])

“The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you.. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him. Happy is he that turneth thereunto; well is it with him that hath attained, and gazed on the light of so wondrous a countenance.” BWF 116 or GL 322

Am I aware of how my heart yearns for spiritual understanding and light? If so, I shall realize how precious these assurances are, as subjects for reflection:

“From the Source of His knowledge, countless Luminaries of learning and wisdom have risen, and out of the Paradise of His Pen the breath of the All-Merciful hath continually been wafted to the hearts and souls of men. Happy are they that have recognized this truth.” GL 144

“Knowledge is the means of honor, prosperity, joy, gladness, happiness and exultation.” BWF 189

“What ‘oppression’ is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? . . . By ‘oppression’ is meant the want of capacity to acquire spiritual knowledge and apprehend the Word of God.” 25(rrr), 83(u), Iqan 31-2

And “When . . . the mirrors that reflect His light have departed . . . mankind, . . . (is) afflicted with ‘oppression’ and hardship, knowing not whither to turn for guidance.” Iqan 32

“In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless.” ESW 27

“The tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: ‘Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.’ Happy is the lover that hath inhaled the divine fragrance of his Best-Beloved from these words, laden with the perfume of a grace which no tongue can describe.” BWF 127 or GL 332

“Joy unto whosoever adhereth . . . to and practices that whereunto he is

commanded on the part of God, the Knower, the Wise!” BWF 193

“Were any man to ponder in his heart that which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed and to taste of its sweetness, he would, of a certainty, find himself emptied and delivered from his won desires and utterly subservient to the Will of the Almighty. Happy is the man that hath attained so high a station.” BWF 139 or GL 343

“Happy is the man who hath recognized Thee, and discovered the sweetness of Thy fragrance, and set himself towards Thy kingdom, and tasted of the things that have been perfected therein by Thy grace and favor.” BWF 74 or P&M 54

“By thy life, O my beloved! If thou didst know what God had ordained for thee, thou wouldst fly with delight and thy happiness, gladness and joy would increase every hour.” BWF 363

“Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.” 90(g), BWF 68 or GL 329

“the happiness of man is in the fragrance of the love of God. This is the highest pinnacle of attainment in the human world. How preferable to the animal and its hopeless kingdom!” 72(g), PUP 180 (see page 128 [])

“Release yourselves, O nightingales of God, from the thorns and brambles of wretchedness and misery, and wing your flight to the rose-garden of unfading splendor.” BWF 114 or GL 319

“Attach thy heart entirely to the light of truth and . . . rise in the service of truth in the rose garden of God . . . (and) in the path of God . . . exert thyself exceedingly and thus . . . enjoy life.” 103(u), TAB I, page 132

If I meditate as I should on the foregoing, I shall attain both happiness and fulfillment, for in the highest sense, “the man that pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God” is happy. BWF 11 or GL 13

If I cannot take time to find and meditate on such beams from the light of truth, let me memorize and use for reflection a brief petition to have my level of consciousness lifted through the spiritual bounty if and when I find myself in an unhappy negative state of mind. There are dozens of such petitions in my favorite prayers or in Baha’u’llah’s words of Communion with God. I can find and learn one or two when I do have a few odd moments, a call for divine power such as these:

“Praise be unto Thee, Who art . . . my Paradise and the Paradise of them that have ascended towards Thee, . . . and my Exultation and the Exultation of all them that remember Thee . . .” P&M 266-7

“O Thou Compassionate God! . . . confer upon me a thought which may change this world into a rose-garden through the spiritual bounty.” BP’69, 96 #77

“O Lord, . . . make my happy by the wine of Thy love in this wonderful age!”

BP’69, * ____

The potentialities of prayer and meditation are infinite, eternal and divine. One of the greatest delights and most fulfilling experiences of my life can be realized through these activities. Therefore

“I beseech Thee, by Thy most excellent titles and Thy most exalted attributes, to open to my face the portals of Thy bestowals.” BP’69, 73 #57 or P&M 215 (see page 1 [])

“This is the day of rejoicing and the hour of ecstasy.” DAL 18 #12

PART FOUR - PURPOSE AND FULFILLMENT

1. TO KNOW AND TO LOVE GOD

The fact that prayer and meditation are of definite value and assistance in achieving my real purpose in life probably needs no further enlargement. It is fairly obvious too that God's purpose for me cannot be fulfilled without the help that these spiritual activities provide. but since there are four phases of this purpose, (see page 15h []) perhaps I should consider the potentialities and specific ways of using my heavenly gifts as I work for each of these objectives.

The basic and abiding purpose of prayer and meditation is to assist me in achieving the eternal, over-all purpose of prayer and meditation is to assist me in achieving the eternal, over-all purpose of my being. So I should begin, perhaps, by reflecting on these shafts of divine light that heavenly portals have admitted to my heart:

“The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence . . . Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of divine guidance and entered his holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol.” GL 70

“Spiritual blessings are . . . endless; spirit, consciousness, thought, memory, perception, ideation and other endowments. By these He (God) has guided us and we enter His Kingdom. He has opened the doors of all good before our faces . . . He has summoned us tot he Kingdom of heaven. He has enriched us by the bestowals of God.” 83(ii), PUP 232

“If thou be a man of communion and prayer, soar up on the wings of assistance from Holy Souls, that thou mayest behold the mysteries of the Friend and attain to the lights of the Beloved.” 7 VAL 17

Prayer and consciousness of God go hand in hand in the development of a soul. One depends on the other.

The individual who learns in childhood to pray sincerely and with faith is fortunate. Children's hearts are pure since all souls are “in the state of purity at the time of their births,” 45(ii) BWF 388 and if they are cared for and taught lovingly, they respond wholeheartedly to love with love and with faith which is the first sign of love. 40(I), PUP 331 (see pages 15g and 39 []) They form reacting habits in whatever ways they are taught, and by responding to whatever divine realities that are made accessible to them. And since faith is an expression of the love that flows from man to God, 5(s), PT 180 (see pages 15g and 128 []) a real love of God can develop in the soul of a child, with prayer becoming a channel through which that development takes place.

This can begin before the “excellencies” of the soul develop, before the child questions

the efficacy of prayer or the reality of God, for “in real infancy the reasoning power is totally absent even though” the soul is ever endowed with full strength.” 53(g), BWF 337-8 The full capacity of children is here at birth, but, as we know, their “perfections appear in them by degrees” 31 (w), BWF 312 or SAQ 231 (see pages 98-9 []) just as has been happening with mankind as a whole.

But on reaching maturity man can no longer be content with blind faith, and he does begin to ask for confirmations and practical evidences both of the reality of God and of the importance of efficacy of prayer. It is at this point that the human spirit begins to ask questions. One can look back to the time when” saying his prayers” at night was part of his childish routines that he has now outgrown. It is essential that one’s consciousness of God continue to grow, backed by an accelerating understanding that can only be acquired through the rational faculties. Otherwise what eventually may seem a childish habit will be abandoned. I certainly have asked, at times, why I should pray or how to make my prayers more effective. Most of us have even gone through periods when we simply have not even tried to pray. We need a knowledge and a dynamic awareness of God if prayer is to have continued and increased meaning. The heart demands authoritative answers and positive confirmations in order to either pray conscientiously or to realize positively the power and presence of God.

In the past, followers of one traditional religion used the term heathen in speaking of adherents of another or no religion. But now, having revealed that the purpose of my being is to know and love, Baha’u’llah has also given new light on what knowledge of God means in reality. he says:

“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, . . . the invisible and unknowable Essence.” 31 (y_, BWF 29 or GL 62

and certainly no human heart can ever “comprehend His fathomless mystery.” 9(g), BWF 19, GL 46-7 or Iqan 98 And as already noted, “All that man is able to understand are the attributes of Divinity, the radiance of which appears and is visible in worlds and souls.” 99m), BWF 322 or SAQ 257 (see pages 15g and 98)

“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 . . . Blessed are those who receive the light of the divine bounties from the enlightened Dawning-points! 19(mm), BWF 323

and He gives us a new definition of heathen:

“They that are the worshipers of the idol which their imaginations have carved, and who call it Inner Reality, such men are in truth accounted among the heathen.” 10(r), GL 338

He extends a challenging invitation to the heart that professes a desire to know God

through a tangible experience:

“If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me . . . Thus have We manifested the truth of Our Revelation, that haply the people may be roused from their heedlessness, and be of them that understand.” GL 272-3

and He describes the potentialities of such spiritual discoveries thus:

“We have caused the rivers of Divine utterance to proceed out of Our throne, that the tender herbs of wisdom and understanding may spring forth from the soil of your hearts, GL 43 (see pages 40-1 and 59 []) . . . to the end that every man may testify, in himself, by himself, in the station of the Manifestation of his Lord, that verily there is no God save Him and . . . every man may thereby win his way to the summit of realities, until none shall contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein.” 7 Val 1-2.

For “The accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the Divine Being.” 24(aaa), BWF 23, GL 53 or Iqan 178 (see page 66 [])

And “Behold how the generality of mankind hath been endued with the capacity to hearken unto God’s most exalted Words . . . “ 25 (ppp), GL 97 (see page 66 [])

“The beloved of God (believers?) Have, in the days of the Manifestation . . . been exalted above and made independent of all human learning. Nay, from their hearts and the springs of their innate powers hath gushed out unceasingly the inmost essence of human learning and wisdom . . . In those days, no man shall ever stand in need of his neighbor.” 77(oo), BWF 95 or GL 263-4

“Although to outward view, the wayfarers in this Valley (of Contentment) may dwell upon the dust, yet inwardly they are throned in the heights of mystic meaning; they eat of the needles bounties of inner significances, and drink of the delicate wines of the sprit.” 7 VAL 30

In terms of my own objectives and my delight in fulfilling them, I hear and reflect on the Voice of God saying:

“O SON OF MAN! Sorrow not save that thou art far from Us. Rejoice not save that thou art drawing near and returning unto Us.” HWA 12 #35

Unfortunately I am still human, still subject to the doubts and questioning of my rational being. When I pray and seem to be given no answer, in my limited egocentric way I ask: Is prayer really a two-way communication with God? Does He really hear and respond?

Then I read and meditate on these words which have infinite eternal and divine significances:

“A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him; and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth.” 7 VAL 22

And if my mind cannot fully grasp the meaning at least my heart leaps joyously in hope and

expectancy. And in time I experience affirmations of the truth that are a tremendous challenge to me, saying: try it out and see! The eternal promise that “God will answer,” *ibid.* (see page 49 []) rousing my heart that longs for a closer relationship with God, comes to me as traditional words that God speaks and that Baha’u’llah now reaffirms thus:

“A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him; and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth. For thus the Master of the house hath appeared within His home, and all the pillars of the dwelling are ashine with His light. And the action and effect of the light are from the Light-Giver.” *ibid.* (see page 83) What is the Master’s “home?” My heart, which God tells me He has made the habitation of His beauty and glory! HWP 31 #27 I should ask myself what I am doing that makes me forget the reality of His Presence. And I must open my consciousness more fully until that shining light dispels every shadow of doubt.

Using and meditating on these simple petitions can help:

“O God, Who art the Author of all Manifestations, the Source of all Sources, the Fountain-Head of all Revelations, and the Well-Spring of all Lights!” BP* ____ 99 #80, P&M 59-60

“I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by . . . the shining light of the Day-Star of Thy Beauty . . . “ P&M 293

“From the fragrant breezes of Thy joy let a breath passover me, O my Goal, and into the heights of Thy paradise of Thy reality let me gain admission, O my Adored One!” BP’69, 77 #60 or P&M 258

Certainly I can find time for a moment of this kind of communion with God every day, and even many times a day, if I keep it on my mind and really desire to do so. And there is a wealth of full-length prayers in addition to the Obligatory ones, to choose from during the period I set aside for this soul-nourishment. I should gratefully become acquainted with some in Baha’u’llah’s Prayers and Meditations and in the Baha’i Prayers “for General Use,” by way of increasing my knowledge and love of my Lord; especially those numbered 1, 2, 15, 16, 40, 52, 55, 58, 67, 76 and 77. And of course I should avail myself of the heavenly bounties to be gained from using the Obligatory Prayers. The potentiality voiced in the beginning of the Long one can never be sufficiently stressed or reflected upon as I commune with my Beloved: namely, that my prayer may become “a fire that will burn away the veils which have shut me out from Thy beauty and a light that will lead me unto the ocean of Thy Presence”. BP’69, 120-1 or P&M 317 (see pages 4, 53 and 75 []) Or if I choose the Short Prayer, how lovingly and firmly Baha’u’llah provided that at least I should add daily to my growing awareness of God’s purpose for my life and of His reality as my Creator!

How blessed I am to have authoritative answers to every question that my heart or mind can ask! How glorious it is to live in this century of radiance . . . wherein “the reality of things is becoming evident” 1(b), BWF 279 - even the reality of the infinite eternal and divine realms of

being!

‘Abdu’l-Baha has said:

“Every age requires a central impetus or movement. In this age, the boundaries of terrestrial things have been extended; minds have taken on a broader range of vision; realities have been unfolded and the secrets of being have been brought into the realm of visibility.

“As this is the cycle of sciences, there must needs be new teachings, a new revelation is required and a new life wanted. The minds and hearts refute the veracity of ancient opinions. New ideas are called for and new principles are urgently demanded which may fill the requirements of this age, be as the spirit of this century and as the life of this period.” *SofW Vol. 16, 377*

Actual experience puts me in touch with all of the needs of my heart and of my divine nature - what greater confirmation than this could I have, of the reality of a divine Provider and Creator? And the spiritual heights of consciousness that I reach in prayer and meditation constitute invincible proof!

It appears that the human being or nature stands in relation to the spiritual world as the physical creature stands in relation to space. In one specific point of time, the body, located in one spot on the earth, is able to raise its eyes and to become aware of existence far out in space and inaccessible here and now. Sky, clouds, sun, moon and stars, all have been explained as phenomena of space, and the physical being can react to their appearance and descriptions through outer powers of perception. And similarly, spiritual realities, virtues and their absence, Revelations, Manifestations and even God Himself, have all been explained as phenomena of the infinite, eternal, [and] divine worlds; and I, a living soul, as the eyes of intuition and faith assist my human spirit, may become aware of these heavenly realities and can react to their appearance as registered by the rational faculties and in human experiences. But that is not all that has come about! Through inconceivably elaborate inventions of man, it has become possible to lift a body and carry it safely up and out into outer space where it can become an actual part of the infinite space world and react directly to it. And similarly, souls can benefit from an inconceivably great invention of God - divine Revelation - that can lift a human consciousness and transport it effectively up and out into spiritual heights of the infinite world where a person can realize that he is an actual part of it and react directly to its infinitude, eternity and divinity.

“Blessed is the man that hath, on the wings of longing, soared towards God, the Lord of the Judgment Day.” *ESW 94*

Prayer and meditation are two vehicles that can make me into a spiritual cosmonaut, soaring in the heights of God-consciousness. And once I have come face to face with the Sun of Reality and have experienced the joys of exploring the outer edges of spiritual existence, I can never again be content to be earth-bound. As a matter of fact no soul can be content in that human bondage. Once I have learned to use those vehicles, I shall take every possible

opportunity to go soaring. The potentiality of new perspectives and visibility at the heights that can be reached through the precious inventions of God called Revelation is breathtaking [and] inconceivably glorious.

But, like human cosmonauts, I do not leave my immediate responsibilities in such flights. I cannot abandon my earthly duties or claim a full-time residence in celestial spaces until my Pilot releases me from human limitations and calls me to higher service. The purpose of these experiences is to enable me to face the reality of my Creator and Lord, and to glimpse the reality of infinitude, eternity and divinity, so that I may realize the thrill of knowing and adoring Him. It is a matter of vision; and meditation and prayer can constantly increase mine. We have the heavenly invitation:

“Ascend to the zenith of an existence which is never beclouded by fears and forebodings of non-existence. When a man is not endowed with inner perception he is not informed of these important mysteries. the retina of outer vision though sensitive and delicate may nevertheless be a hindrance to the inner eye which alone can perceive. The bestowals of God which are manifest in all phenomenal life are sometimes hidden by intervening veils of mental and mortal vision which render man spiritually blind and incapable . . . “ 4(m), 62(a), BWF 266

“Therefore we must endeavor with heart and soul in order that the veil covering the eye of inner vision may be removed . . . and realize that material blessings as compared with spiritual bounties are as nothing>” BWF 266

“Now . . . the light of God’s everlasting Morn is breaking; . . . the radiance of His holy words: ‘God is the light of the heavens and of the earth’ is shedding illumination upon mankind; . . . God hath willed to perfect His light.” Iqan 90

2. TO ACQUIRE VIRTUES

“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.” 96(ee), PT 121

This truth and love can be developed in my outer consciousness through prayer and meditation. Love is my most urgent need, in acquiring virtues. “Spiritual love . . . maketh man pure and holy, and clotheth him with a garment of virtue and purity.” 34(e), 104(ii), BWF 365 Baha’u’llah describes “the Actions of the Righteous” BWF 136, GL 285 and they are all motivated by love.

“Know thou of a certainty that Love is the secret of God’s holy Dispensation, the

manifestation of the All-Merciful, the fountain of spiritual outpourings. Love is heaven's kindly light, the Holy Spirit's eternal breath that vivifies the human soul. 72(a), DAL 108 #2

"Praise be to God! we are living in a century of light. Praise be to God! we are upon earth in the day of divine effulgence. Praise be to God! we are alive in this time of the manifestation of divine love. Praise be to God! that we live in the day of the outpouring of heavenly bounty. Praise be to God! this is a day wherein the lights and splendors have awakened progress throughout the east and the west." PUP 328

"The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God." 77(qq), BWF 128-9 or GL 340

"The human reality may be compared to a seed. If we sow the seed, a mighty tree appears from it. . . Through education and culture, . . . virtues deposited by the loving God will become apparent in the human reality even as the unfoldment of the tree from within the germinating seed." 78(a), BWF 267

Because love is called forth by what I find desirable, I think of it as something that originates in me. I want, then, to activate it and make it grow, so that I shall become both loving and lovable. I have met a few beings who have truly reflected divinity in their outer being. Love is the hall-mark of such individuals. 'Abdu'l-Baha was the supreme Example - he was thoroughly loving and lovable. This is my ideal.

But I find that there is much in me that is unloving and unlovable. For in addition to my automatic liking of what I find desirable, my physical being and human nature respond with negative love power, showing in revulsion and dislike, to what is unpleasant or painful to me. This points up the fact that the kind of responses that make me loving and lovable are actually those of my divine nature as it is attracted to real perfections or divinity whereas, my lower nature reacts to what my ego dislikes in the worlds and beings I deal with.

Therefore, as already noted, through prayer and with brief meditation to season my everyday reactions, I must lift my sights until I see things as they are revealed to be in reality. (see page 15*___ [])

For instance, I am told "in creation there is no evil; all is good." 33(r), BWF 32*___ or SAQ 250 (see pages 43 and 97 [] _ Yet

"From the beginning of his life you can see in a nursing child the signs of desire, of anger, and of temper. Then, it may be said, good and evil are innate in the reality of man, and this is contrary to the pure goodness of nature and creation." The answer to this is that desire, which is to ask for something more, is a praiseworthy quality provided that it is used suitably. So, if a man has the desire to acquire science and knowledge, or to become compassionate, generous, and just, it is most praiseworthy. If he exercises his anger and wrath against the bloodthirsty tyrants who are like ferocious beasts, it is very

praiseworthy; but if he does not use these qualities in a right way, they are blameworthy.”
ibid.

The thing I must learn, then, is how to use each desire “suitably” or in the right way. Anger and wrath may result from facing any condition that I desire to eliminate; and vice versa, I want to do away with any situation that arouses anger or rebellion in me. But many “natural” responses to what I see as “evil” or to what infuriates me do not serve in any way to eliminate those conditions. On the contrary, action from those responses may compound the evil in a “blameworthy” way. Then I must handle my anger in some other manner.

If I am driven by anger to wrong behavior myself as I react, my feelings can be destructive and merely compound the evils. Thus use of my powers to serve selfish ends that work against God’s purpose for man is wrong use of my powers. And wrong use of my powers develops character deficiencies and prevents my latent virtues from developing.

I am given many warnings about this:

“Self-desire . . . is the dust which prevents reflection of the rays of the Sun of Reality . . . The natural emotions are blameworthy and are like rust which deprives the heart of the bounties of God.” 68(ff), PUP 239

For “self-desire” and natural emotions belong to my lower nature and must be overcome by my divine nature. It is a matter of which of my two natures shall rule “me.”

“If a man has a keen sense of taste and smell, a fine ear for music, and eye that delights in symmetry and colour; . . . it does not follow he is sunk in sensuality or a rank materialist . . . But the moment he becomes a gourmand, the moment he lives only for the joy of satisfying some or all of his gifts and hindering the unfoldment of his soul. Just as asceticism is unnatural and fundamentally false in principle, so licence is equally false and even more injurious to human nature, for bad as abstinence may be, over-indulgence in anything is worse in its effects.” 66(z), Prescr. For Liv. 54

“O SON OF MAN! Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?” HWA 16-7 #56

Desire for material wealth or “things” leads to covetousness and envy. My Creator warns me:

“O QUINTESSENCE OF PASSION! Put away all covetousness and seek contentment; for the covetous hath ever been deprived, and the contented hath ever been loved and praised. HWP 39 #50

“O SON OF EARTH! Know, verily, the heart wherein the least remnant of envy yet lingers, shall never attain My everlasting dominion, nor inhale the sweet savors of holiness breathing from MY kingdom of sanctity.” HWP 24 #6

“O MY SERVANT! Purge thy heart from malice and, innocent of envy, enter the divine court of holiness.” 84(11), HWP 36 #42

“Man cannot free himself from the rage of the carnal passions except by the help of the Holy Spirit.” 22(y), SAQ 105

“By the power of the Holy Spirit alone is man able to progress.” 22(z), PT 163, (see page 157{ }).

One “right” way to use my hateful feelings or negative emotions is as a signal telling me that I am reacting only to my human concept of what faces me, and not to its reality; because every reality, being the product of a divine Creator and backed by a heavenly purpose, is “good.” I know, then, that if I view and react to the reality of a situation or being, in the way that Baha’u’llah teaches [me] to see existence and to behave, “nothing save that which profiteth” me “can befall” me. 31(v) (see page 111 []) This is the reaction of an enlightened spiritual being. And of course rising to the heights of spiritual consciousness is the one way to escape from negative emotions and the prison of self. This is the basic objective of earthly life. For

“When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed freedom! For self is the greatest prison.” 84(tt), BWF 122-3, DAL 70#1

In view of the many things that are hateful or revolting to me that I must deal with, it is vitally important for me to learn to use my highest degree of spirit and to view things in the light of what Baha’u’llah has unveiled. And meditation is one way of learning and practicing this.

I cannot become loving and lovable simply by desiring and “making up my mind” to do so. what my mind and volition can do to help, is to make me aware of reality and to choose, reaction by reaction, what powers of perception I shall use. The part that desire plays is to strengthen my determination to do this when dealing with the suffering and cruelties of “the unpleasant things of life.” Let me remember that viewing what faces me in the light of what Baha’u’llah has revealed about it is my only protection against the natural human revulsion that earthly cruelty, injustice and other human evils make me feel.

One reason this is important is that the hatred and hostility that are natural human reactions make a person hateful.

‘Abdu’l-Baha never hated, even though He lived among hateful people and in revolting situations all His life. He saw everything in the light of divine Revelation. He set us an example of how a spiritually enlightened soul does this. Otherwise,

“If a man’s thought . . . does not soar, but is directed downwards to center itself upon the things of this world, he grows more and more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal.” 65(h), RofM 9 (see page 20*____)

Being “religious” is not enough. A man can have human thoughts about God and still feel hateful. To transform the evil strength of hatred into the heavenly power of positive love, one must “see” what the Word of God unveils, and view life in the light of the new Revelation, recognizing the dimension of divine purpose-and-power as a reality. Until I do this I am still in the “world of illusion,” and out of touch with reality.

“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.” 65(k), ‘AbBa in Lond. * ____

Activated by my own desires, my “mind” is busy with words, with thinking, reasoning, imagining, remembering, etc. It can become filled with “things of this world” that stir dislike, fear, anger and revulsion in my consciousness. This is natural to every human creature. What inspires this mental activity “naturally” is my personal view of reality, based all too often on my own personal goals. I should recognize as undependable, it does not include the dimension of divine purpose that every reality has. Baha’u’llah says:

“Wouldst thou that the mind should not entrap thee? Teach it the science of the love of God! “ 66(w), 7VAL 49

I have also been warned that if I do not render asunder the veil of my idle imaginings I “will assuredly fail to heart the Voice of God.” 65(M), B. World Vol.2, 63 (see page 72 []) This is why I must concentrate, with love and faith, on the illuminating words that Baha’u’llah speaks - meditate on them - until they penetrate my inner hearing. Only in this way can my thoughts reach the heights of pure Truth.

What I must remember is that this Truth and love can be made a part of my outer consciousness through meditation and prayer.

I have latent within me divine “energies with which the Day Star of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man” (see pages 68 and 77 []) - powers that my worldly desires, or “veils,” may obscure. The right kind of thinking can free my consciousness of its “dross,” and my inner reality will then reflect a radiance from the light and glory of its Creator. And, through prayer and meditation, come through to my outer consciousness and reacting.

This is how virtues are acquired. Viewing with love and faith what faces me, makes the difference.

“A lover feareth nothing and no harm can come nigh him . . . The leviathan of love swalloweth the master of reason and destroyeth the lord of knowledge.” 7 VAL, 9, 10 (see page 78 [])

My “mind” or ego often revolts against that truth, but if I meditate on it, the light of its reality may open my heart. And to be lovable and loving I need an open heart. I need to have “the leviathan of love” take possession of my heart. I long for that all-encompassing selfless love” take possession of my heart. I long for that all-encompassing selfless love to “swallow” and rid me of my petty revulsions and self-centered anxieties, and to establish itself as the predominating principle of my inner life. For with love in my heart, I find it easy to be kind, generous, forgiving, sympathetic, and to reflect the attributes of God. Love, I see, is my most urgent need, for, as already noted, “spiritual love of God maketh a man pure and holy and clotheth him with the garment of virtue and purity.” 34(e), 104(ii), BWF 365 (see page 20* ____)

While I don’t become lovable and loving just by wishful thinking, what my mind does,

can determine how much love I reflect. For since my reality was created like a mirror, what I perceive and know of what I deal with and react to, I reflect in my own being. I take on its attributes. In this way I even become part of my environment, part of each world where I live.

At first this was an unconscious process - it happened without my volition. The baby automatically reflects the mental, emotional and spiritual atmosphere of the mother and family, as surely as he absorbs body nourishment from the. Thus a well-loved infant becomes a physically strong baby if given good material care, and strong spiritually - loving and lovable, that is - if provided with the pure love that God makes instinctive but latent in the hearts of parents. Likewise, of course, the little one becomes weak and may even die in an atmosphere where the soul's needs are unfulfilled.

Gradually as the instruments of thought and mental life are activated, the soul takes over and consciously directs that process of absorbing and reflecting what the environment offers. This creates a growing consciousness.

The child's unfolding reality finds expression there. What he sees and thinks makes him feel as he does when he reacts, motivates his act, and forms his attributes.

"The important factor in human improvement is the mind. In the world of the mind there must needs be development and improvement. There must be re-formation in the kingdom of the human spirit, otherwise no result will be attained from betterment of the mere physical structure." P&M 272

"He (Baha'u'llah) bore these ordeals, suffered these calamities and difficulties in order that . . . the precious, priceless bestowal of God, the human mind, might be developed to its fullest capacity in the temple of the body; and man become the reflection and likeness of God, even as it hath been revealed in the Bible: 'We shall create man in Our own image.'" 100(r), BWF 223-4

"Therefore thoughts must be lofty and ideals uplifted in order that the world of humanity may become assisted in new conditions of reform," PUP 273

Prayer and meditation are the acme of that kind of lofty thinking. Sometimes prayer and meditation may be my only chance of attaining the heights of perfection and responses of pure selfless love, until I learn to see divinity in every phase of existence. For the human world is a world of opposite extremes, and what I can experience there always has some imperfection. Therefore I find much that prevents me from being loving and lovable. I note that the kind of responses that generate these qualities are those of my divine nature or spiritual being that is attracted to divinity that is reflected in every world; and yet, by the same token, my soul or spiritual being is naturally revolted by the "evil" or absence of divinity that actually exists in my surroundings. Here, however, is where my divine knowledge and understanding can help. Even as a soul, I hate pain. But when I understand that pain serves as a danger signal to a physical organism, I see that it fulfills a divine purpose of the Creator. Nothing can make my anatomy enjoy its own pain, but "I" can endure it more stoically if I have that spiritual understanding of it.

As a soul I also hate the character deficiencies and absence of divinity that I encounter in worlds and souls. I am revolted by everything that I see as "bad," because I was created to recognize and love divinity. But when I understand that God has willed that this [IaCl] shall exist in the outer manifestations of existence so that we can contrast "good" and "evil" and choose wisely between the, I can accept evil as an essential part of earthly life.

"Were it not for darkness, light could not be sensed. Were it not for death, life could not be known. If ignorance did not exist knowledge would not be a reality. It is necessary that each should exist, in order that the other should have reality . . . Unless night was a reality there could not be day . . . Things are known by their opposites."

64(e), PUP 79

It helps, also, to learn that, gradually, through evolution or growth, imperfections in the outer world are gradually being replaced by the reflection of more divine attributes.

Nothing can made me love what I see as evil in people or in my environment. But I can face it with tolerance or compassion when I understand that its existence here and now is part of God's heavenly plan.

This applies to my own faults and inadequacies, too. As a soul, I hate human faults wherever I encounter them. But I can be forgiving when I understand that all existence proceeds from a state of relative imperfection toward a God-given infinite potentiality of perfection. then I can look at human character deficiencies as a condition of mutually shared immaturity, knowing that all souls can and are trying to outgrow this condition "by virtue of their own innate powers." 36(r), GL 71 (see pages 24 and 191 []) This changes my feelings about human faults in general and about my own reality. With that vision, while I still hate my own inadequacies when I fail or disappoint myself in some way, I can turn with relief to the Source of my own latent power, and seek what will cause the growth and spiritualization of my inner being. And meanwhile, I shall be more patient and forgiving in relation to all human shortcomings.

This is how understanding and spiritual perception serve to transform my satanic emotions and power into the heavenly love that generates divine attributes and virtues. It involves much sincere prayer and consistent reflecting and meditating on the Word of God that Baha'u'llah has made available.

But as one's mind and will develop, he soon begins to use these powers and to make his own choices. 'Abdu'l-Baha says that every soul, like the body, has its own individuality. PT 65 So here I am, making my own personal choices, whether consciously or not. I reach a milestone in my spiritual growth when I realize that I have a choice about what powers of perception I shall use in viewing what I must deal with, and about what I shall reflect or ponder on. This is my key to winning a control over what I shall see, feel and become.

It is in exercising this control that thinkers have come to know the "power of positive thinking."

At first I had no control over what I must face or "see." I tend to blame my inadequacies

on that early conditioning. but I must not forget that during that time I was under the guidance of my Creator, however unfavorable my environment may have been, for “all things are dependent upon His Will.” BWF 136 or GL 293 He could have changed or removed me from that environment, had it really been a threat to my destined growth. Instead, since my childhood conditions were less than ideal (as, indeed, all human conditions are, He gave me a divine potential that is quite equal to overcoming their limitations and outgrowing their evil effects. So no amount of “bad” conditioning can excuse my character deficiencies or relieve me of the responsibility of developing my latent virtues. A person is never too old to learn! 103(g), PT 43

A person’s consciousness -what he knows and feels - has a haphazard growth at first, it is true, and he is not responsible for his earliest development. My consciousness was cumulative, built up by what was happening both in and around me moment by moment and reaction by reaction. What I “saw” and reacted to was what my consciousness reflected. It was not reality - it was what I became aware of in terms of my own feelings about it. Nevertheless, what started as fleeting feelings, repeated, became my attributes and attitudes - love or revulsion, joy or revolt, faith or fear, etc. Love, joy, and faith, or all positive feelings became virtues, while revulsion, revolt and fear stymied my spiritual growth and became the beginning of character deficiencies. They could not be corrected until my vision changed, either.

*___ situations and obnoxious human beings that I cannot change or avoid. But I do have the power to choose my level of perception and reflection, reaction by reaction. And now that I am a Baha’i, I know that to do this is both a responsibility and a key to happiness and fulfillment. I know that I must face the reality that underlies my personal impressions.

The human creature makes a start toward realizing this. For instance, he can see and react to the beauty of a person or situation, or he can concentrate only on some imperfection that annoys him. Gradually he should see that he has that choice. In the realm of human affairs and earthly living, every material thing is a combination of the desirable and the undesirable, from the individual’s viewpoint - everything, from the weather to other people. I do have the ability, though, to look beyond the pleasure or pain of the moment. As a person matures he is expected to consider causes and results, and be willing to undergo a degree of unpleasantness in order to achieve his cherished desires. In short, if I am a well developed adult, I should be willing to sacrifice cheerfully for what I am struggling to achieve, for I well know that without a degree of sacrifice I shall achieve no great degree of success. Baha’i’s feel that way about achieving God’s purpose for man. And we might as well be “radiant” in our acquiescence.

But this transformation from “natural” feelings demands a clear apprehension of how things are in reality.

The adult, of course, has objective and desires, and evaluates what faces him in terms of help or hindrance in achieving his goals. He is willing to endure a great deal in order to achieve his ends. And once he apprehends clearly his real purpose and potentialities, he will naturally want to find ways to fulfill these. He can’t do this by imitating those around him, or by following

his won habit patterns. He can best learn successful new behavior patterns by study of his Creator's advice and opening his own heart through meditation and prayer. This assures him divine assistance in convening and carrying out the right behavior patterns. Thus meditation and prayer are the two essentials that insure his success in fulfilling his real purpose in life and developing his divine nature where virtues are latent.

The ability to establish habit patterns and the compulsion to follow them are characteristics of my lower nature. Up to ta point, they can benefit me tremendously. My outer being is an educated animal organism that functions through automatic reflex actions. This enables me to carry out complicated repetitive behavior patterns such as driving a car in heavy traffic. I can do such things almost "without thinking, or at least with divided attention. At the same time, my inner creative powers enable me to meet and emergency and to change or reject a behavior pattern, when reflex action is not effective. There I can initiate and entirely new way of reacting or behaving. If I don't do this, the results will be "bad".

But in order to initiate innovative behavior of any kind, I have to subdue my lower nature. My inner being must take over and direct its outer machinery to carry out my wishes. This is the procedure for ding anything for the first time, or for starting a new habit pattern. Every soul, having been designed to reflect its Creator's attributes, is essentially creative. But unless definitely directed otherwise by the soul, every physical organism behaves blindly, driven by its own instinct, one phase of which is imitation. the first years of one's earthly are spent forming habit patterns for dealing with the material environment, and imitation plays a big part in doing this. But it is important for a child to have his creativity developed too, because this is one gift that distinguishes a human soul from lower kingdoms.

"God has not intended man to blindly imitate . . . He has endowed him with . . . the faculty of reasoning . . . to investigate and discover truth; and that which he finds real and true he must accept. He must not be an imitator or blind follower." 58(h), PUP 285

Conditioned habit patterns are restricted in efficacy, and what we imitate is based on very limited truth or even on illusions. 53(r), PT 110 (see pages 54 and 122 []) So I must stand ever ready to abandon both habits and imitation when these don't achieve desired results. Never let me doubt that I have the power to do this; but it is not easy. An educated animal organism resists any change in its established behavior patterns.

However, a soul was created for success, and has infinite capacity to outgrow itself. A soul, being creative, loves changes and innovations. Volition is the key. 56(vv), BWF 119 or GL 149 (see page 192 { }) I have undreamed of capacity for achieving any desire of my soul. But, still, I resist change with the full force of my ego or human nature. For the human self or ego is unwilling to admit that its own conditioned ideas and behavior patterns could be anything but "right." This is because the human nature, being motivated by both animal impulses and intuitive wisdom, (see page 123-4 []) clings to a conviction of its own perfection even when its imperfections are made obvious. But I am destined to overrule my humanness 50(e), PT 86 (see

page 4 []) for this is how my divine nature progresses and how I acquire spiritual qualities.

I need new vision and understanding to create new and spiritual behavior patterns. And this is where meditation helps. for meditation uses all of the soul's powers: senses and memory from a background of outer perception, faith and intuition open the portals of my consciousness to the divinity that I must develop or react to, and my intellect fulfills its ultimate purpose by reasoning and imagining from this heavenly enlightenment and by helping me to understand the truth that cannot be put into words.

One gift that is given man to help him release the clutch of habit and humanness is sleep. [In]Every twenty-four hours sleep blacks out my immediate consciousness except for a few meaningless dreams. this makes a break in my automatic handling of what faces me and gives me a special opportunity to release the power of habit and to initiate a better creative way of reacting or behaving on awakening.

Coupled with the gift of sleep the instructions of our Creator have offered heavenly guidance and promises:

“in every Dispensation the law concerning prayer hath been emphasized and universally enforced. To this testify the recorded traditions ascribed to the lights that have emanated from the Day-star of Truth.” Iqan 39

“if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained.” PT 176 (see page 141 [])

I should meditate on and trust in the favors of my Lord, and supplicate unto Him at night and “at early morn, just as a needy and captive one beseeches,” DAL 33 #32, says ‘Abdu’l-Baha. Especially “at the dawn of every day.” I should commune with God BWF 106 or GL 265. ‘Abdu’l-Baha gave such clear instructions as these:

“You must supplicate and pray to God every night and every day seeking His assistance and help, saying: O Lord! We are weak; strengthen us . . . If Thou dost assist us, O Lord, we shall become as scintillating stars. If Thou dost not assist us we shall become lower than the earth . . . O God! Enable us to conquer self and overcome desire. O Lord! Deliver us from the bondage of the material world.” 101(ee), PUP 454

“O thou advancer toward the Kingdom! Endeavor thou day by day to increase thy yearning and attraction so that the attitude of supplication and prayer may be realized more often.” DAL 28 #15

Let me petition divine assistance in this way as I start each day, and then meditate on these precious words. This is how I can apprehend more clearly God's purpose in creating me, and how today I can do and be more than yesterday. When I “call on the Mercy of God waiting to reinforce” me, when I reflect on this celestial reality and then reflect it in my own being, then I am promised that my “strength will be tenfold”! PT 39

Sleep offers me many benefits, especially in terms of inner growth (see page 18). It offers

a challenge, too, as to how and at what level of consciousness I shall resume my outer life.

Do I depend on my coffee to awaken me to full consciousness in the morning? Do I feel depressed as I return to earthly realities, and burdened by what I must cope with today?

Baha'u'llah once asked that we open our eyes and recall His plight, and that we meditate "diligently" on what He had to face. BWF 32 or GL 98 And here are more of His words for me to reflect upon:

" . . . until . . . thou forsake thine outward eyes, thou shalt never open the eye of thine inward being; and until thou burn with the fire of love, thou shalt never commune with the Lover of Longing." 7 VAL 9 (see page 78)

If I comply with the foregoing suggestions, I can be helped to start the day with more wisdom than I had access to in my outer consciousness yesterday. And as I meditate, perhaps I shall remember that by using insight and communion with my divine Lover, I have been promised that I shall

"reflect the spirit of the kingdom, behold the manifest evidences of the reality of divinity, comprehend irrefutable proofs of the immortality of the soul, live in conscious at-one-ment with the eternal world and become quickened and awake with the life and love of God." 74(I), PUP 322 (see page 30)

Won't this make a better start to my day than that cup of coffee or other material resource that I sometimes depend on?

Those who have not been conditioned from childhood to pray, or formed the habit of meditation, may find it exceedingly difficult to pray wholeheartedly immediately upon awaking each morning. It is like starting off in high gear from a dead stop. Some need to go through the basic pattern of spiritual ascending each day, beginning with physical consciousness, working up to rational thinking, and finally looking at life with the eyes of the heart. But being in the dark all night, I can choose in my immediate consciousness the light with which I shall view this new day. Shall it be electric or daylight? Shall it be the light of my own human feelings and intellect? - or the light of divine Revelation?

It is natural to experience a human resistance to prayer or spiritual meditation. My human self values its rational powers and prides itself on my intellect. It is difficult sometimes to release the clutch of this pride and of my egocentric feelings. I must stir a desire and get my own consent to seek a higher level of functioning. I can take such experiences as a sign that my spiritual being has not developed much conscious power above the level of human functioning; and I must be patient with myself. If I am in the habit of using my mind in studying the Baha'i Writings, it is even possible for me to feel a human pride in that intellectual activity. to help me in such circumstances, I have this wise suggestion:

"O My people! Let not too much reading . . . make you proud. To chant but one verse with joy and gladness is better for you than reading all the revelations of the omnipotent God with carelessness. Chant the Tablets of God in such measure that ye be

not overtaken with fatigue and depression. Burden not the measure that ye be not overtaken with fatigue and depression. Burden not the soul so as to cause exhaustion and languor, but rather refresh it that thus it may soar on the wings of revelation to the Dawning-lace of proofs. This brings you nearer to God, were ye to those who understand.” DAL 41 #59

So I should learn the efficacy of simply repeating a few times: Allah’u’Abha! - God is glorious! If I put my heart into it, if I reflect on what I am saying and begin to feel it, I shall soon find that this dispels “languor” or morning grouchiness quite effectively, and I shall be learning something about meditation, too. Taking time for a little prayer or reading a paragraph from the creative Word followed by a few moments of reflections, can do ever more for me.

Sometimes a day my present such frightful tests or problems that this is my only way for forestalling the expression of a formidable array of human faults: complaining, irascibility, hostility, resentment, anxiety, fear, bitterness, etc.

When someone says to me, “Have a good Day! “ do I realize what I must do to make it so?

Since I am very human, I am inclined to feel that it is excusable to be grouchy under certain circumstances. I humor myself and wait for something outside of myself to lift me out of the beastly way I feel or to make me feel good-natured. But I am cheating myself if I do this, for in every reaction I strengthen the nature that I allow to handle the deal. Any habit is strengthened by repetition, and any quality becomes more entrenched as part of my being when exercised. Also, any negative feeling can be the beginning or add to the development of human character deficiencies.

But do I understand how I can not hate what is hateful to me?

What I desire, reaction by reaction is to lift my immediate consciousness from its natural negative state that generates human faults up to the spiritual heights of love and positive emotions that bring out latent virtues. The key to doing this is given to us in the one little prayer that begins “O God, refresh and gladden my spirit” BP’69, 80 #64 (see page 131 []) It brings God’s Covenant with man down to practical application every time I am confronted with something unpleasant. When I am in deep trouble or anxiety, God can and will, if asked, refresh, gladden and illumine my spirit - my inner reality, even in inconceivable ways. He promised such help long ago and I can count on it. But my part of the covenant is verbalized too in the simple affirmations: “I lay all my affairs in Thy hand” and “I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.” This is a two-way relationship and I must fulfill my part of the deal.

There is a divine purpose behind even the most horrendous conditions and most bitter afflictions that torment humanity. If I use my inner powers and the light that God has cast into my heart, I may “apprehend” that spiritual dimension of what faces me, even if I cannot always understand it or know why such things are allowed to happen.

The evil in other human beings is the hardest thing for me to accept with radiant

acquiescence, and my feelings toward people are the most prolific sources of growth in either strength or deficiency of character. So I hear again and should reflect on these words as the Voice of God speaks:

“O EMIGRANTS! The tongue I have designed for the mention of Me, defile it not with detraction. If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others.” HWP 45 #66

The action patterns that people follow in their struggle to survive and progress may not be God’s first choice. What they do often wreaks havoc on their fellow-beings. Such are “the unpleasant things of life,” and they will be part of the world of human affairs as long as man is free to disregard God’s Will. But all such things pass. They are limited in both power and duration. They do not negate God’s power or purpose. For always

“He is supreme over His servants, and standeth over His creatures . . . He is the potent, the All-Subduing . . . Victory and overlordship are His.” BWF 149 or P&M 87

“Can ye imagine that . . . the potency of My will and purpose hath been deterred from directing the destinies of mankind?” 36(t), BWF 65 or * ____

As a matter of fact, instead of interfering with God’s Will, all of what is “terrible” to me plays a part in carrying out His purpose. For, as I have been told, what is “outwardly . . . fire and vengeance,” HWA 15 #51 (see page 79 []) is, in reality, God’s “Providence.” And I must face these facts:

“The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furroughs the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment . . . Man so to speak, unripe; the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him . . . The greatest men have suffered most.” 78(e), PT 178

“Men who suffer not, attain no perfection. The plant most pruned . . . is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit.” 78(f), PT 51

“To the sincere ones, tests are as a gift from God, the Exalted, for a heroic person hasteneth, with the utmost joy and gladness, to the tests of a violent battlefield, but the coward is afraid and trembles and utters moaning and lamentation. Likewise, an expert student prepareth and memorizeth his lessons and exercises with the utmost effort, and in the day of examination he appeareth with infinite joy before the master. Likewise, the pure gold shineth radiantly in the fire of test. Consequently, it is made clear that for holy souls, trials are as the gift of God, the Exalted; but for weak souls they are an unexpected calamity.” BWF 371

“O SON OF MAN! If adversity befall thee not in My path, how canst thou walk in the ways of them that are content with My pleasure? If trials afflict thee not in thy longing to meet Me, how wilt thou attain the light in thy love for My beauty?” HWA 15 #50

“Tests are benefits from God, for which we should thank Him. Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance, they are sent to us by the Divine Mercy for our own perfecting. While a man is happy he may forget his God.” PT 50

“O SON OF MAN! The true lover yearneth for tribulation even as doth the rebel for forgiveness and the sinful for mercy.” HWA 15 #49

Shall I ever become that mature? Meditation on the following could help:

“O SON OF BEING! Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not. This is that which hath been destined for thee in Our kingdom above and Our exalted dominion.” HWA 5 #6

Love of God! How I long for this! Prayer and meditation are ever-present ways of growing in it. So let me test myself:

“O SON OF MAN! For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials.” HWA 15 #48

“Afflictions and troubles are due to the state of not being content with what God has ordained for you. If one submits himself to God he is happy.” 69(ww), SofW Vol. 7, 187

As I commune, let me hear with the ear of my heart the Voice of God answering me:

“O SON OF MAN! If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.” HWA 5 #7

“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.” HWA 13 #40

Baha'u'llah has given us so many promises and petitions, so many comprehensible beams of divine light, with which to express the refresh[en]ing and gladdening spirit that He channels into my heart! For instance He gives us specific words to use “‘if our bodies by, at times, weighed down by our troubles,” on pages 135-6 in His Prayers and Meditations. If I am unaware of my own potentialities in dealing with hateful conditions and human creatures, I shall find them clearly set forth as I use or meditate on this prayer.

Also, I should meditate on what my relationship with Baha'u'llah offers, and ponder the fact that Manifestations

“are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words . . . for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man,

emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment.” 85(bbb), BWF 104 or Gl 67

“Through . . . knowledge of God . . . rightness of morals and illumination, are obtained.” 102(f), SAQ 344

Also, “assuredly one may learn to the end of one’s life! 102(g), PT 43 (see page 208b [])
I hear His Voice urging me:

“O OFFSPRING OF DUST! . . . Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from thy mortal cage wing they flight unto the paradise of the Placeless.” 84(vv), HWP 36 #39

Sometimes He speaks to me as a human being. At other times He addresses me as a soul, the celestial being that He has created:

“O SON OF SPIRIT! . . . the light of His countenance doth lead thee; how canst thou go astray?” HWA 11-2 #34

just as a plant unfolds and blossoms in the sunshine, my soul’s growth is [a] accelerated by opening the portals of my heart, through communion and reflections, to that heavenly light.

I find the following beams of celestial illumination mentioned as being available, and which I shall dwell and reflect on in my struggle to acquire virtues[:]

the light of affirmation and acceptance can deliver me from the fire of negation and denial. ESW 131 (see page 17 [])

The light of assurance that can protect doubters and guide them to the Dayspring of Certitude. ESW 131 (see page 17 [])

the light of beauty that is manifested, P&M 64-5 that may shine on me P&M 89 - in fact that has shone on me. 84(uu), HWA 18 #63 (see page 48 [])

the light of this Cause that the ignorant and foolish have arisen to put out: ESW 102

the light of certainty or certitude, from which some souls have been debarred by vague fancies; ESW 131 that has dawned above the horizon of God’s Will ESW 151 and that may shine in my heart if God will draw me out from the depths of my own imaginations. BWF 73-4 or P&M 53

the light of courtesy, to be illumined with which is a blessing; BWF 175

the light of [deeds] of righteous may illuminate the world; BWF 177

the light of detachment - “well is it with him who hath been illumined” with it,
Baha’u’llah says; ESW 147

the light of eternity with which God promises to shine upon me if I “magnify” His Cause.
HWA 13 #41

the light of faith that ‘Abdu’l-Baha prayed would shine, BP 43 #0 and which can deliver me from the darkness of vices; 83(cc), BWF 324 or SAQ 260 (see page 15g [])

the light of the fear of God with which Baha’u’llah says the hearts of Baha’is are

illuminated; ESW 122

the light of [God's] glory whose splendors I have recognized, P&M 80 and which may reveal to me God's path. BP'69, 76 #59, BWF 135 or P&M 248 Baha'u'llah begged people to let it shine on them, GL 329 and 'Abdu'l-Baha teaches me to pray at midnight that I may see it. BP'69, 29 #17 (see 73 and 195 [])

the light of [God's] governance - Baha'u'llah asked God to shed its splendors as we pray, P&M 327 (see page 184 [])

the light of guidance, the radiance of which God shed abroad through Baha'u'llah. BWF 76-7 or P&M 179 It behooves the seeker to embrace it, Iqan 38 (see page 176 []) 'Abdu'l-Baha ask[ed] God to brighten eyes and hearts with it, BP'69, 146 #13 and to give His loved ones the grace to follow it. BP'69, 92 #74 Baha'u'llah said that its splendors are shed by Baha'is who fast. BP'69, 179 or P&M 84 "Peace be upon him who . . . followeth the True One by the lights of guidance." & VAL 29

the light of honesty and piety, virtues that Baha'u'llah enjoins on us. "Blessed the city that shineth by their light." ESW 23

the lights of God's inspiration, with which God enabled Baha'u'llah to shine. BWF 71 or P&M 49 (see page 83 [])

the light of justice, which is "the light of men." BWF 182 Baha'u'llah begs God to adorn believers with it, BWF 179 because He says, "No light can compare with the light of justice." ESW 28 "When it shines upon the world," the world will be sanctified from tyranny, GL 218 and "completely transformed." GL 219

the light of kindness: 'Abdu'l-Baha prays that God will "illumine us" with it. BP'69, 334 #22 (see page 101 [])

the light of the Kingdom: souls enlightened with it have founded eternal sovereignty. BWF 385

the light of true liberty with may someday illumine the earth. Gl 260

the light of [God's] love - I must illumine my heart with it, BWF 132, Gl 205 (see 72, 87, 100 [])

the light of love which Jesus Christ came to enkindle in souls: FWU 104, Iqan 38 (see *____)

the light of God's [majesty], of which souls are destined to be mirrors; BP''^(, 51 #36

the light of mercy which in its dawning has chased away darkness, ESW 133 and my envelop all mankind. GL 260 Words of the Aqdas "radiate the light of divine mercy". BWF 209

the lights of oneness reveal manifestation as one, BWF 72 or P&M 51 It will be manifest to me only when I strip my heart of illusions. 7 VAL 24

the light of peace, which will rend darkness and illumine countries when the Sun of Reality shines forth. BP '69, 146 'Abdu'l-Baha prayed that clouds be scattered, so

“the rays of conciliation” may shine forth from the Sun. *ibid.*
 the light of God’s providence that I discern: BP’69, 42 #29 believers are radiant with it.
 BP’69, 45 #32
 the light of God’s tenderness is it within believers’ hearts, BP’69, 106 #85 or P&m 3 (see
 page 87 [])
 the light of trustworthiness that illuminates the worlds of honor, glory and affluence.
 BWF 169
 the light of truth that guides men unto all truth. Iqan 43 (see page 70? [])
 the light of understanding: guiding men to its is the first purpose of God’s Prophets GL
 79-80 (see page 85 [])
 the light of unity and concord that is so powerful that it can illuminate the human race
 and whole earth; ESW 14 or GL 288 and 286 Baha’u’llah is its Day-Spring BWF
 146 or P&M 31 and through Him, it has shone forth above the horizon of the
 world. ESW 2. He urges us to turn to it and let its radiance shine on us, GL 217,
 so that the horizons of our hearts may be illumined with it. BWF 208 For this is
 the day when all peoples should shed it. ESW 76 If we do our part, the light of
union and accord will irradiate and illuminate all regions. BWF 193
 the light of wisdom; its fountain is a kindly tongue. ESW 15 or GL 289 (see page 119 []
)

Certainly the foregoing should give me an inkling of the results of opening the portals of
 my heart through prayer and mediation. Those virtues are latent within me and must be activated
 for my own growth and to assist in promoting the oneness of mankind. And as I concentrate on
 them as desirable realities this will help my heart to reflect them.

Of course the light of each divine attribute which I seek to reflect in my own being is but
 a beam of the Divine Light that radiates to us from God and His Manifestations. Even the ancient
 Scriptures have spoken of such Light, and Baha’u’llah now explains:

“the terms ‘sun’, ‘moon’, and ‘stars’ (in Scriptures) primarily signify the Prophets
 of God, the Saints, and their companions, the light of Whose knowledge hath shed
 illumination upon the worlds of the visible and the invisible.” Iqan 36

But as I meditate, I begin to understand that what comes to mankind from that source is
 not merely an intellectual grasp of esoteric truth that takes us into the area of mysticism and
 theology. For also

“by the terms ‘sun,’ ‘moon,’ and ‘stars’ are meant such laws and teachings as
 have been established and proclaimed in every Dispensation, such as the laws of prayer
 and fasting.” Iqan 38

and, in fact, all of the basic laws for successful spiritual living and developing my divine nature.
 Light on this subject is certainly something that I need and desire. How sincerely then, as I
 commune with my Maker, do I reflect on these words! -

“O my Lord! This is a lamp lighted by the fire of Thy love and ablaze with the flame which is ignited in the tree of Thy mercy. O my Lord! Increase his enkindlement, heat and flame, with the fire which is kindled in the Sinai of Thy Manifestation.” BP’69, 82 #66

“Illumine my inner being, O my Lord, with the splendors of the Day-Spring of thy Revelation, even as Thou dist illumine my outer being with the morning light of Thy favor.” BP ‘69, 53 #38 or P&M 251

Certainly it can help my spiritual growth to reflect on the fire of His love and the splendors of His Revelation. For the more I meditate on what is revealed, in the light of my real purpose in life, the greater will become both my wisdom and my yearning to realize my potentialities. Believers have not yet realized what insight and power can be gained through this kind of meditation! We cannot realize that as “the beloved of God,” we have been “exalted above and made independent of all human learning;” and that if we will but open the portals of our hearts in ways currently taught us, undreamed of wisdom will “gush out” from “the springs of our innate powers.” 77(oo), BWF 95 or GL 264 (see page 199 [])

Baha’u’llah encourages me, I remember, by saying:

“If thou be a man of communion and prayer, soar up on the wings of assistance from Holy Souls, that thou mayest behold the mysteries of the Friend and attain to the lights of the Beloved.” 7 Val 17 (see page 197 [])

So I pray and in awe, contemplate the potentialities of what I ask: “O Lord, . . . open before my face the doors of Thy heaven.” BP’69, 29 #17

3. TO PROMOTE THE ONENESS OF MANKIND

How long ago it was that mankind was given this Enlightenment! -

“We are of God; . . . love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God and

knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. I John 4:6-8

God is love. The inherent Link between us and Him is love. All of the interaction between us and Him is the result of love. God loves us. When are we going to learn to react and respond to that heavenly bounty?

Twentieth century man stands smug and over-confident in his intellectual brilliance, and yet a pathetic victim of his own egocentric outlook and complete failure to establish peace within either his own being or his own realm of existence.

Baha'u'llah breaks in on our complacent self-love with these words:

“Know ye not that the Hand of God is over your hands, that His irrevocable Decree transcendeth all your devices, that He is supreme over His servants, that He is equal to His purpose, that He doth what He wisheth, that He shall not be asked of whatever He willeth, that He ordaineth what He pleaseth, that He is the Most Powerful, the Almighty? If ye believe this to be the truth, wherefore, then, will ye not cease from troubling and be at peace with yourselves?” GL 224

“Bear thou witness . . . that there is none other God but Him, that all . . . have been created by His behest . . . 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.” 30(d), GL 192-3

Baha'u'llah has come to complete the Revelation of reality. Truth learned in the past is not abrogated - it is only extended and enlarged upon. Now we understand the reason we say that God is love is that all we can understand of God is His attributes, and that of these, love is the greatest. Also I remember that love is “a conscious bestowal of God,” 76(aa), PUP 249 (see page 5 []) and that, as with a back account, I must recognize its existence and draw on it, fi it is to benefit me or serve its purpose. (see page 15a []) It is the fundamental principle of God's purpose for man, but to operate under that principle, we must “love each other even as He loves us.” 75(t), PUP 122

“Love is the light that guideth in darkness, the living link that uniteth God with man, that assureth the progress of man.” 72(a), DAL 108 #2

It is not something I must depend upon my own inner being to generate - it is a reality of my spiritual environment to which I simply need to open the portals of my heart and respond.

“The wonderful law of attraction, Harmony, and Unity, holds together this marvelous creation.” 75(q), PT 139

The spiritual love of God is a two way experience - it is His love for me and mine, reflected in my soul, for Him. And it is an essential in promoting the oneness of mankind. so I must intensify it though meditation to bring these spiritual verities down to immediate human application:

“Love and affinity are the cause of life, and discord and separation are the cause of death.” 75(s), PUP 202

“If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual; but if enmity and hatred exist within it, destruction and dispersion are inevitable. This is likewise true of a city . . . a nation . . . Finally this is true of humanity itself in the aggregate. When love is realized and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men, the whole human race will be uplifted, the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant and the happiness and tranquillity of mankind be immeasurably increased. Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and Universal Peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree. This is the illumination of man . . . I desire this station for you and I pray God that the people of America may achieve this great end in order that the virtue of this democracy may be insured.” PUP 136-7

“spiritual unity . . . emanates from the breaths of the Holy Spirit.” BWF 258, FWU 67

“Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit in man.” 22(t), PT 30

Baha’u’llah has breathed it into my inner being; I have only to open the portals of my heart to find it reflected there.

I must meditate on my oneness with other souls, too. I must pray for I to stir me and manifest itself in my daily reactions.

“Some of the creatures of existence can live solitary and alone . . . But this is impossible for man. In his life and being cooperation and association are essential. Through association and meeting we find happiness and development, individual and collective.” PUP 32

“The spiritual brotherhood which is enkindled and established through the breaths of the Holy Spirit unites nations and removes the cause of warfare and strife. It transforms mankind into one great family and establishes the foundations of the oneness of mankind. It promulgates the spirit of international agreement and ensures Universal Peace. Therefore we must investigate the foundation of reality of this heavenly fraternity.” BWF 227

“Human brotherhood and dependence exist because mutual helpfulness and cooperation are the two necessary principles underlying human welfare. This is the physical (material) relationship of mankind. There is another brotherhood, the spiritual, which is higher, holier and superior to all others. It is heavenly; it emanates from the breaths of the Holy Spirit . . . ‘ it is founded upon spiritual susceptibilities. This brotherhood is established by the manifestations of the Holy One’ in the realm of spirit. 70(e), PUP 145

Because of my humanness, however, my heart is wayward and subject to vain imaginings, and these qualities can remove it far from God, as has already been noted. BWF 98

or GL 186 (see page 98) They can prevent the development of the selfless love that is the great uniting force between souls. The “dust of sedition,” GL 40 which means resistance to authority, has clouded and even blinded the hearts of men, and no one has escaped contamination from that spiritual malady. We all are victims of what our own hearts have devised, for we see that people “have entangled themselves with their idle fancies and vain imaginations.” BWF 132 or GL 204 Only the God-given “unique capacity” and “twofold distinction” of “knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory” make it possible for my heart to be cleansed of every vain desire. GL 77-8

Baha’u’llah offers this guidance:

“And as the human heart, as fashioned by God, is one and undivided, it behoveth thee to take heed that its affections be also, one and undivided. Cleave thou, therefore, with the whole affection of thine heart, unto His love, and withdraw it from the love of any one besides Him, that He may aid thee to immerse thyself in the ocean of His unity, and enable thee to become a true upholder of His oneness.” BWF 46-7 or GL 237-8

To comply with this appeal, I turn my heart to God in prayer and loving reflection, remembering that my heart is a precious trust. For Baha’u’llah says that it belongs to my Creator - it is His own, “His exclusive possession,” GL 206 (see page 31 []) “the throne wherein abideth the splendor of His revelation.” BWF 98 or GL 185 Baha’u’llah’s mission, He says, was to seize and possess the hearts of men,” BWF 38 or GL 212 and He certainly captured mine! But what kind of a lover am I proving to be? Through Him, God has drawn my heart “towards the resplendent court” of His oneness, P&M 298 and through Baha’u’llah’s summons “the hearts of all them who were nigh” unto Him, mine included, “have soared into the atmosphere” of God’s presence. P&M 147 Having been so blessed, how can I stray from His path, shut myself out from His glory, and let my heart “be stained with the defilement of earthly desires,” BWF 98 or GL 185 or darkened by hostility and hatred? I need prayer and meditation to tune in to the call by which “hearts are carried away towards the horizon” of God’s majesty and grandeur. BWF 151 or P&M 171 And to know that all mankind has been given the same call.

Have I forgotten that God’s love is “the radiance of my heart”? BP’69, 90 #72 or P&M 174 And that in my heart which is God’s treasury, 24(iii), GL 322 (see page 31 []) He has enshrined the pearls of His love? P&M 176 (see page 31 []) Those pearls must be brought forth, burnished and used to fulfill their purpose!

Moreover,

“all are submerges in the ocean” of God’s mercy. He created us all “from the same original parents” and intends “that all belong to the same household.” BP’69, 45 #32 If I love God how can I not love each “heavenly gem” He has created? 34(f), BWF 121 or GL 158 (see page 5, and 10 [])

We are ending a cycle of man’s subjective growth, a time when rugged individualism built a new western world and civilization, a time when great nations developed their

individuality, fought each other and competed. But we are entering another era now. It is time for mankind to become spiritually conscious, as human souls have been doing, and fulfill its destiny as a divine conscious, as human souls have been doing, and fulfill its destiny as a divine creation. Just as man has been learning that his greatest success happiness can come only in the spiritual sphere and through activation of his divine nature, so too humanity must become aware of its divinity and start to function as a total spiritual organism. And every soul must begin to see himself as a part of that potentially glorious body.

“Today, humanity is bowed down with trouble, sorrow and grief, no one escapes; the world is wet with tears; but, thank God, the remedy is at our doors. Let us turn our hearts away from the world of matter and live in the spiritual world! It alone can give us freedom! If we are hemmed in by difficulties we have only to call upon God” - turn to Him for guidance - “and by His great Mercy we shall be helped.” 82(x), PT 110

This is “salvation” or the solution of problems for the individual; and because mankind is the sum total of individuals it will also be the salvation and solution of all problems for humanity as a whole. For

“among the teachings of His Holiness Baha’u’llah is the oneness of the world of humanity; that all human beings are the sheep of God and He is the kind Shepherd. This Shepherd is kind to all the sheep, because He created them all, trained them, provided for them and protected them. There is no doubt that the shepherd is kind to all the sheep and should there be among these sheep ignorant ones, they must be educated; if there be children, they must be trained until they reach maturity; if there be sick ones, they must be cured. there must be no hatred and enmity, for as by a kind physician these ignorant, sick ones should be treated.” BWF 285-6

“Whoso hath drunk of the cup which the hand of Thy mercy hath borne around will strip himself of all things except Thee, and will be able, through a word of his mouth, to enrapture the souls of such of Thy servants as have slumbered on the bed of forgetfulness and negligence, and to cause them to turn their faces toward Thy most Great sign . . . “ P&M 191-2

“We work and pray for the unity of mankind, that all the races of the earth may become one race, all the countries one country, and that all hearts may beat as one heart, working together for perfect unity and brotherhood.” PT 100

As already noted, (seepage 204) my human relationships are an ever-present source of negative emotions. I must deal with people who are hateful[,] situations that are terrifying, and relationships that are intolerable. what is the “right” way to deal with what torments me so? I cannot feel or express love when faced with revolting human realities! How am I expected to react to war, and to a total absence of unity o even decency? How can I see a divine purpose behind the increase of alcoholism, drug addiction, beastly immorality, violence, crime and evil in human hearts? ‘Abdu’l-Baha told us to be happy, and happiness comes from spiritual love. But I

am tortured by the condition of mankind. I don't even want to be a part of the human race, at times.

Baha'u'llah cuts through this human reflecting, saying:

“Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its servitude to the Gods of its idle fancies.” 68(oo), BWF 139, GL 93

And suddenly as I turn my heart to Him this admonition puts everything in perspective. I remember that I have control over one thing alone: my own vision or perceptive powers: I have a choice as to what I face, view, and think about. I can see my fellow beings from my self-centered viewpoint and react to their imperfections, in which case I shall become irascible, unloving, unlovable. Or I can open the portals of my heart and reflect on their reality and love the divine purpose that is being worked out in their lives. It will help if I obey Baha'u'llah's simple invitation: “Let your vision be world-embracing” - and that means embracing the spiritual worlds, too - “rather than confined to your self.” 68(nn)

Baha'is have set their hearts on the oceans of God's favors as they have listened to “the accents” of His “most sweet Voice, calling.” GL 300 I did so when I enrolled. What I need to learn is that my struggle up out of humanness and into the heights of spiritual consciousness, is a way of life that all share and that I am to participate in [twenty-four] hours a day. Only thus can I have ready access to the bounties of divine love that are so freely available in reality.

There are specific requirements for such a life, and my heart's needs must be filed if that life is to be lived richly and successfully; and if, most specifically, I am to be in love with my fellow-beings and help to promote the oneness of mankind. Prayer and meditation are the portals through which the power comes to meet those requirements. Prayer and meditation are also the channels through which the divine bounties and heavenly love are made accessible to me, even in my humanness.

Especially, as has been noted, I should meditate on God's Word - on any and every word that His Voice has brought to us. for Baha'u'llah teaches me to affirm:

by “Thy word . . . they who have believed in Thy unity have soared up into the atmosphere of Thy knowledge, and they who are devoted to Thee have ascended into the heaven of Thy oneness.” P&M 188

Baha'u'llah implored God to inspire believers “with that which will assure their hearts,” and to “endue them with such steadfastness that nothing whatsoever will hinder them from turning towards Thee.” *ibid.* If anything is hindering me, then, I may be sure that it is my own fault, for God is making steadfastness available to me, and the hindrance can be overcome. Prayer is the simplest way to turn to Him: and meditation opens the portals of my heart to the spiritual knowledge that lifts my consciousness to the heaven of divine oneness.

One height of consciousness that I need to achieve and maintain is a vivid awareness that I am a unit of mankind. Meditating on this can help:

“O CHILDREN OF MEN! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.” HWA 20 #68

This gives me the key to feeling and being motivated by the oneness of mankind. Here is another beam of truth that I must open the portals of my heart to receive, and that I should reflect on:

“The unity which is productive of unlimited results is first a unity of mankind which recognizes that all are sheltered beneath the overshadowing glory of the All-Glorious; that all are servants of one God; for all breathe the same atmosphere, live upon the same earth, move beneath the same heavens, receive effulgence from the same sun and are under the protection of one God. this is the most great unity, and its results are lasting if humanity adheres to it.” BWF 257-8 or FWU 66

“O SON OF SPIRIT! There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me; for it behooveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be loved alone and above all that is.” 55(mm), HWA 5 #8

This, of course, is one reason my compassionate all-loving Creator has given me the capacity and bounty of prayer and meditation. When, in my human affairs, evils face me that I can do nothing to alleviate, the “suitable way” to use my emotional energy and to check its “natural” expression in anger and rebellion, is to turn to God and in the spirit of faith, lay those affairs in His hands through prayer.

This procedure has two heavenly purposes and consequences: (1) it places the responsibility for removing the difficulty on the true Remover of difficulties; and (2) it relieves me of emotions that could become destructive, make me hateful and thereby add to my imperfection. For since all negative use of love power, if persisted in, can produce some kind of character deficiency, just as its positive use always strengthens character and brings out virtues. So think what spiritual communion can do for me! First, since, as I reflect in the spirit of faith (which all prayer or meditation demands), my highest degree of spirit, 39 (x) and my love of God are activated, thereby diverting my emotional energy from negative expressions into positive use. Also, I transform my anger and wrath into an increasing faith and appreciation of God’s power and purpose. Of course, incidentally too, I experience the heavenly release that comes from lifting my spirits above human considerations. What a blessing and privilege is this highest use of my “mind” as I deal with the evils of life over which I have no control!

Let me keep in mind that I can choose what I reflect on. Baha'u'llah instructs me thus:

“Behold that which hath been sent down from the Throne on high, and meditate thereon with innocent and sanctified heart . . . “ BWF 34 or GL 105 (see page 13 []) For I remember, meditation is a way of opening my outer consciousness to the celestial light or spiritual understanding that is within my own heart. Nothing of course, is so essential to promoting the oneness of mankind as this. Nothing can serve better to make me loving and lovable.

Like my body, my soul or heart has to grow from seed form into the creation that will fulfill God's purpose in bringing me into existence. What kind of growth is that? The ever-present purpose of life: growth of divine knowledge and love, of course. Awareness, for instance, of the radiance of God's attributes “which appears and is visible in worlds and souls.” 9(m), BWF 322 or SAQ 257 (see pages 15g, 98, 1*___ []) Human awareness I need too, that develops “naturally”, by using my human degree of spirit - memory, rational faculties and senses. But it takes the higher-than-human degree of spirit to grasp the ultimate enlightenment and wisdom that generates selfless love, loveliness and a spiritual consciousness.

At birth the human creature faces a great unknown. First awareness, and then understanding of his environment, must be acquired.

“All our senses are doors which can lead us not only to a fuller expression of life but to a better understanding of it and a higher state of inner development. But like everything else, they must be kept in their proper place, fulfilling their proper function.” 78 (c), Prescr. For Liv. 53

Gaining knowledge of reality and reflecting its divinity is our ultimate purpose: first of the reality of matter; gradually of causes and consequences; and finally of the purpose and power behind all that exists.

“Man . . . is seed at first, and then passes by degrees to the condition of embryo and foetus, acquiring a bone structure, being clothed with flesh, taking on his won special form, until at last he reaches the plane where he can befittingly fulfill the words: ‘the most excellent of Makers.’” SDC 107

The purpose and “fruit of man's earthly existence . . . is the recognition of the one true God.” 79(l) Involved in this is the acquiring of virtues.

Recognition of God stirs the heart's deepest devotion, and this selfless love generates the spiritual qualities. This is how humanity progresses and develops its “divine nature”.

“The fruits of the human world . . . are the spiritual attributes which appear in man. If man is bereft of those attributes he is like a fruitless tree.” 79(I), PUP 300
Prayer and meditation stimulate and promote this growth.

“If a tree bear no fruit it had better be cut down . . . It is better a thousand times for a man to die than to continue without virtue.” 79(m), PT 133
But only a well-rounded, mentally developed human being can show forth spiritual

maturity and reflect all of the heavenly virtues. The mind and will must be both strong and flexible as must be the trunk of a tree that withstands the storms of its environment.

“For example, if this tree were entirely fruit, the vegetable perfections could not be attained; for leaves, blossoms, and fruits are all necessary, so that the tree may be adorned with utmost beauty and perfection.” 78 (g), SA 148-9

If “fruit” is produced only by the soul’s highest degree of spirit, the human spirit with its brilliant intellect produces what corresponds to leaves of a tree - human concepts that are brought forth year after year but always replaced by more accurate ones as time goes on. Virtues, on the other hand, like fruit that carries the seed of its immortality, proliferate without dying, while showing ever greater and new perfections.

“New fruits must be forthcoming; for that is the provision and intention of spiritual re-formation. The renewal of the leaf is fruitless. From the re-formation of bark or branch no fruit will come forth. The renewal of ver*___ produces nothing. If there be no renewal of fruit from the tree, of what avail is the re-formation of bark, blossom, branch and trunk? 79(o), PUP 272-3

“The life of man is useful if he attains the perfections of man.” 85 (eee), PUP 51

“The “seeds” that are human souls are planted in the soil of God’s love.” 78(b), P&M 178 (see pages 29 and 40 [])

“Just now the soil of human heart seems like black earth, but in the inmost substance of this dark soil there are thousands of fragrant flowers latent. We must endeavor to cultivate and awaken these potentialities . . . bring forth these resplendent powers long hidden in human hearts.” 93(z), PUP 288

the creator has provided so bounteously everything needed for our growth! In fact His Voice is telling us that we are experiencing “the first stirrings” of the spiritual springtime. P&M 199 Therefore, I should meditate on these illuminating truths:

“When the season of spring appear in the arena of existence the whole world is rejuvenated and finds new life.” PUP 8

“The world has become a new world. The darkness of night which has enveloped humanity is passing. A new day has dawned. Divine susceptibilities and heavenly capacities are developing in human souls under the training of the Sun of Truth.” PUP 21

“At the time of the vernal equinox in the material world a wonderful vibrant energy and life-quickenning is observed everywhere . . . The whole world is born anew, resurrected . . . Likewise the spiritual bounty and springtime of God quicken the world of humanity with a new animus and vivification.” PUP 35

“Praise be to God! The springtime of God is at hand. This century is verily the spring season. The world of mind and kingdom of soul have become fresh and verdant by its bestowals. It has resuscitated the whole realm of existence. On one hand the lights of reality are shining; on the other the clouds of divine mercy are pouring down the fullness

of heavenly bounty. Wonderful material progress is evident and great spiritual discoveries are being made . . . Truly this can be called the miracle of centuries for it is replete with manifestations of the miraculous. The time has come when all mankind shall be united . . . It is the day in which the oneness of humankind shall lift up its standard and international peace like the true morning flood the world with its light.” FWU 16-7 or PUP 148

This is heady information for a world that sees only the death of “the good old days.”

Not only is my spiritual vision expanded as I reflect on these thrilling words, but I have a faint glimmer of how much light has been “cast into the hearts” 76(b), Iq1an 46-7 (see pages 36 and 83 []) and why it is so well worthwhile communing with my own soul. Doing so can put me in touch with the influx of new life and rejuvenation that the Creator has provided. If I have felt dark despair about the condition of the world, meditation can enable me to feel a glow from the light of this new day. I can call on the life-quickenning power of this spiritual springtime and expect my whole being to become “fresh and verdant”, capable of sharing in the progress and spiritual discoveries that are currently made possible. I may not want to be part of mankind, but since it is the time when mankind is destined to be united, I certainly want to do my part in promoting the oneness of mankind. And of course the desire to do so, is the beginning of fulfilling my own destiny as a Baha’i.

What is the real purpose of this glorious Faith? ‘Abdu’l-Baha answered that question thus:

“The essential purpose of Faith and Belief is to ennoble the inner being of man with the outpourings of grace from on high.” SofW Vol. 16, 539

Since my reality is created like a mirror, think of the potentialities of “ennobling” my inner being simply by opening the portals of my heart to the new spiritual powers of this Day!

“The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers.” 87(r), ‘Ab-Ba in Lond. 4

“Try with all your hearts to be willing channels for God’s bounty. For . . . He has chosen you to be His messengers of love throughout the world, to be His bearers of spiritual gifts to man, to be the means of spreading unity and concord on the earth. Thank God . . . (for) such a privilege.” 77(rr), RofM 27-8

and here is action that can employ and help me to realize my latent capacities:

“O YE DWELLERS IN THE HIGHEST PARADISE! Proclaim unto the children of assurance that within the realms of holiness, nigh unto the celestial paradise, a new garden hath appeared, round which circle the denizens of the realm on high and the immortal dwellers of the exalted paradise. Strive, then, that ye may attain that station, that ye may unravel the mysteries of love from its wind-flowers and learn the secret of divine

and consummate wisdom from its eternal fruits. Solace are the eyes of them that enter and abide therein!” HWP 27 #18

When I sens what Baha’u’llah has unveiled before the hearts of mankind, my consciousness is flooded with the highest kind of love - undying selfless devotion, spontaneous worship. And no power on earth is greater than the power of love - it can do anything! - even promote and establish the oneness of mankind and create world peace.

“When the heart of man is aglow with the flame of love, he is ready to sacrifice all - even his life. In the Gospel it is said God is love.” 78(u), PT 179-80

“Love is . . . the vital bond inherent . . . in the realities of things. Love is the one means that insures true felicity both in this world and the next.” 72(a), DAL 108 # 2

“Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world.” 72 (a), DAL 108 #2

“Verily God has chosen you for His love and knowledge; God has chosen you for the worthy service of unifying mankind, . . . for spreading and claiming true education, for the expression of love toward your fellow creatures and the removal of prejudice.” 101(ii), PUP 329

I have been chosen, so I have a tremendous responsibility. I must be attentive, alert and mindful, occupied with service to all mankind, appreciating the bestowals of God and ever conforming to His Will.” *ibid.* I must feel myself a vital part of “the people of God” who

“have no ambition except to revive the world, to ennoble its life, and regenerate its peoples . . . Their outward conduct is but a reflection of their inward life.” 103(j), GL 270-1

“Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of this Cause . . . This is . . . the first choice of His unrestrained Will for everyone of you.” 1-2(k), BWF 140

“He that seeketh to be a helper of God in this Day . . . should cleanse his heart from all evil passions and corrupt desires, for the fear of God is the weapon that can render him victorious.” 102(l), GL 272

The one power strong enough to dissolve the evil passions and corrupt desires of any human heart is the love of God. How can I activate this in my own being?

Desire is the first expression of love in a soul, and the first feeling of love, that is experienced in life is love and enjoyment of having one’s physical desires satisfied. But this is only self-love - the love of one’s own sensations, which is natural to the animal nature. I still feel this kind of desire, and as my human nature developed [and rapidly expanded], I naturally learned to love and enjoy having th[ose] kind of desires satisfied. Being backed by the power of a “living soul”, those desires and feelings grew. Many of them were “good” too. But that is still self-love. And if a person’s love does not ripen into the selfless variety, the results can be disastrous.

“Self-love is a strange trait and the means of destruction of many important souls in the world. If man be imbued with all good qualities but be selfish, all the other virtues will fade or pass away and eventually he will grow worse.” 54(t), DAL 119# 35

All character deficiencies result from concentrating all of one’s desires and feelings on oneself and one’s selfish pursuits and goals.

“Some men’s lives are solely occupied with the things of this world; their minds are so circumscribed by exterior manners and traditional interests that they are blind to any other realm of existence, to the spiritual significance of all things. They think and dream of earthly fame, of material progress. Sensuous delights and comfortable surroundings bound their horizons, their highest ambitions center in successes of worldly conditions and circumstances . . . Like the animal, they have no thought beyond their own physical well-being.” these live at the lowest level. 78(d), PT 98-9

“In man . . . imperfections and sinful actions are born of his material nature . . . If . . . he rejects the things of God and allows his evil passions to conquer him, then he is no better than a mere animal.” 64(c), PT 60

“If the animals are savage and [erocious] it is simply a means for their subsistence and preservation. They are deprived of that degree of intellect which can reason and discriminate between right and wrong, justice and injustice; they are justified in their actions and not responsible. When man is ferocious and cruel toward his fellowman it is not for subsistence or safety. His motive is selfish advantage and willful wrong . . . There is no lower degree or greater debasement for man than this natel condition of animalism.” 64(d), PUP 346

“Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings . . . ‘ if, on the other hand, his thought does not soar, but is directed downwards to center itself upon the things of this world, he grows more and more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal.” 72(c), PT 17-8

The only antidote for sel-love is awareness of something greater and more lovable than one’s won pleasure and self. And it is awareness of this that Baha’u’llah makes possible.

“The Prophets of God have come to show man the way of righteousness in order that he may not follow his won natural impulse, but govern his ac[t]ions by the light of Their precepts and example. According to Their teachings he should do that which is found to be praiseworthy. . . even though it be opposed to his natural inclination; and he should not do that which is found to be unworthy . . . though it be in the direction of his natural impulse and desire.” 71(I), PUP 37-8

But not only does Baha’u’llah show me the way to righteousness - He explains its desirability and reality so clearly that I can understand and love the purpose and result of following that way. This changes my desires and awakens the selfless kind of love and adoration

of Divinity, that can truly promote unity. He “has proclaimed and provided the way by which hostility and dissention may be removed from the Human world.” 86(k), PUP 225 for one thing:

“Baha’u’llah has rent the veil of prejudice and superstition which was stifling the souls of man.” 75(w), PT 34

My inner being assents joyously, as ‘Abdu’l-Baha pleads:

“For thousands of years we have had bloodshed and strife. It is enough; it is sufficient. Now is the time to associate together in love and harmony . . . For thousands of years we have tried the sword and warfare; let mankind for a time at least live in peace.” BWF 244 or FWU 50

My heart longs to see mankind lifted completely out of that old world order where bitterness and hatred have always separated individuals and nations. Such a drastic change requires a “rebirth” of the soul - an experience that results in a “release from the captivity of nature, freedom from attachment to this mortal and material life” 77(uu), PUP 299 - even from the ego which is a mortal part of the soul.

As a Baha’i my soul has undergone this “rebirth”. But birth into the spiritual world demands growth of spiritual awareness. So I should check to see where my immediate consciousness centered? What am I seeing, feeling and reflecting? If I am not delighting in the oneness of mankind, if I am revolted by my fellow-beings, I should give thoughtful attention to these words addressed to each believer by the Voice of his Creator:

“O SON OF LOVE! Thou art but one step away from the glorious heights above and from the celestial tree of love. Take thou one pace and with the next advance into the immortal realm and enter the pavilion of eternity. Give ear then to that which hath been revealed by the Pen of Glory.” HWP 24 #7

I should listen to ‘Abdu’l-Baha, too, as He describes what taking that one step makes possible, since it is that by which I release the low gear power and satanic strength of my being and gear into the heavenly light and power that come into my heart when the portals of faith and selfless love are thrown open:

“May your eyes be opened to see the signs of the Kingdom of God, and may your ears be unstopped so that you may hear with a perfect understanding the heavenly Proclamation sounding in your midst.

“I pray for each and all that you may be as flames of love in the world, and that the brightness of your light and the warmth of your affection may reach the heart of every sad and sorrowing child of God.” DAL 31 #23, PT 95

What on earth can one little person like me do to promote the oneness of mankind? More than I can conceive of! For

“Whatsoever people is graciously favored . . . (with divine love), its name shall surely be magnified and extolled by the Concourse from on high, by the company of angels, and the denizens of the Abha kingdom. And whatsoever people turneth its heart

away from this Divine love - the revelation of the Merciful - shall err grievously, shall fall into despair, and be utterly destroyed.” DAL 109 #2

“Baha’u’llah has appeared and so resuscitated spirits that they have manifested powers more than Human . . . Such resuscitation is impossible except through . . . the divine power of the Holy Spirit.” 77(pp), PUP 271

I ask my heart how I can key into that kind of divine power, and the answer comes through the portals of faith and meditation from my Beloved Himself:

O SON OF MY HANDMAID! Wouldst thou seek the grace of the Holy Spirit, enter into fellowship with the righteous, for he hath drunk the cup of eternal life at the hands of the immortal Cup-bearer and even as the true morn doth quicken and illumine the hearts of the dead.” HWP 42 #58

Yes, I must enter into fellowship with those who are “righteous” enough to have recognized and accepted Baha’u’llah, for it is almost impossible to be a Baha’i alone. And when I feel my inadequacy and lack of love as a member of my community, I must remember that “the oneness of God and unity of mankind . . . is the bond of union among Baha’is all over the world” Through this Baha’is ‘become united themselves, then unite others.” I well know that “it is impossible to unite unless united,” 24a(I), PUP 150-, DAL 116 #20

Perhaps the key to promoting the oneness of mankind lies in integrating my own being. This is done only by placing all of my resources under the control of my divine nature. Then that love, which, as noted, is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of “Man,” 22(t), 38(e), PT 30 (see page 221 []) may flood my very soul through the portals of light in my inner being. This is the goal of all Baha’is, and to the extent that it is achieved, “they become united themselves” and qualified to “unite others.”

So I pray earnestly, “Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones”; BP’69, 137 #6 and supplicate in these words from my heart:

“O Almighty! . . . Bestow upon us the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be assisted in Thy service and like unto brilliant stars, shine in these regions with the light of Thy guidance.” BP’69, 149 #13

God is waiting to do this; but my part is to turn to Him, reflect, and open my heart to receive His gifts.

Because [the] mind is so essential a faction in human growth, I must understand how it can interfere as well as help in that process, too. I know that if I do not constantly strive to “sanctify” my consciousness from the defects of my human nature, I “will not partake of the bestowals of God.” 68(ee), PUP 190 So let me meditate repeatedly on these admonitions that counsel me in my everyday reacting.

“O CHILDREN OF MEN! . . . O Concourse of light!” HWA 20 #68 (see page 225 [])

“Beware . . . lest ye estrange yourselves from the servants of God. You must

consider all His servants as your own family . . . God has created men to love each other.” 76(bb), PUP 465

“Your behavior towards your neighbor should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be re created by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory . . . Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom on high than ye are known to your own selves.” BWF 118 or GL 316-7

“O SON OF MAN! Deny not My servant should he ask anything from thee, for his face is My face; be then abashed before Me.” HWA 11 #30

“arise ye with such qualities and attributes that ye may continually bestow life to the body of the world, and nurse the infants of the universe up to the station of maturity and perfection.” BWF 353

“O SON OF DUST! The wise are they that speak not unless they obtain a hearing, even as the cup-bearer, who proffereth not his cup till he findeth a seeker, and the lover who crieth not out from the depths of his heart until he gazeth upon the beauty of his beloved. Wherefore sow the seeds of wisdom and knowledge in the pure soil of the heart, and keep them hidden, till the hyacinths of divine wisdom spring from the heart and not from mire and clay.” HWP 34-5 #36

“O MY FRIENDS! Walk ye in the ways of the good pleasure of the Friend, and know that His pleasure is in the pleasure of His creatures. That is: no man should enter the house of his friend save at his friend’s pleasure, nor lay hands upon his treasures nor prefer his won will to his friend’s, and in no wise seek an advantage over him. Ponder this, ye that have insight!” HWP 37 #43

“may your souls receive help and comfort, and, being so strengthened, may they be enabled to live in accordance with the teachings of Baha’u’llah . . . May you be as shining stars, bright and luminous for ever in the Kingdom.” PT 95-6, DAL 31 #23

“The Baha’i youth . . . can contribute . . . decisively to the virility, the purity, and the driving force of the life of the Baha’i Community . . . Upon (them) must depend the future orientation of its destiny, and the complete unfoldment of the potentialities with which God has endowed it.” 103(p), ADJ 18

“O SON OF MAN! Rejoice in the gladness of thine heart, that thou mayest be worthy to meet Me and to mirror forth My beauty.” HWA 12 #36 (see page 129 [])

In this state of mind, my heart is glad - glad that I am part of mankind, part of its oneness, part of its blossoming spirituality. I feel the very presence of the precious Center of God’s Covenant and reflect ecstatically on such words of his as these:

“Ye are the angels, if your feet be firm, your spirits rejoiced, your secret thoughts pure, your eyes consoled, your ears opened, your breasts dilated with joy, and your souls gladdened, and if you arise to assist the Covenant, to resist dissension and to be attracted

to the Effulgence!” BWF 360

“May this boundless love so fill your hearts and minds that sadness may find no room to enter and may you with joyful hearts soar like birds into the Divine Radiance. May your hearts become clear and pure like unto polished mirrors in which may be reflected the full glory of the Sun of Truth.” PT 95

Meditation can help me in a thousand ways to become loving and lovable.

I remember that

“A person through his own actions and deeds makes himself loved or disliked by the people; or through his own unselfish conduct, etc. . . . suffers himself to become favored and beloved at the threshold of God.” 103(r), SofW Vol. 7, 168 (see page 116 [])

I am hindering both my own growth and the unification of mankind to whatever extent I am selfish. But the human creature with its egocentric vision naturally is selfish. Would that I might hasten my growth from an earthbound imperfect human being into an enlightened, loving and lovable spiritual being!

In order to become lovable and loving, I need to have my satanic strength converted into heavenly power, and Baha’u’llah has been empowered to accomplish this task - He Who is the Word of God for this glorious day of God.

“The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change.” 24(ee), BWF 113 or GL 200

What do these words mean? What is the potentiality, meaning or reality of the Word of God, infinite, eternal, divine? Obviously, all this is beyond the capacity of my mind to grasp. How does one approach or solicit help from that “Force” which Baha’u’llah says transcends “the Elixir of His potent Revelation”?

The answer is simple, though: through my heart. Words are but outer symbols. As I read them, I must address my “spirit” and put certain questions to my soul. For it is promised that then the light will break forth and the reality will be revealed. PT 174 (see pages 143 and 165 [])

This is how I may become so loving and lovable that I may indeed help in promoting the oneness of mankind.

Baha’u’llah says:

“Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depth.” BWF 35 or GL 136

What better way is there to do this than to read a few of His words every day and meditate on them? Being immersed in them, means concentrating on them until they fill my consciousness and their reality becomes a dynamic motivation and desire of my heart.

This is mediation in its highest sense.

Do I need encouragement? ‘Abdu’l-Baha gives it:

“Praise be to God, your hearts are turned to Him, your souls are attracted to the

Kingdom, you have spiritual aspirations, and your thoughts soar above the world of dust. You belong to the world of purity, and are not content to live the life of an animal, spending your days in eating, drinking, and sleeping. You are indeed men! Your thoughts and ambitions are set to acquire human perfection. You live to do good and to bring happiness to others. Your greatest longing is to comfort those who mourn, to strengthen the weak, and to be the cause of hope to the despairing soul. Day and night your thoughts are turned to the Kingdom, and your hearts are full of the love of God. Thus you know neither opposition, dislike, nor hatred, for every living creature is dear to you and the good of each is sought . . . The All-Loving God created man to radiate the Divine light and to illumine the world by His words, action and life.” 32(g), PT 112-3 (see page 81 [])

As I reflect on the disclosure of the reality of Baha’is, a powerful motivation floods my being, and I pray that I may express it in my daily reacting and living.

4. TO HELP IN ADVANCING CIVILIZATION

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so in earth.” Luke 11:2

For nearly two thousand years Christendom has prayed thus. Now all mankind has been called upon to become that heavenly kingdom, and been told how to bring this about. Never in the past has mankind known and shared in the responsibility of fulfilling so specific and immediate purpose of the Creator. The commission, knowledge and responsibility weigh heavily on every Baha’i, especially.

First, Our Creator, through Moses, laid down the laws for the spiritual kingdom and commanded blind obedience. Later His “Son” came to teach us how a beloved and loving human being accepts, through pure love, the leadership and guidance of a divine Progenitor. And now as we stand at the age of understanding, the whole plan and purpose of God is being explained so that we can understand our destiny and choose voluntarily and wisely to fulfill it - still through obedience and pure devotion to God.

In the meantime, the human consciousness has been evolving. It began with “the cognizance and consciousness that man has of himself”, 39(p), SAQ 180 (see page 150 []) as center of creation, a separate entity thrust into an environment that is both helpful and hostile, but is definitely full of hazards. This consciousness gradually expanded into an awareness of himself as part of a larger organism made up of people. Spurred by the growing human intellect, evolving man has analyzed the forces that help and harm him, and his consciousness has been supplemented by religious teachings that introduce God as the Ultimate Power to which we must

react and divine Being with Whom we should communicate.

I should realize that in our Long Obligatory Prayer, Baha'u'llah gives me the perfect pattern for mature communication. It starts with me speaking as an individual spiritual being, a soul longing to face divinity and to be led into His Presence. but I end the communication as part of mankind, with thanks and a petition for us - all humanity, and especially the enlightened part of mankind - bearing witness to all that divine Revelation has made available. Baha'u'llah thus brings us up to date in all that the Creator has provided for the evolution of the human consciousness. I can measure my spiritual maturity partly by how aware I am of myself both as a spiritual entity and as a unit of humanity. By now I should know that my personal progress is part of the advancing of civilization and that mankind needs my help in order to fulfill its purpose. Participation is essential in recognizing and serving the purpose and Cause of God.

“All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.”

34a(h), 51(p), BWF 114 or GL 215 (see page 30 [])

A step of advance must be taken now. For

“Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.” 86(b), GL 7 “The day is approaching when We will have rolled up the world and all that is therein, and spread out a new order in its stead. He verily, is powerful over all things.” 86(c), GL 313

“The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective.” 86(d), GL 216

“It is now the time in the history of the world for us to . . . arise to service in the world of morality, for human morals are in need of readjustment.” 91(g), PUP 319

“Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its . . . requirements.” 91(h), BWF 36, or GL 213

Now “The world of spirit needs new life, the world of mind necessitates new animus and development, the world of souls a new bounty, the world of morality a reformation.” 86(e), PUP 273

“No matter how far the material world advances it cannot establish the happiness of mankind. Only when material and spiritual civilization are linked and coordinated will happiness be assured . . . (For) although material advancement furthers good purposes in life, at the same time it serves evil ends. The divine civilization is good because it cultivates morals . . . 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 from every direction the glad-tidings of peace upon earth will be announced.” PUP 105-6

This prospect is so enchanting! - How is it going to be realized?

“Man has two powers, and his development two aspects. One power is connected with the material world and by it he is capable of material advancement. The other power

is spiritual and through its development his inner, potential nature is awakened. These powers are like two wings, both must be developed, for flight is impossible with one wing. Praise be to God! material advancement has been evident in the world; but there is need of spiritual advancement in like proportion. We must strive unceasingly . . . to accomplish the development of the spiritual nature in man.” 48(h), RofM 38

When we speak of civilization we don’t necessarily think of it as connected with religion or spiritual development. But ‘Abdu’l-Baha said:

“I want to make you understand that material progress and spiritual progress are two very different things, and that only if material progress goes hand in hand with spirituality can any real progress come about, and the Most Great Peace reign in the world. If men followed the Holy Counsels and the Teachings of the Prophets, if Divine Light shone in all hearts and men were really religious, we should soon see peace on earth and the Kingdom of God among men. the laws of God may be likened unto the soul and material progress unto the body. If the body was not animated by the soul, it would cease to exist. It is my earnest prayer that spirituality may ever grow and increase in the world, so that customs may become enlightened and peace and concord may be established.” PT 107-8

“Until the heavenly civilization is founded, no result will be forthcoming from material civilization.” BWF 257

As we view conditions in the world it is obvious that our troubles stem from the low morals or lack of spirituality of individuals, groups and nations. It is apparent, too that civilization and morality are closely related.

“Unless the moral character of a nation is educated, as well as its brain and its talents, civilization has no sure basis.

“As religion inculcates morality, it is therefore the truest philosophy, and on it is build the only lasting civilization . . . Because man has stopped his ears to the Voice of Truth and shut his eyes to the Sacred Light, neglecting the law of God, for this reason has the darkness of war and tumult, unrest and misery, desolated the earth.” 70(f), 95 (x), PT 31

It is apparent, that

“In this day . . . the reins of every community have fallen in the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire. On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His Word a dead letter.” Iqan 29

What is going on in the organization called the United Nations shows this. Here representatives of mankind are making halting efforts to take some action that might advance civilization or at least relieve mankind’s common miseries. We see that neither religion nor love of God is a factor in those deliberations. This is why their progress is so limited. After all,

“The greatest bestowal of God in the world of humanity is religion; for assuredly

the divine teachings of religion are above all other sources of instruction and development of man. Religion confers upon man eternal life, and guides his footsteps in the world of morality. It opens the doors of unending happiness and bestows everlasting honor upon the human kingdom. It has been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind.” 96(z), BWF 270

“From the time of Adam to this day there have been two pathways in the world of humanity; one the natural or materialistic, the other the religious or spiritual. The pathway of nature is the pathway of the animal realm . . . The second pathway is that of religion, the road of the divine Kingdom. It involves the acquisition of praiseworthy attributes, heavenly illumination and righteous actions in the world of humanity. This pathway is conducive to the progress and uplift of the world. It is the source of human enlightenment, training and ethical improvement; the magnet which attracts the love of God because of the knowledge of God it bestows. This is the road of the Holy Manifestations of God for They are in reality the foundation of the divine religion of oneness. There is no change or transformation in this pathway. It is the cause of human betterment, the acquisition of heavenly virtues and the illumination of mankind.” 96(y), BWF 235-7

“Man has opposed the Will of God and acted in opposition to the plan of God. Therefore from the beginning of history to the present time the world of humanity has had no lasting rest . . . In the nineteenth century . . . the darkness of imitations and of forms had enveloped religious belief. the people of religions were in constant warfare, filled with enmity, hatred and bitterness.” 97(b), PUP 291-2

“When the lights of religion sets, it is the time for bats to fly . . . When the lights of religion become darkened, the materialists appear.” 97(c), PUP 174

“We should, therefore, detach ourselves from the external forms and practices of religion. We must realize that these forms and practices, however beautiful, are but garments clothing the warm heart and living limbs of Divine truth.” 65(r), 97(g), PT 136

Wen the heart and aliveness of religion are gone, as was true in the nineteenth century, then our Creator in His eternal love and compassion, takes pity on His creatures, and sends new Light into the world. This happened in 1844.

“When the darkness of ignorance and heedlessness concerning the realm of eternity . . . had encircled the universe, then the resplendent Luminary dawned and the brilliant Light illumined the horizon of the East. Hence the Sun of Reality shone forth, scattering the sparkling lights of the Kingdom to the East and to the West. Those who had seeing eyes . . . have beheld the reality of things in themselves, have discovered the mysteries of the Kingdom, were released from superstition and doubts, perceived the lights of Truth, and became . . . intoxicated with the cup of the love of God . . . sacrificing their minds and their lives upon the altar of love.” 99(g), BWF 352 (see page 8w [])

And now

“The Religion of God and the creed of God hath been revealed and made manifest from the heaven of the will of . . . (God) for the sake of union and harmony among the people of the world.” 95(w), BWF 210

Baha’u’llah must have been dismayed at the bitterly cold reception He was given! We hear Him pleading with mankind:

“O MY FRIENDS! Call ye to mind that covenant ye have entered into with My upon Mount Paran . . . Now none do I find faithful unto the covenant. Of a certainty pride and rebellion have effaced it from the hearts, in such wise that no trace thereof remaineth.” 97(a), HWP 46 #7

I thank God that I was awakened by the Renewal of that Covenant, and have become a part of the “mere handful” of souls that Baha’u’llah spoke of when He said:

“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.” 99(l), GL 183

It seems incredible that, I, one single soul among billions, could have any effect on the new civilization that is to be created or on establishing God’s kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven.” But Baha’u’llah speaks with inexorable Authority saying:

“A might power and supreme potency is hidden and concealed in the world of being. Focus your gaze upon it and upon the direction of its unity, not upon the differences which are apparent therein.” BWF 209

Meditate on it, in other words!

Of course that power is the love of God. So it is easy to understand that

“Love is . . . the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world.” 72(a), DAL 108-9 #2

Its “potency” is still “hidden and concealed”, in hearts. We must open their portals that “the fingers of divine power have unlocked,” so that the new light and promise potency may be outwardly manifested 74(l), Iqan 29-30 (see pages 1, 4, and 85 []) so I must remember that every verse that Baha’u’llah revealed “is a bright and shining portal that discloseth the glories of a saintly and pious life, of pure stainless deed.” GL 96 (see pages 1 and 49 []) And I must recall His divine promise that if I ponder His utterances in my heart, I would “surely find the portals of understanding unlocked . . . and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled.” 5(bb), (see pages 1 and 31 [])

I am promised that:

“Were men to discover the motivating purpose of God’s Revelation, they would

assuredly cast away their fears, and, with hearts filled with gratitude, rejoice with exceeding gladness.” BWF 140 or GL 175 (see page 39 [])

This means that I can and may learn through meditation to accept with radiant acquiescence my responsibilities and duties as a Baha’i, however unpleasant they may seem or however much sacrifice is involved in doing so. I’ve been ward to

“Behold how contrary are the ways of the Manifestations of God, as ordained by the King of creation, to the ways and desires of men! As thou comest to comprehend the essence of these divine mysteries, thou wilt grasp the purpose of God, the divine Charmer, the Best-Beloved.” 87(u), Iqan 57

Grasping or gaining an ever-growing “apprehension of God’s purpose for man” is all that is necessary to make me want and be determined to work for its achievement. And meditating or reflecting on it is a means of “grasping”, and accepting as my own, that sublime purpose.

Baha’u’llah encourages me with these words:

“The precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples.” 86(g), BWF 126

“Whenever My laws appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance, they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder.” 86(h), BWF 127

“It is incumbent . . . (to) cleanse the heart - which is the wellspring of divine treasures - from every marking, and . . . turn away from imitation.” 58(g), 7 VAL 5

“Although we are imprisoned in the material world, our spirit (soul) can soar into the Heavens and we shall be free indeed!” 83(ee), PT 111

“Spiritual existence is absolute immortality, completeness and unchangeable being.” 89(h), BWF 267

Di I realize that the next step in advancing civilization is the building of “the World Order of Baha’u’llah” and establishing God’s spiritual world or “Kingdom” here on earth? Do I understand that this was God’s “purpose”, His actual “Cause” when He created man? If I do as I commune with God through the following words, I shall feel an irresistible desire to comply with them all and work to help others apprehend and desire to fulfill that glorious purpose:

“Recite: ‘O God, my God, and my Desire, and my Adored One, and my Master . . . and my supreme Aspiration! . . . thou didst call me into being . . . to manifest Thy Cause. My heedlessness, however, hath deterred me.” 21 (f), ESW 2-4

“Just as you were physically born from the mother into this world, ye must be born again from the mother-world of nature into the life of the divine Kingdom . . . May you all be born again from this mortal world into the realm of the Kingdom. May you clearly witness the signs of God, sense the virtues of the divine, attain the eternal bounties and perceive the reality of life everlasting.” 86(I), PUP 327

‘Abdu’l-Baha pleads:

“Leave all thought of self, and strive only to be obedient and [submissive] to the Will of God. In this way only shall we become citizens of the Kingdom of God.” 86(n), PT 54

My potentialities are beyond imagining, as are those of mankind in this glorious Day:

“O OFFSPRING OF DUST! Be not content with the ease of a passing day, and deprive not thyself of everlasting rest. Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from they mortal cage wing thy flight unto the paradise of the Placeless.” 84(vv), HWP 36 #39 (see page 216 [])

“While possessing physical life,” a person “should lay hold of the life spiritual, and together with bodily comforts and happiness, he should enjoy divine pleasures and content. Then is man worthy of the title man; then will he be ‘after the image and likeness of God,’ for the image of the Merciful consists of the attributes of the heavenly Kingdom.” 36(y), PUP 329

“I hope that you will use your understanding to promote the unity and tranquility of mankind, to give enlightenment and civilization to the people, to produce love in all around you, and to bring about the universal peace.” PT 43

“O friend! Be set aglow with the fire of the love of God, so that the hearts of the people will become enlightened by the light of thy love.” BWF 359

“Exert yourselves so that this glorious teachings may encircle the globe, and that spirituality may be infused into the hearts of men.” 103(x), PT 167

“The East and the West must unite to give to each other what is lacking. This union will bring about a true civilization where the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material.” 71(k), PT 21-2

“Compose your differences, and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lightened, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquilized. Heal the dissensions that divide you, and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of you cities and territories demandeth.” 87(t), BWF 40

Civilization will advance if and when the oneness of mankind is realized and developed. Of course people have no inner unity or oneness except in their relation to God and to Baha’u’llah, and this is a reality and relationship that has yet to be “apprehended” by most people/ In the human world, minds will always oppose each other and hold conflicting views and opinions. Personal desires and efforts will always compete and clash. The only area where people can be united and work together in harmony is in recognition of their relationship to their Creator and in accepting their common purpose in life. But, thank God, the time has come when He is destined to become the accepted Leader and Guide of humanity. His Light is now penetrating hearts subconsciously pointing the way to the new world order. The Baha’i principles are mysteriously becoming felt as realities. And so as the old world order crumbles and the

Baha'i institutions take shape, we can see civilization is advancing into its culmination and fulfillment of God's immediate plan.

How can I personally make the transition from a self-determining being and life struggle for achievement of my personal desires, into a God-directed creature with a totally spiritual purpose and way of life? For this is what is demanded in the World Order of Baha'u'llah! Specifically, how can I be released from the power and dominance of my own ego and free my divine nature to express itself and grow? I cannot! - but "my God, my Adored One" can! He, "my King, my Desire," is only waiting to be asked to do so - He, "the Lord of bounty and the Sovereign of the kingdom of eternity!" BP'69, 11 #1, P&M 264-5 'Abdu'l-Baha promises to be with me as I commune with my Maker in these words:

"Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance to Thy gate," (for selflessness is an attribute that qualifies me to go through the gate and to enter His "holy precincts,") "and aid me to be detached from all things" (for attachment to "things" is what keeps me in the prison of self, even when in my heart, I long to live spiritually and expand my consciousness) "within Thy holy precincts. Lord, give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness" (something that He offers the soul as it reaches out to free itself from human bonds and realize the potentialities of a divine consciousness; and I need this mysterious power to make me grow to spiritualize my reactions); "with its robe clothe me" (envelope and protect me until my humanness disappears,) "and in its ocean immerse me." (To be immersed in and live as a part of the ocean of selflessness! - what heaven that would be!). BP'69, 138 #6

This can happen to me, if I will it and work for it under Baha'u'llah's guidance. For it is destined in time to happen to all mankind. This, the spiritualization of mankind, is the goal of God's Cause. The process began in 1844, and is now going on.

"Human history itself is the arena in which this mighty drama, the intervention of God in the life of man, has been visibly and publicly played.

"Though we have not seen the whole design, but only portions of it, the historic evidence is complete and irrefutable that faith is inspired in men from a higher Power, that faith is born at times of most complete moral and social crisis, and that the foundation of human civilization is a revealed religion. Reborn from the life of nature to the life of the spirit, the followers of the Prophet have demonstrated the power of faith to establish a new society upon the ruins of an order fallen into decay.

"Through a decadent society confers its powers, its authorities and its forms of prestige upon worldly leaders committed to the maintenance of tradition, it has never been able to prevent the ultimate victory of the new and higher vision of the purpose of human

existence.” Horace Holley, “The Meaning of worship” (pamphlet)

nothing on earth can prevent that victory now. Only the time required is in human hands. The new civilization, the World Order of Baha’u’llah, is now being built as the old order is disintegrating. For as already noted, “there is a power in this Cause, a mysterious power far, far, far away from the ken of men and angels.” 21(1), SofW Vol. 7, 34 And

“When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God’s Faith.” GL 319 sec CL

What I have to decide is whether I shall share in such a glorious victory by participating wholeheartedly now in the effort. We are in the “days of world-encompassing trials.” The only way to survive or endure their misery is to stand “fast in the Cause” and to refuse “to swerve from its truth.”

“Baha’u’llah . . . hath, during His last days on earth, given the most emphatic promise that, through the outpourings of the grace of God and the aid and assistance vouchsafed from His Kingdom on high, souls will arise and holy beings appear who, as stars, would adorn the firmament of divine Guidance . . . heralds calling forth the name of the one true God, and establishers of the world’s supreme foundation . . . Their face will radiate heavenly gladness, and their hearts be filled with joy. their souls will be inspired, and their foundation stand secure.” BWF 354-5

Therefore, I commune with my Beloved in these God-given words that promise fulfillment, and pray for myself as a Baha’i, and for the spiritual state into which civilization will advance as rapidly as souls become transformed, thus:

“I implore Thee, O my Lord, by Thy surpassing majesty and Thine Ancient Name, to enable Thy loved ones to assist Thee. Direct, then, continually their faces towards Thy face, and write down for them what will cause all hearts to exult and all eyes to be gladdened.” P&M 77 (see page 120 [])

“O Lord! Grant us Thine infinite bestowals and let Thy light of faith shine . . . Unite and bring mankind into one shelter beneath the banner of Thy protection, (see page 129 []) so that they may become as waves of one sea, as leaves and branches of one tree, and may assemble beneath the shadow of the same tent. May they drink from the same fountain. May they be refreshed by the same breezes. May then obtain illumination from the same source of light and life.” BP’69, 43-4 #30

“O Lord! Point out to us the pathway of Thy Kingdom and resuscitate all of us through the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Bestow upon us life everlasting and confer upon us never-ending honor. Unify mankind and illumine the world of humanity. May we all follow Thy pathway, long for Thy good-pleasure and seek the mysteries of Thy kingdom.” BP’69, 44 #31

This is God’s side of the Covenant, and I know that He will do His part. But the ultimate result and the time that will be required to build the spiritual Kingdom or World Order of

Baha'u'llah depends on mankind's carrying out its side of the bargain. And my part is clearly stated in the foregoing words.

Thus when God "writes down" or plans "what will cause all hearts to exult and all eyes to be gladdened," I must open the portals of my heart to these blessings and "see," through prayer and meditation, what He has planned.

When "the Law . . . streameth from the good-pleasure" of His will, and when His love draws "them that love Him" into any assembly or other gathering, let me make my heart receptive and responsive to both His Law and His love. Prayer and meditation can help me to do this.

When He lets "the light of faith shine," I must be sure to turn to Him so that my inner being shall reflect that light. For I need faith to remain steadfast and to even believe that I can help in bringing mankind into one shelter where all will "obtain illumination from the same source of light and life." (See page 245 []) For certainly a rational view of the world today indicates that such a thing can never happen! I need a strong dynamic faith to reinforce and spur on my efforts. And because meditation is a kind of thinking that puts the spirit of faith into action, I must persist and grow in the habit of meditating.

Above all, I myself must follow God's pathway - the pathway to ever-increasing knowledge and love of God which will bring out my loveliness and spiritual qualities - the pathway of action built on Baha'i principles and on obedient devotion to God's Cause.

This is my wholehearted desire, the determination of my inner being. For I know in my heart that

"One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects those eternal principles proclaimed by Baha'u'llah." Wellspring of Guidance 25 (see page 166 [])

5. THE REALITY OF COMMUNICATION

“The God of Mercy hath . . . created man, and taught him articulate speech.” ESW
1

“All virtues have a center and source. That source is God from Whom all these bounties emanate.” 10(w), PUP 79

“the function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of human hearts.”
PUP 57

“The spread of the known facts of the human world depends upon language.” PU
P58

That kind of language every child learns from those around him, and it is essential to successful life in the realm of human affairs. But also

“We should speak in the language of heaven - in the language of the spirit - for there is a language of the spirit and heart. It is as different from our language as our own language is different from that of the animals, who express themselves only by cries and sounds.

“It is the language of the spirit which speaks to God. When, in prayer, we are freed from all outward things and turn to God, then it is as if in our hearts we hear the voice of God. Without words we speak, we communicate, we converse with God and heart the answer . . . All of us, when we attain to a truly spiritual condition, can hear the Voice of God “. (from a talk reported by Miss Ethel J. Rosenberg.) BNE 99-100, 1970 Ed.

This language is now being taught to Baha’is by Baha’u’llah, continuing God’s elementary instruction of the past.

“The holy Manifestations of God, the divine Prophets are the first teachers of the human race.” BWF 250 ro PUP 82

“The Prophets of God are the first educators. They bestow universal education upon man and cause him to rise from the lowest levels of savagery to the highest pinnacles of spiritual development.” BWF 249, FWU 55 or PUP 81

Can I imagine what life would be without communication with my associates? Without communication there could be no human education, no spread of knowledge, no participation in the realm of human affairs, no conscious understanding between people. Self-expression would be almost impossible. How precious are the gifts of language, articulate speech and communication!

But if conversation is essential to a successful life in the realm of human affairs, even more indispensable and precious is that gift of the language of the spirit, and communication in the realms of divinity. My ordinary daily conversations demonstrate the importance of exchanging with my human associates ideas, experiences and emotions. I could have no life whatever without this exchange. What I may not realize however, is that just as the human being reaches out to people for communication and an exchange of what we need, so too the soul reaches out to its spiritual associates and to divine Beings in a longing for communion and to realize the potentialities of spiritual communication. I know that I am totally dependent of God (see page 169 [], P&M 90) but also I must respond and give something to Him, not because He needs it, but to do my part in fulfilling His purpose. This is what it means to be related to God, and it is a responsibility of every creature to his Creator.

There are many kinds of communication. The dictionary gives these definitions:

1. An act or instance of transmitting
- 2.a: information communicated
- b: a verbal or written message
3. an exchange of information
- 4.pl.a: a system (as of telephones) for communicating
- b: a system of routes for moving troops, supplies and vehicles
- c: personnel engaged in communicating
4. a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols
- 6.a: technique for expressing ideas effectively (as in speech)
- b: the technology of the transmission of information

There are several ways, systems or routes by which the “transmitting” of various kinds of information and messages is carried on. For spiritual communication, an infinitude of information and meanings must be exchanged, and innumerable symbols, techniques and technologies are employed in doing so. In my everyday life, through this basic life-activity, I talk and listen, I give forth and receive, I ask questions and receive answers.

What I seek from my communication is the following:

1. the means of knowing how to live intelligently and successfully;

2. clarification of my objectives and help for achieving them;
3. praise and approval (of myself and those I love);
4. education and self development;
5. intellectual support of my ideas;
6. awareness and confirmations of the reality of Divinity;
7. ideals and aspirations;
8. truth about the Great Unknown;
9. justification for trusting what is incomprehensible and intangible;
10. love that can take root and grow in my heart;
11. an actual being who will love and understand me;
12. clarification of right and wrong;
13. power to supplement my own inadequate abilities;
14. dependable explanations of my own being;
15. authoritative elucidations of spiritual truth;
16. infallible guidance and directions that I can depend on.

My earthly sources of information are fallible, often erroneous, and usually not as authoritative as is claimed or desired. But in spite of that, I love asking questions, and discussing what interests me, and transmitting to others what I have to offer. I communicate about material things. I exchange ideas and emotions in the realm of human affairs. I share with any available understanding hearts my inspirations and thrilling bursts of insight. I discuss with my loved ones the longings and aspirations of my soul. communication is one of the basic activities of living, as essential as food.

Sometimes I am bitterly disappointed in my communicants. My questions bring forth untrue answers. Discussions become arguments that irritate, confuse or upset me instead of enlightening me. I give what I feel is valuable advice or information and it is rejected. Many of my efforts to reach other hearts are unsuccessful or misjudged. In short, while human communication is an indispensable adjunct to living, it often leave me frustrated, and spiritually needy or dissatisfied.

This of course is part of God's Plan. It is the heartsickening disappointments and infuriating frustrations that I experience from human communication that drive me to communication with God where I can learn and participate in a different kind of exchange - a heavenly soul-satisfying communion and intercourse. Pitiful indeed is the soul who does not pray or who has not learned and used the "language of the spirit."

All of those human kinds of discourse are only outer aspects or expressions of an infinite, eternal divine reality which is experienced as an interchange between the Creator and His creation. This elemental communication initiates existence itself, ("He saith: Be; and it is." GL 341) and includes the 'act or instance' of the Creator "transmitting" to His Manifestations and souls what is needed to promote His Cause and carry out His purpose. In an infinite sense, God

“broadcasts,” or casts abroad, to the cosmic thought world and the entire creation what we need for existence; and my being is shaped, by what I receive and answer to what He imparts.

The transmission of His discourse is a mysterious intangible process; and the techniques and system of symbols, as well as the spiritual language itself, are, in the beginning, incomprehensible since they are infinite, eternal and divine. For it is the essence of spiritual realities that He so lovingly and freely communicates to all mankind. For instance:

As infallible Guidance and directions that I can depend on, God sends His Transmitter to us, His Prophet, Whose mission is to “train the souls.” 28(t), PUP 304 And man has responded, at first unconsciously and then consciously. One response is human growth and a start at freeing the self “from the thralldom of natural instincts and physical tendencies,” *ibid.* Another is the experiencing of a “quickenings . . . into higher divine recognitions.” 28(v), *ibid.* (see page 160 []) The common aim of all of God’s Prophets “was to turn the earthly into heavenly, darkness into light, things that are satanic into things Divine . . . and to confer . . . the imperishable blessings of eternal life.” DAL 107 #1 With this Guidance to heaven itself, how could the heart not respond?

As authoritative elucidations of spiritual truth, God broadcasts periodically His Word to us, proving “the reality of Prophethood.” 14 (m), SAQ 174-5 And souls answer this, collectively, by establishing religions which are “the outer expression of the divine reality.” 94(a), BWF 224 or FWU 83 And individually, souls acknowledge the Word by accepting its truth through the spirit of faith. “How could there be conceived any existing relationship or possible connection between His Word and they that are created of it,” 24(rr), Iqan 98-9 except that “those luminous Gems of Holiness” who are commissioned to speak that Word, have been “made manifest unto all men” to impart unto the world the mysteries”; 28(u), BWF 19, GL 47 or Iqan 99 (see pages 161 and 174 []) and souls individually (I, included) “arise and, armed with the power of faith, shatter to pieces the Gods of . . . vain imaginings”? 5(t), GL 217

As dependable explanations of my own being, God “transmits” to us the Perfect Man Who reveals the human potential, “a polished mirror . . . manifesting the attributes of God,” 14(p), PT 25 “in a form that man is capable of comprehending.” 14(q), PT 26 And souls answer this Perfection with selfless devotion and with the unfolding the “virtues deposited” in them “by the loving God.” 78(a), BWF 267 (see page 204 []) This is inevitable, or at least possible, because “the reality of man can become the mirror wherein the lights of God are revealed.” 32(h), PT 113 (see page 81 []) the ultimate response is an ever-increasing divinity in souls because they are the “center of radiation: the sun of truth shines in this mirror.” 17(g), BWF 311 or SAQ 228-9 (see page 81 []) For this, awareness and response alone are needed.

As power to supplement my own inadequate abilities, God broadcasts to us the infinite, eternal divine power called spirit - “the divine breath that animates and pervades all things,” 38(c), BWF 260, PUP 55 (see page 6 and 13 []) making accessible to me its highest degree as it emanates from the whole or Holy Spirit “that exists in the Divine Manifestation.” 38(b), PT 87 (see page 15a []) And souls respond with their highest degree of spiritual power called “the

spirit of faith” and love which “is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man.” 22 (t), 38(e), PT 30 (see page 221 and 233 []) And from these come forth the other Divine virtues that “are the breathings of the Holy Spirit itself.” 22 (v), PUP 200 Another acknowledgment is the dawning power “to perceive the Divine reality of things.” 22(w), PT 85 (see page 153 [])

As clarification of right and wrong, God broadcast His commandments to us, “lamps” of His loving providence and “keys” of His mercy “sent down from the “heaven” of His Will. 23(oo), BWF 127 or GL 332 And souls acknowledge these with obedience and with an awakening recognition of the facts that He “doeth whatsoever He pleaseth,” 23(pp), Iqan 171 and that “the source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command and contentment in His holy will.” 23(mm), BWF 140. Souls do so, at least, unless the ego or human self refuses to accept the “keys.”

As an actual being who loves and understands me, God broadcasts to us “the reality of the Divine Presence,” 26(j), ESW 118 (see page 160 []) which all souls longs for, since they were created to know and to love their Creator. And souls reply by recognizing and turning to God’s “Viceregent,” Whose Presence is the Presence of God. *ibid.* Another acknowledgment is the continuing pursuit of the reality of that precious Presence, until now I find myself asking each day that my prayer may be made “a light that will lead me to the ocean” of that Presence. BP’69, 120-1 #3 or P&M 317 (see page 201 [])

As love that will take root in my own heart and keep growing, God broadcasts His heavenly love to us, love which “is the very cause of life,” 75(r), PT 139 and “the bond of affiliation in all phenomena.” 76(aa), PUP 249 (see page 5 []) He has placed the “celestial tree of love . . . but “one step away” from the spiritual world where souls live 77(jj), HW)P 24 #7 (see page 232 []) This supplies new spiritual nourishment for souls, “for that is the provision and intention of spiritual re-formation.” 79(n), PUP 272 And souls answer with ever-growing “faith”, attraction to the Divine, enkindlement, progress, entrance into the Kingdom of God . . . this love is the origin of all philanthropy; this love causes the hearts of men to reflect the rays of the Sun of Reality.” 5(s), PT 180 (see pages 15g and 198 { }) Another acknowledgment is the increase of purity and holiness in souls, because “the spiritual love of God” has this effect on man “and clotheth him with the garment of virtue.” 34a(e), 104(ii), BWF 365 (see pages 204 and 221 []) This inconceivably great power called love, infinite, eternal, divine, flows continually to us with its “inexhaustible graces . . . and heavenly illumination. Through this love the world of being receives life. Through this love man is endowed with physical existence, until, through the breath of the Holy Spirit - this same love - he receives life eternal and becomes the image of the Living God. This love is the origin of all the love in the world of creation.” PT 180 In blind response to it, unconsciously I experience human love - love of things and people. But with a conscious response to it, I grow into “the love which exists between the hearts of believers,” a love that has indeed taken root and will continue forever to grow in my inner being, as it will in all hearts, until “each sees in the other the beauty of God reflected.” *ibid.* How much of this

bounty I experience depends on my responses.

As justification for trusting what is incomprehensible and intangible, God broadcasts to us the spirit of faith, which, of course, is an element of love, and its “first sign.” 40(I), PUP 331 (see pages 15g, 39 and 197 []) And souls answer with faith in God and love of the kingdoms of earth and heaven, knowing that all of the worlds are “His”. BP’69, 128 #3 or P&M 323.

As truth about the Great Unknown, God broadcasts to us divine Revelation. And souls reply with a dawning spiritual consciousness, and a start at achieving God’s purpose in creating them. For Revelation casts light into the heart, by which God may be recognized; 57(b), Iqan 46 (see page 36) and having become aware of the Beloved, a heart cannot resist the awareness of its own “intended Aim and Desire>” BP’69, 75 #58

As ideals and aspirations, God broadcasts to us “the radiance of all of His names and attributes.” 32(j), BWF 103 or GL 65 (see page 38 []) And souls respond by becoming mirrors “of His own Self” in which these ideals take shape and become “realized.” ibid.

As awareness and confirmation of the reality of Divinity, God broadcasts to us divine spirit, “the Holy Spirit from the Divine Sun of Reality to give light and life to the souls of men . . ., flooding all souls with Divine Radiance.” 22 (n), PT 58 O(see page 27) And would acknowledge this “intermediary” that is needed to bring together the finite and the Infinite, this “mediator between God and Man,” ibid. by learning from the One Who embodies this Spirit the “spiritual virtues,” and experiencing the quickening of the soul that is called spiritual birth. 22(q), PT 59 (see page 42 []) this is the beginning of “the unity and coordination of mankind.” 22(p), PUP 315 If the portals of the soul are closed to the Holy Spirit, though, “the spiritual qualities of the soul . . . become atrophied, enfeebled, and at last incapable.” 22(x), PT97

As intellectual support of my ideas, God broadcasts a heavenly intelligence that manifests in the rational faculties and human intellect or “mind” which God created “before all else” and “made to be revealed in the temple of man.” 14(I), SDC 1 It is communicated through “the Dawning-places of Prophethood,” because “Divine intellectual power is the special attribute of the Holy Manifestation.” and souls answer by catching “a ray of this light” as it falls on the mirrors of their hearts, and acknowledging and using “a share of this power.” 17(f), SAQ 253

As education and self-fulfillment, God broadcasts to us the “pearls” of His “mysteries which lie hid in the seas” of His names and “in the goblets” of His “words” 21(d), ESW 38 “gems of divine wisdom.” 21(e), Iqan 97 And souls respond by soaring “on the wings of renunciation to those heights that are veiled from the eyes of men.” ibid.

As praise and approval (of myself and those I love), God broadcasts to us, speaking through Baha’u’llah, a description of the reality of man, enabling me to see myself and every other soul as “a heavenly gem,” 34(f), BWF 121 or GL 158-9 (see page 10) “one of the mighty signs of the Almighty” 34(e) “a celestial entity,” 34(d), 442(N), PT 85 (see page 56 and 10 []) “the supreme Talisman” currently suffering from “lack of a proper education” and thus “deprived” of what we inherently possess, but whose “station and destiny” the Creator has

“safeguarded.” GL 269-60 Clear and strong the Word comes through that in God’s human creatures “are potentially revealed all the attributes and manes of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed.” BWF 116 or GL 177 This is the reality of man - my reality and the reality of every living soul, revealed by the Words “proceeding out of the mouth of God.” GL 259-60 And souls respond with an ever-increasing love, self-respect and spiritual consciousness, and with a longing to fulfill the purpose of their being. Through prayer and meditation I, having recognized the Source of my education, have put myself under His tutelage, and am trying to “tear asunder . . . the veils that have grievously blinded” my own vision. Through the power born of my faith, I am struggling to “enter . . . the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful” and to “sanctify” my soul from whatsoever is not of God.” 69(tt), BWF 188 or GL 143 And I freely use communion with God to keep the portals of my heart open to the divine means that insure my success.

As clarification of objective and help for achieving them, God Broadcasts to us through Baha’u’llah the very words by which we may gain a clear “apprehension of the purpose of God for man, and particularly of His immediate purpose, “ 34b(c), (see pages 6 and 15g []) which, of course, is what all Baha’is desire. And all souls respond unconsciously by becoming purposeful beings. But my response must be more than this - it must be voluntary and conscious. Baha’u’llah gives me many affirmations by which I may express the reality of my response; for instance: “My heart yearneth after the things ordained by Thee in the heaven of Thy decree and the kingdom of Thine appointment. For whatsoever befalleth me in thy path is the beloved of my soul and the goal of my desire.” P&M 309 My spiritual consciousness will grow if I seek and use these affirmations.

Finally as the means of knowing how to live intelligently and successfully, God broadcasts to us the “first and foremost” of His favors, “the gift of understanding.” 35(m), BWF 121 or GL 194 (see pages 15f, 52, 150 and 813 []) And souls reply by increasing their apprehension of reality, 35(o), PT 41 (see page 150 []) beginning with a knowledge of material existence 69(rr), PT 94 which leads to science and religion, 94(j), PT 145 and finally by developing spiritual understandings, discoveries and communion.” 77(kk) (see page 154)

I note that response to what God “broadcasts” begins unconsciously, between the inner being and its Creator; but it becomes voluntary through prayer and mediation. And only thus can the divine intercourse fulfill its potentialities.

The infinite, eternal, divine exchange goes on eternally, whether I know it or not. It goes on between my inner self and the Source of my life and sustenance, between my heart and its Progenitor, between my reality and the Goal of my existence. But as a spiritual human being, I must externalize it, make it a part of my outer consciousness and daily living. This is the purpose of communion with God: to develop a dynamic consciousness and acceptance of what God is imparting to me. The process is like that of a baby “growing up”, advancing past his blind acceptance of what life imposes on him, and gradually learning to understand and cope with

realities as he moves into a conscious evaluation and use of what life offers. This is how I grow up spiritually too - by consciously recognizing, accepting and using what is offered by the very Source of life. For it benefits me to whatever extent I respond to it.

This demands the use of my total endowments as I face reality and plan my reactions. And it is the time in human history to do so, because I am told authoritatively that “the potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God.” BWF 128-9 or GL 340

I do not know my inherent potentialities, and as I deal with my material surroundings I must admit that I am largely concerned with the dictates of my animal nature: namely, survival and self-reproduction. But even here, and in every phase of my everyday life, I need what God offers and communicates to me. When I become over-concerned with physical survival, I need to hear my Beloved speaking these words to me:

“O SON OF THE SUPREME! To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire and seek thine own?”
HWA 9 #23

“My purpose . . . was that thou mightest attain My everlasting dominion . . . And yet heedless thou didst remain, and . . . didst neglect all My bounties and occupied thyself with thine idle imaginings, in such wise that thou didst become wholly forgetful, and, turning away from the portals of the Friend didst abide within the courts of My enemy.”
82(w), HWP 32 #29

Moreover, even in caring for my body and dealing with material matters, I require the superior wisdom that He transmits. My human will frequently ignores the God-given instinct that protects animals, and I abuse my body. Also I often find myself blindly wasting time and energy by pursuing material treasures and objectives that cannot play any great part in manifesting my latent potentialities. I should heed the Voice of God, saying:

“O SON OF MAN! My majesty is My gift to thee, and My grandeur the token of My mercy unto thee. That which beseemeth Me none shall understand, nor can any one recount. Verily, I have preserved it in My hidden storehouses and in the treasures of My command, as a sign of My loving-kindness unto My servants and My mercy unto My people.” HWA 19 #65

“O SON OF SPIRIT! The spirit of holiness beareth unto thee the joyful tidings of reunion; wherefore dost thou grieve? The spirit of power confirmeth thee in His cause: why dost thou veil thyself? The light of His countenance doth lead thee; how canst thou go astray? HWA 11-2 #34

In the realm of human affairs, where I must cope with vain imaginings and human fancies, I crave the guidance and celestial light from heaven that dispels inner darkness, and I require spiritual potency from my Light-and power Source. I need them in my daily and hourly

reactions. I should meditate on ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s reminder of the time in which I am living too, as He says:

“It is impossible to realize the grandeur and spiritual significance of these peerless days! God is establishing in the hearts of men His Kingdom of peace and good-will. Blessed are those who have taken part in this glorious work.” SofW Vol. 16, 377

To fulfill my destiny in these unprecedented times I therefore should constantly seek communication with my Creator. I need continual enlightenment before I can have any inkling of what my latent potentialities are. And it will take unceasing response on my part and compliance with God-given guidance, if I am to “manifest the innate excellence” of my reality. However, the prospect is breathtaking!

My Beloved has voiced this promise, too:

“Know thou that every hearing ear, if kept pure and undefiled, must, at all times and from every direction, hearken to the voice that uttereth these holy words: ‘Verily, we are God’s, and to Him shall we return.’ GL 345

What a marvelous achievement that would be if I could actually experience the “reunion” with my Creator, and develop that kind of relationship and communion with Him!

How can such a thing be accomplished?

Hungers, desires and needs motivate the process. People struggle to gain what they desire - this is the drive behind all reacting. The effort can be extremely rewarding too, for many of their desires are satisfied “by virtue of their own innate powers,” which is exactly as the Creator intends. 36(r), GL 71 (see pages 24 and 191 []) This is how we “ascend” from the material existence and the level of animal consciousness, to participation in the world of human affairs. The animal instinct of self-preservation drives me to satisfy my most obvious hungers, desires and needs. But I have deeper needs that I must learn to recognize. My hungers are for spiritual sustenance and I must learn how and where my soul is fed and nourished. And I have desires and longings for spiritual progress and achievements that lie far beyond the scope of the “natural” or unenlightened human consciousness. I need information from an Authority about my own aspirations - what they are, and how they can be fulfilled. I need to hear and respond to the following statement, for instance, and, as a positive acknowledgment of it, to meditate on it and be motivated by it.

“Man is always turned towards the heights, and his aspiration is lofty; he always desires to reach a greater world than the world in which he is, and to mount to a higher sphere than that in which he is. the love of exaltation is one of the characteristics of man.” 92(s), BWF 306 or SAQ 219

I am told that “every soul has its particular aspiration.” 96(dd), BWF 36 or GL 213 I have aspirations, know and as yet, undreamed of. I don’t know what their fulfillment will be, but I am well aware of my “love of exaltation.” As a human being my aspirations center in the realm of human affairs and what I unconsciously work for is the exaltation of my human self or ego. But

this is not the ultimate purpose of my inner being. My aspirations are self-centered until I become aware of greater ones. Meanwhile I learn that “aspirations can motivate either my higher or lower nature, but it takes “the blessing of the spirit” to spiritualize them so that they impel me in the right direction and insure my reaching a greater world and higher sphere than where I am . For about the human being, I am told that

“If his morals become spiritual in character, his aspirations heavenly and his actions conformable to the Will of God, man has attained the image and likeness of his Creator; otherwise he is the image and likeness of satan.” 45(kk), PUP 330

“But on the other hand, when man does not open his mind and heart to the blessing of the Spirit . . . all his aspirations and desires being strengthened by the lower side of the soul’s nature, he becomes more and more brutal, until his whole being is in no way superior to that of the beasts that perish.” 49(p), PT 97

So much is in my own hands!

I should keep in mind that my morals can become spiritual and my actions conform to the Will of God only to the degree that I am in communion with God and in close touch with the Light He transmits through the portals of my heart. So this is where I turn both to learn what my destiny is and to prepare myself to fulfill it.

I listen and respond to every admonition, for what my Creator asks me to do and be is the truest revelation of my potentialities. For instance:

“O SON OF MAN! My eternity is My creation, I have created it for thee. Make it the garment of thy temple. My unity is My handiwork; I have wrought it for thee; clothe thyself therewith, that thou mayest be to all eternity the revelation of My everlasting being.” HWA 18-9 #64

“ SON OF MAN! The light hath shone on thee from the horizon of the sacred Mount and the spirit of enlightenment hath breathed in the Sinai of thy heart. Wherefore, free thyself from the veils of idle fancies and enter into My court, that thou mayest be fit for everlasting life and worthy to meet Me. Thus may death not come upon thee, neither weakness nor trouble.” 84(uu), HWA 18 #63 (see page 48)

When my faith wavers, my Beloved urges me thus:

“O FLEETING SHADOW! Pass beyond the baser stages of doubt and rise to the exalted heights of certainty. Open the eye of truth, that thou mayest behold the veilless Beauty and exclaim: “Hallowed by the Lord, the most excellent of all Creators!” HWP 25 #9

“O SON OF UTTERANCE! Thou are My stronghold; enter therein that thou mayest abide in safety. My love is in thee, know it, that thou mayest find Me near unto thee.” HWA 6 #10

When I am depressed or feel the darkness of the prison of self encompassing me, His Voice can reach me, saying:

“O SON OF SPIRIT! My claim on thee in great, it cannot be forgotten. My grace to thee is plenteous, it cannot be veiled. My love has made in thee its home, it cannot be concealed. My light is manifest to thee, it cannot be obscured.” HWA 8-9 #20

“O SON OF SPIRIT! Burst thy cage asunder, and even as the phoenix of love soar into the firmament of holiness. Renounce thyself and, filled with the spirit of mercy, abide in the realm of celestial sanctity.” 84(pp), HWP 35 #38

When all I can see around me is ugliness, poverty and limitations of all sorts, let me hear and meditate on this loving counsel:

“O SON OF MAN! Divest not thyself o My beauteous robe, and forfeit not thy portion from My wondrous fountain, lest thou shouldst thirst for evermore.” HWA 12 #37
And when I seem to be losing my spiritual consciousness, and feel desperately alone, He addresses my inner being repeatedly, and so lovingly - dear God! let me listen and respond!

“O SON OF UTTERANCE! Turn thy face unto Mine and renounce all save Me; for My sovereignty endureth and My dominion perisheth not. If thou seekest another than Me, yea, if thou searchest the universe for evermore, thy quest will be in vain.” HAW 7 #15

“O SON OF EARTH! Wouldst thou have Me, seek none other than Me; and wouldst thou gaze upon My beauty, close thine eyes to the world and all that is therein; for My will and the will of another than Me, even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart.” HWP 33 #31

“O SON OF MAN! Be thou content with Me and seek no other helper. For none but Me can ever suffice thee.” HWA 8 #17

He even teaches me how to answer Him with a call for more needed assistance:

“I entreat Thee . . . to blot out from my heart all idle fancies and vain imaginings, that with all my affections I may turn unto Thee, O thou Lord of all mankind!” BP’70 #54 or P&M 75

Thus I can consciously act to open my mind and heart “to the blessing of the Spirit” and do what is in my power to develop morals that are “spiritual in character.”

Yet to be a person of good morals who sincerely tries to live in conformity with the Will of God, is not enough in this new Day. 70(c), SAQ 344 It is also important to realize that “every age hath its own problem,” 96(dd), BWF 36 or GL 213 and that our problem in this age is to promote the oneness of mankind, 34a(g), BNs #231, 6 (see page 15h []) and thus to achieve God’s immediate purpose for man as revealed and directed by Baha’u’llah. 334b(c), Wsp of G 115 (see pages 6, 15g and 250 []) For upon this depends the carrying forward of an ever-advancing civilization. 34a(h), BWF 114 or GL 215 (see pages 30 and 237 []) As a Baha’i I know this, so I have a responsibility to help in that effort. My first duty it to establish unity in my own being and personal relationships. To encourage and empower me, I need to hear and answer such authoritative reminders as these:

“O SON OF MAN! A dewdrop out of the fathomless ocean of My mercy I have shed upon the peoples of the world, yet found none turn hereunto, inasmuch as every one hath turned away from the celestial wine of unity unto the foul dregs of impurity, and, content with mortal cup, hath put away the chalice of immortal beauty. Vile is that wherewith he is contented.” HWP 43 #61 (Dear God! - protect me from that kind of contentment!) Let me meditate on these words of “Abdu’l-Baha as He puts my potentialities into words:

“You must love your friend better than yourself, yes, be willing to sacrifice yourself.” 76(cc), PUP 213

[Baha’u’llah says . . .]

“O DWELLERS OF MY PARADISE! With the hands of loving-kindness I have planted in the holy garden of paradise the young tree of your love and friendship, and have watered it with the goodly showers of My tender grace; now that the hour of its fruiting is come, strive that it may be protected, and be not consumed with the flame of desire and passion.” HWP 34 #34

And:

“The fruit of the human tree . . . is the love of God; it is the love of humankind; it is to wish good for all the people of the earth; it is service to humanity.” 79(k), SofW vol. 7, 150

Love and friendship! - I do pray for these in my dealings with my everyday associates.

And I turn to the Source of all love to heart His Voice gently counseling me:

“O SON OF BEING! My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure, and he that turneth away shall surely stray and perish.” HWA 5 #9

Recalling what I have learned from the Baha’i Teachings, I realize that:

“Baha’u’llah has proclaimed and provided the way by which hostility and dissensions may be removed from the human world.” 86(k), PUP 225 (see page 231 [])

As I turn to Him, I see myself as a part of humanity that is desperately seeking God’s stronghold and provisions. For here alone is offered escape from the hostility that spawns warfare and destruction.

I remember too, ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s explanation that

“Real love is impossible unless one turn his face towards God and be attracted to His beauty.” DAL 116 #22

And my Beloved’s admonition:

“Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved . . . through a virtuous life and a goodly behavior.”

101(ff), BWF 139-40 or GL 193-4

So I turn to my Lord to pleas for us all:

O God, my God! these are servants attracted in Thy days by the fragrances of Thy

holiness . . . responding to Thy voice, uttering Thy praise, . . . understanding Thy verses, hearkening to Thy words . . . “BP’69, 83 #68

“I beseech Thee, O God of bounty and King of all created things, to guard Thy servants from the imaginations which their hearts may devise.” BWF 79 or P&M 283

“I implore Thee . . . to send down upon us from Thy retreats on high that which will enable us to draw nigh unto Thee . . . and enlighten our hearts with the effulgence of Thy knowledge.” BWF 153 or P&M 221

“Cause them to be so enraptured by the sweetness of Thy divine melodies that they will rid themselves of all attachment to any one except Thee.” P&M 98

“Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight with God hath made the Throne of His Paradise.” GL 31

Daily I commune with “the Desire of the world and the Beloved of the nations,” in such words, and find it tremendously satisfying to end with the petition which also states His intention: to do with His loved ones as becomes His bounty and is worthy of His grace. (See page 55 [])

And as I pray and listen for an answer once more these words reach my heart as an answer for us all:

“O people! . . . behold that which hath been sent down from the Throne on high, and meditate thereon with innocent and sanctified hearts.” BWF 34 or GL 105 (see page 226 [])

“O ye Cohorts of God! . . . this community of the Most Great Name is . . . striving . . . to live in accordance with the divine Teachings in order that . . . the human race attain to higher morals, conduct and manners.” 87(x), TAB Vol. 1, 41

I am striving to respond appropriately and it is a comfort to feel that I am part of a community that has the same goal.

But I must not sit back and expect my community to carry me along and provide the stimulus I need. In fact if I try this, if I depend too much on my fellow-believers for my spiritual help, I shall be disappointed. I’ll expect too much of them and become critical. All human beings, including Baha’is, are at different levels of development, and while their love and help are precious, they cannot supply the divine power that I need for growth. I meditate on the following words and realize that my need and their fulfillment are a matter between me and my heavenly Progenitor:

“O YE SONS OF SPIRIT! Ye are my treasury, for in you I have treasured the pearls of My mysteries and the gems of My knowledge. Guard them from the strangers amidst My servants and from the ungodly amongst My people.” HWA 20 #69

This reminds me of my responsibility for self-development and that for the gems of knowledge that I need I must turn only to Him. I must heed and dedicate myself more devotedly to what He broadcasts to me. I should be more concerned about obeying Him than about what I

can get from my fellow-believers.

So I meditate on this admonition and the explanation that ‘Abdu’l-Baha is quoted as leaving for us all:

“Become servants of the heavenly kingdom, captives in the service of the Will of God. This captivity is freedom, this sacrifice is glorification . . . For service . . . is unity with God.” 15(z), 84(rr0), PUP 181

“The sweetest thing in the world is to obey strictly the commands of God and shun His prohibitions. Through this the attractions of the love of God will be created in the human consciousness.” 104(jj), SofW Vol. 9, 103

This brings me back to the subject of love, and to how I may acquire more of it. For of course love is the essential quality for promoting the oneness of mankind.

“The essence of love is for man to turn his heart to the Beloved One, and sever himself from all else but God, and desire naught save that which is the desire of his Lord.” 76(ff), BWF 140-1

“Real love is the love which exists between God and His servants, the love which binds together holy souls. This is the love of the spiritual world, not the love of physical bodies and organisms. For example, consider and observe how the bestowals of God successively descend upon mankind; how the divine effulgences ever shine upon the human world . . . Were it not for the love of God, hearts would be inanimate, spirits would wither and the reality of man would be bereft of the everlasting bestowals. 86(j),m PUP 250

Wholeheartedly my answer comes:

“Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee.” BP’69, 137 (see page * ___)

Meditating on the foregoing words fills my heart with gratitude for His “bestowals”, and prompts me to respond sincerely with such words as these:

“Thou hast led those with parched lips to the fountain of guidance.” BP’69, 149
#13

“Cast upon this poor and desolate creature, O my Lord, the glance of Thy wealth, and flood his heart with the beams of thy knowledge, that he may apprehend the verities of the unseen world, and discover the mysteries of Thy heavenly realm, and perceive the signs and tokens of Thy kingdom, and behold the manifold revelations of this earthly life all set forth before the face of Him Who is the Revealer of Thine own Self.” BWF 73 or P&M 52-3

To “apprehend the verities of the unseen world and discover the mysteries of the heavenly realm and perceive the signs and tokens” of God’s kingdom:, it is for this that I commune with my Beloved and pray for such enlightened and spiritual vision make it possible for me to real-ize the potentialities inherent in my station the full measure of my destiny on earth

and the innate excellence of my reality. For today is the time of the coming on earth of the heavenly “kingdom” 93(ee), PUP 328 and we are given exiting new truth and Light on this subject on which to meditate and act. For instance:

“the Kingdom is not a material place, it is sanctified from time and place.” 83(aa), SAQ 280 (see page 2 [])

I learn that this realm of existence is a real world, that underlies the “appearance” that we know as the three dimensional world. For, as my Beloved affirms:

“We have demonstrated that all things are the recipients and revealers of the splendours of that ideal King, and . . . that nothing whatsoever can exist without the revelation of the splendour of God, the ideal King . . . Behold how within all things the portals of the Ridvan of God are opened, that seekers may attain the cities of understanding and wisdom, and enter the gardens of knowledge and power.” Iqan 140

It is not a world distant and apart from where we live. Rather it is a newly revealed underlying dimension of our own domain: its Source and Purpose.

Always we have thought of “heaven” as a condition to which a soul “ascends” after the earthly life is ended - a separate world from our everyday existence. At best, in referring to a spiritual state of consciousness, or “the heaven of communion” with my Beloved 84(nn), HWP 24 #8 (see page 68 []) we have been aware of a condition to which hearts and minds could soar only on special occasions, rather than a world that is part and parcel of the realm of human affairs. But now I learn that “the world of humanity” being “out of touch with the world of God” 55(ll), PUP 299 is a temporary and abnormal condition that Baha’u’llah has come to remedy; and that “the perfections of the spirit” are an evanescent part of mankind and are destined to appear again and more powerfully, in this world of human existence for otherwise “the world would be like a body without a soul”. 70(b), BWF 314 or SAQ 234 The spiritual world is the world of the purpose and power of the Creator. I must awaken to the reality of this spiritual world just as each human being must awaken to the reality of his own soul.

I am a purposeful and powerful being, I am part of and living in the world of divine purpose and power. To be in satisfying, joyous harmony with this underlying realm of reality, my purposes and goals must become a fulfillment of God’s purpose for man. As I word for them, I must understand and activate the full power that God provides for my success and fulfillment. Otherwise I may be unable to qualify for life in that heavenly realm. I am communicating, reacting and living “spiritually” if and when I make myself part of this heavenly world of divine purpose - seeing, reacting to and in close communication with it - instead of limiting myself to the world of my personal purposes and powers. Otherwise I am marking time spiritually, frustrating my inner being, and preventing the growth of my soul.

Baha’u’llah, the Voice of God, speaks assuring me that in reality, from that inner spiritual world, there has been provided here everything that I need and desire to insure the fulfillment of the highest purpose of my being: love, knowledge, power, vision, receptivity, and divinity; and

loving lovable Beings, helpful Communicators, and a heavenly spirit and undying light to be communicated to me. But here I stand in my own little world where what I desire in my present human condition is sadly limited. Here love is restricted by animosity, hatred and revulsion. Ignorance plagues me and creates darkness in my environment. Powers outside of me are often hostile or destructive, and my own abilities frequently prove inadequate or fail me entirely. I am forced to cope with blindness, insensitivity, and evils of all sorts, including hateful beings, undependable communicators and areas of confusion and helplessness that torment and terrify me. Why would I ever want to anchor my consciousness in this outer world, when there is an alternative?

“It is our duty in this radiant century to investigate the essentials of divine religion, seek the realities underlying the oneness of the world.” 98(e), BWF 229
Prayer and meditation are ever-available portals of “investigation” into the world of infinite purpose and eternal divine power.

Once again my heart echoes these words:

“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.” 1(b), BWF 279 (see page 201 [])

Baha’u’llah remind me of Isaiah’s words:

“The Lord shall be exalted in that Day. Every fair-minded person is led, by the fragrance of these words, unto the garden of understanding, and attaineth unto that from which most men are veiled and debarred.” ESW 146

To those who are still pursuing their own egocentric purposes and desires, God speaks:

“‘Where is Paradise, and where is Hell?’ Say: ‘The one is union with Me; the other thine own self, O thou who . . . doubttest.’” ESW 132

Baha’u’llah’s loving call to me and to all people stirs me to the depths of my soul as I ponder on it:

“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 Ridvan of everlasting reunion, and in one breath commune with the heavenly spirits . . . Peace be upon him . . . who, in the name of God, standeth in the path of His Cause, upon the shore of true understanding.” Iqan 43 (see page 70 [])

“Strive, O people, to gain admittance into this vast Immensity for which God ordained neither beginning nor end, in which His voice hath been raised, and over which have been wafted the sweet savors of holiness and glory.” 85(iii), BWF 35 or GL 107

Since I am committed, as a Baha’i, to helping to bring this new dimension into the human consciousness and to establish this Kingdom of Divinity “on earth as it is in heaven,” I need to the comments and suggestions that the Master Builder offers, such as these:

“O COMRADES! The gates that open on the Placeless stand wide and the

habitation of the loved one is adorned with the lovers' blood, yet all but a few remain bereft of this celestial city, and even of these few, none but the smallest handful, hath been found with a pure heart and sanctified spirit." 101(y), HWP 27 #17

"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." 83(t), 55(ii) or HWP 50 #79

I need explanations, too, that will increase my understanding of how to function in "this celestial city" and "realms of mystic holiness" where "the people of God" are working to "ennoble" the life of the world and to "regenerate its peoples." 103(j), GL 270-1 (see page 230 []) For instance, I must understand that

"Life is of two kinds: that of the body, and that of the spirit. The life of the body is material life, but the life of the spirit (would) expresses the existence of the Kingdom, which consists in receiving the Spirit of God, and becoming vivified by the breath of the Holy Spirit." 92(o), SAQ 280-1

"God . . . out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things. . . and . . . Hath received them into His kingdom of incorruptible glory." 31* ___, BWF 102 or GL 64-5

As "love has no place, but . . . is connected with the heart; so the Kingdom has no place, but is connected with man. Entrance into the Kingdom is through love of God, through detachment, through holiness and chastity, through truthfulness, purity, steadfastness, faithfulness, and the sacrifice of life . . . " 83(bb), SAQ 282 (see page 148 [])

This, then, is the domain of my reality and inner life:

"The outer expression used for the Kingdom is heaven; but this is a comparison and similitude, not a reality or fact, for the Kingdom is not a material place, it is sanctified from time and place. It is a spiritual world, a divine world, and the center of the Sovereignty of God; for it is freed from body and that which is corporeal, and it is purified and sanctified from the imaginations of the human world." 83(aa0), SAQ 280 (see page 2 [])

"In the spiritual world, the divine bestowals are infinite, for in that realm there is neither separation nor disintegration which characterize the world of material existence. Spiritual existence is absolute immortality, completeness and unchangeable being." 83(gg), PUP 87

"Ponder in thine heart the revelation of the soul of God that pervadeth all His Laws, and contrast it with that base and appetitive nature." 21(b), GL 160-1

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." 21(a), Isaiah 55:8

"The spiritual world, . . . is the Kingdom of complete attraction and affinity. It is

the Kingdom of the one divine spirit, the Kingdom of God. Therefore the affinity and love manifest.” 83(ff), PUP2

But because I am so human, so veiled in relation to divine secrets and heavenly realities, and so absorbed in the outer world, I need to heed all of the heavenly counsels and instructions that are issued from Headquarters; for only thus can I develop my insight and awareness regarding that spiritual world. It is my own loss and failure if I do not avail myself of the truth that can vivify my spiritual consciousness - truth that is called “living waters . . . from the cup of . . . Revelation and the Revealer,” 25(111), BWF 91 or P&M 197 and that “have flowed down out of the mouth: of God’s Will. 25(mmm), BWF 147 or P&M 42 I must, in short, keep in close communion with my Source, my Guide and my Purpose, and learn to think of myself as the spiritual being or celestial entity that I am in reality. 34(d), PT 85 (see pages 6, 10 and 253 [])

At this point I must recall the reality of communication and “the language of the spirit,”

“which is independent of speech or writing, by which God can communicate with and inspire those whose hearts are seeking after truth, wherever they are, and whatever their native race or tongue. By this language the Manifestation continues to hold converse with the faithful after His departure from the material world. Christ continued to converse with and inspire His disciples after His crucifixion. In fact He influenced them more powerfully than before; and with other Prophets it has been the same. “ 70 BNE99 (see page 247 [])

This should awaken me to a new awareness of the reality and potentialities of communion with Baha’u’llah whose presence is the Presence of God. (see pages 144 and 160 [])

The human spirit limits the human consciousness to “the world of attributes” which Baha’u’llah calls “the relative world” 7 VAL 26 - a world illumined by the light of human intellect whose highest product is scientific knowledge, but knowledge, acknowledged by scientists themselves to be only “relative knowledge”. He points out that His “statements are made in the sphere of that which is relative because of the limitations of men;” but He refers to “personages who in a single step have passed over the world of the relative and the limited, and dwelt on the fair plane of the Absolute,” and “have burned away these relativities with a single spark”. 7 VAL 27 And this suggests that I open the portals of my heart to what Baha’u’llah has revealed, to see life in the heavenly light that He brings, and to feel the way an enlightened soul would naturally feel. For by unveiling God’s purpose for man, Baha’u’llah has elevated enormously the potential level of human consciousness. Now therefore, I can learn to react spiritually. Only thus can I manifest the endowments inherent in my station, the full measure of my destiny on earth and the excellence of my reality.

Spiritual communication is essential to this kine of living and reacting. I must keep in close touch with the Holy Spirit though communication with Baha’u’llah. I find it natural too, at

times, to commune with ‘Abdu’l-Baha. Why should I not also be in communication with Shoghi Effendi and perhaps even with one or more of the departed souls who radiate a light that “is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples”? 29(mm), GL 157 (see page 156 []) Or even with a dear one who has passed on?

The following quotation from Human Personality by F.W.H. Myers, “a work which summarizes many of the investigations of the Psychical Research Society,” was mentioned fifty years ago by Dr. J.E. Esslemont in his Introduction to the Baha’i Faith, Baha’u’llah and the New Era:

“Observation, experiment, inference, have led many inquirers, of whom I am one, to a belief in direct or telepathic intercommunication, not between the minds of men still on earth only, but between minds or spirits still on earth and spirits departed. Such a discovery opens the door also to revelation . . .

“We have shown that amid much deception and self-deception, fraud and illusion, veritable manifestations do reach us from beyond the grave . . .

“By discovery and by revelation certain theses have been provisionally established with regard to such departed souls as we have been able to encounter. First and chiefly, I, at least, see ground to believe that their state is one of endless evolution in wisdom and in love. Their loves of earth persist, and most of all, those highest loves which find their outlet in adoration and worship . . . Evil to them seems less a terrible than a slavish thing. It is embodied in no mighty potentate; rather it forms and isolating madness from which higher spirits strive to free the distorted soul. There needs no chastisement of fire; self-knowledge is man’s pu[n]ishment and his reward; self-knowledge and the nearness or the aloofness of companion souls. For in that world love is actually self-preservation ;the communion of saints not only adorns but constitutes the life everlasting. Nay, from the laws of telepathy it follows that that communion is valid to us here and now. Even now the love of souls departed makes answer to our convocations. Even now our loving memory - love itself is a prayer - supports and strengthens those delivered spirits upon their upward say.” ‘70 BNE 212-3

To souls who have been enlightened by authentic explanations of spiritual communication (see pages 154-7 []) the foregoing is interesting merely as an indication of how the less common manifestations of spiritual life and worlds are gradually being recognized by rational-minded people and individuals who dissociate this subject from all religious significance. It should strengthen then my faith in all that Baha’u’llah has said in describing the potentialities of a soul’s powers of perception. Surely I should recognize communion with the unseen realms of spirit as a reality and worthy of my attention and use. I should see that divine power not as a psychic phenomenon, but as a capacity, predominantly latent, of my inner being. As a seeker in the “Valley of Knowledge,” I remember the promise:

“The wayfarer in this Valley . . . breaketh the cage of the body and the passions, and consorteth with the people of the immortal realm.” 82(z), 7 VAL 12

As for communication with Baha'u'llah, this is a must, whether it be wordless or through His Writings and via the “thoughts” and “contemplations” that are “the product of what hath been generated through the movement of the Pen” of God’s “behest”. P&M 149

It should be obvious to me that in the Day of God, communication with “the immortal realm” transcends what has been known as prayer and meditation in the past. For now man can aspire, and is at the brink of progressing, to “win his way to the summit of realities,” where “none shall contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein.” 7 VAL 1-2 (see page 199 [])

This is the ultimate in spiritual consciousness. It may seem like an unattainable goal. Yet again I am drawn to these words:

“Whosoever the light of Manifestation of the King of Oneness, settlenth upon the throne of the heart and soul, His shining becometh visible in every limb and member. At that time the mystery of the famed tradition gleameth out of the darkness: “A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him; and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth. . . “7 Val 22 (see page 200 [])

How glorious it would be to be so tuned to what He broadcasts that Baha'u'llah might become “the ear wherewith” I hear!

And there is a very possible way to start: for to “see God in” whatever I am reacting to is simply a matter of recognizing two revealed truths: (1) that what I love and find “good” in what faces me, is a reflection or radiance from God’s attributes; 33 (1), SAQ 300-1 (see page 43 [] _ and (2) that when I face something revolting or “evil”, in some way it plays a part in fulfilling His purpose. 31(v), ADJ 69 (see pages 111 and 206 []) If I remember this it will keep me in close touch with my Beloved. For in the light of this dual truth I see that in dealing with all of the “good” things of life, I should be thinking Him for His revelation of divinity; and when encountering “evil”, I should seek and depend on His protection from it and for faith and understanding that will enable me to deal successfully with the test that is involved.

How can I keep this in mind? The answer is: reaction by reaction.

A reaction is a kind of communication. When I react to a person I am recognizing, feeling and doing something about what he projects in my direction - his words, his thought, his feelings. How marvelous life could be if I were to make every reaction, a reaction to God! This is what a person achieves who does not “contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein.” 7 VAL 2 (see pages 199 and 268 [])

It is not at all impossible! For when I see and react to God’s attributes, purpose and power, in what I deal with, I am reacting to Him - not only receiving and acknowledging His communications broadcast through Baha'u'llah, but seeing and dealing with the divinity or His attributes in the matter at hand.

We all unconsciously react with love to what we see as perfect or beautiful. But to love what faces one simply because we “see God therein”, can be an entirely new way of viewing life.

It produces a new kind of reacting and living: the truly spiritual kind that the Prophets of God have been trying to teach people for thousands of years. The epitome of this kind of reacting has been voiced in these words, which also define the true “lover” of God:

“Perish that lover who discerneth between the pleasant and the poisonous in his love for his beloved!” 92(r), P&M 11

This is indeed a heavenly but still distant goal. But what has made progress so slow is man’s vision. Our ability to perceive divine realities, all of which are infinite and eternal, and to understand the heavenly secrets that the Manifestations have tried to explain, has had to grow “from scratch.” We are shortsighted, and choose what is pleasant over what may be ultimately far better. Enlightened souls who are called Baha’is still have to be urged to gain a working consciousness of that newly revealed dimension of life, the divine purpose underlying it and its outer material expressions. However, we are now receiving the infallible Guidance, and irresistible notice that the time has come for us to gain “a clearer apprehension” of that heavenly dimension. Administrative action is currently geared to help us as a Community and as individuals to move toward this goal.

Let me ponder with faith then on the fact that this is the promised Day of God, and that it is possible for me to manifest my innate excellence and to realize the potentialities inherent in the station of man. The whole pattern of human evolution has been laid out before me.

“Wherefore must the veils of the satanic self be burned away at the fire of love, that the spirit may be purified and cleansed and thus may know the station of the Lord of the Worlds.” 54(u), & VAL 11

“Development and progression imply gradual stages or degrees . . . Now is the beginning of the manifestation of the power spiritual, and inevitably its potency of life forces will assume greater and greater proportions . . . It will reach such a degree that spiritual effulgences will overcome the physical, so that divine susceptibilities will overpower material intelligence, and the heavenly light dispel and banish earthly darkness.” 91(b), PUP 127

Do I long to achieve that high destiny? Baha’u’llah tells how it can be done.

“Purify thou, first, thy soul with the waters of renunciation and adorn thine head with the crown of the fear of God.” 104(y), ESW 2

“Wash from your hearts all earthly defilements, and hasten to enter the Kingdom of your Lord.” 104(z), BWF 37 ro GL 210

I do yearn to be close to God! - to become His devoted beloved servant. ‘Abdu’l-Baha gave this counsel in answer to such a desire:

“Question: What can I do to become the real servant of God? Answer: Live thou in accord with the Teachings of Baha’u’llah. Do not only read them. There is a vast difference between the would who merely reads the word of Baha’u’llah and the one who tries to live them. Read thou the Hidden Words. Ponder over their meanings and embody

the behests into thy life.” 102(h), SofW, Vol. 7, 178

I need to realize the importance of maintaining a dynamic communication and relationship with Baha’u’llah and understand the sublime part that He plays in effecting the destined transformation of character:

Of the Creator He says:

“He saith: Be, and it is.” GL 341 (see page 250 [])

And in communing with God, He has said:

“Thou didst through a word of Thy mouth, bring creation into being and fashion the universe.” 37(ee), BWF 142 or P&M 6

Baha’u’llah is the Bearer and Instrument of that Word. Reacting to Him is the same as reacting to God.

He tell us that

“Deity, . . . the beginning” and “the End” of all existence, “the Innermost Spirit of Spirits and Eternal Essence of Essences,” 12(a), BWF 24, GL 54 or Iqan 179, speaks from “the throne of eternity.” 9(d), P&M 86-7

There “the world of existence has no beginning” 8(a), BWF 297 or SAW 209 for to Him “the end is the same thing as the beginning.” 8(c), SAQ 174 He has brought into being a creation that is “absolutely infinite” and whose “phenomena” are “endless,” 11(hh), PUP 268 moving by “the law of progress” which the human mind sees as evolution , from the inferior to the superior degree. We are now enlightened about what causes evolution on earth: in each age, transformation in the whole character of mankind” that is involved in BEING what God commands, takes place as a result of that Word, BE! That is embodied in the Manifestation of that age and brought to mankind as a Revelation. Thus Baha’u’llah is the “recipient of the Divine Command” for this Day. 26(f), Iqan 153 “single-handed and alone” He has “promulgated the law of God” 28(y), Iq1an 45 Through Him “every soul was directed towards the kingdom.” 28(cc), BWF 71 or P&M 50

In short, it takes action by Baha’u’llah in relation to my own soul plus response on my part to make what exists in me potentially to “BE: in the world of my own inner life and the realms of human experience. For I remember that through His God causes “the letters B and E: - the evolving elements of creation’s potentialities - “to be joined and knit together,” so that these can be seen and outwardly manifested in mankind and in my own Being (see page 54 [])

So I must commune with Him, dwell in His presence, and pray through Him. And the exhilarating part of spiritual consciousness today is that Baha’u’llah is Himself a Being that both my mind and my heart can apprehend. He embodies and makes accessible to me the power by which I am “able to receive help from the divine Reality.” 15(cc), PT 57-8 (see page 117 []) He is the Being through Whom knowledge can be gained of Him “Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men.” As the Day-Spring of God’s signs, BP’69, 126 #3 or P&M 322 Baha’u’llah brings together and transmits to mankind and to my soul, what is required for the transformation

of the human creature into what God has commanded by that Word, BE!

Especially I need to heart and continually reflect on the light that He makes available in my inner consciousness. My soul is hungry for the truth He reveals and I long to become one of “the learned ones in Baha.” What undreamed of potentialities and excellences can be stirred and called into being by such words as these?

“Happy are ye, O ye the learned ones in Baha. By the Lord! Ye are the billows of the Most Mighty Ocean, the stars of the firmament of Glory, the standards of triumph waving betwixt earth and heaven. Ye are the manifestations of steadfastness amidst men and the daysprings of Divine Utterance to all that dwell on earth. Well is it with him that turneth unto you and woe betide the froward. This day, it behoveth whoso hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of Everlasting Life from the Hands of the loving-kindness of the Lord his God, the Merciful, to pulsate even as the throbbing artery in the body of mankind, that through him may be quickened the world and every crumbling bone.” Aqdas 27

“The breeze of holiness, laden with the love of Thy Lord, (hath) stirred thy spirit within thee, and the waters of understanding have washed from thee the stains of remoteness and ungodliness.” 40(h), GL 303

“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.” 82(v), PT 127-8

“Happy is the man that hath heard Our voice, and answered Our call. He, in truth, is of them that shall be brought nigh unto us.” GL 335

Trough prayer and meditation let me open the portals or my heart and life to this celestial light!

6. USING THE WORD OF GOD FOR PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

“Is it within human power . . . 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 cold? Perplexing and difficult as this may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We has 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 80 great and far-reaching a change.” 124(eee), BWF 113 or GL 100 (see page 235 [])

We are told that the Elixir of God’s potent Revelation alone can cleanse and revive the vitality of men’s belief in God, and that, transcending the potency of this Elixir, there is a Force capable of converting satanic strength into heavenly power. This is what I long to have happen to my emotional energies! We are also told that only the Word of God has that capacity or “Force”. I know that its power is the “Holy Spirit”, the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestation ,22(o), SAQ 124 (see page 157 []) and specifically now from Baha’u’llah. What I am seeking then, since I desire this transformation, is a way to relate myself to this Power.

I know, by now certainly, that prayer and meditation open the portals of my heart and bring unspeakably glorious power to my inner being. This is true of any prayer or any true spiritual meditation, but it is supremely true of the creative Prayers given for this very purpose, and of meditating on the Word of God itself, what more perfect way could there be, then, for my highest faculties (which must be functioning before I can either pray or meditate) into a dynamic relation with the Power of God, than to use revealed Prayers regularly and to meditate systematically on the “The verses of God”?

As I read some of Baha’u’llah descriptions of a truly spiritual being, or even hear what is expected of me as an active, fully participating community member, I am somewhat appalled by the gap between what I am or do, and that ideal toward which I am striving.

Yes, and I find it very difficult to change. I hoped that enrolling as a Baha’i would transform me. However, when I note the difference made by physical birth- a thrilling change and yet a relatively small transformation - I realize that most of my progress as a spiritually conscious being comes after enrollment through a slow process of growth in the spiritual world, rather than as a sudden miraculous effect. Growth takes persistent subjection to the Sun of Truth and “passing” of spiritual tests, just as a plant for its growth must be subjected to the sun and elements in the material world.

However, lest I be disheartened by my obvious need for transformation and my own resistance to change, I should be cheered by the fact that a hard little black seed can and does become a plant; that a tightly closed-up bud can change into a gorgeous flower, that a weak little barren sapling can become valuably productive fruit tree, and that a helpless infant can become a

strong self-reliant man or woman. So, too, what is a three-dimensional sense perception aware only if immediate physical attributes, can and does in time expand into a cumulative human awareness that perceives a past and a future; and the unenlightened finite transitory human consciousness burdened with illusions, can, by the mercy of God and power of the Holy Spirit, be transformed into a glorious dawning apprehension of infinitude, eternity and divinity. It can set forth, however laboriously, to achieve the glorious purpose of God and move toward the victorious destiny of all living souls. It is possible and it is going to happen; but it takes both inner growth and help from my Creator, in addition to my desire.

The first part of my growth began automatically without conscious control or direction on my part. But little by little as my human will and mind have developed, my progress has been placed increasingly in my own hands. Now if I long for a transformation of my inner being, I must voluntarily do something to cause it. So it is important to understand the processes of human change and development.

These have been explained most beautifully in the following words quoted as having been uttered by our Beloved Master:

“In this twentieth century, man from the time of his birth to the time of his death is subject to the influence of four progressive degrees of human life - physical, intellectual, spiritual and celestial.”

(The physical being develops)

“As soon as the babe is born, the mother suckles it from the breast of kindness, nourishes it with the utmost tenderness, trains it with the greatest compassion, and spends many sleepless and anxious hours at night watching over its cradle. Having reached the stage of childhood, she strives to engrave upon the clean tablet of his mind the elementary lessons of sincerity and honesty, and to illumine in the chamber of his heart the lamps of the refinement of feeling and spiritual susceptibilities. She wards off from him the possibilities of any danger, and supplies all his physical needs.

“Before the child attains the age of maturity, the mother has done everything, putting forth every energy and life to cause his all-around physical growth. Then, the necessities of his life are multiplied. He must work personally for his food, shelter and clothing, and solve independently the three cardinal problems of his physical existence, namely, nutrition, reproduction and production. Thus his physical life is fluctuating between health and sickness, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, happiness and depression. Consequently, in this physical life, no matter how perfect, there is no stability nor permanency.”

(The human being develops)

“His intellectual life begins when he enters the school and starts to learn the principles of knowledge, later on to assimilate the thoughts and ideas of the sages and wise men. His mind is nourished through the lofty ideals of ancient and modern

philosophers. Having learned all that he ought to learn, he starts on his business or professional career, and to a large degree contributes his share to the welfare of the community. His mind becomes a storehouse for useful information, and his intellectual life is constantly replenished through association, and other peers of progress become his contemporaries. Naturally a man of his accomplishments and attainments is very superior to the physical man who lives only for the sake of enjoyment of material pleasures.”

(The spiritual being develops)

“Going a step further, we meet the spiritual man, the man whose spirit is sustained through the moral precepts, ethical advice of the past Messengers and Prophets. If a man of this type lives in accord with the best moral instructions, he will influence the lives of many people; his heart like unto a pure mirror reflects the Rays of the Sun of the Holy Spirit; he will guide his friends to the path of rectitude and integrity, and thus become an example of purity and virtue. This is why in our contact with the man of religions and perfections we often meet a truly grand, noble and spiritual soul, whose words are comforting and whose deeds are philanthropic.

“In the tenement houses and in the social service of the large cities we find that a body of men and women, awakened by a sense of moral and spiritual responsibilities, are devoting their whole lives to the improvement of the awful conditions of the slums, and of the poor who are dragged down by poverty and misery. Those people are not doing these things for selfish purposes, but because through their inner consciousness they are stirred by the feeling of pity and sympathy; hence they devote their time to such a noble work. The Lord loves these people and reward is destined for them.”

(The ultimate earthly development takes place - one becomes a Baha’i)

“But the highest expression of the life of man on this planet in this age and many ages to come, is celestial: - that is, to live and act in accordance with the teachings of Baha’u’llah and be steadfast in the love of ‘Abdu’l-Baha. The Principles of the Religion of the Blessed Perfection adorn the spirit with the highest attributes of the Kingdom of Abha, illumine his heart with the Sun of the Love of God, make him a servant of the world of humanity, and a standard bearer of Universal Peace, and an orb shining from the heaven of righteousness. He forgets himself and lives in the flow of the Love of the True One; he embraces all mankind with an ineffable tenderness, and strives day and night to: serve his fellow-man. Then he becomes a herald of the Supreme Concourse, and wins the good-pleasure of the Lord of Hosts. He will be attracted with the Love of the Beloved and immerse his whole being in the ocean of humility and meekness. He will enlist himself in the army of human progress and limitless advancement of the race. Through his zeal he will sacrifice everything in the Path of God, and quaff from the chalice of Eternal Life! This is the Most Glorious Bounty of the Age. This is the bestowal of the Baha’i Cycle! This is the Light that illumines every heart! This is the water that allays

every thirsty one! This is the Divine ELIXIR that changes man into the Image and Likeness of the ALMIGHTY!” (Pilgrim notes on personal Tablet supplied by Helen Archambault)

Here I see the whole picture of earthly life as one long gradual transformation: the helpless babe that has no conscious knowledge or love, converted into a wise loving human being, and finally into the image and likeness of the Almighty. What an incredible transformation that is!

“O SON OF MAN! Veiled in My immemorial being in the ancient eternity of my essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty! HWA 4 #3

The greatest general change I can experience is from egocentric human vision to a dynamic awareness of reality that the eyes of my heart can perceive. For since the variations of my life-journey “proceed” from my own vision (see page 15e []) this is what moves me beyond a hostile, hazard-laden world of matter apparent from my lowest level of vision, up into the kingdom of heavenly underlying purpose and divine reality which slowly becomes perceptible as my spiritual sight develops. It is achieved through a life-long growth, and it is the delight of my life, since man always longs to be in a greater world than the one where he is 92(s), BWF 306, SAQ 219 (see page 256 []) I note that this ascent is something I do myself - that is, the ascent is made by virtue of my own powers, to often by a painful growth process or successful dealing with a test 36(r), GL 71 (see pages 24, 191 and 255 []) and this carries with it a reward of additional satisfaction and joy.

But the miracle is that the same kind of uplifting change can also take place in one short moment, through the celestial magic of prayer. I can begin praying in my human consciousness, “lowly and tearful” from a desperate need or even from feeling veiled and separated from God, and seeing, through the eye of humility, my unworthiness, and sinfulness. And as “I cover my face in the dust of that Threshold” of my Lord, the portals of my heart open and I establish communication with my Beloved. And I find my tears have mysteriously stopped flowing or have turned into tears of joy! This is an especially vivid experience of many a believer who has covered his face in the flower petals of a Threshold in one of those heavenly Shrines, and returns to that electrifying experience in the condition of prayer and supplication today. For it is possible thus to experience a recrudescence of the unutterable bliss of those precious moments. And even without the bounty of that memory, once my heart is open and my inner being is responsively turned to my Beloved, I can lift my heart from the threshold that is also the ceiling of my human vision, and find myself, however fleetingly, face to face with His beauty and the ocean of His presence. How can I resist such a glorious transformation of consciousness?

But let me face the fact: my human consciousness does resist it, stubbornly begrudging me the incomprehensible ecstasy of selflessness.

Oh, if I could only overrule my short-sighted humanness and remain at those heights that

I glimpse when my heart truly communes with my Lord! Certainly reaching them is a spiritual phenomenon that I should investigate and subject myself to! This is why I welcome ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s explanation of the transformations that face me. He makes clear the changes that I must undergo: physical, intellectual, spiritual and celestial. These represent progressive stages of being, and to emerge from one to another involves change and transformation of one’s energies and powers, just as driving in a car involves changing gears to permit the power of the car to be used in its different intended ways.

I can think of this potential in relation to my fellow-beings, or to myself.

First let me apply it to others. What I see with my physical eyes when I look at a new born infant is a small dependent physical organism whose life or death depends on the care it is given. Poor little thing! This is what actually exists. But what I should also see is a newly created eternally living soul in its first stage of development with its progress and its growth dependent on the love and education that will be provided for the intellectual, moral and spiritual growth that underlies physical existence. However, whether I see the infant as a heavenly creation or only as a member of the animal kingdom brought into existence by human parents, that infant is reality is an immortal soul, a celestial being, a heavenly gen, a mighty sign of the Almighty (see page 253 []) “the collective center of spiritual . . . forces,” 32(d), PUP 297 and all that Baha’u’llah has revealed about that reality. And I know that, with good hearth, that soul will go on to become a valuable human being and an intellectual person with a moral and spiritual nature. So I love him.

When one confronts his or her own precious off-spring, it is easy to believe this revelation, and to apprehend the reality of that miraculous being. But I may never have seen my own being in that light. Certainly my first ideas of myself revealed very little of my own reality, and these still color my present understanding of myself. At first all I knew of myself was what my senses reported. I began life as a physical being “animated and pervaded” by the lowest degree of my spiritual capacities, the animal spirit, and from this all I knew about myself was in terms of pleasant and painful sense-experiences. Each of these was indelibly imprinted on my brain cells that were empowered to organize these imprints into concepts of reality that were readily recalled or reactivated as needed. And those brain cells represent an underlying part of the machinery with which I shall think and feel through out my earthly lifetime. I used them as a basis of my intellectual development, which began as soon as I learned to translate sounds or words into ideas; for through these I began to receive and express human thoughts. The soul enters this development before the stage of babyhood is past.

Under any but most destructive environmental influences, the soul progresses into the stage of spiritual development when instructed in moral and ethical precepts, for these values, introduced by divine Messengers and Prophets, have been making contributions to the human thought world ever since the time of Adam. Whether a child is given religious teaching or not, he encounters certain “no-no’s” and “Thou-shalt-not’s.” In * ___ developed a conscience of sorts and

shaped my concepts of “right” and “wrong”, my individual moral values and standards. These, also, have been imprinted on my brain cells, and have thus similarly become part of my reacting machinery. Altruism had its beginning at this stage of development. How “spiritual” this made me depends upon the motive underlying my efforts to be “good.” Was it a matter of policy? - I doubtless learned that a certain amount of cooperating serves my own best interest, prompted only by the self-protective instincts of physical existence. But another motive drive is love and a desire to pelage those who are loved. In any case,”common sense” prompts some unselfishness in this stage of growth.

It is obvious, however, that there is a definite limit to how much a human creature will sacrifice himself just to make other people happy. It takes heavenly power to do that. Satanic power is what is being developed and used predominantly by humanity today - power connected with earthly life and activating the lower nature. 55(kk), PUP 289 (see page 83 []) For humanity has identified itself with the material world and is out of touch with the divine world. Even though “religions” still exist in the realm of human affairs,

“All the people have formed a god in the world of thought, and that form of their own imagination they worship; . . . all the sects and peoples worship their own thought; they create a god in their own minds.” 52(d), BWF 281-2

They serve that “God” which is a term applied to what they love and desire from life; and are totally unaware of what their real God or Creator loves, desires and plans for them.

I have been warned in practical terms in a book currently out of print called “Divine Philosophy,” about ignoring the divine world where the one true God rules supreme.

‘Abdu’l-Baha is quoted as saying here:

“If the soul identifies itself with the material world it remains dark, for in the naturel world there is corruption, aggression, struggles for existence, greed, darkness, transgression and vice . . . There is, however, a faculty in man which unfolds to his vision the secretes of existence . . . the power of the mind; . . . and still another power which is differentiated from that of the soul and mind . . . This spirit of faith . . . inspires man to attain the virtues and perfections of the divine world.” 52(b), Div. Phil. 121-2

It is the spirit of faith, directed to past Revelations, that has produced conscience and a certain spiritual growth in mankind. But now what little faith people have is directed to human resources and institutions which are proving tragically ineffectual. Yet the very fact that a new Revelation has been sent, indicates that a metamorphosis of the whole of humanity is now due; for

“The object of every Revelation is 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.” 18(q), Iqan 240

Always in the past religious truth stood somewhat apart from everyday thinking and feeling as mystic, esoteric concepts which were not totally comprehensible. What man had to

deal or cope with seemed largely unrelated to the idealistic objectives and spiritual teachings of the great religion founders, and therefore many have come to think of religion as unrealistic instead of as the “manifest light and strong fortress for the protection and tranquillity of the people of the world” that Baha’u’llah says it is. 95(v), BWF 198 (see page 81 [])

But not it is different. We are told in practical terms that the purpose of earthly life is to acquire virtues, promote the oneness of mankind, and carry forward an ever advancing civilization, and it is becoming more obvious everyday that it is because of the absence of virtues that family life is disintegrating, businesses are failing, governments are rocked and wars rage out of control. Because of man’s need to change, Civilization is retarded. People are clinging to old world order divisions, hostilities and prejudices, and have a glaring need to understand the Purpose of God and the power He sends through Baha’u’llah to achieve that purpose. So, today it is imperative for our very survival, that everyone give attention and react to the latest Religion and to the whole realm of reality that Baha’u’llah has unveiled. Far from being distantly separated from current human problems, the divinely revealed purpose is the final dimension of life that can show us how those problems are to be solved. Thus the Word spoken by the Voice of God today is thoroughly realistic and practical, sent to replace the imaginings and fancies of man which are unrealistic and totally impractical.

When I realize that I am part of faltering humanity, I can understand both how dependent I am on Baha’u’llah’s Revelation, and how desperately I need help from that Source. Without that, I cannot achieve the metamorphosis that is demanded for a soul’s normal progress..

Prayer and meditation are portals that open the eyes of my heart to the Ultimate in Light and Power. And when praying and meditating, it is using the revealed Prayers and contemplating the Manifestation’s own communion with God, that opens those portals most effectively. What could be more potent in bringing about a transformation of my character?

The trouble is that I don’t pray or meditate on the blessed Word as much as I should. I seldom fail to feed my body three times a day, but when it comes to my spiritual meals, I say, “I don’t have time.” How, then, can I expect my spiritual growth to progress normally, or hope to be converted into a celestial being?

I should realize that how soon and how rapidly I can experience the transformation that “Abdu’l-Baha has set forth as the growth potential of a soul, is largely in my own hands. For God has provided all of the elements needed for my growth and has endowed me with the capacity. The question is: how shall I use my endowments?

It is true that my early illusions and ego-centric concepts are a part of me, and I cling to them with the same tenacity with which I cling to my teeth or physical vision. it is also true that my ideas and habits, good and bad alike, are built inextricably into my reacting machinery. Nevertheless, I should remember that that machinery, far from being composed of steel or concrete, is itself alive and subject to growth; so the concepts and images imprinted there can expand and reflect more truth. It happens not by wishful thinking, but by consciously “turning

on” my “spiritual power” or higher-than-human degree of spirit; and then “facing” the reality that Baha’u’llah unveils. I must contemplate and meditate on it, as something that actually exists.

The distinguishing feature of this “spiritual power” (so named to differentiate it from the powers of the human spirit), of course, is the spirit of faith, for this is what enables me, in the light of Revelation, “to see” beyond what my rational mind perceives and reacts to. (see page 17, etc. []) Using this kind of spirit is how and where the transformation of character takes place.

For instance, as a rational soul and from human observation I know that death exists, so I may see annihilation as part of what lies ahead of me. This illusion, in that case, is indelibly registered on my brain cells. But it can be altered or expanded by acceptance of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s explanation that

“Total annihilation is an impossibility . . . As existence can never become non-existence, there is no death for man. . . Death is therefore applicable to a change or transformation from one degree to another.” 88(a), BWF 263-4

No matter how positively, as a human being, I have seen annihilation as a reality or death as a horror, I can “change my mind” if I open the portals of my heart, and view - and meditate on! - the matter, in this new light. I find, too, that I “just know” my being is not going to come to an abrupt end, for some innate knowledge of my heart has already confirmed what “Abdu’l-Baha has said and what every child knows until he is falsely taught otherwise: namely that

“This Great Workshop with all of 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 . . . Numerous and conclusive proofs exist . . . that this infinite world cannot end with this human life. 31(x), BWF 341

See? - the interesting thing is that the rational soul or human spirit is now able to reach up to the heights of revealed truth, and begin to sense it as logic! But of course I have a choice in relation to the disclosure: I can take it and change my mind, or I can reject it and persist in my illusions.

Does it matter whether or not I submit to this change of mind? It certainly does! Transformation of consciousness or changing our minds is the beginning of transformation of character. For example

“The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, a cause of human debasement and lowliness, a source of human fear and objection . . . ; Therefore it behooves man to abandon thoughts of non-existence and death which are absolutely imaginary and see himself ever living, everlasting in the divine purpose of his creation.” 81(k), BWF 265

Do I imagine such a change in outlook would not change my behavior and finally my

attributes? This is the nitty-gritty of transformation! So it is not only possible but obligatory for Baha'is to overcome the human resistance to change. I must make myself view what faces me in the light of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, no matter how drastically the latter contradicts what I "know" or have been conditioned to think as a human creature. I'll need prayer and meditation to help me in this. I must open the portals of my heart to this light. Then it will be possible to change, because the power behind that level of vision, when backed a desire of my heart, is infinitely greater than the powers of my ego or anatomy.

Using the revealed Prayers is one infallible technique for activating my "spiritual powers." Even if I feel no change in my outer consciousness, I am told that every time I merely "intone" any of "the verses of God," as believers should, the Word "kindles" my own soul and has an unconscious effect on my inner growth. 105(c), BWF 123 or GL 295 (see page 115 [])

If, in addition to "intoning" it, I meditate or ponder on it, the expansion of awareness will extend more surely to my outer consciousness. The growth and change then will become greater and more specific, and that action will be augmented by the help that God gives when I daily beseech Him to protect us from the hosts of "idle fancies and vain imaginations" BP'69, 127 #3 or P&M 323 (see pages 17, 56, etc. []) and even to make of my prayer "a fire that will burn away the veils" that my human nature harbors. BP'69, 120-1 #3 or P&M 317 (see pages 53, 54, 75, 210 [])

Do I sincerely desire to change? If so, I should learn how to use the mysterious force capable to effecting the supreme transformation of my satanic energies into heavenly power.

In what ways do I want to change? I want to be more loving and more lovable. I want to outgrow or overcome my irascibility - it is shocking to me to see how irritated I can be by things that don't "really matter," and how easily those whom I say I love can throw me off my emotional balance or make me angry! - it is especially deplorable since I know that in reality I have a tremendous capacity for real love! Am I not told that the power that "animates and pervades all things" is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and that the breath of that Spirit in man is love? 22(t), 38(e), PT 30 (see pages 221, 233, and 285 [])

I experience evidences, too, of that divine energy in the love that my dear ones feel for me, and in the many kinds of attraction that I feel to what is good - I experience my capacity for love in even the liking and attachment that I feel for things that I should be revolted by, but this can be bad! How can bad results come from a divine power? Simply by using it in wrong ways. 33(r), BWF 320-1 or SAQ 250 (see pages 43, 97 and d204 []) Of course being angered irrationally is another wrong use of my emotional energies.

If I am attached to what is ignoble and unworthy of my love, or if I hate what I am too short-sighted to appreciate, that is a matter of limited vision, isn't it? - the limitations of my human consciousness! (See page 15e []) and prayer and mediation can remedy that.

The fact is that just as I have three levels of power of spirit upon which to base my reacting, (see page 15b []) so, too, I feel and am activated by three kinds of love and desire:

Physical love which is enjoyment of my own sensations, and a feeling of relief from hunger or physical pain - physical existence develops this automatically; human love, which is desire and love of what pleases me and satisfies my own desires - human life develops this automatically, too; and spiritual love which is desire for perfection (Divinity) and love of something more perfect or divine than myself. I feel plenty of the first two kinds of love. But before I can develop a love of Divinity, I must find it in my environment; and for that I need faith and intuitive wisdom functioning in the light of divine Revelation. In short, my highest degree of spirit must be activated in order to make me aware of the “good” or divine purpose underlying what I don’t like.

I have learned that “love is the conscious bestowal of God, the bond of affiliation in all phenomena” 75(aa), PUP 249-50 (see pages 51, 220 and 251 []) and that in “the being of man,” it shows as “the attraction of the heart, the susceptibilities and affinities which bind men together, enabling them to live and associate in friendship and solidarity.” As I see souls maturing, I find that the entire “realm of hearts of spirits is illumined and resuscitated . . . and . . . ever quickened into life” by “the bounties of the love of God.” *ibid.* This, then, is the element that can change me into a loving lovable person. I note, too, that communication expresses this bond and bounty, and that what we talk about tends to show what world we are reacting in, and thus how much of that bond and bounty I am involved in.

Inevitably, I communicate about my material environment because through relating to this world I must care for and protect my body. but what goes on in this area of emotion is largely prompted by the self-protective instinct, and my love here is limited to whatever achieves physical satisfactions, coupled with strong revulsion against whatever is unpleasant or threatening to my material well-being and comfort.

I also communicate my human thoughts and feelings, but actually these are also prompted largely by the same energy drive and express the same kind of self-centered love and hate. Most of that energy drive may well be called “satanic” strength since it is the power that is related to “the lower nature in man.” 55(kk), PUP 289 (see page 85 and 380 []) This holds true even though my thinking does show power that no animal has, and my feelings at times rise above - and also, alas, sink below - what any animal can experience.

The communication of a person’s thoughts and feelings, however, is essential to human development. Children are subjected to it in family life until they are familiar with human language and until they learn to express their own ideas and emotions.

Learning to communicate is a life-long part of living. We see it starting with responses - the baby responding to the warmth of a mother’s arms, and to the light of adoration in her eyes. How readily he answers with crows of delight and a sparkle of the same light in his own eyes! Soon he is chattering and being encouraged to express his feelings in both words and actions; and this learning process goes on and on. Later, the adolescent is not content with mere responding to stimuli - he has a compulsion to express what he thinks and feels, and reaches out

to any who will answer his communications, trying, through all available means, to respond to stimuli and to awaken and express what is in his heart.

This is what education, in its essence, does. Through it music and the other arts, scientific discoveries and invention come into existence in the world of human affairs. This is how man's creativity is activated and fulfilled.

If the learning process is successful, maturing souls express love and communication, in a thousand ways. Lovers reach out to each other in endless and thrilling expressions, and by doing so are lifted to heavenly heights of mystical experience. Adults communicate with youth by describing and teaching them what they know, and with their peers by sharing what they are aware of and feel. The devoted seer, minister, philosopher or preacher broadcasts his wisdom, and souls are inspired to seek ever heightening levels of expression and being. Progress results from progress from mere sensation and physical contact to mental and emotional consciousness and exchange; and finally from earthly experiences to spiritual exhilaration and communion that is indeed celestial.

The development of the human creature through this interchange between himself and his environment must be duplicated in the soul's interchange between the inner being and its invisible intangible spiritual environment. At first it is an unconscious receiving and response to "the bounties of the love of God" - unconsciously activated, but extremely precious experiences. Through them, gradually, I feel the need to learn the language of heaven. This is now a universal need, because sooner or later everyone is going to have heavenly thoughts and feelings, prompted by his divine nature. And of course for every need God provides an answer.

The language of heaven is accessible to an unprecedented degree in Baha'i life where we can be subjected to the communication between the Creator and His creatures, and listen with ear, mind and heart to the Word of God. For this is the language of heaven. This is where we encounter that Force that is capable of transforming human society. And if it can happen to society in general, it surely can happen to me as one living unit of that society.

The part of me that can undergo the transformation that I desire is that "most noble of phenomena," my "spirit" or inner reality that is "the meeting ground between man and God" and which is also "the collective center of all human virtues." I want to bring out the latent virtues there, because I know that for every one that I fail to develop, a character deficiency can show. That, then, is a basic transformation that I seek. And the part of me where that takes place is my inner reality - the "mirror" of my Creator's own Self which is intended to reflect "the radiance of all of His names and attributes," but which is largely covered by the "dross" of "worldly desires." 33(m), BWF 103 or GL 65 (see pages 16, 31, 36 []) Removal of the dross is the transformation I seek. And only the Word of God can purify my heart in that way - the Prayers and "verses of God" that Baha'u'llah brings.

Nothing but the acquisition of virtues - one purpose of my being: - can make me more living and lovable. Well do I know my need for growth and change in that area! Many of those

latent virtues, such as selfless devotion and loving sacrificial service may never manifest in the physical organism of man or in my human nature. In my present stage of development many spiritual qualities remain “latent . . . , obscured by worldly desires.” *ibid.* And if these qualities of the soul which constitute the part of man that is “open to the breath of the Divine Spirit, and never used, they become atrophied, enfeebled and at last incapable.” 22(x), PT 97, (see page 252 []) This is how “satanic power” develops.

“Men such as this plan to work evil, to hurt and to destroy; they are entirely without the spirit of Divine compassion.” 69(ss), PY 97

Sad to say, it is people at this level of development that are at the helm of human affairs today. Mankind as a whole is in the clutches of satanic power, “walking in darkness because it is out of touch with the world of God.” Humanity has let itself retrogress to the point where “the power of the Holy Spirit has no influence.” 55(ll), PUP 299, (see page 263 [])

“The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people talk only of their ideals, and do not strive to put them into practice.” 55(oo), PT 16

This is a challenge to me on which I would do well to meditate. Am I one of those who “know” what is good, but lack the “heavenly power” to live by what they know? Their material achievements excite wonder and admiration, but eh Voice of God renders true judgment on such people:

“O YE SEEMING FAIR YET INWARDLY FOUL! Ye are like clear but bitter water, which to outward seeming is crystal pure but of which, when tested by the divine Assayer, not a drop is accepted. Yea, the sun beam falls alike upon the dust and the mirror, yet differ they in reflection even as doth the start from the earth: nay, immeasurable is the difference.” 65(g), HWP 30-1 #25

This turns my thoughts to my own “dust” and “mirror” - the human being that is apparent, and my latent potentialities waiting to be unveiled, virtue by virtue. My lower nature is animated by physical and mental energy which has been called “Satanic” power, since “satan . . . refers to the lower nature in man.” 55(kk), PUP 289 (see pages 85, 280 and 286 []) But the virtues that it is my goal in life to acquire (see page 151 []) are qualities of my divine nature. And what it takes to lift me up to the higher level of consciousness and power today is not just the reading and mouthing of words - even the Word of God or the “saying” of prayers - but the spirit of faith directed to the reality of Baha’u’llah and to what God broadcasts through Him. When my faith weakens and I lose touch with what is available in my own heart, what I need is to sincerely pray and meditate, thus opening the portals of my inner being. This is why Baha’u’llah, knowing human weakness, prescribed daily Obligatory Prayers. But again, it is not enough to read one prayer today and reflect now and then on some verse of verity of the Word (though of course this is a “must” as a beginning). Rather, I should strive to attain the “most blessed condition” which ‘Abdu’l-Baha says “is the condition of prayer and supplication” or “state of prayerfulness.” 104(jj), *SofW* Vol. 9, 104 (see pages 64, 261 []) Attaining and

functioning in that state insures a change of outlook.

Does this seem like too high an objective? On the other hand, can I imagine that it will take anything less than this to accomplish “so great and far-reaching a change” as converting the satanic strength of my human emotions into heavenly power and love?

To the human creature the thought of being in a state of prayer may conjure up a picture of [a] man sitting cross-legged and passively regarding his own navel, which is obviously a revolting condition. With that view, the ego can feel a revulsion at the idea of living in a spiritual world and a state of prayer and supplication, and rationalize that feeling by saying that that attitude sidesteps personal responsibilities and is not a realistic approach to earthly life. This might be true if prayer brought forth no higher-than-human response and no augmentation of my own powers, or if my prayers were made the goal of my emotional energies or an escape rather than a means of strengthening me to fulfill the real purpose of my being.

However, never does man reveal the limitations of human vision more surely than when he talks about being “realistic.” For a person can be realistic, in the popular sense of the word, if he reacts to the realness of outer appearances but remains blind to the reality underlying those appearances. Real prayer or meditation gives full consideration to “appearances,” but it also makes a deep response to what underlies any problem that actually exists. However fully I recognize my personal responsibilities, there is nothing cowardly or unrealistic about recognizing that certain situations and individuals threaten to get the best of me, or that I cannot even cope intelligently with my own weaknesses, anger, anxieties and fears, much less counteract with my human spirit or ego the destructiveness and cruelty of my environment. My only hope of successful behavior and victorious living is through superhuman augmentation of what I am and can do as a human creature.

For here is where the divine Elixir - the Word of God - comes into the picture as the instrument by which the far-reaching changes and transformations are made possible.

Am I really a spiritual or celestial being? - a heavenly gem, a sign of God? Potentially yes! But I want to consciously be that kind of heavenly being now - to know my own reality as such, and to feel as though I am all the Baha’u’llah says I am in reality. As I react in my daily routine, I know myself only as a somewhat spiritual human being. I have exhilarating aspirations, it is true, and a few budding spiritual qualities. But this is not enough. I yearn to be transformed into that celestial being the God created me to be. O God! - help me! Touch my heart with “the Divine Elixir that can, alone, transmute into purest gold the dross of the world”! 99(1), GL 183

What is unrealistic about wanting to live in that “state of supplication and desire”? - especially when it is based on the Light of Reality and the dynamic Word of God?

When I repeat a petition from a revealed prayer, I am not only expressing an intensely real, though often unrealized, yearning of my soul, but I am reaching out to accept a bit of the infinite, eternal, divine bounty of my Creator that He offers and desires me to have. The very act

of turning to Him in this spirit opens the portals of my heart and the flood-gates of His benevolence on my behalf. This is how some of the supreme heights of consciousness in my life have been reached, how many sublime aspirations have been formulated, and how the spirit of faith and God-given insight find expression in the certitude of fulfillment. With those portals open, for the moment at least, my being is filled with joy and gratitude from the thrilling awareness of receiving what I am asking for.

For instance, what a delight it is to repeat such words as the following, which verbalized both the highest desire of my heart and what I know I can count on happening:

“I implore Thee . . . to do with Thy loved ones as becometh Thy bounty, O Lord of all being, and is worthy of Thy grace, O King of the seen and the unseen!” BP’69, 127 or P&M 322 (see page 55 [])

And one of the most confirming and amazing truths about such precious words is that every time they are used, their potency is intensified, and their effect on my inner being is increased. This is not true of any other stimulus that the world offers me. Every humanly worded inspiration finally comes to the end of its potency. There are no words on earth but His that can and do keep expanding my consciousness and stirring a crescendo of response in my heart, as do the revealed Words of God. Day after day, month after month, year after year, these words, if used, can activate, maintain and increase the transformation that I crave and need. For they are infinitely powerful, eternally effective and divinely dependable.

The more I use them, then, the more I find it easy to subdue the humanness in me that dislikes to pray. And this is good, because to love to pray is to experience the highest degree of love - strange as it may seem, a selfless kind of love. I once thought of prayer as a selfish pursuit - a clamor for help in struggling for what I want. Some even call it a crutch. But how could I possibly feel any self-love, once I am truly in communion with the Almighty, and my Best Beloved?

Selfless love or spiritual devotion has to be learned. It can begin very early, for it is latent in every heart, waiting to be activated from without and then spontaneously expressed. An appreciative heart speaks to a fragrant rose or glorifies a blazing sunset, and a poem is created. A grief-stricken woman at a grave sobs out her misery and somehow the agony of her heart is momentarily eased. An angry man curses what he finds unendurable, and in some fashion manages to endure it. Feelings must be expressed. Finally, a soul cries out to God and a new level of expression and illumination is experienced. Yes, as we communicate, so we live. If self-expression is stymied, some kind of growth will be retarded, but nothing can destroy a person’s need for an exchange of thoughts and feelings. He who communicates little, must love in a limited way. And nothing, except my own human ego can stop my soul from reaching out and speaking to God.

The higher the levels of consciousness that are involved in a communication, the more significant and valuable is the converse or intercourse. The greatest communication that can be

verbalized on earth, is the communion between a Manifestation of God and His Lord. This means that there is probably no literature available to man more precious than the book called Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah. Upon completion of the translation of these blessed writings, Shoghi Effendi sent us this message about them:

“Here, indeed, . . . exists that Divine Elixir which can alone transmute the base metal of human nature into pure gold.” BNs #116, June ‘38

And referring to the book later, he expressed the thought

“That the perusal of such a precious volume will help to deepen more than any other publication the spirit of devotion and faith in the friends, and thus charge them with all the spiritual power they require for the accomplishment of their tremendous duties towards the Cause.” BNS #235, 5

If I need another testimony to whet my appetite for such sublime spiritual fare, I should read again Amat'u'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum's comments of the Book in Baha'i News #325.

In addition to that Book, there are others that offer thousands of verities, admonitions, petitions and other communications that compose the Word of God and that man may study and use to shape his own thoughts and feelings. If I can learn from the wisdom of human creatures, how much more I can learn from the superhuman mind and heart of Baha'u'llah! When I meditate on His revealed Meditations, I am walking in His footsteps and leaning to testify in the station of the Manifestation” of my Lord, “that verily there is no God save Him”; and as already notes, I have been promised that “thereby” I may win my way “to the summit of realities” until I shall “see God” in everything that I “contemplate.” What more simple or perfect behavior pattern could there be for growing up and living “in the spiritual world”? If my outlook on life and feelings about what faces me can be changed by taking in what human educators have to offer, it certainly should be easy to understand that a greater transformation can be effected by what I can learn from the Supreme Divine Educator!

When I pray my own personal prayers, I may be disappointed in results, too, for no matter how spiritual I may feel, I am prone to ask to have my own desires carried out, and when I do this, the answer my well be No. For as Baha'u'llah teaches me to say, “I know not what will help or harm me.” P&M 257

Jesus expressed the ultimate wisdom of personal supplication in “The Lord’s Prayer,” when He taught people to ask: “Thy Will be done.” Baha'u'llah leads me more specifically away from the tendency to pray for what I desire, by instructing me to daily offer this supplication, intending certainly that its echo resound in my heart where my desires are given form:

“O God, my God! Look not upon my hopes an doings, nay rather look upon Thy will that hath encompassed the heavens and the earth.” BP’69, 121 or P&M 318

That very petition can lift me above my limited human concerns.

Moreover, if I am patient and wait for God’s own way of answering, there can be no disappointment whatever in using the divinely revealed petitions because these express only

what God is ready and willing to grants. They even confer certain bounties which I could never even dream of, otherwise. For instance, how could my human consciousness ever have conceived of having my own prayer become a fire that will burn away the veils that cover the mirror of my heart, a light that can lead me to the ocean of God's Presence, or a fountain of the living waters of my own eternal being? BP'69, 120-2 or P&M 317 (see pages 53, 54, 75 and 285 [])

Yet when I hear and say these words, I thrill to the realization that this is exactly what, in my heart, I long for, - what my soul might ask for in its wordless communion with its Lord. Oh, how my inner being does exult in this language of heaven, this [potent] expression of my own hidden longings!

"In days past," prayer was a means of seeking and then petitioning the Unknown Jehovah. This kind of prayer was and still is only a prelude to worship of God, which we know is the very purpose of our being. BP'69, 117 #1 or P&M 314. But this is the Day of God, and "the Beloved Himself . . . is now calling His lovers and is inviting them" - not merely to seek and supplicate to Him, but "to attain His presence." 105(a), BWF 115 or GL 320 (see pages 34 and 70 []) And through the communion that is established by the soul's ecstatic response, man can come into an entirely new and definitely transforming understanding of the reality and purpose of prayer.

God is communicating with hearts today in unimaginable but exhilaratingly new ways, too. And He leaves no prayer unanswered. (see pages 73-4 [])

The dynamic and all encompassing answer to all of these petitions, the confirmation of the reality and dependability of whatever is sought or mentioned in the revealed Prayers and Meditations, is Baha'u'llah Himself, the Perfect Man 29(rr), SAQ 130, and the Divine Educator, 28(x), SAQ 10-1 Speaker of the blessed Word, 28(z), 29(qq), ESW 166 and SAQ 194 the very Source of transformation. 28(bb), BWF 104 As parents embody the answers to an infant's needs, so does Baha'u'llah provide all the needs of the soul. His Prayers and Meditations are uttered from a superhuman awareness of reality and heavenly vision of what God plans and desires for us.

What is the Word of God today? It is not something contained between two book covers that one can pick up on Sunday or at the Feast and scan through, or read a paragraph or now and then as a week's or a month's spiritual inspiration. I remember that in "the realm of intelligence and idealism" the Word of God is the center of illumination, . . . the everlasting, ever-shining Sun . . . illuminating the realm of thought and idealism." 71(h), BWF 254 FWU 11 (see page 81 []) and I long to live there - to find a place for myself in the world of its light.

'Abdu'l-Baha say:

"May your souls be illumined by the Light of the Words of God and may you become repositories of the mysteries of God, for no comfort is greater and no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the Divine Teachings." DAL 40, #58
I must open the portals of my heart to that spiritual comprehension. For among these

teachings, looming up as the moon and stars that reflect the light of that celestial Sun, are the laws of prayer and fasting, Iqan 38 (see page 219 []) Don't I realize that an entirely new life and consciousness flourish at those ethereal heights of vision? I should, when I listen to Baha'u'llah's invitation:

“O SON OF MY HANDMAID! Quaff from the tongue of the merciful the stream of divine mystery, and behold from the dayspring of divine utterance the unveiled splendor of the day-star of wisdom. Sow the seeds of My divine wisdom in the pure soil of the heart, and water them with the waters of certitude, that the hyacinths of knowledge and wisdom may spring up fresh and green from the holy city of the heart.” HWP 50 #78
And He further urges:

“O My friend, listen with heart and soul to the songs of the spirit, and treasure them as thine own eyes. For the heavenly wisdoms, like the clouds of spring, will not rain down on the earth of men's hearts forever; and though the grace of the All-Bounteous One is never stilled and never ceasing, yet to each time and era a portion is allotted and a bounty set apart, this is given measure.” 7 VAL 37-8

The reality of music as a means of spiritual communication has been described as never before in terms of its serving the purpose of God for man. It is one of the many ways we have been given of praising and communing with the divine realms and beings. The Word provides such enlightenment as the following statements:

“All art is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When this light shines through the mind of a musician, it manifests itself in beautiful harmonies. Again, shining through the mind of a poet, it is seen in fine poetry or poetic prose. When the light of the Sun of Truth inspires the mind of the painter, he produces marvelous pictures. These gifts are fulfilling their highest purpose, when showing forth the praise of God.” The Chosen Highway 167

“In this great dispensation, art is identical with an act of worship and this is a clear text of the Blessed Perfection (Baha'u'llah). Therefore, extreme effort should be made in art . . . Each should assist the other in art and guidance . . . Managing art with propriety will become the means of sociability and affinity; and sociability and affinity themselves tend to guide others to the Truth.” BWF 377

“ . . . Singing and music are the spiritual food of the hearts and souls. In this dispensation, music is one of the arts that is highly approved and is considered to be the cause of exaltation of sad and desponding hearts. Therefore . . . set to music the verses and the divine words so that they may be sung with soul-stirring melody in the assemblies and gatherings, that the hearts of the listeners may . . . rise towards the Kingdom of Abha in supplication and prayer.” BWF 378
to the singer ‘Abdu'l-Baha gave this instruction:

“Thank thou God that thou art instructed in music and melody, singing with pleasant voice the glorification and praise of the Eternal, the Living. I pray to God that

thou mayest employ this talent in prayer and supplication, in order that the souls may become quickened, the hearts may become attracted and all may become inflamed with the fire of the love of God.” TAB 111, 512

And to another early believer who was a musician, he is said to have written:

“Music is one of the important arts. It has a great effect upon the human spirit. Although music is a material affair, yet its tremendous effect is spiritual. Music is an important means to the education and development of humanity, but its only true way is through the teachings of God. Music is like this glass which is perfectly pure and polished, and the teachings of God, the utterances of God, are like the water. When the glass is absolutely pure and clear and the water is perfectly fresh and limpid, then it will confer life; wherefore the Teachings of God, whether they be in the form of anthems or communes or prayers, when they are melodiously sung, are most impressive. It was for this reason that . . . David sang the psalms in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem with sweet melodies. Musical melody forms an important role in the associations, or outward and inward characteristics or qualities of man, for it is the inspirer and motive power of both the material and spiritual susceptibilities. When man is attached to the love of God, music has a great effect upon him.” ‘Abdu’l-Baha, Tablet to Mr. E. Kinney

Repeatedly we are told that music can be a form of worship, especially music set to the revealed verses and the divine words as noted above. for

“If a man engages with all his powers in the acquisition of a science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he has been worshiping God in the churches or temples.” BWF 377-8

Worship of God is the ultimate purpose of life, and is therefore precious and desirable in a supreme way. The following comment by Mr. Horace Holly gives a thumbnail sketch of how mankind has been guided into an ever-expanding consciousness of how and why we are to worship:

“Among primitive and childish peoples worship can be appeal for help in meeting an entirely personal need. They pray for health and strength, for material benefits, for good fortune in their affairs. In this condition God is the supplier of personal wants. What God my will for them or expect from them is unknown and ignored. Such personal supplication can be entirely sincere, but it subjects the higher Will to the lower, the Creator to the created, and measures the Ocean by the cup. God and Nature are perceived as two parents, and what one parent withholds the other is implored to bestow.

“The tribal concept of God as its own exclusive Father and Protector has inevitably conditioned public worship. Public worship through the ages has been associated with the particular and exclusive conception of God evolved within a people by its own dominant religion or by its contending faiths. It has assumed that the community or group is a larger social personality of unique value, and therefore the

divine response to worship would be directed to the benefit of this social personality through its own traditional channels of culture and understanding. Public worship has recognized the existence of God, but a God primarily concerned with the welfare of that group, a welfare which the group itself has defined.

“In times of general distress the divisions between adjoining groups may be weakened or temporarily broken down. In anguish, the people feel a mutual dependence and at least a temporary bond. The solution of their common problem, the alleviation of their general woe, eventually restore the influence of those institutions primarily concerned with the maintenance of boundaries and divisions. The God of humanity has been only occasionally glimpsed through the clamor of an interminable struggle for existence.

“The essence of worship, personal or public, is a humility so profound that prayer and supplication carry no sense of special privilege but rather a willingness to know and to obey the divine Will.

“Not until the soul of man becomes imbued with the emanations of the Holy Spirit can it soar above self and enter a purer world where God is supreme.”

The Meaning of Worship.

Down through the ages the Word of God has instructed mankind in worship, which is the ultimate fulfillment of a celestial being's purpose. Mr. Holley went on to say that worship

“is the supreme achievement of man in this world. All noble deed, all useful deeds, proceed from this act. For by worship is meant the attainment of that humility which recognizes a higher Power and submits the soul to its pure influence.

“It is through worship that men release their spiritual qualities and become organically unified beings. Through worship men rise to awareness of their divinely created nature, grow conscious of the purpose of their existence and attain to a new life in a Kingdom beyond space and time.” *ibid.*

Here I am, seemingly anchored in my humanness, faced with conditions that make me rail out against the powers-that-be, and dealing with people who, at best, keep irritating me and often infuriate or torment me! I pray - yes, I pray that my tormentors and hateful conditions may change, but they don't. I am not dealing with illusions, either - my problems are real, people are what they are, and there is no way to escape them or to abandon my human responsibilities. And I would have to be an angel not to be resentful, rebellious or made miserable by the injustices, evil situations and heartless people that are part of my environment.

But if they don't change, could it be that it is I who should change?

What kind of a transformation can be expected of me, and how can I achieve it? Does 'Abdu'l-Baha suggest what I should do when I am “hemmed in” by such difficulties?

He certainly does! He speaks both as the Master and as the Exemplar, for His answer indicated that it was His solution for Himself, too, and certainly He was “hemmed in” by

“terrible” conditions and hateful people during his whole lifetime. Thus it was a practical viewpoint as well as a spiritual one, that in mentioning the fact that “Today humanity is bowed down with trouble . . . no one escapes,” He stated, “We have only to call upon God, and by His great Mercy we shall be helped.” 82(x), PT 110 (see page 233 [])

“Call upon God” - yes, but I should pray the way the divine Educator teaches and not just as my egocentric feelings prompt. I certainly should pray for my enemies, “bless them that curse” me, do good to them that hate me,” and pray for those who “despitefully use” me - and pray in a spirit of compassion and love, too. Jesus taught that nearly two thousand years ago (Matt 5:44) Haven’t I learned even that much yet?

I want those who torment me to change, but I lose sight of the fact that I am equally imperfect, equally in need of having my “satanic strength” and emotional energy converted into “heavenly power”. I need to elevate my level of consciousness, and probably to develop a few neglected virtues. This is what the revealed prayers teach me to realize, and to ask God’s help for.

Do we think that conflict and evil can be overcome by our own (or other People’s) human efforts and at the level of human vision? - or that what I am praying for? Do I imagine that any effort on my part, when I am feeling so unloving, will remove any difficulties without God’s intervention, or that there is any possibility of my own problems being solved except as I learn to stay “on the beam” or spiritual enlightenment and struggle?

The Voice of God cuts in on my complaints about the injustices of life and the hatefulness of people, and reminding me of my real purpose, saying:

“O SON OF MAN! Neglect not My commandments if thou loves My beauty, and forget not My counsels if thou wouldst attain My good pleasure.” HWA 13 #39

Can’t I remember that loving and pleasing Him is my real objective in life?

Let me meditate on His sublime admonition when He addresses me as a “companion of His Throne” - for O! what joy it would be to qualify as that! -

“O COMPANION OF MY THRONE! Hear no evil, and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh and weep. Speak no evil, that thou mayest not heart is spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed. Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.” HWP 37 #44

Of course this will drive me to my knees, for only by His help can I hope to acquire that degree of loveliness.

Do I really pray to be able to comply with that admonition? I should, because if I do, definite super-human help will come. First it comes as an immediate change of outlook which,

since prayer requires action of my spirit of faith, I achieve simply by trustingly calling on God. And second, help comes in the response from my Beloved (whether known or not) that acts to produce a tiny step of the growth in my own soul. Both are changes within me. But the trick now is not to sink back again into my human resentment, irritation, anger or misery.

Why don't I open the portals of my heart oftener and keep them open longer through this kind of praying? Why do I forget this divine potentiality and heavenly promise? The answer is: because as a soul I have not developed much beyond my natural humanness: I am still predominantly a rational self-reliant being - and not too rational at that - locked in at the mercy of my egocentric vision and illusions. To date the powers that I have cultivated are not much beyond those provided by my human spirit or involved in my personal thoughts and feelings. Not only has my soul not grown much above this level, but my ego or outer self automatically controls a large part of my reacting. The portals of my heart are closed to my outer consciousness, and when undirected from within, my ego won't break down and admit its own helplessness. How do I know this? It must be true, because when I am in low spirits or just swamped in my own hateful human feelings (which is when I most need divine help), I don't want to pray. I - the human self - will make no move to "change gears," to alter my present outlook, or to do any of the things that elevate a soul beyond the level of its own stupid humanness.

In order to perform the single act of praying, I - I, the living soul - must make myself do what my ego refuses to do. I must deny and sacrifice my human thoughts and feelings. I - the imperfectly developed soul - hate to do this. For to pray sincerely calls into action the higher-than-human degree of spirit that the human creature lacks. However, every time I pray in this way, in this action I undergo a bit of growth that I urgently need. In this way I meet, half-way, the help that God is waiting to give.

Nearly every stop of my spiritual progress takes place reaction by reaction, and is achieved in some such way as this - through forcing myself to do or be something that my latent powers are prepared to enact, but that a rational human creature resists doing. Like forgiving one who has injured me; or feeling compassion for someone who seem hateful to me. It is not pleasant! Sometimes I hate it like poison! But if I have faith in Baha'u'llah, if I love God, I'll do it anyway 92(r), P&M 11 (see page 270 []) And the miracle of transformation comes, in finding that the sacrifice finally becomes no sacrifice, and that at least I begin to delight in a new state of consciousness and begin to love doing and being what my Creator expects of me.

"If you plant a seed in the ground, a tree will become manifest from that seed. The seed sacrifices itself to the tree that will come from it. The seed is outwardly lost, destroyed, but the same seed which is sacrificed will be absorbed and embodied in the tree, its blossoms, fruit and branches. If the identity of that seed had not been sacrificed to the tree which became manifest from it, no branches, blossoms or fruits would have been forthcoming." 79(n), PUP 446

I must remember that although I am a “living soul,” I am far from being the fully developed celestial being I shall one day become: but I want to keep on trying!

I am a soul, always, just as an apple seed is always an apple producer. But I must experience the stages of root formation, of frail plant life and sapling development, before I begin to resemble a bearer of the virtues that are the fruit of the tree of life. And in my lower stages of development or levels of consciousness, I have experiences that show me my need to produce my intended “fruit.”

The Baha’i age is going to be the fruit-bearing stage of human existence. Since the time of Adam the development of the preliminary virtue-blossoms has been started, but now we are called upon to experience that culminating unfoldment that started in the seed stage, and the final transformation from blossom into fruit. Humanity is to become a spiritual fruit-bearing creation, and reflect the full radiance of God’s names and attributes - many souls in one body, and each soul alive and active in producing its won fruits.

My energies manifested first in initiating the root life of my material existence and the plant and sapling weaknesses of my human nature. Those energies of my ego went on to produce the solid trunk life of the mind and will of my ego from which have branched out the myriad interests and accomplishments of my earthly life. But now these energies must all be converted into the heavenly power that will bring my total growth to its culmination and produce a full quota of divine knowledge and heavenly selfless love. From this spiritual development will come the endless divine attributes that characterize the celestial man. This is how I am destined to fulfill my ultimate potentialities and achieve God’s purpose.

This change must take place in me as it does in a fruitful tree. How? Through my own capacity for growth and natural unfoldment of latent potentialities acted upon by the life-growing influences of the Sun of Truth. And how are these two powers - inner and outer - brought into their ideal and essential relationship with each other? Through prayer and meditation followed by action. Without these precious portals opening in my heart, I could not “translate that which hath been written into reality.” I could remain so veiled as to miss the warmth and light of that blessed Sun. And without completing the translation into action, my growth could be hampered as a baby’s growth would be if his hands and feet were tied and his physical action restricted.

It is as I fling open those portals and expose my heart to the Fire of God’s love and the glorious light of reality, that the metamorphosis of my celestial being is prompted. In the action, transformations can take place more dramatic than the bursting of a closed-up bud or the conversion of the tiny residue of a faded blossom into a luscious fruit.

The life-giving Elixir and Sun are there, facing my heart. But unless I open those portals and expose my inner being to the divine Potency, how can I expect results from those heavenly powers?

I need help in establishing a “oneness” within myself. The fact is that I am a very complex and a not too well integrated being. Part of me is constantly being enriched by God’s

love and nothing does this more powerfully than the Long Obligatory Prayer. Meanwhile, another part of me is being destroyed and “consumed” by its separation and remoteness from Him. It is appalling to realize how destructive my own human thoughts and feelings are at times!

But God has given me His own Words to use: and when I immerse myself in the ocean of their power my consciousness becomes the center of divine unification for all of the conflicting aspects of my being. Here, for a rare moment of selfless spiritual insight, I am able to put into their proper perspective and relationship all of the different worlds and conditions of my being. I need not repudiate the material world for here God’s footsteps and voice saying “Here am I!” have actually come into earthly manifestation. BP’69, 126 #3 or P&M 321-2 This reveals God’s purpose for the material world, and during this blessed moment of prayer I can forget everything else in the world. Then, wholeheartedly and at every level of consciousness to which I have access, I feel and can express but one desire: namely that “I may gaze” on His beauty and “observe whatsoever” is in His Book. Praise be to God! - in this action I can feel all the elements of my being knitting themselves together into one celestial entity and purpose, the one “living soul” that is coming into being during the time of its prenatal existence. And I feel from the depths of my inner being a vibrant praise and gratitude for God’s having aided me to remember and praise Him, and for having made Baha’u’llah known to me. Through this communion with God, I am enabled to experience the very essence of prayer and the ultimate mental enlightenment that meditation promises

The bigger a thing is, the longer it takes to grow. The celestial entities that God has created in His kingdom of infinitude, eternity and divinity have a purpose and life patterns that are limitless, unending and inconceivably glorious, so I must not be impatient when I see a soul developing slowly. The advance of civilization is a stage of human evolution that has been prepared for during millions of centuries and has gone on for thousands of years. The oneness of mankind is a reality whose root development took place instinctively and that has been in the process of unfolding ever since then. It has shown progressively in the formation of the institution of marriage and the unification of family life, then in unity of tribes, of feudal states or cities, and of nations. Obviously the ultimate goal of this evolution is the formation of international unity and the realizing and manifesting of mankind’s inherent oneness.

This realization and fulfillment depend, however, on the unification of the conflicting forces and development of altruistic love within human beings, both individually and collectively. From this over-all viewpoint, I can understand the symbolic explanation given by God’s own Voice as He speaks both to mankind and to me as a soul:

“With the hands of loving-kindness I have planted in the holy garden of paradise the young tree of your love and friendship and have watered it with the goodly showers of My tender grace; now that the hour of its fruiting is come, strive that it may be protected, and be not consumed with the flame of desire and passion.” HWP 34 #34 (see page 259 [])

I do long to contribute to and develop in myself that tree’s fruiting. I want to express and

receive friendship and love, and to help to manifest the oneness of mankind, as the unity of my own being develops. I feel an urgent need to be part of that paradise where the flame of desire and passion has been consumed or transmuted into the fire of the love of God. I know full well that only thus can the conflicting energies of my own being be brought under control; only thus can I exemplify and successfully teach the oneness of mankind.

I long for this, and besides, the alternative leaves me no choice, for I have been given God's word of warning:

“O MY SERVANT! The basest of men are they that yield no fruit on earth. Such men are verily counted as among the dead, nay better are the dead in the sight of God than those idle and worthless souls. HWP 51 #81

I know that development of the celestial beings that God creates is only in its initial embryonic stage of progress, and that for individuals this growth extends over a lifetime of struggle and slow transformation. So when I face the reality of spiritual existence from this over-all viewpoint, how can I be impatient with the earthiness of my fellow beings, or with my own immaturity and snail-like spiritual advancement?

Yet on the other hand, I am often overwhelmed by my own imperfections and sadly discouraged with my slow progress. I sometimes fortify myself against discouragement or impatience by recalling that ‘Abdu’l-Baha said that the soul “must traverse all conditions.” 44(aa) (see pages 51 and 145 []) This is a comfort to me when I recognize how “unspiritual” I am at times! But when I am experiencing unsatisfactory results from reacting in the lower “conditions” or in a purely materialistic way, let me use my dissatisfaction as a reminder that I am to “traverse” or go through these lower levels of reacting and not become anchored in them. The situation or time comes when I must change - change my viewpoint, change “gear” or the power-drive that is no longer effectual, change what I see by using higher powers of perception in viewing what I am dealing with. I must make a transition from depending on my limited unsuccessful human powers into the higher level of consciousness where I open my heart to the divine help that is mine for the asking.

Let me simply put myself “on the beam,” by praying and meditating on the Word given for that purpose, so that I may know exactly where I am and where I am going. When I gain a thoroughly clear apprehension of my real goals and purpose - God's purpose in creating me - this will stir such intense desire in my inner being that I shall want to devote all of my energies - including those that are now involved in satanic or ignoble behavior - to the pursuit of that heavenly destiny.

The Baha'i prayers open my heart to that whole dimension of divine purpose and power that underlies my reactions and existence. As I commune with God through those inspired Words, this action in itself can change my consciousness. For although any prayer begins with a spiritual desire, this kind of prayer propels me to an ever increasing fulfillment of what my inner being craves.

Each time I open my heart to commune with my Beloved through one of those prayers, it is like stepping onto a spiritual escalator. I should try at the end of my prayer to remain in that “most blessed condition . . . of prayer and supplication” or “state of prayerfulness,” that “Abdu’l-Baha described as the “sweetest state of consciousness possible “in the world of existence.” 104(jj). SofW Vol 9, 103-4 (see page 298 [])

For instance, I can experience in a practical way and realize beyond all question, the uplifting power and value of starting the day by asking God to “refresh and gladden my spirit.” For if I maintain that state of prayerfulness when I confront some of “the unpleasant things of life,” I shall find myself refusing to dwell on them or to allow them to harass me or Cause me anxiety. This makes me “real-ize” (make real to me) the fact that with God’s help, and as a celestial being, I have the superhuman power to react in that way. This is how the “truth” makes me “free.” 1(a), John 8:32

The effect and spiritual progress activated by the prayers are cumulative too, for they provide an endless, lasting and divine expansion of mind and heart from which, I remember, there is no retrogression 45(jj), PT 89 (see page 149 []) The soul cannot ungrow! But of course as a human being, at the end of the prayer, I can either retain or forget what I have experienced during that mystic communion. If I close the portals of my heart and forget, the radiance that came through will fade from my outer consciousness. I am warned, too, in terms of spiritual development that “to cease to progress is the same as to decline.” 88(e), BWF 331 or SAQ 270 So this is a choice I must make.

However, the benefit from my communion with God goes on throughout my entire earthly lifetime, helping me to move from my natal lack of knowledge and love of God, into awareness of my true relation to Him, and to an eternally expanding conscious knowledge and love. Prayer is one of my most obvious ways, too, of changing my feelings from mere desire for His presence into a dynamic sense of His nearness and reality. For using the revealed prayers, in time, provides a confirmation of all that they ask.

In short, there is no method to compare with prayer, as a means of attaining the conscious knowledge and worship of my Beloved for which I was created; and there are no prayers to compare with Baha’i prayers, originating and revealed as they have been in the worlds of superhuman vision. I can scarcely dream of the bounties of spiritual realization, growth and transformation that are treasured between the covers of a Baha’i Prayer Book!

Do I avail myself of their heavenly potentialities? I’m afraid I don’t! I wonder if I even know how to use them fully! I could benefit from them by studying and testing my understanding of their words and truths, verity by verity, petition by petition. I need this kind of slow steady influx of the celestial light that they offer, too. For every day in my dealings with the outer world, my egocentric fancies and vain human imagining can develop a veil over what was clear to me even yesterday. This is the nature of the human consciousness which is blacked out every night in sleep. This is one reason the, that my Creator made daily prayer and

“indispensable and obligatory” part of my spiritual life.

How strange that I should have to be coxed to pray! For in reality prayer can answer every unfulfilled desire of my heart. And prayer is also my assurance of help in meeting my daily tests, large and small. It is my protection against their destructive powers. DAL 27 #2

Perhaps the celestial feast spread before us in “the language of heaven” (see page 248 []) leaves me awed and dismayed as a starving pauper might be if confronted by an enormous table loaded with delicacies that are far beyond his scope of appreciation. In short, perhaps I just don’t know where to begin!

Of course, I can begin with one spiritual Word: Allah’u’Abha! (See page 212 []) God is glorious! What a bounty it is to have been given this simple treasure! I have been in love. I remember how I loved to whisper the name of my beloved when we were separated - how my whole heart seemed to open and go into that utterance and draw me close to the very soul of the one I loved. I remember the joy of reflecting on that name, and especially of hearing even one word in answer to it that confirmed the closeness that I could not bear to lose. This is what makes me appreciate having been given the name of my supreme and heavenly Loved One in “the language of heaven” - one mystical word that encompasses the infinite, eternal, divine lovableness and love of the Greatest of All Beloved! What simpler or more effective way could there be to open my heart and connect my outer being with my inner reality that has its portals open to the Divine Presence? That one utterance has the power to lift me beyond all human interference.

Once the connection is made, surely I shall remember specific help that has been vouchsafed to every seeking heart; ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s words about his Table of Visitation, for instance:

“Whoso reciteth this prayer with lowliness and fervor will bring gladness and joy to the heart of this Servant; it will be even as meeting Him face to face.” BP’69, 137 #6
how can I resist the blissful experience of a spiritual meeting with my beloved Master? He knows how difficult it is for me in my human imperfection to face infinitude, eternity and Divinity, to achieve a state of humility essential to prayer, or to seek the selflessness that characterizes a celestial being. But as I use this special prayer of his, it lifts me into a state of consciousness that transcends my humanness, and that empowers me to meet successfully any spiritual responsibility or ordeal that I may encounter. Surely I shall want to make this experience a part of my daily spiritual sustenance!

Two more prayers are very special, too: The Tablet of Ahmad, and the Long Obligatory Prayer, both of which, our beloved Guardian stated, “have been invested by Baha’u’llah with a special potency and significance.” How can I ignore the promise that through these prayers I “may enter into a much closer communion with God,” and the prediction that through this communion I shall identify myself more fully with Baha’u’llah’s laws and precepts? Surely using these “verses of God” is a vital part of the process of converting my “satanic strength into

heavenly power.” (see page 176 [])

Since these three prayers are in “the language of heaven,” (see page 247 []) meditation on them as I pray will enhance their value and open wider the portals of my heart.

I find it helpful, for instance, to meditate on ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s Tablet of Visitation by noting the following heavenly vistas of ascent through which I am carried to the sublime heights of selflessness:

I begin in a state that is lowly and tearful, humble and subservient at the door of heaven.

I recognize that I am enthralled and captive in His hand, trusting in Him (or I would not be praying).

I beseech (and thereby receive) His grace to serve my fellow beings, and strength to serve Him.

In the court of His holiness, I seek (and find) the light of adoration and prayer.

At the heavenly entrance of His gate, I beg to be selfless and detached.

Within His holy precincts, the very domain of selfless detachment, I ask to :

drink from the chalice of selflessness;

be clothed with the robe of selflessness; and

be immersed in the ocean of selflessness.

In His pathway (where I now feel myself to be), I ask to be as dust in relation to other souls.

When recalled to earth I recognized it as having been ennobled by footsteps of the Manifestations; and I offer my soul for service there.

In closing this call to God, made morning and night, or in either spiritual light or darkness, I ask that the present desires of my heart (as I pray) be fulfilled, but also that I may receive more illumination and light; I hope thus that I may serve His Cause and His servants.

I close my prayer knowing that it will be answered in full because He is the infinite, eternal, divine Bestower, is full of pity and is Bountiful, Gracious, Merciful and Compassionate.

What a celestial ascent this is! With the portals of my heart open, who can estimate the power I have received or the transformation of inner consciousness and character that may have been contributed to! Through it I have glimpsed the “spiritual Word” which ‘Abdu’l-Bah said “alone can give us freedom” from “trouble, suffering and grief” when He urged us to “turn our hearts away from the world of matter.” 82(x), PT 110 (see page 223 []) Certainly this is a transformation for which I yearn!

The Tablet of Ahmad is a different kind of communion. I am uplifted as I meditate on it as an affirmation, not only of my faith but of an over-all view of reality. it immediately illumines my heart and lifts my consciousness far above its usual egocentric, human viewpoint. How

marvelously it draws me close to Baha'u'llah, putting Him in perspective both as a divine Reality and as an irresistibly lovable Man” - my beloved Lord who holds in His hand the destinies of mankind, 100(s), P&M 123 (see page 25 []) and also my ever present Companion. Each heart finds its own illumination from these powerful Words; but as I recite and meditate on them, I find the following beams of light:

First, I see humanity divided in terms of its spiritual consciousness into four groups; and what Baha'u'llah's Revelation can be to each group is named.

Then His Message is identified and its relation to its Herald is mentioned.

I am exhorted to obey God's revealed ordinances, and His message is established as the only Source of Truth for this Age.

Baha'u'llah is next spoken of as a Man, and I am admonished as His follower, and given words of guidance that I may find precious in my struggles as a Baha'i.

A brief description of the condition of mankind follows, with a warning about those who turn away from Baha'u'llah.

A heavenly promise is finally uttered, one that I may accept as the answer to all of my needs, if I have felt, and sincerely meant, all of the words I have been reciting; and I realize that this is a special bounty from the presence of earth of the Manifestation of God for this Day.

I testify in closing, “in the station of the Manifestation” (see page 199, etc. []) of my Lord, that He is indeed the Merciful, the Compassionate, and I give praise to God.

This represents what I personally see as I meditate on this heavenly statement of reality; but part of the mystic power of these words lies in the fact that to each soul it has a special and unique significance.

When it comes to the Long Obligatory Prayer, the light I gain and the spiritual vitality I derive from this pinnacle of illumination and power, build up so endlessly and are so continuously intensified by repetition, that I would not attempt to put my realizations into human words. I only know that when I neglect to say it, some portal in my heart remains closed, and something is missing throughout the day. Surely there can be no more potent instrument of communication than this one that Baha'u'llah designed for the special and unique purpose of satisfying daily the unending hungers of my soul.

I meditate deeply on these mystic Words that have been made available to me as they open the portals of my heart and are given to me as “daily bread” to nourish my soul and essential light to illumine my inner being. I find it interesting to contemplate the various changes in physical posture that Baha'u'llah saw as an appropriate part of the expression of my communion with Deity. Could it be that each movement of my body is the ideal expression of the particular aspect of my being from which the accompanying communication is voiced? Pondering on this, I find it intriguing to note in each paragraph and its accompanying bodily attitude, what part of my reality is speaking, and what is being expressed in that level of

consciousness. I note what I am petitioning and affirming as a potential celestial being, as a conscious spiritual being however undeveloped, as a human creature with pitiful immaturities, or just as a person struggling to thin, feel and behave as a true Baha'i would; for I am all of the[se] beings. Thus through the use of this Prayer, every facet of my reality is nourished, spiritualized and awakened to a vivid consciousness of reality and love of my most Exalted and All-Glorious Lord; and this consciousness is intensified because my whole being - even my body - participates in this dynamic communion with God.

If these genuflections seem strange to me, and if I find it difficult to keep my mind on such lengthy communications, I "ponder in my heart" what I have been asked to do and say, until I begin to have some kind of understanding that helps. For instance I note the following activity - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual - in which I am to involve myself.

(Note: Paragraphs are identified by postures taken.)

I, a reality, stand erect before my Creator, (as a growing celestial entity?)

(1.) I address Him, mention His relation to the lowest signs of reality (names) and to the highest realm of being (heavens). Through Whom do I pray? I note that what I ask for is what only a celestial being could desire (what is this?); (2.) I name another heavenly potential of the prayer that Baha'u'llah has given me and a desire that only a celestial being could understand and confidently feel (what is this?); (3.) I think of how I must, in my present state of development, appear to my Creator (how do I describe myself in this way?) And then mention the two opposite conditions that affect me - God's love and my own human indifference to it (how do I describe the effects of these?), I entreat God by certain tangible signs of God's reality (what are these?) in the human world (what does He call that earthly condition or world?), I mention and ask for what will insure my growth and transformation into the celestial being that I am in reality (what do I ask for?) (4.) I bring my prayer to a close viewing myself and my Lord as they are in reality (how does this make me feel?), noting what holds me back (what kind of feelings are back of these "tears," that they should "prevent me" from my spiritual fulfillment?); and finally asking for the most glorious action possible on God's part - which I know He is going to carry out (what is that?).

I raise my hands in supplication (as a needy spiritual being?): (1.) I mention how God sees me - as a living but imperfectly developed soul, I affirm my true relationship to Him and (how do I describe my soul's position, station and desires?), and ask my Lord to disregard my humanness (what part of me has desires other than to obey God's will, and what do I affirm to negate my egocentric feelings?); (2.) I mention what is happening to the world (what is this?) And request and describe what I [am] as a spiritual being, seek and desire (how do I describe myself?), and I mention three facts about the Creator and my relation to Him (what are these?);

(3.) then, addressing Him as the Almighty, the Ordainer, I name four actions God has taken in relation to my soul that have made it possible for me to become a Baha'i (what are these?), humbly state my dependence on Him (how do I express this?) And again affirm my relation to Him (how do I describe it this time?); (4.) Ending with an affirmation of His Greatness (what do I say?).

I bend down with hands resting on my knees (in the position of a subject who stands before his Sovereign?): (1.) I affirm my present state as I pray (how do I describe this?), name what I desire from Him (what is this?) And why I desire it (why do I ask for "all that is with" Him?); (2.) I praise, glorify or thank my Lord for what He has done for me (specifically what?).

I seat myself (as a part of mankind?): I testify to the highest) and most complete Truth ever mentioned on earth (Whose testimony is this?) About God (how is that Truth summed up in two sentences?) And about Baha'u'llah (how is His part in existence described, and how is He identified?); (2.) I testify again, in closing, to what I have learned from Baha'u'llah's Revelation (how is this summed up in one sentence?).

I kneel, bowing my forehead to the ground (as a human reality or person in the process of learning to worship?): (1.) affirming His exaltation (how is this expressed?), and (2.) His inaccessibility (how is this described?); (3.) and finally praising Him for making Himself accessible (for what specifically do I thank Him?). My final petition is for protection from what might prevent us from taking advantage of such precious gifts (what is that?).

This is a very personal communion between a soul and its Creator. What I actually see and feel may be something different from the foregoing words, as I open the portals of my heart and listen to what is reflected there. But however the individual responds, contemplation of these life-giving words is sure to have a transforming effect that transcends the effects of any other kind of meditation on earth.

Westerners are under terrific time-pressure, always "in a hurry," so probably most of us by a process of elimination, use the short Obligatory Prayer. The Long one is difficult to understand, and in most people the human powers of attention are not trained to undertake concentration for so long a time and on such incomprehensible subject matter, especially in conjunction with those unfamiliar genuflections that almost demand memorization of at least parts of the prayer. But if I comply, I'll find that the blessings from using the Long Prayer as communion with God are enormous and more than compensate for the time and struggle that are involved.

Even after the prayer becomes familiar, a person can easily rationalize and give in to his reluctance by recalling the instructions that we "Burden not the soul so as to cause exhaustion and languor." DAL 41 #59 (see page 212 []) But if find that if I don't give in to this reaction of

my human spirit but, instead, listen to my heart, I will persist, and eventually find the rest of that admonition being carried out: “rather refresh it (the soul) that thus it may soar on the wings of revelation to the Dawning-place of proofs. This brings you nearer to God.: Ibid. Experience proves that this can really happen!

I'll admit, however, that it is a struggle. But ‘Abdu’l-Baha instructs us:

“Raise up and struggle, seek education, seek enlightenment.” SDC 91

I'll not become educated or enlightened, otherwise. so it may sometimes become necessary first to ask to have my spirit refreshed and gladdened and my heart purified of its self-concern, laziness or other egocentric humanness, before I am ready to use this celestial communication. Or sometimes I must even seek the inspiration or uplift that is gained from repeating The Tablet of Ahmad, before I can feel like praying at all. At other times I find myself seeking a Visitation or “meeting” with ‘Abdu’l-Baha, when I am feeling too lowly and human to do more than to speak to God through Him, to raise suppliant hands and then to cover my face in the dust of His exalted Threshold. But I find that if I do this, by the time I have voiced my longing for God’s grace to serve His loved ones and my desire to be strengthened in my servitude to Him, I am sincerely desiring to seek the awareness and power of His Will to which the Long Obligatory Prayer opens the portals of my heart.

In short, every revealed prayer is a door to spiritual realization and mystical understanding, but probably none can have a greater effect, when used regularly, than the Long Obligatory Prayer that Baha’u’llah provided for daily use.

While the prayers of Baha’u’llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha are unparalleled as heaven’s language by which a soul communes with its Maker, they also have infinite value as much needed knowledge, especially as enlightenment about my own being and purpose.

For instance if I am wise enough to use the Long Obligatory Prayer, I can learn that in the world of reality and when the “I” that speaks is my reality or soul, it is true, that:

I am “rid of all attachment to any one save” God;

I cling to the “cord” (His Covenant? His Revelation? His love?) That binds me to Him.

I am “ready to do” His will and desire.

I wish “naught else except” His good pleasure.

I desire that God “do with” me as He wills and pleases.

Whatever He reveals “is the desire of my heart and the beloved of my soul.”

I don’t ask that God consider “my hopes and my doings,” much less fulfill them, for however these may register in my outer consciousness, in my inner being” I have desired only what” God has desired, and “love only what” He loves.

Through prayer, “I may live as long as” His sovereignty endures, “and may make mention” of Him “in every world or condition where I may find myself.

I am a “stranger hastening to his most exalted home.”

I am a “transgressor seeking the ocean” of God’s forgiveness.

I am a “lowly one” seeking “the court” of God’s glory.

I am a “poor creature” seeking “the orient” of God’s wealth.

I long “to worship” God.

I praise God for sending me what draws us near to Him and for supplying us “with every good thing sent down” or revealed by Him.

I desire and beg for protection from human “fancies and vain imaginations.”

I testify to everything about God that His Manifestations have revealed, and know and affirm that all that exists belongs to Him and is under His control.

As I read over what my soul is destined to feel and do, I see clearly the areas of growth to be covered and the transformations to be undertaken. And I am grateful both for having them pointed out and for being given the knowledge of my destiny and being taught how to petition the divine help that I need for this growth.

Let me rest assured that if I pray thus, patiently, persistently, I shall change.

Am I truly longing for an immediate and miraculous transformation of my own being? Even that can happen, starting on a small scale.

The revealed prayers have been designed to answer that longing. In fact I have experienced a complete revision of outlook more than once in the short space of time required to read or recite (and feel in the depths of my heart) ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s Tablet of Visitation or the Tablet of Ahmad or the Long Obligatory Prayer. A person can begin any one of these powerful expressions of the Word of God, in a state of depression, discouragement, revulsion against life or rebellion against the power-that-be; and feel, as he prays, that he is being led gently yet dynamically from whatever low level of consciousness where he is sunk, step by step through levels of rationality and human vision up into an electrifying awareness of the divine secrets and heavenly realities that are now accessible to hearts. This has happened to me, and with this change of vision, I find myself motivated to do what ‘Abdu’l-Baha has admonished, namely, to turn my heart away from the world of matter and live in the spiritual world.” 82(x), PT 110 (see page 233 []) But it is obvious that I need divine help to do this.

I yearn “to remember . . . and extol” God.

I know and “testify to what the Tongue” of God’s Commandment has testified in heaven.

I love, in the state of awareness of what has been revealed in heaven, to beg for “all that is with” God, and thereby “demonstrate my poverty” and A”declare my powerlessness,” and may “magnify” God’s “bounty and . . . riches, and . . . manifest” His power and might.

Compared to the celestial being into which I must grow, I am

a “wretched creature knocking at the door” of God’s grace.

I am an “evanescent soul seeking the river of everlasting life from the hands” of God’s bounty.

“Resignation and willing submission” to Go’s will, is “mine.”

I testify to the truth that God is God.

I testify to the fact that Baha'u'llah is "the Hidden Mystery, The Treasured Symbol, through Whom" all that God has willed to "Be", is being manifested.

I testify that it is Baha'u'llah "Whose name" previous Revelators "set down," and "mentioned in the Books of God" in the past.

"My trespasses have kept me back" from drawing near to God "and my sins have held me far from the court" of His holiness.

I have been enriched by God's love, but part of me has been "destroyed" and "consumed" by separation and remoteness from Him (my earthly being?).

I desire and ask that God ordain for me "that I may gaze" on His beauty "and observe whatsoever is in" His Book.

I praise God for aiding me to remember Him and for making Baha'u'llah "known unto me"; and for causing me "to bow down" before His Lordship, to "humble myself" and to acknowledge His Revelation.

"My back is bowed by the burden of my sins" and my heedlessness has destroyed a part of me (again the earthly self?). I am thrown into inner turmoil "whenever I ponder my evil doings," especially in view of God's benevolence. It makes me "blush to lift up my fact" to Him, and "my longing hands . . . ashamed to stretch forth" toward heaven.

I can soar to those heights of consciousness only by using both wings of the soul - the wings of the mind and of the heart. In other words, I must know and understand what I am saying, and I must put my heart into it. I must use my highest spiritual endowment when "saying" such prayers, for in reality they are expressions of the celestial man. So I must realize what I am saying and mean it with my whole soul.

When I use a prayer in this way, then my highest degree of love will be called into action, too, intense feeling is inevitable for any heart that is tuned into the power of the revealed prayers or that meditates deeply on the "verses of God that have been received" by Baha'is; and the full effect of the prayer is realized when it produces the accompanying illumination of mind that completes the transformation of consciousness.

It is only in the human world that knowing power or intelligence and love power or feeling are separated, the way light and heat are separated in the outer manifestations of fire or electricity. The effect of this separation is to enable one to believe or accept as truth a fact without having his heart stirred by it, or to love something without knowing why or understanding what it is that is loved. But Baha'i prayers involve both mind and heart, and therefore serve the whole soul.

This suggests a technique of study and meditation that can help me to assimilate the Word of God in a way that will expose me to its full transforming effect: I find it contributes to my understanding and exhilaration to go through a prayer and list and meditate on each of the

following elements of celestial Light:

- (1.) statements about myself as I start to pray;
- (2.) statements about my inner being that go beyond what I now consciously feel or am;
- (3.) statements about my human associates or mankind;
- (4.) statements describing my real relationship to God or His to me;
- (5.) statements of how things are in reality, as when a truth is expressed or elements of reality are described as seen from the over-all or spiritual viewpoint;
- (6.) expressions of gratitude and joy;
- (7.) expressions of praise, love and worship;
- (8.) petitions or admonitions;
- (9.) mention made of divine realities hitherto unknown, but now perceptible through the spirit of faith directed to divine Revelation (such as the names of God).

In this exercise both my intelligence and emotional energies are challenged at their highest levels. Both must be dynamically active when I pray, too.

In short, in the world of power and purpose, the two aspects of the power that is called spirit are resolved into one basic energy-drive. And I am not availing myself of a prayer's total potential power if I either read it without intense feeling, or feel it without a dawning light or heavenly understanding of it. To pray or meditate requires the action of the total power with which my soul is endowed - total vision and total emotional response. This is what opening the portals of my heart does. Then as I respond to what God broadcasts to me, I am put in touch with reality - infinite, eternal and divine. Every Word I utter opens my heart wider, too, to new light in relation to both my own being and my environment, beginning with my outer awareness of material things, the light extends upward to abstract mental heights far beyond the realms of my egocentric common thought, and finally reaches the pinnacle of ideals and aspirations and of the divine purpose-and-power that is too glorious for me to understand but that I feel in my very soul. This is part of God's purpose, described in these words:

“O SON OF MAN! Ascend unto My heaven, that thou mayest obtain the joy of reunion, and from the chalice of imperishable glory quaff the peerless wine. HWA 18 #61

The prayers are realistic in the highest sense of the word, and so are all of the verities and admonitions encountered in the Baha'i Writings. They supply to my heart both the illumination and transforming power that I need to enable me to deal intelligently with what faces me: both what appears in the outer world and what exists in the infinite, eternal, divine heights and depths that underlie those appearances. They give me a “working knowledge” of the unknowable.

Spiritual growth or metamorphosis in Moses' time or the early childhood of man was through blind obedience based on a fear of God; and in Jesus' time or the adolescence of man, through faith and the love of God. But now or in the maturity of man, it is to be through voluntarily facing and understanding reality. Understanding engenders a spontaneous awe and love of God that supersedes fear, plus a heavenly power and impetus to fulfill His glorious

purpose.

The God-given science of reality imparts and understanding of life that is superhuman. And when I gain this, my vision and feelings will become superhuman, too. They will, in short, be spiritualized. They will become the vision and feelings of the celestial being that God ordained that I should be.

I can prove this to myself afresh every time I use a revealed prayer or meditation. It opens the portals of my heart to the Elixir of God's Word, and my inmost being is stirred and caused to respond to this Truth:

“The seal of the choice Wine of His Revelation hath, in this Day and in His Name, the Self-Sufficing, been broken. Its grace is being poured out upon men. Fill thy cup, and drink it in His Name, the Most Holy, the All-Praised.” GL 12

“This is . . . the Day whereon those that are nigh unto Him are able to drink of the soft-flowing river of immortality, and they who believe in His unity, the wine of His Presence, through their recognition of Him Who is the Highest and Last End of all.” GL 33

“O SON OF DUST! Turn not away thine eyes from the matchless wine of the immortal Beloved, and open them not to foul and mortal dregs. Take from the hands of the divine Cup-bearer the chalice of immortal life, that all wisdom may be thine, and that thou mayest hearken unto the mystic voice calling from the realm of the invisible. Cry aloud, ye that are of low aim! Wherefore have ye turned away from My holy and immortal wine unto evanescent water? HWP 43-4 #62

I know that the seal of the Choice Wine of His Revelation has been broken - the celestial Wine that can transform my consciousness and convert my satanic strength and emotions into heavenly power and spiritual motivation. But, occupied as I am with the responsibilities and demands of earthly life my ego or human self asks: when do I have time to enjoy that inebriating “wine of His Presence”? I do recognize Baha'u'llah as “the Highest and Last End of all,” and I am more than willing to accept “the chalice of immortal life.” But I can only live minute by minute here and now. How can I compress the realization of the heights of Immortality even though recognized as being real, into a momentary human experience? How can I undergo so radical a change of consciousness as this, in the brief and rare periods of time that I am free to look into my heart and thus benefit from the ineffable beauty and light that God casts into it?

The answer, of course, is: prayer and meditation make this possible. So it behooves me to find at least a quarter of an hour (preferably more) in every twenty-four hour period, to devote to communion with God. And if this is actually impossible, I should learn to use the Greatest Name as a prayer. (see pages 212 and 311 [])

On the other hand, Baha'u'llah teaches that one's whole life should be a prayer. BNE 11- (last part) So my ultimate goal is not to experience a mere flash of awareness of the heaven of His Presence, but to actually dwell in that consciousness so that every thought and feeling, every

word or action, is motivated by God's love and purpose. This can be possible as I mature. Meanwhile, I can find that that one word from the language of heaven, "Allah'u'Abha!", used sincerely and often can, magically enough, keep me where I want to live, reversing each drop in the level of my consciousness.

Acknowledging the gloriousness of God is in itself communion with Him. It is a spiritual experience too, that has nothing to do with time, for in that communion,

"Truth, riding upon the wind, darteth across space," 68(kk)

with its blinding light, to banish the destructive darkness of the human consciousness as I plod along in my material routine.

Probably this described the most dramatic instantaneous transformation that I can experience and perhaps one of the most vivid proofs of the reality and power of the higher-than-human power that makes me a celestial being. It is different from what I experience as a human being who has been conditioned by family mores or tradition to "say my prayers" and who follows this blind habit patter (when convenient). My human nature has its own way of praying, a way that does not necessarily affect or change me to any noticeable degree. How do I pray? It is worth checking!

That miraculous change of inner consciousness is something that I can only experience in my station as a celestial being. It can happen when, from the depths of selfless humility, or from despair at my own imperfections but also from an overwhelming yearning and realization of God's love, I open all the portals of my heart and allow the light of His Word to flood my whole being.

Every soul was created to know and to worship its Creator, but this fact is not yet clearly apprehended or known. Souls are pitifully blind and hearts are agonizingly frustrated in this day because as the Voice of God has explained:

"O SON OF SPIRIT! The bird seeketh its nest; the nightingale the charm of the rose; whilst those birds, the hearts of men, content with transient dust, have strayed far from their eternal nest, and with eyes turned towards the slough of heedlessness are bereft of the glory of the divine presence. Alas! How strange and pitiful; for a mere cupful, they have turned away from the billowing seas of the Most High, and remained far from the most effulgent horizon. HWP 22-3 #2

But Baha'is are gloriously blessed in that they need no longer to be "bereft of the glory of the divine presence"! Yet even though I am a Baha'i, I have not yet fully awakened from the heedlessness of my human nature or even begun to learn to benefit from "the matchless wine of the immortal Beloved." So I hear His celestial Voice speaking to me saying:

"O SON OF MAN! Many a day hath passed over thee whilst thou hast busied thyself with they fancies and idle imaginings. How long art thou to slumber on they bed? Lift up thy head from slumber, for the Sun hath risen to the zenith, haply it may shine upon thee with the light of beauty." HWA 18 #62

And he reminds me, so gently but powerfully, so compellingly and yet so tenderly:

“O SON OF MAN! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I many name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life. HWA 4 #4

He has helped me to awaken from my “slumber of heedlessness” and allowed the light of His beauty to shine into my heart, giving me glimpses of the heaven of His presence, through my use of these precious revealed prayers. But I have only begun to be transformed by them in relation to my potentiality. So He repeats His invitation again and again.

“Haste ye to enter into Paradise, as a token of Our mercy unto you, and drink ye from the hands of the All-Merciful the Wine that is life indeed.” GL 45-6

As I meditate or supplicate God, from the depths of a grateful heart, I answer:

“The inebriation of Thy presence, o Well-Beloved of all worlds, hath seized and possessed me.” GL 31

Also I put my heart into this or any “verses of God” as I make them my own, and, to my Beloved Creator, I say:

“I render Thee thanks, O Thou who hast lighted Thy fire within my soul, and cast the beams of Thy light into my heart that Thou hast taught thy servants how to make mention of Thee, and revealed unto them the ways whereby they can supplicate Thee, through Thy most holy and exalted tongue, and Thy most August and precious speech. But for Thy leave, who is there that could venture to express Thy might and Thy grandeur; and were it not for Thine instruction, who is the man that could discover the ways of Thy pleasure in the kingdom of Thy creation?” P&M 283 (see page 4 and 177 [])

7. INSTRUCTIONS FOR REALIZATION

“O SON OF LOVE! Thou art but one step away from the glorious heights above and from the celestial tree of love. Take thou one pace and with the next advance into the immortal realm and enter the pavilion of eternity. Give ear then tot hat which hath been revealed by the pen of glory.” 77(jj), HWP 24 #7

Although I am “a living soul,” 34(b), Gen. 2:7 (see page 6 []) and that makes me “a celestial entity,” 34(d), PT 85 (see pages , 10, 253 and 266 []) I am predominantly a human being living in the realm of human affairs. It is true that my aspirations and objectives are centered in those “glorious heights above” and my heart is vitally connected with that “celestial tree of love” that is “out of this world.” But there is a step to be taken - again and again - to lift my outer consciousness above “the world of matter” with its ills that “all flesh is heir to.” 82(s), PT 110 (see page * ____ []) I need help in centering my attention on “The immortal realm and pavilion of eternity.” (see above) It is a matter of vision, since my human powers of perception restrict me to the “world of illusion,” although in reality my soul or inner being was created in the world of divine purpose and power and is part of that immortal realm.

What more effective “step” than could there be, to open the eyes of my heart and enable my outer consciousness thus to enter the world of spiritual fulfillment, than the prayer and meditation that engage my highest powers of perception and that acknowledge and respond to “that which hath been revealed by the pen of glory:?”

Communion with God is the most positive action that my inner being can participate in, too, by way of translating “that which hath been written into reality and action.” 1(h), GL 250
Muhammad defined prayer in the simplest terms for a more primitive people:

“Prayer is a ladder by which everyone may ascent to heaven.” (Muhammed BNE 99, top)

What is prayer and what will it do for me? Let me “give ear” to some of the answers that have been revealed.

Quoted below are only a few highlights summing up what I have been learning since I first read that “The fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God,” and after I besought God to “open to my face the portals” of His bestowals (see page 1 [])

A. Verities Answering the Question: Why Pray?

“What is prayer? It is conversation with God. While man prays he sees himself in the presence of God. If he concentrates his attention he will surely at the time of prayer realize that he is conversing with God . . . Prayer and supplication are so effective that they inspire one’s heart for the whole day with high ideals and supreme sanctity and calmness. One’s heart must be sensitive to the music of prayer. He must feel the effect of prayer. He must not be like an organ from which the softest notes stream forth without having consciousness of sensation in itself.” SofW Vol. 8, 41

God starts the conversation, (BNE 99, 1st par.) So I must answer. (see THE HEART’S OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNICATION, our pages 64-74 []) The response of souls is a spiritual law to be apprehended and obeyed.

“The traditions established the fact that in all Dispensations the law of prayer hath constituted a fundamental element of the Revelation of all the Prophets of God - a law the form and manner of which hath been adapted to the varying requirements of every age.”

Iqan 38-9 (see page 211 [])

Prayer is “indispensable and obligatory.” DAL 26 #2, BWF 368, BNE 103-4 (see page 36 and 53 [])

But the Command is given from divine love, for “supplication and invocation unto God” benefit one marvelously. DAL 27 #6 All of Part Two (pages 49 - 141 []) HOW PRAYER RELATES TO MY INNER NEEDS, enlarges on the foregoing facts.

Also I learn:

When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to Him and seeks bounty from His ocean, this supplication is by itself a light to his heart, an illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exaltation to his being.” BAL 26 #1 (see pages 49 and 74 [])

“Man becomes like a stone unless he continually supplicated God. The heart of man is like a mirror which is covered with dust and to cleanse it one must continually pray to God that it may become clean. The act of supplication is the polish which erases all worldly desires . . . Therefore, prayer is a key by which the doors of the kingdom are opened. There are many subjects which are difficult for man to solve. But during prayer and supplication they are unveiled and there is nothing that man cannot find out.” SofW Vol. 16, 544

“Supplication . . . is conducive to the joy of hearts and prayer causes spirituality.” DAL 33 #31 (see page 128 [])

“Prayer begets the attraction of the Kingdom and engenders . . . susceptibilities of the higher intelligence.” 104(jj), SofW Vol. 9, 103-4 (see page 64 [])

“By these attractions on’s ability and capacity increase.” DAL 26 #1 (see page 74 [])

Communion with my Lord causes “the fire of His love” to “glow more luminously” in my heart; DAL 28 #14 (see page 173 []) and “Fasting is illumination, prayer is light.” Iqan 39

“Prayer and supplication are two wings whereby man soars toward the heavenly mansion of the True One. However, verbal repetition of prayer does not suffice. One must live in a perennial attitude of prayer. When man is spiritually free, his mind becomes the altar and his heart the sanctuary of prayer. Then the meaning of the verse ‘We will lift up from before his eyes the veil’ will become fulfilled in him.” SofW Vol 9, 113

We do not know the precious benefits to be gained through prayer, but the new Revelation enlightens me, coaxes me to avail myself of them.

“The majority of people are captives in the matrix of nature, submerged in the sea of materiality. We must pray that they may be reborn, that they may attain insight and spiritual hearing, that they may receive the gift of another heart, a new transcendent power, and in the eternal world the unending bestowal of divine bounties. Today the world of humanity is walking in darkness because it is out of touch with the world of

God.” 55(11), PUP 299 (see pages 263 and 289 [])

The Voice of God speaks to my heart:

“O MOVING FORM OF DUST! I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me.” HWP 29 #21 (see pages 68 and 70 [])

and ‘Abdu’l-Baha adds:

“I now assure thee, O servant of God, that if . . . thy heart . . . forget all else beside God and come in communion with the Spirit of God, then the Holy Spirit will assist thee with a power which will enable thee to penetrate all things, and a Dazzling Spark which enlightens all sides, a Brilliant Flame in the zenith of the heavens, will teach thee that which thou dost not know of the facts of the universe and of the divine doctrine.” BWF 369

“There is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer. Man must live in a state of prayerfulness. The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication.” 104(jj), SofW vol. 9, 103 (see page 290 [])

I reread pages 49-50 [] for heaven light on THE REASON FOR PRAYER

B. Does God Answer Me?

I reread pages 73-4 [] , and am reassured that He is a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God.” BP’69, 95 #76

“He answers the prayers of all of His servants . . . In his mercy He answers . . . according to His supreme wisdom.” DAL 31-2 #25, PUP 243-4 (see pages 49 and 74 []).

I also am reminded that He disappoints no one who has sought Him, and as the result of supplication, He brings about amazing changes in souls: from “abasement into glory, . . . weakness into strength . . . powerlessness into might, . . . fear into calm, and doubt “into certainty.” BP’ 69, 55 #40, P&M 249 (see page 117 []) Children or immature souls have been know to reject the whole idea of prayer after having made requests of God and having received no answer, except perhaps “No.” This can happen to one who is unacquainted with the purpose and hence is out of touch with the reality of prayer.

One of the most destructive illusions under which unenlightened human beings live and react is that they should not have to face anything they don’t like, or to cope with what is unpleasant or painful. Such people would naturally petition God to remove from their lives everything that is hateful to them, and at the very least to change the people they dislike, What they don’t know is that the right answer to such requests is usually No, or perhaps Not Now.

If I have any such thoughts as these, I reread the section on TESTS AND AFFLICTIONS in Divine Art of Living, pages 89 - 95 which remind me that

“Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance; they are sent to up by the Divine Mercy for our own perfecting.” PT 50, DAL 30, #19 (see page 214 [])

I also realize that there are two kinds of ordeals: “One kind is to test the soul, and the other is

punishment for actions.” DAL 89 #1 [(strike)Both since] Both are ordained to be “educational and developmental,” in facing either, a petition for radiant acquiescence, and for forgiveness for what I am being punished for, or for the “heavenly power” to meet whatever test is involved as an enlightened and submissive believer. Since this is what God is always waiting to supply, I can be sure that that kind of prayer will be gloriously answered.

In that face of current light that illumines the reality of prayer and the purpose of God underlying it, I am learning to “ask not” of God anything except what He has “ordained” for my sake, knowing that this is “that which profits” me if I only content myself with it. HWA 8 #18 (see page 74 []) I even ask Him to “Look not upon my hopes and doing,” and I try to condition my own heart to do the same by looking only upon His will “that hath encompassed the heavens and the earth.” BP’69, 121 or P&M 318 (see page 294 [])

Thus it is gradually dawning on me that the purpose of my prayers is not to give me a chance to beg God for what I want, but rather to “draw me ever nearer to the threshold” of God’s door and “to suffer em not to be far removed from the shadow” of His mercy “and the canopy” of His bounty. BP’69, 161 #21, P&M 288 (see page 74 []) When I commune with God from a desire for this spiritual effect of prayer, I know beyond all doubt that He will respond and give me all that I desire in the depths and heights of my inner being.

I find additional enlightenment about answers to prayer in Baha’u’llah and the New Era page 107-8, “Prayer and Natural Law”, and in Divine Art of Living pages 31-3, ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

“In the Baha’i view, the power that brings about answers to prayer is the inexhaustible power of God. The part of the supplicant is only to exert the feeble force necessary to release the flow or determine the course of the divine bounty which is ever ready to serve those who have learned how to draw upon it.” BNE 108

C. General Instructions re: Prayer

Real prayer is an art and must be learned. So I gratefully turn to and review instructions I have been given, such as the following:

“O SON OF GLORY! Be swift in the path of holiness, and enter the heaven of communion with Me. Cleanse thy heart with the burnish of the spirit, and hasten to the court of the Most High.” 84(nn), HWP 24 #8 (see page 68 [])

“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 Ridvan of everlasting reunion, an din one breath commune with the heavenly Spirits>’ Iqan 43 (see page 70 [])

“Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Sprit, and be thou of the thankful.” 49 (w), GL 280 or BWF 109 (see page 59 [])

“You must offer supplications unto the kingdom of El-Abha and seek eternal bounties from Him. You must pray that your hearts may become filled with glorious

lights even as a purified mirror; then will the lights of the Sun of Truth shine therein. You must supplicate and pray to God every night and every day seeking His assistance and help.” PUP 454

“O SON OF MAN! Transgress not thy limits, nor claim that which beseemeth thee not. Prostrate thyself before the countenance of thy God, the Lord of might and power.” HWA 9 #24

“O MY SERVANT! Thou art even as a finely tempered sword concealed in the darkness of its sheath and its value hidden from the artificer’s knowledge. Wherefore come forth from the sheath of self and desire that thy worth may be made resplendent and manifest unto all the world.” 36(z), HWP 46 #72

“Thank God for . . . manifesting unto thee the Evident Light . . . Thou shalt advance unto the Lofty Station, acquire heavenly qualities and attain knowledge of the significances of the words of God in this glorious day.” 25 (uuu), BWF 316

I especially thank God for manifesting His “Evident Light” in our precious Kitab-i-Aqdas, and of course I turn there to find specific LAWS, ORDINANCES AND EXHORTATIONS on Prayer pages 35- 59, and for endless subject matter on which to reflect and meditate.

When Shall I Pray?

Commune “at the dawn of every day.” BWF 106, GL 265, Iqan 194 Supplicate and beseech “in the middle of the night and at early morn . . . invoke at all times.” DAL 33 #32 (see page 211 [])

“Pray . . . and invoke Him at midnight and at dawn . . . at morn and eve.” DAL 33 #29, BWF 359 (see page 243 [])

Reflect, and beseech “at all times.” GL 253 or DAL 34 #36 Several MORNING prayers are given in Baha’i Prayers, under this title and under DAWN, and among those for EVENING is for communing with God at midnight. See page 29 #17.

“Chant (or recite) the words of God every morning and evening. The one who neglects this has not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His agreement, and he who turns away from it today is of those who have turned away from God.” DAL 40 #59

To emphasize my need for daily prayer, Baha’u’llah revealed three prayers that He “invested . . . with a special potency and significance” BP”69, 129 top and called them “Obligatory” BP”69, 117-28 # 1, 2, and 3 or P&M 314-23.

“The Master said: ‘It has been revealed in the Teachings that work is worship, but this does not mean that worship and the prescribed mentionings of God should be abandoned, for such worship is a requirement set forth in the Book of God. Prayer makes the heart mindful, it spiritualizes the soul; it causes the spirit to exult; it gladdens the

breast, till Divine love appears and a man leans trustingly on the Lord and bows in lowliness at the Threshold of Grandeur.” BNS 382, 10 from Mahmud’s Diary.

“Baha’u’llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha have revealed innumerable prayers for the use of Their followers at various times and for various purposes.” BNE 108-110 For instance:

Praying from Gratitude

To return to light already received on this subject, I reread pages 59-63 [] . Also:

“Reflect, o people, upon the mercy of God and upon His favors, then thank Him in the mornings and evenings.” BWF 195

“Thank God for guiding thee unto the Straight Path, manifesting unto thee the Evident Light. He shall give thee a draught of the cup whereby thy spiritual power will be increased.” TAB I, 73

There are such endless bounties for which to be thankful and I am reminded repeatedly to render thanks for such blessings as:

the blessing of life and existence in the human kingdom; BWF 266

God’s supreme testimony and our recognition of His Manifestation; BWF 122 or GL 195

the consummation of Scriptural prophecies; ESW 114

believers opportunity to “turn with their inmost soul; to Him; GL 172 and having “beheld the Lights”; BWF 353

the honor of turning our faces to His holy court; GL 306 (see page 59 [])

Having been “strengthened . . . to aid His Cause;” DAL 36 #45, GL 303 (see pages 33, 59, 170 [])

God’s having ordained every good thing for believers; BWF 134-5 or GL 276

the comfort of God’s mercy. DAL 36 #43

“Thank God for choosing thee, saving thee and granting thee of these great blessings and glorious attainments>” TAB I, 111

We are even admonished to be “thankful in adversity.” BWF 136, GL 285, ESW 93 In fact I am old that if I were to “thank God a thousand times with each breath it would not be sufficient”; because He created and trained me, protected me from every affliction and prepared for me “every gift and bestowal.” DAL 35 #41, PUP 182-30 (see page 170 [])

To recall all that I have learned about gratitude, I can reread pages 32-4 and 59-60 []

.Table Blessing or Grace

“O my Lord, my Hope!! Thanks be unto Thee for these foods and benefits. Suffer us to ascend to Thy Kingdom and to sit at the tables of thy divine world. Nourish us with the food of Thy meeting and cause us to attain to the sweetness of beholding Thy beauty, forasmuch as this is the utmost wish, the mightiest gift and the greatest bestowal. O Lord, O Lord! Make this feasible unto us. Verily Thou

art the Beneficent, the Giver! Verily Thou art the Bestower, the Mighty, the Merciful.”
TAB I, 168

Praying for Forgiveness

The divine Educator admonishes us to pray for forgiveness. BWF 33 or GL 105 (see page 94 []) In fact Baha’u’llah teaches me to present myself before my Lord every day as a “transgressor seeking the ocean” of God’s forgiveness. BP’69, 122, P&M 319 (see page 54 [])
To review what my “heart free from all save God . . . seek forgiveness from God alone.”

“Confession before the servants (i.e. before men) is not permissible, for it is not the means or the cause of Divine forgiveness. Such confession before the creatures leads to one’s humiliation and abasement, and God - exalted be His glory! - does not wish for the humiliation of His servants . . . the sinner must, between himself and God, beg for mercy from the sea of mercy and implore pardon from the heaven of forgiveness.” BNE 96

A special bounty available to Baha’is making their Pilgrimage is that:

“ . . . whoso saith in ‘Akka: ‘I beg forgiveness of God,’ God will forgive all his trespasses. And he that remembereth God in ‘Akka at morn and at eventide, in the night-season and at dawn, is better in the sight of God than he who beareth swords, spears and arms in the path of God - exalted be He! “ ESW 180

Forgiveness is one subject on which we have been given many special prayers, easily accessible through the index of each book or prayers.

Praying for Healing

“Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succor in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.” BP’69, 36 #24, P&M 626-3 (see page 45 [])

As I open the portals of my heart in prayer and meditation, I find divine light and power flooding my heart where every kind of “healing and . . . succor” is needed and is given. I reread pages 46-7 [] and 106-114 [] and meditate on what I find in BAHA’U’LLAH and the New Era, pages 115-117. (see also “The Prophet as Physician” and “Healing by Material Means” 117-8 [] ; “healing by Non-material Means” 118-9; “The Power of the Holy Spirit” 119-20 [] ; “Attitude of the Patient” * ____ [] and “The Healer” 120-2 []) for additional light on which to ponder, I have a whole Chapter on HEALING AND HEALTH in The Divine Art of Living pages 53-60.

In short, I must never forget ‘Abdu’l- Baha’s instruction and promise:

“If we are sick and in distress, let us implore God’s healing, and He will answer our prayer.” PT 111

I must keep in mind that sickness and “distress” refer not only to physical maladies, but to any condition of my consciousness that does not reflect the radiant acquiescence that can be beamed into my heart whenever its portals are wide open and turned to the Divine Physician and Source of Light.

I review pages 106-14 [] on this subject.

Prayer for Others

Healing of this kind for other, as well as the many blessings that I crave for my loved one, prompt my heart to pray for them, and I remember many things I have learned about this subject (pages 46-7 [] and 115-121 []) especially the fact that “Supplication and prayer on behalf of others will surely be effective.” DAL 35 #39 (see page 115 []) I can use any of the healing prayers petitioning for (or on behalf of) another as readily as for myself.

It is human nature to want to change people, and the first impulse of a spiritual being is to help those who are in trouble. But the human ways of answering these impulses can be destructive, so I need to learn the new ways that Baha’u’llah has unveiled. “None but the purest motive” behind my efforts to assist others can be acceptable of effective D-Br93, (see page 44 []) in achieving this highest goal of the spiritual life. Thus if the emotional energy that I express is that of my lower nature (“satanic,” 55(k), PUP 289 (see pages 85, 280, 286, 298 []) before being directed to another soul it should be converted into the heavenly power to which I have access through prayer. Then, as I find myself “endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind,” 5(cc), BWF 107, GL 267, Iqan 195-6 (see page 132 []) the “verses of God” that I “intone” will Cause a response and effect in the hearts of those I pray for. 105(c), BP’69, 3, BWF 123, GL 295 (see page 115, *___, 284 []) This reminds me too, to watch my very thoughts about people, to check the motives and “spirit” that produce these, since the “waves from our minds go forth and create movement and thought in other minds.” 77(ii), SofW Vol. 7, 107-8 (see pages 115 and 185 []) This applies to all thought, both helpful and destructive.

It is so easy and natural to feel critical toward people we disapprove of or who are obviously misguided, even our loved ones, and to want to “put them straight”! I must pray, then, for protection from that kind of spirit or feeling in myself, remembering Baha’u’llah’s warnings about busying myself “with the faults of others” [HWP] 10 #16 *see page 101 []) and His definite command to “Breathe not the sins of others.” HWP 10 #27 (see page 101 []) Haven’t I committed, myself, before God, also not to “dwell on the unpleasant things of life”? BP’69, 81 #64 (see pages 131 and 213 []))

What can I do to help those whose faults or sins I am so vividly aware of? I am told to “conceal” them, but to pray, turning my “face” or attention to God, “that He, (the Remover of Difficulties?) In His infinite compassion and mercy, may help and succor these misguided ones.” ‘Abdu’l-Baha tells me exactly what to ask for and promises that if we all do this, “peace and

love” will “walk hand in hand through the lands.” This is the right way to help “these poor unhappy people.” PT 116 (see page 117 []) Hasn’t the Bab put clearly before me how difficulties are removed? BP’69, 106 #86 (see page 120 []) And hasn’t Baha’u’llah assured us that God has the divine power to change a person’s “abasement, . . . weakness . . . , powerlessness . . . , fear . . . (or) doubt” into “glory . . . , strength . . . , might . . . , calm . . . , (or) certainty”? BP’69, 55 #40, P&M 249 (see pages 117 and 332 []) So what could I possibly do for someone in trouble that would be more effective than to invoke that Power on his behalf?

Here again, however, I realize that the level of my own consciousness, as I pray, is a big factor in the success of my effort. For if I am using only my human degree of spirit and am only concerned with worldly or human attainment, I cannot expect quick or completely satisfactory results. I recall Baha’u’llah repeating a verity uttered by Muhammad long ago:

“‘All HUMAN attainment moveth upon a lame ass, whilst Truth, riding upon the wind, darteth across space.’” 68(k), Iqan 187 (see page 326 [])

thus if the eyes of my heart are open to Truth, and it is only this that I ask to be fulfilled in the lives of those I love (or in relation to my own growth), that kind of petition I can be sure is immediately being answered.

In fact the answer is part of what exists in the spiritual world, and will eventually, mysteriously, but surely, be manifested outwardly; and I should rest in that assurance.

For instance, I pray for harmony and love between those I love and in my personal relationships. I feel this need when I meet with other believers at every Baha’i Feast, and join them in praying for this condition to develop or “manifest” more fully. At what level of vision do I approach and participate in this kind of prayer? Do I face my Beloved with my consciousness filled with the faults and disunity and lack of love in those I pray for? If so, how can I expect ideal results? - for this is not even facing the reality of what has been unveiled to my heart! I need the eyes of faith wide open as I pray. I need to hear and heed our beloved Master as He speaks to my inner being:

“If you could see with the eye of truth, great waves of spirituality would be visible to you in this place . . . Your souls are as waves on the sea of spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God. Every heart should radiate unity, so that the Light of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous. We must not consider the separate waves alone, but the entire sea. We should raise from the individual to the whole. The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men.” PT 83-4

How true it is that, as “a material man” I dwell on people’s faults and “the unpleasant things of life,” BP’69 81 #64 (see pages 131 and 213 []) and let myself be “worried and harassed by little things” 68(mm), 103(s), SofW Vol. 7, 154 (see page 115 []) - little irritations and petty imperfections in people! Perhaps before I pray for others, my first petition should be that my own heart shall “radiate unity.” For I find that in every answer that God provides, I have

a part to play before it can be fully real-ized - that is, made real in the outer world.

When using revealed prayers for others, we are not permitted to change pronouns; BNs #169, July '44 but I can use those expressed in the first person "on behalf" of another.

All Things Made New, 136 In doing this, I can put my whole heart into the petition, knowing that I am expressing the highest wishes of the other soul.

I review in The Divine Art of Living what is offered as instructions about PRAYER FOR OTHERS page 33-5 , for additional help.

Prayers for Special Individuals

In the index of the precious volume of Baha'u'llah's Prayers and Meditations, I note many special prayers for others: for all mankind, for children of believers, for enemies, for families of believers, for handmaidens, for healing, for nations, for non-believers, for many kinds of protections, and for those grieved by Baha'u'llah's tribulations, etc.

In addition to the foregoing, I find that special revealed prayers have been provided for the following persons:

Prayers for Children

"Know that in every home where God is praised and prayed to, and His kingdom proclaimed, that home is a garden and a paradise of His happiness." DAL 27 #4

'Abdu'l-Baha gave us the following special prayers:

for believers or souls assembled at a Feast, Vol. I, 24, Vol. II, 275, 390, 393

for children: a child "in distress", Vol. I, 195

a little child, Vol. III, 588

a little girl, Vol. III, 551

for a husband: Vol. I, 95

for a youth: Vol. II, 465

for an unborn child: Vol. I, 139

In connection with PRAYER FOR OTHERS, I also remember pages 33 -35 on this subject in The Divine Art of Living; and in Baha'u'llah and the New Era, there are a few paragraphs on the subject of Deliverance from Calamities on pages 105-7 that I find enlightening.

* _____

Praying for The Departed

Yes, I am admonished to pray for the "departed." (See pages 119-30 []) 'Abdu'l-Baha mentions the fact

"that our spiritual instinct, surely never given in vain, prompts us to pray for the welfare of those, our loved ones, who have passed out of the material world." 90(b), PT 90

I recall that He also says:

"It is possible that the condition of those who have died in sin and unbelief may

become changed; that is to say, they may become the object of pardon through the bounty of God, not through His justice, for bounty is giving without desert, and justice is giving what is deserved.” 90(a), BWF 330, SAQ 169 (see page 120 [])

In order to pray with understanding and assurance for those who have “passed out of the material world,” and to base my feelings and motives on the reality of their needs and of my relation to them instead of on my own personal grief, it is helpful for me to open the portals of my heart to the following special light on the subject:

“... These is no other being higher than a perfect man. But man when he has reached this state can still make progress in perfections but not in state, because there is no state higher than that of a perfect man to which he can transfer himself. He only progresses in the state of humanity, for the human perfections are infinite. Thus, however learned a man may be, we can imagine one more learned. Hence, as the perfections of humanity are endless, man can also make progress in perfections after leaving this world.” 88(c), BWF 333, SAQ 274

“As to the soul of man after death, it remains in the degree of purity to which it has evolved during life in the physical body, and after it is freed from the body it remains plunged in the ocean of God’s mercy . . . (and) evolves nearer to God, by the mercy and bounty of God.” 88(b), PT 66

“As the spirit (soul) continues to exist after death, it necessarily progresses, or declines; and in the other world, to cease to progress is the same as to decline: but it never leaves its own condition, in which it continues to develop.” 88(e), BWF 330-1, SAQ 270 (see page 309 [])

“From the moment the soul leaves the body and arrives in the Heavenly World, its evolution is spiritual, and that evolution is: the approaching unto God. . . The soul does not evolve from degree to degree as a law - it only evolves nearer to God,” by the Mercy and Bounty of God.” 88(f), PY 66

“If the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved . . . It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or tongue describe. The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the Ideal King and Divine Educator, the pure heaven that leaveneth the world of being, and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest . . . Those souls that are the symbols of detachment are the leaven of the world.” 90(c), GL 151

“The souls of the people of Baha, who have entered and been established within the Crimson Ark, shall associate and commune intimately one with another, and shall be so closely associated in their lives, their aspirations, their aims and strivings as to be even

as one soul . . .

“The people of Baha . . . are, one and all, well aware of one another’s state and condition, and are united in the bonds of intimacy and fellowship. Such a state, however, must depend upon their faith and their conduct. They that are of the same grade and station are fully aware of one another’s capacity, character, accomplishments and merits. They that are of a lower grade, however, are incapable of comprehending adequately the station, or of estimating the merits, of those that rank above them.” 90(e), GL 164-70.

“The progress of man’s spirit (soul) in the divine world, after the severance of its connections with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the sincere prayers of other human souls, or through the charities and important good works which are performed in its name.” 88(g), SAQ 278

This gives me a vital purpose in praying for my loved ones who are now living only in the spiritual world: simply ask, with full confidence of a response, for God’s bounty and mercy is assisting them to progress “in the divine world.”

We have been given some revealed prayers for “the departed” that are easy to find in our Baha’i Prayer Books. In addition ‘Abdu’l-Baha gave us the following special ones:

“O Thou Forgiving Lord! Although certain souls finished the days of life in ignorance, were estranged and selfish, yet the ocean of Thy forgiveness is, verily, able to redeem and make free the sinners by one of its waves. Thou redeemest whomsoever Thou willest and deprivest whomsoever Thou willest not! (Referring to the reward and punishment of the soul according to its deed. There are many instances of this in all the heavenly Scriptures.) Shouldst Thou treat justly, we all are sinners and deserve to be deprived; and shouldst Thou observe mercy, every sinner shall be made pure and every stranger shall become a friend. Therefore, forgive and pardon and grant Thy mercy unto all. thou art the Forgiver, the Light-giver and the compassionate.” TAB I, 178-9 (Prayer for the forgiveness of souls who have departed from this World in ignorance of the Truth.)

“O my God! O my God! this is a servant who hath ascended to the Kingdom of Thy Mercifulness; supplicated to the realm of Thy Might and Singleness; is rejoiced at the appearance of Thy Kingdom; the effulgence of Thy light and the spread of Thy signs. He hath believed in Thy Verses, been overtaken with the ecstasy of Thy love and with the cheer of Thy affection, until his soul craved to behold Thy Beauty - and could not (or was unable to) endure the grief and violence of the fire of separation, hastened unto the Supreme Friend and betook himself to Thy Threshold of Holiness at the visiting places of grandeur!

“O my Lord! Suffer him to abide in a blessed abode and cause him to enter into a retreat of faithfulness and favor him to everlastingly dwell in the heavenly paradise, the precinct of meeting in the shelter of Thy great mercy!

“Verily, Thou art the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Powerful, the Forgiving, the Mighty, the Bestower!” TAB I, 229-30 (Prayer for a devoted believer who has “ascended”)

We are urged especially to pray for our parents, especially after they have passed on “to the other world,” in return for the troubles and hardships they endured for us. BWF 329-30, SAQ 269

I find in BAHA’U’LLAH and the New Era sections that are relevant and enlightening under the subjects, Heaven and Hell (pages 195-7) and Oneness of the Two Worlds; (pages 197-9) also I find the comments on Body and Soul (Pages 212-3) interesting. In my meditation on this subject, my understanding of it is enhanced by rereading the last chapter of The Divine Art of Living, ETERNAL LIFE.

Praying for Virtues

Since part of the purpose of my being is to acquire virtues, 85(ddd), PT 177 (see page 15h []) it is natural to pray for the spiritual qualities that I especially need. In fact I have been instructed to do so, in such admonitions as:

Pray for “firmness and steadfastness.” DAL 30 #20 (see page 120 [])

Pray to be strengthened in “divine virtue.” PT 16, DAL 30 #21 (see page 104 [])

Pray to be made “conqueror over material things.” DAL 30 #22 (see page 173 [])

I find many communes in Baha’i Prayers from which to choose, especially those for Severance, Steadfastness, Unity and Spiritual Qualities in general.

Prayer invokes the power of the Holy spirit without which man is unable to progress, 22(a), PT 163 (see pages 157 and 206 []) or to “free himself from the rage of carnal passions.” 222(y), SAQ (see page 206 [])

It is through prayer that I develop the love of God, and that kind of love “maketh a man pure and holy and clotheth him with the garment of virtue and purity.” 34a(i), 104(ii), BWF 365 (see pages 204, 221 and 251 []) Do I realize the two extremes that face me?

Here I see a spiraling cyclic pattern of the spiritual life: prayer generate love and as love grows it shows by increasing “my yearning and attraction,” so that my “attitude of supplication and prayer” is “realized mor often”. DAL 28 #15 (see page 211 []) It is a pattern that I want to institute as a vital part of my life, definitely “saving” me from the “hell” of that lower state. Thankfully, then, and wholeheartedly, I cling to this simple but transforming petition:

“Enrapture my soul, O my Lord, with Thy most mighty signs, and draw me out of the depths of my corrupt and evil desires.” 54(ff), P&M 216

D. Miscellaneous Instructions re: Prayer

“The daily obligatory prayers are three in number. The believer is entirely free to choose any one of these three prayers, but is under the obligation of reciting either one of them, and in accordance with any specific directions with which they may be

accomplished.” - Shoghi Effendi BP”69, 117

Baha’u’llah encourages Baha’is to come together to pray, saying:

“He that seeketh to commune with God, let him betake himself to the companionship of His loved ones.” HWP 42, #56 (see page 70)

Moreover we are told that

“Such communal worship has greater power than isolated devotion, but in the Baha’i Dispensation there are to be no congregational prayers except for one revealed by Baha’u’llah to be said in unison at funerals. All others are recited by one person on behalf of everyone present. A Baha’i devotional programme consists of prayers and readings from the Holy Writings, selected in advance and apportioned to different readers. Chanting instead of reading is customary in the Middle East, but Western languages are not suitable for chanting. The Holy Writings are sometimes sung in these languages, and this may become more usual.” All Things Made New, 136

“Kings are the manifestors of God’s power and the source of His majesty and affluence. Pray ye in their behalf.” BWF 209

How to Pray

It is of the utmost importance that I be in the “right spirit” (my higher-than-human degree of spirit) when I am ready to pray. Before I realized this or tried to meet this requirement, I heard the Voice of my Beloved asking:

“why with thine heart defiled with desire and passion dost thou seek to commune with Me and to enter My sacred realm? Far, far are ye from that which ye desire.” HWP 45, #68 (see page 68 [])

No matter how or whether I may have prayed in the past, now in this new Day of the maturing of mankind and for the building of God’s Kingdom on earth, I need to be taught to pray in a new mature way.

How does our beloved Master and Exemplar teach us? We have the following story of one who actually had this thrilling experience:

“When ‘Abdu’l-Baha was in New York, He called to him an ardent Baha’i and said ‘If you will come to me at dawn tomorrow, I will teach you to pray.’ Delighted, Mr. M. arose at four and crossed the city, arriving for his lesson at six. With what exultant expectation he must have greeted this opportunity! He found “Abdu’l-Baha already at prayer, kneeling by the side of the bed. Seeing that ‘Abdu’l-Baha was quite lost in his own reverie, Mr. M. began to pray silently for his friends, his family and finally for the crowned heads of Europe. No word was uttered by the quiet man before him. He went over all the prayers he knew then, and repeated them twice, three times - still no sound broke the expectant hush. Mr. M. surreptitiously rubbed one knee and wondered vaguely about his back. He began again, hearing as he do so, the birds heralding the dawn outside the window. An hour passed, and finally two. Mr. M. was quite numb now. His eye,

roving along the wall, caught sight of a large crack. He allied with a touch of indignation but let his gaze pass again to the still figure across the bed. The ecstasy that he saw arrested him, and he drank deeply of the sight. Suddenly he wanted to pray like that. Selfish desires were forgotten. Sorrow, conflict, and even his immediate surroundings were as if they had never been. He was conscious of only one thing, a passionate desire to draw near to God. Closing his eyes again he set the world firmly aside, and amazingly his heart teemed with prayer, eager, joyous, tumultuous prayer. He felt cleansed and lifted by a new peace. ‘Abdu’l-Baha had taught him to pray! The ‘Master of Akka’ immediately arose and came to him. His eyes rested smilingly upon the newly humbled Mr. M. ‘When you pray.’ He said, ‘you must not think of your aching body, nor of the birds outside the window, nor of the cracks in the wall!’ He became very serious then, and added, ‘When you wish to pray you must first know that you are standing in the presence of the Almighty!’”(World Order Magazine, June 1936, Vol. 2 No. 3 p. 114-5; from *The Path to God* by Dorothy Baker)

It is impossible for me to have this first hand experience today, but as already noted, I do have a similar bounty in being invited to use ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s Tablet of Visitation BP’69, 137-8 since He said that reciting this prayer “with lowliness and fervor” will be “even as meeting Him face to face.”

I recall other guidance given by the Voice of God Himself, too:

“O SON OF LIGHT! Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is the essence of My command, therefore turn to it.” HWA 8, #16 (see page 64 [])

“Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful.” 49(w), BWF 109, GL 280 (see page 59 [])

How this is expressed in The Devotional Attitude in which conversation with God becomes possible, is described in Baha’u’llah and the New Era, pages 100-1.

The beloved Master put it so clearly and simply:

“Pray with heart and soul.” DAL 34 #33, PT 116

At the “first counsel” given by the Voice of God is that I should “Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart,” HWA 3 #1 I remember that purity has long been symbolized by cleanliness, especially in Muhammad’s teachings. Even many centuries before that, St. Matthew admonished: “When thou fasteth, wash thy face.” Matt. 6:17 And much earlier than that, David, the God-loving Shepherd, turned to God in prayer saying:

“I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.” Ps. 26:6

‘Abdu’l-Baha’s words about cleanliness, then, make me mindful of its symbolic relation to a condition of prayer:

“Cleanliness and sanctity in all conditions are characteristics of pure beings and necessities of free souls In all conditions, cleanliness and sanctity, purity and

delicacy exalt humanity and make the contingent beings progress. Even when applied to physical things, delicacy causeth the attainment of spirituality, as is established in the Holy Scriptures. External cleanliness, although it is but a physical thing, hath a great influence on spirituality . . . The fact of having a pure and spotless body . . . exerciseth an influence on the spirit of man.” 58(c), BWF 333-4, DAL 57 #12

If I am to pray with my whole being, I may do well to start by preparing my outer being. But of course it is much more important that my heart be purified. This I remember, can be done “with the burnish of love and severance from all save God,” 104(aa), 7 VAL 21 (see page 35 []) or “with the waters of renunciation.” 104(y), (see page 271 [])

How do I know my heart is “pure” as I face the Presence of God?

“The pure heart is one that is entirely cut away from self. To be selfless is to be pure.” 104(bb), ‘AbBh in Lond 110

Selflessness is the state of being “released from the prison of self,” which ‘Abdu’l-Baha said “is indeed freedom” 84(tt), DAL 70 #1 (see page 206 []) He said that when a man attains this spiritual freedom, “his mind becomes the altar and his heart the sanctuary of prayer.” 105(b), SofW V. 9, 113 I may not be able to live in this “perennial attitude of prayer,” *ibid.* but I certainly should be able to attain it during the brief time that I devote to communion with my Beloved.

This devotional attitude, in fact, is more important than any words in which I may try to converse with God. I have learned that true “prayer need not be in words” at all. It is what the heart utters when in an attitude of love. Prayer itself has been called “the Language of Love, and “Words without love mean nothing.” BNE 105 But of course every one of the revealed Baha’i Prayers has been uttered and written in the most perfect Language of Love, having originated in the heart of the Blessed Beauty or our precious Master, where the love of God burned intensely. So if I merely detach my thoughts and emotions from my earthly self and its desires, and use these prayers, I shall be teaching myself the language of love as well as expressing the highest and deepest emotions of inner being in a heavenly way.

How does one who has never learned to pray begin?

A wise Baha’i teacher once advised a seeker who was in great trouble and who claimed to have no faith in prayer, to read through the Baha’i tiny booklet called *Communion with God* until some prayer stirred a response, however weak; and then to memorize it and keep repeating it. Even one who claims to be an atheist can still have enough faith in people to follow a friend’s advice, and a prayer was found that called forth an unconscious response, even while denying all faith in God. And this proved the turning point in that seeker’s life. For such is the potency of these prayers: the soul can be so affected by one of them that a transformation, like the first imperceptible bursting of a hard little seed, can be brought about.

That is excellent advice, then, for anyone inexperienced in prayer or suffering from apparent loss of faith. If there is the smallest response to any of the “verses of God,” something

will happen in the user's inner being. 104(c), BP'69, 3, BWF 123, GL 295 (see pages 115, 284 and 339 []) How can a heart fail to make some response or its portals remain completely closed, when exposed to the power that can transform any condition on earth or that is the source of all life and growth?

Finally here is a most precious and practical bit of guidance about how to pray. Our beloved Guardian said:

“Today is the Judgment Day. Today we are being tested as never before, and we are given a freedom of choice such as we have never had before, and in that freedom of choice, we are making our own judgment every day. ‘Now is the accepted time: now is the Day of Salvation!’ We must see the Ray of Light which has entered the cavern of self in which we have been living: and we must see and recognize that Light in the day and age in which It comes.’

“Shoghi Effendi stressed the need of prayer and meditation, which is beyond any we have ever had before, an earnest and sincere turning of the whole soul toward God. And then he gave what he called is the mystical key for the solution of the problems which was all have - - a ‘magical mystical vision and key.’ Shoghi Effendi gave it in five steps:

- (1.) When you have a problem, pray and meditate. He did not say prayer alone, but pray and meditate.
- (2.) Then he said decide: and without any doubts. Hold your decision.
- (3.) Then have a determination to carry out that decision.
- (4.) The fourth step (and not until the fourth step did he put this one in) - Have

confidence then that the Power will flow through you, the gate will open, the right door will be opened for you, the right book, the right message, the right thought, the right principle will be given to you, at the right time. Have confidence, and the right thing will come to you in your need.

(5.) Then, he said, last ACT. Act as though it had already been answered. Act with tireless, ceaseless energy. And as you act, you yourself will become a magnet which will attract more power into your being, until you become an unobstructed channel for the Divine Power to flow through you.”

(Note: I cannot authenticate the above; maybe someone else can. It may have appeared in Ruth Moffetts' Doa, to which I now do not have access.)

The Necessity for a Mediator

If we wish to pray or commune, we must have some object on which to concentrate, as explained in Baha'u'llah and the New Era, pages 101-2.

Baha'u'llah has made it clear that there is “no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation,” except through the “pure and stainless Soul . . . made manifest in the Kingdoms of earth and heaven.” 15(aa), BWF 103, FL 66

I am unable to understand even my own inner being, much less the mystery of its communion with the infinite, eternal, divine Source of all existence. Baha'u'llah teaches me to realize, in awed humility:

“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 . . . O my God.” 9(I), P&M 194

Baha'u'llah explains to me my need for divine Assistance in understanding what happens to signalize the mystery of prayer.

“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.” 9(k), GL 165

I do recognize my helplessness, and am grateful for these words that acknowledge and explain it:

“Thou hast ordained that the utmost limit to which they who lift their hearts to Thee can rise is the confession of their powerlessness to enter the realms of Thy holy and transcendent unity, and that the highest station which they who aspire to know Thee can reach is the acknowledgment of their impotence to attain the retreats of Thy sublime knowledge . . . This very powerlessness . . . is beloved to Thee, and . . . Thou hast decreed (it) as the goal of them that have reached and attained Thy court.” 9(I), P&M 89
Thus I know that “No one hath any way to the Reality of Deity except through the Instrumentality of the Manifestation.” TAB I, 214 But Baha'u'llah teaches me to affirm:

“Thou hast . . . called into being . . . the Manifestations of Thy Self, and hast . . . caused Them to become the Day-Springs of Thine inspiration . . . that all men may, through Them, turn their faces towards Thee, and may draw nigh unto . . . the heaven of Thy grace.” P&M 99

I am taught to pray direct[ly] to God, for all prayers are addressed to Him. But I know that my prayer goes through Baha'u'llah to my heavenly Father.

To clarify this, the following statement was quoted as being made by our beloved Guardian:

“You have asked whether our prayers go beyond Baha'u'llah. It all depends on whether we pray directly or through Him to God. We may do both, and also can pray directly to God, but our prayers would certainly be more effective and illuminating if they are addressed to God through His Manifestation, Baha'u'llah.

“Under no circumstance, however, can we, while repeating the prayers, insert the Name Baha'u'llah where the word ‘God’ is used. This would be tantamount to blasphemy. BN[s] #118, 2

I found this analogy helpful, too!

“An man who tried to worship God without turning to His Manifestation is like a man in a dungeon trying through his imagination to revel in the glories of the sunshine.”

BNE 102

E. Instructions re: Mediation page 30

General

The foregoing PART THREE - HOW MEDITATION RELATES TO ME INNER NEEDS has given me a general idea of the subject. Specific guidance and explanations in reference to meditating are found in ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s talk at the Friends’ Meeting House on St. Martin’s Lane in London, recorded in his Paris Talks page 173 (see preceding pages 133-6, 139-43 and 165 []) These explanations are basic to my understanding of the subject.

From the kind of meditating that He describes, many practical spiritual results are foretold:

“When you reflect deeply, you discover that also outwardly the perfections of existence are also unlimited, for you cannot find a being so perfect that you cannot imagine a superior one.” BWF 328, SAQ 367

“Similarly the wise and reflecting soul will know of a certainty that this finite universe with all its grandeur could not have come into existence by itself.” 7(d), BWF 344

Also

“if we reflect deeply we will perceive that the great bestower and giver of life is God; the sun is the intermediary of His will and plan.” BWF 254, FWU 11 or PUP 90

In almost any book I peruse I can find promises of rewards for meditation of the kind the Baha’u’llah teaches. For instance, in Gleanings from His Writings:

“Happy is the man that pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God.” BWF 11, GL 13

“Were man to meditate on these words which have flowed from the Pen of the Divine Ordainer, they would, one and all, hasten to embrace the truth of this God-given, and ever-enduring Revelation, and would testify to that which He Himself solemnly affirmed.” GL 82 (see page 132 [])

“Wert thou to ponder in thine heart the behavior of the Prophets of God thou wouldst assuredly and readily testify that there must needs be other worlds besides this world.” GL 157-8

(Re: “those whose deeds agree with their words, whose outward behavior conforms to their inner life”). “Their very deeds are sufficient testimony, and an irrefutable proof unto all the peoples of the earth, were men to ponder in their hearts the mysteries of Divine Revelation.” GL 181-2, Iqan 226-7

“Whose will reflect upon the tribulations We have suffered, his soul will

assuredly melt away with sorrow.” GL 307

“The meditations of the profoundest thinker . . . the highest expressions of praise from either human pen or tongue, are but a reflection of that which hath been created within themselves, (see page 137 []) through the revelation of the Lord . . . Whoever pondereth this truth in his heart will readily admit that there are certain limits which no human being can possibly transgress.” GL 317

The following guidance was given by Shoghi Effendi in answer to a believer who had questioned him about guidance received through meditation:

“It is good that people should turn to God and beseech His aid in solving their problems and guiding their act, indeed every day of their lives, if they feel the desire to do so. But they cannot possibly impose what they feel to be their guidance on anyone else . . .

“As to meditation: This also is a field in which the individual is free. There are no set forms of meditation prescribed in the teachings, no plan as such, for inner development. The Friends are urged . . . nay enjoined . . . to pray, and they also should meditate, but the manner of doing the latter is left entirely to the individual.”

“The same thing is true of teaching methods; no system for teachers to practice exists. But obviously the more people know about the teachings and the Cause, the better they will be able to present the subject. If some people find that prayer and placing all their trust in God releases in them a flood of inspiration, they should be left free to pursue this method if it is productive of results.”

“The inspiration received through meditation is of a nature that one cannot measure or determine. God can inspire into our minds things that we had no previous knowledge of, if He desires to do so.

“We cannot clearly distinguish between personal desire and guidance, but if the way opens, when we have sought guidance, then we may presume God is helping us.”

Prin. of Baha’i Admin. 10-11

What to Mediate On

A person can meditate and seek guidance on any subject, and if his vision and thoughts include or are based on the underlying purpose and power of the subject p the only way its reality can be faced - some benefit will be derived from his “pondering.” But for the greatest light to which I can open the portals of my heart, I should meditate on the revealed Word of God.

Baha’u’llah, all through His Revelation, admonishes us to meditate or ponder on particular verities or heavenly admonitions that He has unveiled, and I can benefit immeasurably by noting these and following His instructions. Often He adds a word on how to meditate (“in your heart”) or mentions a specific objective of the meditating. A good study project would be to search these out, book by book and follow His instructions. For instance, as I go through the Gleanings from His Writings, I find the following admonitions:

Mediate with “ears . . . attentive unto is Word” on what has been revealed in the Books of God” (now that the fore-ordained time has come). BWF 11, BL 13

“Ponder upon the Manifestations of the Unity of God with Divine insight.” BWF 15 or GL 21 or Ian 20

“Meditate on motive and reason responsible for the persecution of Manifestations. BWF 26, FL 57-8

“Ponder this” (“God’s hidden and most loving providence”) “in thine heart, that the truth may be revealed unto thee” (for steadfastness). GL 76

“Meditate diligently” on what the hands of His enemies wrought against Baha’u’llah. BWF 32, GL 98

“Reflect . . . and ye shall recognize how . . . exalted” Baha’u’llah’s state was above the station of “the learned of the world.” BWF 32, GL 98-9

“Meditate . . . with innocent and sanctified hearts on what has been “sent down from the Throne on high.” BWF 34, GL 105 (see pages 226 and 260 [])

“Ponder . . . in your hearts” quoted Scripture (to feel thankful to “the Expounder”). GL 117

“. . . ponder the Cause of God in your hearts” (to understand your duty to it). GL 124

“Reflect, O people!” on what has become of “bygone days, . . . lost centuries.” GL 138

“Mediate diligently upon the Cause of thy Lord” (strive to know Him), GL 148

“Meditate on” what “We have revealed unto thee, that thou mayest discover the purpose of God.” GL 153

“Ponder in thine heart the revelation of the Soul of God that pervadeth all His laws (contrast it with man’s “base and appetitive nature”). 21(b), GL 160-2 (see page 265 [])

“Meditate on this, and be of the thankful” (on what is revealed about soul’s after death). GL 161

“Ponder in thine heart upon the unsearchable wisdom of God, and meditate on its manifold revelations . . . And reflect upon”: the “range and character” of “God’s handiwork.” GL 162 (see page 151 [])

“Meditate on what the poet hath written” about the closeness of God, and “wonder” . . . “ BWF 98-8, GL 183 (see page 22 [])

“Ponder . . . on the woes and afflictions” Baha’u’llah sustained as a Prisoner. BWF 131, GL 203

“Reflect . . . and consider how . . . the loved ones of God must conduct themselves, and to what heights they may soar.” GL 243, DAL 23 #36 (see page 120 [])

“Meditate upon this, O men of insight!” (The fact that the new Revelation is not

“a mere code of laws”). BWF 127 or GL 332-3

“Meditate on the “surrender of one’s will to the Will of God.” BWF 134, GL 338

8. ANSWERING GOD THROUGH ACTION

A. The Purpose and Power of Faith

“What is real faith? Faith outwardly means to believe the Message a Manifestation brings to the world and accept the fulfillment in Him of that which the Prophets have announced. But in reality faith embodies three degrees: To confess with the tongue; to believe in the heart; to give evidence in actions. These three things are essential in true Faith. The important requirement is the love of God in the heart . . .

“Faith is not so much what we believe as what we carry out. Man must prove whatsoever he speaketh by deeds and actions. If he claims faith he must live and do according to the Teachings.

“Although a person of good deeds is acceptable at the Threshold of the Almighty, yet it is first ‘to know’ and then ‘to do’ . . . Consider how most animals labor for man, draw loads and facilitate travel; yet, as they are ignorant, they receive no reward for this labor and toil . . . The lamp is lighted, but as it hath not a conscious knowledge of itself, none hath become glad because of it. Moreover, a soul of excellent deeds and good manners will undoubtedly advance from whatever horizon he beholdeth the lights radiating. Herein lies the difference: by faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge; and second, good deeds.

“Faith is the magnet which draws the confirmation of the Merciful One.” SofW Vol. 15, 229

Since all prayer and meditation are based on faith, and the spirit of faith is the power required for communion with God, it is important for me to understand the purpose-and -power of faith, and how it works. This is the only way I can be in touch with the reality of faith.

I see that as a physical being or human creature my tongue can “confess” my faith in Baha’u’llah, and yet do nothing about it. To be a Baha’i, I need more faith than that.

I need to “take to heart” what I believe, as the saying goes. I need to believe and feel it in my inner being. This is what every Baha’i has experienced in enrolling as a Baha’i: he believes in his heart the Message of Baha’u’llah. But even this does not insure the purpose of faith being fulfilled. I remember that Baha’u’llah has said that it is incumbent upon me to “translate that which hath been written into reality and action.” 1(h), GL 250 (see page 329 []) Not only must I believe in my heart what Baha’u’llah has revealed, but I must keep the portals of my inner being open so that I use as ‘conscious knowledge’ and acquire an understanding of what I believe. Because what I know and am aware of is what initiates all activity and starts every reaction on

my part, with conscious knowledge of what Baha'u'llah reveals, I'll act as if it were true. Otherwise what I believe won't produce results.

Action, then, is the ultimate goal and purpose of faith. What I believe must loom up as a reality, and then I must react to it.

B. Two Kinds of Action

Faith in God bears its desired fruits in man's material activities. From the time of Adam, man has been instructed by His Creator, but whether that divine enlightenment is accepted or not, or how a soul uses the power of faith, is left to the individual,

"That thereby they who seek the Beauty of the All-Glorious may be distinguished and separated from the wayward and perverse." 36(r), 56(yy), GL 71 (see pages 24, 191, 255, 278 [])

The most obvious test that will be put to Baha'is to distinguish and separate them from "the wayward and perverse," is whether or not they obey the instructions that involve their outer lives and material existence - for instance, such admonitions as the following"

"It is made incumbent on every one of you to engage in some one occupation, such as arts, trades, and the like." BWF 195

"O MY SERVANT! The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds." HWP 51, #82

"O MY SERVANT! Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire." 7(g), HWP 50-1, #80

"No one is permitted to produce anything with less than his greatest creative ability if he has the power to bring it to perfection. For example, if a man constructs something and does not make it to shine with all the perfection he is capable of manifesting, not one second passes in the existence of his handiwork but that all the angels ask God to punish this man. It may be that even the atoms of this man's work will cry out in their turn for retribution.

"In very truth, everything according to its station announces the achievement of its own perfection. If one has the power to attain the highest in his own field and fails to do so, he will be called to account for his failure." Bayan- Unite 6, Porte I (Given to Alice Tyler by Robert Bartlett, Feb. 1958, Translated by M. Mills)

When I recognize Baha'u'llah as the Messenger of God for this age, I agreed to carry out to the best of my ability, all of the ordinances that He revealed as requisites for establishing the World Order of Baha'u'llah. So I should be answering the call of my Beloved by learning and

obeying Baha'i Laws. Some of these are listed as "ordinances" in the index of Baha'u'llah and the New Era under Baha'i Faith (alcohol, calendar, divorce, fast, feasts and anniversaries, marriage, Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, monasticism, narcotics, and prayer). These all involve my outer actions. Then there is the law of prayer which is a matter between myself and God, and involves my inner being. All of these laws require of me behavior contrary to what an unenlightened human creature would "naturally" do. This shows how necessary it is that my faith be strong and that my determination be unwavering in the struggle to "translate that which hath been written into reality and action." How can I claim the honor and glory of being a Baha'i if even my outer actions deny the reality of God's Will and of His Kingdom, or if I fail to fulfill the law of prayer which opens my heart to His love and divine power. Haven't I committed my whole being to the activities of building that kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven"? And is it not obvious that more than human power is required for so great an achievement?

Even my laughter and my tears should distinguish me as a Baha'i. For laughter is recognition of a response to what seems incongruous or ridiculous, and what I believe, is reflected in what I consider "crazy" or mirth provoking. For instance jokes are constantly made about religion or using the word, God, but a Baha'i cannot laugh about what is sacred to him. Comments about a specially warm and tender human relationship can bring tears to my eyes, whereas the same remark might seem hilariously unreal to most people. But on the other hand, I should laugh off a little insult and see it as ridiculous in the light of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, whereas the same remark made to an unenlightened person might call forth anger or tears. A sense of humor can be a valuable asset as the spiritual individual learns to see what is generally considered "terrible" as simply incongruous in the light of reality. So it is apparent that when I express my emotions (or fail to) in laughter or tears, these express (or suppress) what I "know" and show what part of me is in action as I respond to my stimuli. Moreover, a spiritual outlook, gained through prayer and meditation, can increase my sense of humor and open the door to a new kind of "fun."

'Abdu'l-Baha is quoted as saying that

"the test of existence is motion. An object that has in itself the power of motion lives; if motion is withheld growth ceases . . . If the reality of man is not confirmed by the divine power, there is no doubt whatsoever that it will stop along the path of human progress, and after its stop there will be a fall." SofW Vo. 13, 110 Mary Hanford Ford.

This is why I must keep my divine nature active, and nothing can do this better than prayer and meditation. The reality of man and his spirituality are proved by the divine power to act and to grow, and the confirmation of the power comes through meditation and its resultant deeds.

"Sight comes to the eyes, happiness to the heart, and though outward circumstances may not be what one desires, the light and happiness are not diminished. Such light and happiness are from within and are not dependent upon exterior

happenings.” Ibid.

“Man . . . , by this spiritual power, has been able to free himself, to soar above the world of matter and to make it his servant.” 63(x), PT 20

“The telegraph, phonograph, telephone were latent and potential in the world of nature but would never have come forth into the realm of visibility unless man through education had penetrated and discovered the laws which control them. All the marvelous developments and miracles of what we call civilization would have remained hidden, unknown and so to speak, non-existent, if man had remained in his natural condition, deprived of the bounties, blessings and benefits of education and mental culture.” PUP 303-4

But it is not in the physical world that I shall find my greatest joy and fulfillment.

“As long as man is in the matrix of the human world, as long as he is the captive of nature, he is out of touch with and without knowledge of the universe of the Kingdom. If he attains rebirth while in the world of nature, he will become informed of the divine world. He will observe that another higher world exists.” 82(r), PUP 298

And as I commune with my Beloved, I hear His Voice pleading:

“OFFSPRING OF DUST! . . . Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from thy mortal cage wing thy flight unto the paradise of the Placeless.” 84(vv), HWP 36 #39 (see pages 216 and 243 [])

Once the eyes of my heart are opened, once I have attained “spiritual birth,” I am no longer imprisoned in the “dust-heap of a mortal world,” for I am “informed of the divine world,” and my understanding of the latter can be fed, instead of stymied, by every earthly experience. For I learn that:

“The world spiritual is like unto the world phenomenal. 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.” PUP 7-8 (see pages 80 and 88 [])

“The physical universe is . . . in perfect correspondence with the spiritual or divine realm. The world of matter is an outer expressions or fac-simile of the inner kingdom of spirit.” 80(e), PUP 265 (see page 80 [])

so I see material things and events as finite, time-limited shadow-like pictures of elements and activities of the spiritual world which is eternal, flawless and divine. However, in the “world phenomenal,” there is also an absence of divinity. For instance, I lack divine wisdom and therefore have wrong ways of using my powers; 33(r), BWF 320, SAQ 250 (see pages 43, 97, 204, 285 []) and the same is true of other people. This creates what we call evil.

Here, especially, I need prayer and meditation. Yes, God has always revealed His Will, but the human ego is arrogant about accepting divine admonitions and insists on having its own way. Only the heart can recognize the truth, appreciate the wisdom and welcome the Guidance of

such words as these, for instance:

“O SON OF BEING! Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou dost not. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.” HWA 10 #29

“O BRETHREN! Be forbearing one with another and set not your affections on things below. Pride not yourselves in your glory, and be not ashamed of abasement. By My beauty! I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again.” HWP 39 #48

“O CHILDREN OF DUST! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.” HWP # (#49

“O SON OF MAN! Bestow My wealth upon My poor, that in heaven thou mayest draw from stores of unfading splendor and treasures of imperishable glory. But by My life! To offer up thy soul is a more glorious thing couldst thou but see with Mine eye.” HWA 17 #57

“O SON OF SPIRIT! Vaunt not thyself over the poor, for I lead him on his way and behold thee in thy evil plight and confound thee for evermore.” HWA 10 #25

“O SON OF MAN! Should prosperity befall thee, rejoice not, and should abasement come upon thee, grieve not, for both shall pass away and be no more.” HWA 16 #52

“O SON OF BEING! If poverty overtake thee, be not sad; for in time the Lord ow wealth shall visit thee. Fear not abasement, for glory shall one day rest on thee.” HAW 16 #53

“O SON OF SPIRIT! Know thou of a truth: He that biddeth men be just and himself committeth iniquity is not of Me, even though he bear My name.” HWA 10 #28
The Creator has endowed us with divine powers of the mind - the ability to think, imagine, reason and comprehend. Humanity must finally come to face the reality of God, then, for common sense tells us that

“As we . . . reflect . . . upon this infinite universe, we observe that motion without a motive force, and an effect without a cause are both impossible.” 7(b), BWF 343

“All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle.” 7(c), GL 157

In the human thought world it is obvious that the Source of life cannot be comprehended nor can its condition be know. But, as already noted,

“This much is know: It exists and Its existence is certain and proven!” 13(e), BWF 382 (see page 2 [])

this Source is call God; and God is a reality to be faced and reacted to.

C. Two Kinds of Thought

It is time for me to learn to distinguish the “right” from the “unlawful ways” of using my human spirit and mental powers. Do I use my power of thought in the best possible ways, which of course, means in ways that will help me to fulfill my real purposes?

I learn that

“Thoughts may be divided into two classes: Thought that belongs to the world of thought alone; Thought that expresses itself in action.

“Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action, they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds.” 66(s), PT 18

“If a man is successful in his business, art or profession, he is thereby enabled to increase his physical [well being] and to give his body the amount of ease and comfort in which it delights . . . But . . . material advantages do not elevate the spirit of man. Perfection in worldly things is a joy to the body of man but in no wise does it glorify his soul.” 766(t), PT 62-3

“Societies . . . interested in commerce, science and politics . . . are for material service, their desire being for the progress and enlightenment of the world of matter. But rarely does a breath from the spirit world breathe upon them. They seem unconscious of the Divine Voice.” 66(u), PT 67

Of course I recognize the limitations of my mental powers. But my thoughts encompass high ideals and heavenly aspirations that come direct from [the] heart. But lest I pride myself on these, let me remember these words of ‘Abdu’l-Baha:

“The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people talk only of their ideals, and do not strive to put them into practice.” 55(oo), PT 15, (see page 289 [])

“All over the world one hearts beautiful sayings extolled and noble precepts admired . . . But . . . we see very few of them carried into the world of action.” 55(nn), PT 79-80

“O SON OF MY HANDMAID! Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet. HWP 48-9 #76

““On the Day of Judgment, when men stand before their Lord, they will not be questioned as to their education and the degree of their culture - rather will they be examined as to their good deeds.” 89(p), SDC 102

“If we are true Baha’is speech is not needed. Our actions will help the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause the arts to develop. Without action nothing in the material world can be accomplished, neither can words

unaided advance a man in the spiritual kingdom.

“Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble.” DAL 33 #28, PT 81

In short, BAHÁ'U'LLAH teaches that one's whole life should be a prayer.” BNE 110

D. Service is Prayer - (see BNE 90-1) - Both Are Actions of the Heart.

“Should Prayer take the form of action?”

“Abdu'l-Baha - ‘Yes: in the Baha’i Cause arts, sciences and all crafts are (counted as) worship. The man who makes a piece of notepaper to the best of his ability, conscientiously, concentrating all his forces on perfecting it, is giving praise to God. Briefly, all effort and exertion put forth from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. A physician ministering to the sick, gently, tenderly, free from prejudice, and believing in the solidarity of the human race, is giving praise.’” PT 176-7

BAHÁ'U'LLAH is quoted as saying, as He speaks of “the more advanced stages” of the soul's journey “from the earthly dwelling to the divine home:

“The tongue is unable to give an account of these, and utterance falls exceedingly short. The pen is useless in this court, and the ink gives no result but blackness . . . this is not the work of a messenger, nor can it be contained in letters.” BNE 100

(Note: this is apparently a special translation of page 30 of Seven Valleys not our 1936 or 1945 editions.)

Since life in the “advance stages of life on this planet” is my destiny, I must not devote all of my energies to earthly accomplishments. BAHÁ'U'LLAH admonished:

“Strive not after bodily comforts and keep your heart pure and stainless.” BWF 96 , GL 7 (see page 44 [])

And I remember that He urges that we keep our hearts “attuned to His wondrous remembrance.” BWF 124, GL 297 (see page 58)

“O SON OF BEING! If thine heart be set upon this eternal, imperishable dominion, and this ancient, everlasting life, forsake this mortal and fleeting sovereignty.” HWA 16 #54

“O MY FRIEND! Thou art the day-star of the heavens of My holiness, let not the defilement of the world eclipse thy splendor. Rend asunder the veil of heedlessness, that from behind the clouds thou mayest emerge resplendent and array all things with the apparel of life.” HWP 47 #73

“O MY SERVANT! Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.” HWP 36 #40

“O SON OF BEING! Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.” HWA 16 #55

As my inner life glows with the remembrances of God, and as the fire of His love increases there, my behavior will show it, for

“Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words.” 76(z), PT 35

“Devotion to God implies a life of service to our fellow creatures. We can be of service to God in no other way.” BNE 90

“The foundation of success and salvation is the knowledge of God, and . . . the result of the knowledge of God are the good actions which are the fruits of faith.” 75(m), 41(y), SAQ 275

“God has conferred upon man the gift of guidance . . . To express his gratitude for the favors of God, man must show forth praiseworthy actions . . . Whatsoever he wishes to do must be in harmony with the good-pleasure of God. He must . . . see what is the will of God, and act accordingly.” 4(r), PUP 231

“If we confess verbally that Baha’u’llah’s principles are the Cause of eternal salvation and the means of nearness unto the throne of God and yet do not live according to their instructions, we are not Baha’is. Therefore day and night we must pray for each other, so that we be assisted to express in our lives the universal spirit of BAHA’U’LLAH.” 87(y), SofW Vo. 7, 179

E. Promises and Warning Relevant to Communing with God

“The loftiest mansions in the Realm of Immortality have been ordained as the habitation of them that have truly believed in God and in His signs. Death can never invade that holy seat.” 89(q), GL 141

I must remember that these “mansions” are to be established “as in heaven, so on earth,” Luke 11:2 (see page 237 []) and as elements, doubtless, of the World Order of BAHA’U’LLAH; so I must make my “habitation” there, and make my actions manifest the reality of that “habitation.”

Do I behave, generally in this way? Or am I one of those who “walk” in our own human way, those whom BAHA’U’LLAH addressed saying:

“O BRETHREN IN THE PATH! Wherefore have ye neglected the mention of the Loved one, and kept remote from His holy presence? The essence of beauty is within the peerless pavilion, set upon the throne of glory, whilst ye busy yourselves with idle contentions. The sweet savors of holiness are breathing and the breath of bounty is wafted, yet ye are all sore afflicted and deprived thereof. Alas for you and for them that walk in your ways and follow in your footsteps!” HWP 38 #46

“ALAS! ALAS! O LOVERS OF WORLDLY DESIRE! Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the Beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor hath the breeze of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds

the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion.” HWP 38 #45

“O SON OF MAN! Thou art My dominion and My dominion perisheth not, wherefore fearest thou thy perishing? Thou art My light and My light shall never be extinguished, why dost thou dread extinction? Thou art My glory and My glory fadeth not; thou art My robe and My robe shall never be outworn. Abide then in thy love for Me, that thou mayest find Me in the realm of glory.” HWA 7 #14

“O SON OF MAN! If thou loves Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.” HWA 5 # 7

Baha’i prayer has another purpose, too:

“Some . . . commandments have been . . . revealed in the style of prayer. Blessed are those who attain! Blessed are those who practice!” BWF 203

“O SON OF BEING! Walk in My statues for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure.” HWA 12 #38

“O SON OF MAN! Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee. Arise for the triumph of My cause, that while yet on earth thou mayest obtain the victory.” HWA 13 #42

“MY FRIENDS! Quench ye the lamp of error, and kindle within your hearts the everlasting torch of divine guidance. For ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored, accept naught but purest virtue and deeds of stainless holiness.” HWP 34 #35

“O CHILDREN OF ADAM! Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heave of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favor at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity. This is the day-star of wisdom and of divine mystery that hath shone above the horizon of the divine will. Blessed are they that turn thereunto. HWP 46 #69

“There is a . . . thanksgiving too which expresses itself in deeds and actions of man when his heart is filled with gratitude.” PUP 231

F. I Want to Be a Good Baha’i!

“They who are the people of God have no ambition except to revive the world, to ennoble its life, and regenerate its peoples . . . Their outward conduct is but a reflection of their inward life, and their inward life a mirror of their outward conduct.” 7(l), 102(j), GL 271 (see pages 230 and 265 [])

This is why I must enrich my inner life with prayer and spiritual meditation.

“Question: What can I do to become the real servant of God?

Answer: Live thou in accord with the Teachings of BAHA’U’LLAH. Do not only read them. There is a vast difference between the soul who merely reads the word of BAHA’U’LLAH and the one who tries to live them. Read thou THE HIDDEN WORDS. Ponder over their meanings and embody the behests into thy life.” 102(h), SofW Vol. 7, 178

“If we confess verbally that BAHA’U’LLAH’s principles are the cause of eternal salvation and the means of nearness unto the throne of God and yet do not live according to their instructions, we are not Baha’is. Therefore day and night we must pray for each other, so that we be assisted to express in our lives the universal spirit of BAHA’U’LLAH.” Ibid. (see page 271 [])

I must keep the portals of my heart open through prayer and meditation, for to “live the life” I need an unfailing supply of light and love - the light of understanding and knowledge, and love to motivate my choices. Only this can produce “right” behavior and fulfill my purpose in life.

“The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action.” 103(w), PUP 152

And to attain the objectives of a Baha’i and the purpose of God for man, I must have divine knowledge and my volition and will must be in perfect accord with the celestial Will. Only then will my action and reactions be successful.

“Man can become so degraded that he will worship a stone, which is of the lowest kingdom; but the spiritual will raise him to the Supreme Realms . . . Man has the power of knowledge which will exalt him to heaven, and the power of ignorance which will abase him to the lowest condition. the more a person advances in divine matters, the more will he receive the attributes of light; and the more he retrogrades, the more he will receive the qualities of darkness. This world is dark and in darkness, but the spiritual world is light. this is the Heavenly Kingdom.” SofW Vol 16, 543

“Not until thy dynamic love we cherish for Him is sufficiently reflected in its [power] and purity in all our dealings with our fellow men, however remotely connected and humble in origin, can we hope to exalt in the eyes of a self-seeking world the [genuineness] of the all-conquering love of God. Not until we live ourselves the life of a true Baha’i can we hope to demonstrate the creative and transforming potency of the Faith we profess. Nothing but the abundance of our actions, nothing but the purity of our lives and the integrity of our characters, can in the last resort establish our claim that the Baha’i spirit is in this day the sole agency that can translate a long-cherished ideal into an enduring achievement.

“With this vision clearly set before us, and fortified by the knowledge of the gracious aid of BAHA’U’LLAH and the repeated assurances of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, let us

strive to live the life and then arise with one heart, one mind, one voice, to reinforce our numbers and achieve our end.” SofW Vol 16, 437

O, how surely I need prayer, to fulfill my celestial destiny! God help me! - even to learn to pray! There is so much to learn about using my own powers!

Science is telling us now that it is impossible for the human mind to concentrate for any great length of time on one subject. We say the mind “wanders,” and science now calls this day-dreaming. This means that my thoughts are interspersed with daydreams; and these are colored with feelings that show the level of consciousness where I am thinking. Apparently it is only for a short space of time, that knowing power and love power can be separated; and in between these times spirit, embodying both powers asserts itself as the energy drive and real power of my being. Feelings color my thoughts, and reveal the degree of spirit that is activated.

Thus when I am concentrating on physical problems, my animal spirit keeps intruding. An underlying emotion of anxiety or dread creeps into my consciousness, because of the animal objective of physical survival and bodily comfort are part of the world I am thinking about, and I am dealing with a realm of terrific dangers and threats to my survival. Or if my thoughts are anchored in the realm of human affairs, my feelings may be either hopeful or fearful, depending upon what I “see”, for here terrific hazards and terrors face me as well as many exciting prospects or gratifying situations.

But when I pray or meditate spiritually - when the portals of my heart are open to God’s promises and warnings - my daydreaming is part of the uplift that I receive, and a mystical joy and heavenly ecstasy characterize those top-level feelings. This is a large factor in my communing with God, and I should encourage those lapses in pure mental activity and give up to the heavenly love that comes from my heart into my outer consciousness at such times. In other words, if I cannot keep my mind on the words I am reciting or reading, I should not worry about this, but should just relax and feel - experience - the love that is ready to flood my immediate consciousness. For this may be the most important part of what I consciously experience from prayer. And as I use the revealed prayers, slowly and thoughtfully, I find that they have been especially designed to supply a stimulus to this kind of experience. Every thought that they express is of such dimensions that my mind can scarcely grasp it, but it arouses a heavenly emotion even as it stirs the depths of my heart to a new insight.

Actual experience is what integrates the three worlds that my vision makes accessible to me. Experience is what causes me to realize (make real to me) the fact that what Baha’u’llah reveals is absolutely true. It makes me want to act as if it were true.

What goes on in my mind and heart underlies and is a dimension of all that I do; but only actual experience fulfills my aspirations and desires. In short, experiencing is the consummation of my inner life.

Thinking, communicating, talking and praying about what I am trying to do, know, feel and be, is one of the initial steps in achieving; but experience must go beyond the words and

thoughts that go into my prayers or meditations - even beyond my deepest desires and highest aspirations. However, to my soul or inner being, prayer or true meditation is the actual experience of loving God. to know or be aware of Him is to love Him, and to read and assimilate what BAHÁ'U'LLAH reveals about our glorious Creator make me know facts about Him and causes the action of loving and worshiping Him. My destiny is to relate to God in an actual, vivid experience; and this is what can happen in sincere prayer or meditation.

But I still tend to separate what I experience in prayer or meditation from my outer consciousness. So this is where my spiritual experiences break down. I long to retain what I experience in prayer and to integrate it into my down-to-earth routing. Is this too much to expect of myself?

Apparently not. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is quoted as saying:

“The hearts (of Bahá'ís) must be as mirrors wherein the lights of the Sun of Truth shall be revealed. Every bosom must be a telegraph station: one terminal of the wire shall be in the bosom of the soul, the other in the Celestial Concourse, so that messages may be exchanged between them. In this way from the Abhá Kingdom inspiration shall flow.”

BNE 190

If I receive a telegram from my beloved who is far distant from me, shall I immediately forget it? Will its message drop from my consciousness completely? Certainly not! I should learn to think of my communion with God as this kind of open “wire” - to be put into action as needed and then cherished as the source of wisdom that it is. And I should become vividly conscious of the Abhá Kingdom as a domain that is actually connected directly to my heart, for BAHÁ'U'LLAH has said, in speaking to Bahá'ís:

“I swear by Him Who hath caused Me to reveal whatever hath pleased Him! Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom of high than ye are known to your own selves.” BWF 118, GL 317 (see pages 233-4 [])

Not only that, but He says about one “who lives according to what was ordained for him”:

“the Celestial Concourse, and the people of the Supreme Paradise, and those who are dwelling in the dome of Greatness will pray for him, by a command from God, the Dearest and the Praiseworthy.” BNE 199

In the light of such truth, how can I ever feel separated from Divinity? I need never let myself be swallowed up in my earthly life of “prison of self.”

How that does heighten and broaden the potentialities of communion through my inner being and illumine the reality of meditation! (see pages 5-17 [])

How little I realize or actually experience the powers of my own being! but I can learn, as I keep praying and asking for more of the light that can come through the open portals of my heart. For “This is a revelation that infuseth strength into the feeble” 101(cc), GL 184 - every kind of strength. It puts within my reach almost every kind of illuminating experience! How I do

thank and praise God that He has “aided me to remember . . . and praise” Him, BP’69, 126, P&M 322 and that He has “sent down unto us that which draweth us nigh” unto Him! BP’69, 127 or P&M 323 And as I avail myself of the blessings of this help, it is a definite experience and realization. The ecstasy, certitude and spiritual vision from it should and can remain with me for the rest of the day if I keep the portals of my heart open and the channels to my inner consciousness unimpeded.

At these heights that BAHA’U’LLAH has unveiled, and in the light of reality that my Creator has cast into my heart, I can gain dynamic and revolutionizing insights. Having “set my face toward the lights that are shining from the heaven” of His will, BP’69, 124, P&M 320 I realize my longing to worship, remember and extol my Beloved. I experience a conscious awareness that “whatsoever is revealed . . . is the desire of my heart and the beloved of my heart.” I actually feel no desire or love for anything but what He has desired and loved. BP’69, 121, P&M 318 (see page *___) So now I can realize the powerlessness and poverty of my human nature and energy drive and call the support of God’s might and wealth, and indeed all that “is with” Him, BP’69, 122, P&M 318 into the realms of my actual spiritual experience. They are all put so freely at my disposal, if I would only perceive them as realities and claim them as my soul’s support! All I must do is to seek the ocean of His forgiveness, etc. (see BP’69, 122-3, P&M 319).

Dear God! - don’t let me lose this celestial consciousness! Let me go on meditating, reflecting and concentrating on what I have experienced during my heavenly flight into awareness of the divine! And let my reactions reflect this superhuman vision and consciousness! Let me choose definite goals for meeting my Baha’i responsibilities and tests and follow the behavior patterns that BAHA’U’LLAH advocated for achieving those goals and “passing” those tests! This is how I can participate in fulfilling God’s purpose for man. This is how I can “turn away from” myself and seek the pleasure of my Beloved. HWA 5 #7 (see page 369 []) This is how I can learn to “abide” in God’s love - His for me and mine for Him. HWA 7 #14 (see page 368 []) This is how I can “quench . . . the lamp of error,” and kindle within my heart “the everlasting torch of divine guidance.” HWP 34 #35 (see page 368 []) This is how I may learn to “walk” in the “statutes” of the Lord and to deny myself what I selfishly desire. HWA 12 #38 (see page 369 []) This is what will enable me to “arise for the triumph” of our glorious Cause. HWA 13 #42 (see page 369 []) This is how I can gradually become “a good Baha’i.”

What a transformation I am striving for! But it is what my Beloved expects of me, and it is possible. For I hear BAHA’U’LLAH saying:

“He hath protected you from the mighty winds of misbelief, and the tempestuous gales of impiety, and nurtured you with the hands of His loving providence. Now is the time for you to put forth your leaves, and yield your fruit. The fruits of the tree of man have ever been and are goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character.” ESW 25-6

G. My Actions Must Change!

There are two kinds of change, change through natural growth or evolution within fixed limits according to recognized patterns; and another kind, sometimes unaccountable, involves a complete change of pattern.

Dr. Esslemont commented on this fact by saying that

“in progress and development among creatures of all grades we find two kinds of change - one slow, gradual, often almost imperceptible; and the other rapid, sudden dramatic. The latter occur at what are called ‘critical stages’ of development.” BNE 127

Dr. Lecomte du Noüy, renowned biologist, in his Human Destiny, mentions these two types of change from the scientist’s viewpoint, in speaking of what science sees in viewing The Great Unknown!

“In this mighty cosmos, science toys with tiny fractions of knowledge but the chasms separating known facts are vast and deep. We are living on a globe which is about 2000 million years old. On this vast stage was played the drama of evolution. But how did the curtain go up? So far it has been impossible to ascertain how life began. No one has even explained the origin of vertebrates to which you and I belong.

“The whole history of evolution is spotted with improbable mysteries. Every great step forward was made against the most rigid scientific laws of probability; each advance an unlikely conquest from a lower to a higher level. “Reader’s Digest, Mar. 1947, God’s Newest Witness - a Biologist by Fulton Oursler page 39-40

Life, he points out, goes on developing from lower to higher forms, but there are drastic changes separating vegetable from animal and animal from man. This is the second kind of change: something new - new power - was added and fused into life, presumably by the same Creative Source that caused life to begin. About what caused such inexplicable advances in evolution, Dr. du Noüy went on to say:

“To deal with this unknown factor the materialists had to give it a name.

Cherishing some deep antipathy to the revered name of God they called it “anti-chance.”

How little it matters whether you call it anti-chance or call it God! Ibid. page 41

Isn’t it interesting to see the rational mind, unaided by the spirit of faith, having to recognize the fact that God plays a part in the changes that we see.

The unaccountable and dramatic metamorphoses that we see (undeniable, too!) Are those that have been taking place in man, too. About these Dr. du Noüy stated:

“For a thousand million years - until man began to think - life was governed by the one basic motive of survival. Then certain human beings appeared who were ruled by a new motive, by an idea of right and wrong for the sake of which they would willingly lose their lives.”

Du Noüy says it was as if the voice of some Final Power spoke to the human soul:

““So far you have been concerned only with living and breeding. You could kill, you could steal food or mates, and go to sleep peacefully, having obeyed your instincts.

But from this day on, you shall combat those instincts. You shall not kill! You shall not steal! You shall not covet!

“And you shall sleep peacefully only if you have mastered yourself. You shall be ready to suffer and to give your life rather than abandon your ideals. No longer are your principal aims to live and eat. For noble ends you will endure hunger and death. And you must be noble, for that is the will of the new being who has risen in you. You must accept him as master even though he curbs your desires.’

“Man does not represent the end of evolution but only a middle stage between the past with all the memories of the beast and the future, rich in the promise of the soul. From now on, our progress will be not physical but spiritual. The man of the future will be completely liberated from destructive human passions - egotism, greed, lust for power. Though he will enjoy the pleasures of the body, he will not be ruled by them. Man will lose his bondage to the body, escape the domination of the flesh.” *ibid.* page 41-2

Dr. du Noüy was right. He sensed intuitively what has actually happened and what is going to happen as a result of this critical stage of development: some Final Power has been speaking, as the voice of conscience to the human soul, as well as through divine Revelators, casting Its “light” into hearts and putting that choice before man. It has “existed” for long ages: this “unlikely conquest from a lower to a higher level” of existence that man is destined to make.

The Scriptures have all foretold a “Judgment Day,” and now we know that it is upon this “choice” that we are going to be judged. For eventually that “choice” was always destined to become mandatory - on the “day of the Lord” when the “proud and lofty . . . shall be brought low.” Is. 2:12 (see Ps. 37:13, Zeph. 1:14, Matt. 7:22, Rom. 2:5, etc.) And as BAHÁ’U’LLAH warned us:

“We have a fixed time for you, O peoples. If ye fail, at the appointed hour, to turn towards God, He, verily will lay violent hold on you, and will Cause grievous afflictions to assail you from every direction. How severe, indeed, is the chastisement with which your Lord will then chastise you!: 91(f), BWF 113, GL 214

That time has now come, BAHÁ’U’LLAH said

“The time fore-ordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come .

. Happy is the man that pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God . . . Mediate upon the, O ye beloved of God.” BWF 11, GL 13

The Balance hath been appointed, and all them that dwell on earth have been gathered together.” GL 40

Hand of the Cause of God, Mr. Horace Holley, spoke of what Baha’is all know and the rest of the world will soon realize: namely, the fact that

The real crisis of our age is here: that people substitute political and economic

formulas for divine laws, and deal with competitive social organizations rather than with mankind.” The Meaning of Worship the

Baha’is have been alerted to the coming of a new world order for over a hundred years. The old human action pattern has run its course. That “Final Power” that underlies all existence is rolling up “the present day order” and spreading out “in its stead” a new pattern of human activity. 86(b), GL 7 (see page 238 []) Mankind is being prepared to function under the “government” which long ago it was prophesied would some day be on the “shoulder” of the “Wonderful Counselor . . . The Prince of Peace”, Who was promised to mankind. Is. 9:6

The time has come for mankind as a body to recognize God as One “at whose dreadful majesty all things have trembled, in whose grasp are the affairs of all men.” P&M 126 Don’t I thank Him daily for having “caused me to bow down” before His Lordship? BP’69, 126, P&M 322 And don’t we already have the God-given Constitution of the celestial administrative agency for God’s Kingdom that has come “on earth as it is in heaven”?

Never have such complete reversals of patterns and revolutionizing of values been demanded of people, imagined or even dreamed of. For the Divine Governor has established as law the coming forth of the divine nature of man, and this calls for something in the world of man paralleling the metamorphosis in the insect world of a butterfly emerging from its cocoon.

This transformation began in every heart that uses and meditates on the prayers and verses of God that have been revealed through BAHÁ’U’LLAH.

“True worship leads to the discovery of the spiritual self and its dependence upon the grace of God. True worship leads to discovery of mankind. Men who unite on the level of worship can and must unite in the realms of feeling, thought and action.” Ibid.

Horace Holley

Now that I know that everything that happens is in fulfillment of God’s glorious purpose for man in general and for me specifically, a big change in outlook is sure to result. All of the fears and anxieties, all of the bitterness, resentment and revulsions suffered in the past should dissolve, and in my heart a deep joy, gratitude and praise should characterize my views and feelings. Yet I often find myself still thinking and feeling as I did before I received this exhilarating enlightenment. I let my immediate consciousness be taken over by petty irritations and habitual emotional attitudes. I should understand that this complaining creature is not the real me, though. My soul has been divinely enlightened! - if I could reach the best that is in my heart, surely I would find there the spiritual potential that is growing within me; and put all of the forces of my being under its superior control.

That, of course, is what speaks when I pray.

That, too, is what I try to reach when I meditate.

That is what I want to do my living, too! And not just this outer being with its old ingrained emotional attitudes and habit patterns. This is why I want to open - and keep open - a channel from my inner being or spiritual reality to my outer being where my immediate

consciousness deals with what faces me. With that channel open, my divine nature can find expression and live dynamically. On the other hand, without such an open channel, this educated animal which is my outer reacting machinery can take over and behave in ways that are not what I, in my heart feel and desire. For instance, unless I hold in my outer consciousness an appreciation of God's goodness, complaining instead of gratitude can characterize my very soul. For

“A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains even if he lives in paradise.” 72(d), SofW Vol. 7, 186

This is one reason that I want to pray and meditate whenever I can. For these activities broaden and strengthen that communication line between my inner and outer beings and build up an awareness of the goodness and reality of God. And of course the reason that that divine spark and heavenly consciousness is burning there within me is that my heart is connected directly to [the source of] All-Power (the Holy Spirit) and to the love Source - BAHA'U'LLAH. These should keep my relationship with God uppermost in my heart.

This state of inner realization motivates me as long as the spirit of faith is the ruling power of my being. Of course, when I close off that degree of spirit, I find myself reacting as an irascible human being, excusing and rationalizing all of my imperfections and unable to overcome them. But with faith dominant and the portals of my heart open, I can keep my lesser powers - physical and mental - under the control of my divine nature, and stop letting them control me. This is the key to changing my behavior.

A down-to-earth explanation of how I can and must change is outlined as follows under the subject, MEDITATION AND ITS EFFECT UPON CONDUCT, [by] Mary Hanford Ford, published in the Star of the West, vol. 13, Aug 1922, pages 109-10

“The human being is a creature who is ordinarily governed by impulses which rise within him comparatively unwatched and unguarded. If he feels happy or melancholy, angry or patient, his action reflects the conditions of his being, and if one reproach him for faults which might disappear with a little self-control he is apt to reply - ‘Well, I am made that way, and I can’t help I.’

“He is only conscious of the physical impulse which prompts a certain nervous expression and he has not yet learned that there are two of him and that if he would become acquainted with his greater self, the soul or reality, life might be very different, and the disagreeable elements of his temperamental man could easily disappear.

“There is a wave of psychological study passing over the world which has many excellent results and which is causing many persons who never gave much thought previously to the existence of the “inner man” to perceive something of this interesting individual, who presently becomes vastly more important than is indicated by that mysterious and baffling term, ‘the subconscious.’ The subconscious is in fact the true self, the soul, or as ‘Abdu’l-Baha often calls it, the reality.

“There is no part of this wonderful teaching which is more clear and convincing than that relating to the soul in its contact with life, the body, and God. As we follow it we realize that the soul is the avenue through which we know God and receive the Holy Spirit, that is always a distinct entity becoming more luminous and powerful as we turn to God and control the animal man in us. It often surrounds us like an aureole in our earlier stages of development, but as we progress, and reflect its light, it leaves us free even in our waking hours and carries on its own activity. The subconscious, in other words, is the true thinker and revealer is us, though whom words become real prayer, and impulse becomes intuition and veritable guidance.

“But how is this possible? We ask anxiously, and ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s reply is, through prayer, meditation and deeds, because without the deeds which express the results of meditation and prayer these remain only delightful experiences of the soul, and do not transform life. ‘Abdu’l-Baha says in the great address on meditation in Paris Talks - the one who cannot meditate is still in the animal kingdom!

“Many persons are not aware of the difference between concentration and meditation, which is very positive. through concentration we enter the psychic or mental world, we hypnotize, we develop the personal will. But in meditation we enter the Abha kingdom by temporarily eliminating the personal will. In this state we penetrate the consciousness of the reality, and can receive the divine commands through the Holy Spirit, and if we are strong enough to obey the commands we receive our impulses are overcome, we obtain eternal life and become rational beings instead of merely animals who walk erect.

“Many believers are only mental believers. They have never taken time to abstract themselves from the turmoil of the outer life and hear the ‘still small voice’ which is only audible to the inner ear. Baha’u’llah says: ‘We speak one word and by it we intend one and seventy meanings - each one of them we can explain.’

“These one and seventy meanings are not simply shades of mental and spiritual interpretation but often facts of life which we can only understand through prayer and self-control. The individual who is no longer capable of anger, envy, ambition or revenge, who does not feel such impulses, who is made ill by indulgence in gossip and scandal and therefore no longer tolerates them, has entered the spiritual path and is beginning to know eternal life.” SofW, Vol. 13, 109-10

Yet during my entire earthly lifetime my human consciousness functions in dealing with human conditions, facing human problems, thinking human thoughts, feeling human emotions and pursuing human objectives. I walk on the earth, and it seems that my consciousness is bounded by my humanness.

But, on the other hand, I can always lift my eyes to higher objectives, experience fleetingly at least, spiritual emotions and sentiments, let my thoughts soar heavenward to pursue

my celestial aspirations and to visualize the divine solutions to human problems that BAHÁ'U'LLAH tells us actually exist. Communion with God is like wings to my inner being lifting me to those heights. Every day my prayer can become a fire that will burn away those ever-accumulating veils that shut me out from Divinity and a light that will lead to the ocean of God's precious Presence. Every day, humble and lowly, I can cover my face in the dust of heaven's threshold and be immersed in the ocean of His grace, and be transported to another world where the light of adoration illumines my brow. Here I can wing my flight to His court of holiness and approach Him Kingdom of grandeur. Meditation can sustain this flight and allow me to partake of the ethereal reality called selflessness, before returning to service on the earth that has been ennobled by the footsteps of BAHÁ'U'LLAH's and God's chosen ones. thank you, 'Abdu'l-Baha, for that sublime heritage!

In this action I free myself 'from the fetters of this world" and "loose" myself from the prison of self." HWP 36 #40 (see page 367 []) Suddenly I can face my own celestial reality for here "defilement of the world" no longer eclipses my splendor. and I experience the "conscious knowledge" that my heart is "set upon this eternal, imperishable dominion, and this ancient, everlasting life." HWA 16 #54 (see page 367 [])

In the celestial condition and attitude of prayer and meditation, I gain new awareness, and the purpose and power of my individual life and destiny take on new meaning. Here my intellect bases its reasoning and imagining only on what is seen at those ethereal heights, and on my desires which are pure and selfless - the real desires of my divine nature. For such a reaction I must be lifted "out of myself." This is the process of converting and transforming my powers, and of acquiring virtues. By this action I do indeed slowly acquire new behavior patterns and qualities.

For when I return to cope with my outer life, I am a different being and in a different state of mind. I see material existence in its true perspective. I even find that colors and sunlight are more brilliant, that I perceive more clearly the radiance of God's attributes in worlds and souls, and the power of that radiance is more apparent than before. Suddenly my life, with all its tests and problems, has new dimensions, that of infinitude, eternity and divinity, that cannot be denied.

This is the realm of consciousness that I can reach. This is where I can be assured of solving every problem and meeting every test victoriously. This is where my beloved Master and Exemplar lived while on earth and where I can meet Him at any moment.

It is true that not until I have outgrown the use of my human machinery and am completely relieved of its animal nature, shall I live constantly and keep moving in that celestial state as my natural domain. But prayer and meditation can exalt me to those heights of consciousness as often as I open the portals of my heart to turn heavenward in true communion with the Infinite. Not through some psychic process of my own being; not through some seer or guru; but through the Blessed Beauty, the Glory of God.

The November, 1924, Star of the West, carried these illuminating words about change and behavior:

“THE ESSENCE OF INSTRUCTIONS

“(An Except From the Recent Letter of Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Baha’i Cause.)

“Humanity, through suffering and turmoil, is swiftly moving towards its destiny; if we be loiters, if we fail to play our part, surely others will be called upon to take up our task as ministers to the crying needs of this afflicted world.

“Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching - no matter how world wide and elaborate in its character - not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and skeptical age the supreme claim of the ABHA Revelation. One thin, and only one thing, will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by BAHÁ’U’LLAH.” SofW Vol. 15, 221

These words have been repeated many times and in many places since then. They still ring in my ears and heart. The pace of that movement and action is accelerating day by day. It is still first “to know” and then “to do,” but since 1924 we have had a chance to KNOW a great deal. Since I enrolled as a Baha’i, many days of using and meditating on the Obligatory Prayers have passed until I should be able to “know” thoroughly the Obligatory Prayers and other “verses of God.” Surely now the time has come “to do” - to translate our beautiful Writings into reality and action.

He encourages me by saying:

“Joy unto him who, in this Day, casts away that which is possessed by the people, and holds fast to that which is commanded on the part of God.” BWF 187

“Grant, I beseech Thee, O Thou Who art the Everlasting King and the Sovereign Protector of all men that I may be enabled to manifest that which shall cause the hearts and souls of men to soar in the limitless immensity of Thy love, and to commune with Thy Spirit. Strengthen me through the power of Thy sovereignty, that I may turn all created things towards the Day of Spring of Thy Manifestation and the Source of Thy Revelation. Aid me, O my Lord, to surrender myself wholly to Thy Will, and to arise and serve Thee.” 105(h), GL 331 (see pages 47 and 68 [])