

Sun of Reality

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "How does one look forward to the goal of any journey? With hope and with expectation. It is even so with the end of this earthly journey. In the next world, man will find himself freed from many of the disabilities under which he now suffers. Those who have passed on through death, have a sphere of their own. It is not removed from ours; their work, the work of the Kingdom, is ours; but it is sanctified from what we call 'time and place.' Time with us is measured by the sun. When there is no more sunrise, and no more sunset, that kind of time does not exist for man. Those who have ascended have different attributes from those who are still on earth, yet there is no real separation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 96

The great splendor of the day of Christ has gradually merged into the night, so that in this age there is hardly a ray of that great spiritual luminary lighting the world; but after the drought of summer and the cold of winter comes the new life of spring. After each sunset comes a sunrise. The spiritual light of the world has risen again from the eastern horizon. The night is finished; the day is come and the first rays of the dawn are destroying the shadows, dispersing the clouds, making the plants to grow, the trees to become verdant and ornamenting the flower-beds with roses. The sun of reality hath reappeared with tremendous power and soon the light of Bahá'u'lláh will be diffused throughout the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 80

Consequently we cannot say that the divine bounty has ceased, that the glory of divinity is exhausted or the Sun of Truth sunk into eternal sunset, into that darkness which is not followed by light, into that night which is not followed by a sunrise and dawn, into that death which is not followed by life, into that error which is not followed by truth. Is it conceivable that the Sun of Reality should sink into an eternal darkness? No! the sun was created in order that it may shed light upon the world and train all the kingdoms of existence. How then can the ideal Sun of Truth, the Word of God, set forever? For this would mean the cessation of the divine bounty, and the divine bounty by its very nature is continuous and ceaseless. Its sun is ever shining, its cloud is ever producing rain, its breezes are ever blowing, its bestowals are all-comprehending, its gifts are ever perfect. Consequently we must always anticipate, always be hopeful and pray to God that he will send unto us his holy Manifestations in their most perfect might, with the divine penetrative power of his Word, so that these heavenly ones may be distinguished above all other beings in every respect, in every attribute, just as the glorious sun is distinguished above all stars.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 111

That free and independent soul discovered, in Baghdad, a trace of the untraceable Beloved. He witnessed the dawning of the Daystar above the horizon of Iraq, and received the bounty of that sunrise. He came under the spell of Bahá'u'lláh, and was enraptured by that tender Companion.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 37

O ye beloved of God! As long as ye can strive to set aglow the hearts with love, be attracted to one another and be members of each other. Every soul of the beloved ones must adore the other and withhold not his possession and life from them, and by all means he must endeavor to make that other joyous and happy. But that other the recipient of such love must also be disinterested and lifesacrificing. Thus may this

Sunrise flood the horizons, this melody gladden and make happy all the people, this divine remedy become the panacea for every disease, this Spirit of Reality become the cause of life for every soul.

O ye friends and maid-servants of the Merciful! It is the life-offering, rejoicing, happiness and the manifestation of Divine Favors.

O thou servant who art near and dear to the Glorious Threshold!

Give thanks to God for having been ushered into His Kingdom, partaken of the heavenly table and of the "lord's supper," attained ecstasy by the wine of His love, become enrolled as a soldier of life among the hosts of the Lord, and [for His having] blessed thy head with a crown of great guidance, whose gems and pearls illumine the ages.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v1, p. 146*

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

The divine religions are like the progression of the seasons of the year. When the earth becomes dead and desolate and because of frost and cold no trace of vanished spring remains, the springtime dawns again and clothes everything with a new garment of life. The meadows become fresh and green, the trees are adorned with verdure and fruits appear upon them. Then the winter comes again, and all the traces of spring disappear. This is the continuous cycle of the seasons -- spring, winter, then the return of spring. But though the calendar changes and the years move forward, each springtime that comes is the return of the springtime that has gone; this spring is the renewal of the former spring. Springtime is springtime, no matter when or how often it comes. The divine Prophets are as the coming of spring, each renewing and quickening the teachings of the Prophet Who came before Him. Just as all seasons of spring are essentially one as to newness of life, vernal showers and beauty, so the essence of the mission and accomplishment of all the Prophets is one and the same. Now the people of religion have lost sight of the essential reality of the spiritual springtime. They have held tenaciously to ancestral forms and imitations, and because of this there is variance, strife and altercation among them. Therefore, we must now abandon these imitations and seek the foundation of the divine teachings; and inasmuch as the foundation is one reality, the divergent religionists must agree in it so that love and unity will be established among all people and denominations.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 126*

The question has been asked: Will the spiritual progress of the world equal and keep pace with material progress in the future? In a living organism the full measure of its development is not known or realized at the time of its inception or birth. Development and progression imply gradual stages or degrees. For example, spiritual advancement may be likened to the light of the early dawn. Although this dawn light is dim and pale, a wise man who views the march of the sunrise at its very beginning can foretell the ascendancy of the sun in its full glory and effulgence. He knows for a certainty that it is the beginning of its manifestation and that later it will assume great power and potency. Again, for example, if he takes a seed and observes that it is sprouting, he will know assuredly that it will ultimately become a tree. Now is the beginning of the manifestation

of the spiritual power, and inevitably the potency of its life forces will assume greater and greater proportions. Therefore, this twentieth century is the dawn, or beginning, of spiritual illumination, and it is evident that day by day it will advance. 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. Divine healing shall purify all ills, and the cloud of mercy will pour down its rain. The Sun of Reality will shine, and all the earth shall put on its beautiful green carpet. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 131

The physical sun has its rising and its setting. The earthly world has its day and its night. After each sunset there is a sunrise and the coming of a new dawn. The Sun of Reality, likewise, has its rising and setting. There is a day and a night in the world of spirituality. After each departure there is a return and the dawning light of a new day. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 271

If the mountains, hills and plains of the material world are left wild and uncultivated under the rule of nature, they will remain an unbroken wilderness, no fruitful tree to be found anywhere upon them. A true cultivator changes this forest and jungle into a garden, training its trees to bring forth fruit and causing flowers to grow in place of thorns and thistles. The holy Manifestations are the ideal Gardeners of human souls, the divine Cultivators of human hearts. The world of existence is but a jungle of disorder and confusion, a state of nature producing nothing but fruitless, useless trees. The ideal Gardeners train these wild, uncultivated human trees, cause them to become fruitful, water and cultivate them day by day so that they adorn the world of existence and continue to flourish in the utmost beauty. Consequently, we cannot say that the divine bounty has ceased, that the glory of Divinity is exhausted or the Sun of Truth sunk into eternal sunset, into that darkness which is not followed by light, into that night which is not followed by a sunrise and dawn, into that death which is not followed by life, into that error which is not followed by truth. Is it conceivable that the Sun of Reality should sink into an eternal darkness? No! The sun was created in order that it may shed light upon the world and train all the kingdoms of existence. How then can the ideal Sun of Truth, the Word of God, set forever? For this would mean the cessation of the divine bounty, and the divine bounty by its very nature is continuous and ceaseless. Its sun is ever shining; its cloud is ever producing rain; its breezes are ever blowing; its bestowals are all-comprehending; its gifts are ever perfect. Consequently, we must always anticipate, always be hopeful and pray to God that He will send unto us His holy Manifestations in Their most perfect might, with the divine penetrative power of His Word, so that these heavenly Ones may be distinguished above all other beings in every respect, in every attribute, just as the glorious sun is distinguished above all stars. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 466

Everything in life, in its inception, is not know to the full extent of its potentiality. Development and progress is gradual. For example, spiritual advancement may be likened to the light in the early morning. This light of dawn is rather dim in its effulgence, but a wise man who looks at the early morn and sees the march of the sunrise at the beginning can verily foretell the ascendancy of the sun with all its glory and effulgence. He knows for a certainty that it is the beginning of manifestation, and that later it will assume great power and potency. Again for example, if he takes a grain, and observes that it is growing, he can rest assured that the growing seed shall ere long become a tree. Now is the beginning of the manifestation of the spiritual power, and surely day by day its potency will assume greater and greater proportions. Therefore this twentieth century is the beginning or dawn of the spiritual illumination, and it is evident that day by day it will advance. It will reach such a degree that spiritual effulgences shall overcome the material; so that Divine susceptibilities shall overpower material intelligence and the

heavenly light shall dispel and banish earthly darkness; Divine healing shall cure all ills and the cloud of mercy shall pour down its rain. The Sun of Reality shall shine and all the earth shall put on its beautiful green carpet. *Compilations, Baha'i Scriptures, p. 319*

O ye who are turned to the Supreme Appearance!

Day and night, morn and eve, at sunrise and at sunset, we are remembering with all our hearts and souls, the friends of the Merciful One, asking God's help and confirmation that the believers of the pure territory, the Holy Land, may become excellent in all conditions of morality, characteristics, behaviour, manners, conduct and actions, that they may appear with ecstasy, enthusiasm, love, consciousness, assurance, steadfastness, firmness, concord and harmony, with bright faces and splendid beauty in the community of the world. *Compilations, Baha'i Scriptures, p. 359*

A Divine Manifestation is as a mirror reflecting the light of the Sun. The light is the same and yet the mirror is not the Sun. All the Manifestations of God bring the same Light; they only differ in degree, not in reality. The Truth is one. The light is the same though the lamps may be different; we must look at the Light not at the Lamp. If we accept the Light in one, we must accept the Light in all; all agree, because all are the same. The teaching is ever the same, it is only the outward forms that change. The Manifestations of God are as the heavenly bodies. All have their appointed place and time of ascension, but the Light they give is the same. if one wishes to look for the sun rising, one does not look always at the same point because that point changes with the seasons. When one sees the sun rise further in the north one recognizes it, though it has risen at a different point. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 66*

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The dawn of the Sun of Reality is assuredly for the illumination of the world and for the manifestation of mercy. In the assemblage of the family of Adam results and fruits are praiseworthy, and the holy bestowals of every bounty are abundant. It is an absolute mercy and a complete bounty, the illumination of the world, fellowship and harmony, love and union; nay, rather, mercifulness and oneness, the elimination of discord and the unity of whosoever are on the earth in the utmost of freedom and dignity. The Blessed Beauty said: "All are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch." He likened the world of existence to one tree and all the souls to leaves, blossoms and fruits. Therefore all the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits must be in the utmost of freshness, and the bringing about of this delicacy and sweetness depends upon union and fellowship. Therefore they must assist each other with all their power and seek everlasting life. Thus the friends of God must manifest the mercy of the Compassionate Lord in the world of existence and must show forth the bounty of the visible and invisible King. They must purify their sight, and look upon mankind as the leaves, blossoms and fruits of the tree of creation, and must always be thinking of doing good to someone, of love, consideration, affection and assistance to somebody.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 215*

O my God! O my God! verily these servants are turning to Thee, supplicating Thy kingdom of mercy. Verily they are attracted by Thy holiness and set aglow with the fire of Thy love, seeking confirmation from Thy wondrous kingdom and hoping for attainment in

Thy heavenly realm. Verily they long for the descent of Thy bestowal, desiring illumination from the Sun of Reality. O Lord! make them radiant lamps, merciful signs, fruitful trees and shining stars. May they come forth in Thy service and be connected with Thee by the bonds and ties of thy love, longing for the lights of Thy favor. O Lord! make them signs of guidance, standards of Thy immortal kingdom, waves of the sea of Thy mercy, mirrors of the light of Thy majesty. Verily Thou art the generous! Verily Thou art the merciful! Verily Thou art the precious, the beloved!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 231*

O my God! O my God! verily these servants are turning to Thee, supplicating Thy kingdom of mercy. Verily they are attracted by Thy holiness and set aglow with the fire of Thy love, seeking confirmation from Thy wondrous kingdom and hoping for attainment in Thy heavenly realm. Verily they long for the descent of Thy bestowal, desiring illumination from the Sun of Reality. O Lord! make them radiant lamps, merciful signs, fruitful trees and shining stars. May they come forth in Thy service and be connected with Thee by the bonds and ties of thy love, longing for the lights of Thy favor. O Lord! make them signs of guidance, standards of Thy immortal kingdom, waves of the sea of Thy mercy, mirrors of the light of Thy majesty. Verily Thou art the generous! Verily Thou art the merciful! Verily Thou art the precious, the beloved!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 231*

I give thanks to God that I find you imbued with such susceptibilities and lofty aspirations and I hope that you will be the means of spreading this light to all men. Thus may the Sun of Reality shine upon the east and west. The enveloping clouds shall pass away and the heat of the divine rays will dispel the mist. The reality of man shall develop and come forth as the image of God his creator. The thoughts of man shall take such upward flight that former accomplishments shall appear as the play of children; -- for the ideas and beliefs of the past and the prejudices regarding race and religion have ever been lowering and destructive to human evolution. I am most hopeful that in this century these lofty thoughts shall be conducive to human welfare. Let this century be the sun of previous centuries the effulgences of which shall last forever, so that in times to come they shall glorify the twentieth century, saying the twentieth century was the century of lights, the twentieth century was the century of life, the twentieth century was the century of international peace, the twentieth century was the century of divine bestowals and the twentieth century has left traces which shall last forever.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 234*

The purpose of this is to show that the holy Manifestations of God, the divine prophets, are the first teachers of the human race. They are universal educators and the fundamental principles they have laid down are the causes and factors of the advancement of nations. Forms and imitations which creep in afterward are not conducive to that progress. On the contrary these are destroyers of human foundations established by the heavenly educators. These are clouds which obscure the Sun of Reality. If you reflect upon the essential teachings of Jesus you will realize that they are the light of the world. Nobody can question their truth. They are the very source of life and the cause of happiness to the human race. The forms and superstitions which appeared and obscured the light did not affect the reality of Christ. For example, His Holiness Jesus Christ said: "Put up the sword into the sheath." The meaning is that warfare is forbidden and abrogated; but consider the Christian wars which took place afterward. Christian hostility and inquisition spared not even the learned; he who proclaimed the revolution of the earth was imprisoned; he who announced the new astronomical system was persecuted as a heretic; scholars and scientists became objects of fanatical hatred and many were killed and tortured. How do these actions conform with the teachings of Jesus Christ and what relation do they bear to his own

example? For Christ declared: "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you that you may be sons of your Father which is in Heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." How can hatred, hostility and persecution be reconciled with Christ and His teachings?

Therefore there is need of turning back to the original foundation. The fundamental principles of the prophets are correct and true. The imitations and superstitions which have crept in are at wide variance with the original precepts and commands. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has revoiced and re-established the quintessence of the teachings of all the prophets, setting aside the accessories and purifying religion from human interpretation. He has written a book entitled Hidden Words. The preface announces that it contains the essences of the words of the prophets of the past clothed in the garment of brevity for the teaching and spiritual guidance of the people of the world. Read it that you may understand the true foundations of religion and reflect upon the inspiration of the messengers of God. It is light upon light. We must not look for truth in the deeds and actions of nations; we must investigate truth at its divine source and summon all mankind to unity in the reality itself.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 250

THE SUN OF REALITY

In our solar system, the center of illumination is the sun itself. Through the will of God this central luminary is the one source of the existence and development of all phenomenal things. When we observe the organisms of the material kingdoms we find that their growth and training are dependent upon the heat and light of the sun. Without this quickening impulse there would be no growth of tree or vegetation, neither would the existence of animal or human being be possible; in fact no forms of created life would be manifest upon the earth. But 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. Without the bounty of the sun therefore the world would be in darkness. All illumination of our planetary system proceeds or emanates from the solar center.

Likewise in the spiritual realm of intelligence and idealism there must be a center of illumination, and that center is the everlasting, ever-shining Sun, the Word of God. Its lights are the lights of reality which have shone upon humanity, illumining the realm of thought and morals, conferring the bounties of the divine world upon man. These lights are the cause of the education of souls and the source of the enlightenment of hearts, sending forth in effulgent radiance the message of the glad-tidings of the kingdom of God. In brief, the moral and ethical world and the world of spiritual regeneration are dependent for their progressive being upon that heavenly center of illumination. It gives forth the light of religion and bestows the life of the spirit, imbues humanity with archetypal virtues and confers eternal splendors. This Sun of Reality, this center of effulgences is the prophet or Manifestation of God. Just as the phenomenal sun shines upon the material world producing life and growth, likewise the spiritual or prophetic Sun confers illumination upon the human world of thought and intelligence, and unless it rose upon the horizon of human existence the kingdom of man would become dark and extinguished. The Sun of Reality is one Sun but it has different dawning-places, just as the phenomenal sun is one although it appears at various points of the horizon. During the time of spring the luminary of the physical world rises far to the north of the equinoctial; in summer it dawns midway and in winter it appears in the most southerly point of its zodiacal journey. These day springs or dawning-points differ widely but the sun is ever the same sun whether it be the phenomenal or spiritual luminary. Souls who focus their vision upon the Sun of Reality will be the recipients of light no matter from

what point it rises, but those who are fettered by adoration of the dawning-point are deprived when it appears in a different station upon the spiritual horizon.

Furthermore, just as the solar cycle has its four seasons the cycle of the Sun of Reality has its distinct and successive periods. Each brings its vernal season or springtime. When the Sun of Reality returns to quicken the world of mankind a divine bounty descends from the heaven of generosity. The realm of thoughts and ideals is set in motion and blessed with new life. Minds are developed, hopes brighten, aspirations become spiritual, the virtues of the human world appear with freshened power of growth and the image and likeness of God become visible in man. It is the springtime of the inner world. After the spring, summer comes with its fullness and fruitage spiritual; autumn follows with its withering winds which chill the soul; the Sun seems to be going away until at last the mantle of winter overspreads and only faint traces of the effulgence of that divine Sun remain. Just as the surface of the material world becomes dark and dreary, the soil dormant, the trees naked and bare and no beauty or freshness remain to cheer the darkness and desolation, so the winter of the spiritual cycle witnesses the death and disappearance of divine growth and extinction of the light and love of God. But again the cycle begins and a new springtime appears. In it the former springtime has returned, the world is resuscitated, illumined and attains spirituality; religion is renewed and reorganized, hearts are turned to God, the summons of God is heard and life is again bestowed upon man. For a long time the religious world had been weakened and materialism had advanced; the spiritual forces of life were waning, moralities were becoming degraded, composure and peace had vanished from souls and satanic qualities were dominating hearts; strife and hatred overshadowed humanity, bloodshed and violence prevailed. God was neglected; the Sun of Reality seemed to have gone completely; deprivation of the bounties of heaven was a fact; and so the season of winter fell upon mankind. But in the generosity of God a new springtime dawned, 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 breathed into the body of the world and continuous advancement became apparent.

I hope that the lights of the Sun of Reality will illumine the whole world so that no strife and warfare, no battles and bloodshed remain. May fanaticism and religious bigotry be unknown, all humanity enter the bond of brotherhood, souls consort in perfect agreement, the nations of earth at last hoist the banner of truth and the religions of the world enter the divine temple of oneness, for the foundations of the heavenly religions are one reality. Reality is not divisible; it does not admit multiplicity. All the holy Manifestations of God have proclaimed and promulgated the same reality. They have summoned mankind to reality itself and reality is one. The clouds and mists of imitations have obscured the Sun of Truth. We must forsake these imitations, dispel these clouds and mists and free the Sun from the darkness of superstition. Then will the Sun of Truth shine most gloriously; then all the inhabitants of the world will be united, the religions will be one, sects and denominations will reconcile, all nationalities will flow together in the recognition of one Fatherhood and all degrees of humankind gather in the shelter of the same tabernacle, under the same banner.

Until the heavenly civilization is founded, no result will be forthcoming from material civilization, even as you observe. See what catastrophes overwhelm mankind. Consider the wars which disturb the world. Consider the enmity and hatred. The existence of these wars and conditions indicates and proves that the heavenly civilization has not yet been established. If the civilization of the Kingdom be spread to all the nations, this dust of disagreement will be dispelled, these clouds will pass away and the Sun of Reality in its greatest effulgence and glory will shine upon mankind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith* - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 254

This quickening spirit has spontaneous emanation from the Sun of Truth, from the reality of divinity and is not a revelation or a manifestation. It is like the rays of the sun. The rays are emanations from the sun. This does not mean that the sun has become divisible; that a part of the sun has come out into space. This plant beside me has risen from the seed; therefore it is a manifestation and unfoldment of the seed. The seed, as you can see, has unfolded in manifestation and the result is this plant. Every leaf of the plant is a part of the seed. But the reality of divinity is indivisible and each individual of human kind cannot be a part of it as is often claimed. Nay, rather, the individual realities of mankind when spiritually born are emanations from the reality of divinity, just as the flame, heat and light of the sun are the effulgence of the sun and not a part of the sun itself. Therefore a spirit has emanated from the reality of divinity, and its effulgences have become visible in human entities or realities. This ray and this heat are permanent. There is no cessation in the effulgence. As long as the sun exists the heat and light will exist, and inasmuch as eternality is a property of divinity, this emanation is everlasting. There is no cessation in its outpouring. The more the world of humanity develops, the more the effulgences or emanations of divinity will become revealed, just as the stone when it becomes polished and pure as a mirror will reflect in fuller degree the glory and splendor of the sun.

The mission of the prophets, the revelation of the holy books, the manifestation of the heavenly teachers and the purpose of divine philosophy all center in the training of the human realities so that they may become clear and pure as mirrors and reflect the light and love of the Sun of Reality. Therefore I hope that whether you be in the east or the west you will strive with heart and soul in order that day by day the world of humanity may become glorified, more spiritual, more sanctified; and that the splendor of the Sun of Reality may be revealed fully in human hearts as in a mirror. This is worthy of the world of mankind. This is the true evolution and progress of humanity. This is the supreme bestowal. Otherwise, by simple development along material lines man is not perfected. At most, the physical aspect of man, his natural or material conditions may become stabilized and improved but he will remain deprived of the spiritual or divine bestowal. He is then like a body without a spirit, a lamp without the light, an eye without the power of vision, an ear that hears no sound, a mind incapable of perceiving, an intellect minus the power of reason.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 261

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'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 261

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

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 262

it is necessary that the signs of the perfection of the spirit should be apparent in this world, so that the world of creation may bring forth endless results, and this body may receive life and manifest the divine bounties. So, for example, the rays of the sun must shine upon the earth, and the solar heat develop the earthly beings; if the rays and heat of the sun did not shine upon the earth, the earth would be uninhabited, without meaning, and its development would be retarded. In the same way, if the perfections of the spirit did not appear in this world, this world would be unenlightened and absolutely brutal. By the appearance of the spirit in the physical form, this world is enlightened. As the spirit of man is the cause of the life of the body, so the world is in the condition of the body, and man is in the condition of the spirit. If there were no man, the perfections of the spirit would not appear, and the light of the mind would not be resplendent in this world. This world would be like a body without a soul. This world is also in the condition of a fruit-tree, and man is like the fruit; without fruit the tree would be useless.

Moreover, these members, these elements, this composition, which are found in the organism of man, are an attraction and magnet for the spirit; it is certain that the spirit will appear in it. So, a mirror which is clear will certainly attract the rays of the sun. It will become luminous, and wonderful images will appear in it. That is to say, when these existing elements are gathered together according to the natural order, and with perfect strength, they become a magnet for the spirit, and the spirit will become manifest in them with all its perfections.

Under these conditions it cannot be said "what is the necessity for the rays of the sun to descend upon the mirror?" -- for the connection which exists between the reality of things, whether they be spiritual or material, requires that when the mirror is clear and faces the sun, the light of the sun must become apparent in it. In the same way, 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.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 314

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

We hope that the friends of God, like an attractive force, will draw these bounties from the source itself, and that they will arise with such illumination and signs that they will be evident proofs of the Sun of Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 322

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'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 323

The rewards of this life are the virtues and perfections which adorn the reality of man. For example, he was dark and becomes luminous, he was ignorant and becomes wise, he was neglectful and becomes vigilant, he was asleep and becomes awakened, he was dead and becomes living, he was blind and becomes a seer, he was deaf and becomes a hearer, he was earthly and becomes heavenly, he was material and becomes spiritual. Through these rewards he gains spiritual birth, and becomes a new creature. He becomes the manifestation of the verse in the Gospel where it is said of the disciples that they were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; that is to say, they were delivered from the animal characteristics and qualities which are the characteristics of human nature, and they became qualified with the divine characteristics, which are the bounty of God; this is the meaning of the second birth. For such people there is no greater torture than being veiled from God, and no more severe punishment than sensual vices, dark qualities, lowness of nature, engrossment in carnal desires. When they are delivered through the light of faith from the darkness of these vices, and become illuminated with the radiance of the Sun of Reality, and ennobled with all the virtues, they esteem this the greatest reward, and they know it to be the true paradise. In the same way they consider that the spiritual punishment, that is to say the torture and punishment of existence, is to be subjected to the world of nature, to be veiled from God, to be brutal and ignorant, to fall into carnal lusts, to be absorbed in animal frailties; to be characterized with dark qualities, such as falsehood, tyranny, cruelty, attachment to the affairs of the world, and being immersed in satanic ideas; for them, these are the greatest punishments and tortures.

Likewise the rewards of the other world are the eternal life which is clearly mentioned in all the Holy Books, the divine perfections, the eternal bounties, and everlasting felicity. The rewards of the other world are the perfections and the peace obtained in the spiritual

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

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 324

Now regarding the question whether the faculties of the mind and the human soul are one and the same. These faculties are but the inherent properties of the soul, such as the power of imagination, of thought, of understanding; powers that are the essential requisites of the reality of man, even as the solar ray is the inherent property of the sun. The temple of man is like unto a mirror, his soul is as the sun, and his mental faculties even as the rays that emanate from that source of light. The ray may cease to fall upon the mirror, but it can in no wise be dissociated from the sun.

In short, the point is this, that the world of man is supernatural in its relation to the vegetable kingdom, though in reality it is not so. Relatively to the plant, the reality of man, his power of hearing and sight, are all supernatural, and for the plant to comprehend that reality and the nature of the powers of man's mind is impossible. In like manner for man to comprehend the Divine Essence and the nature of the great Hereafter is in no wise possible. The merciful outpourings of that Divine Essence, however, are vouchsafed unto all beings and it is incumbent upon man to ponder in his heart upon the effusions of the Divine Grace, the soul being counted as one, rather than upon the Divine Essence itself. This is the utmost limit for human understanding. As it hath previously been mentioned, these attributes and perfections that we recount of the Divine Essence, these we have derived from the existence and observation of beings, and it is not that we have comprehended the essence and perfection of God. When we say that the Divine Essence understandeth and is free, we do not mean that we have discovered the Divine Will and Purpose, but rather that we have acquired knowledge of them through the Divine Grace revealed and manifested in the realities of things.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 346

When the darkness of ignorance and heedlessness concerning the realm of eternity and bereavement from the True One 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 found the Most Great Glad-Tidings, began to cry the call, "O blessed are we! O blessed are we!" -- and 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 so intoxicated with the cup of the love of God, that, wholly forgetting themselves and the world while dancing, they ran with utmost joy and ecstasy to the city of Martyrdom, sacrificing their minds and their lives upon the altar of Love.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section*, p. 352

You ask if, through the appearance of the kingdom of God, every soul hath been saved. The Sun of Reality hath appeared to all the world. This luminous appearance is salvation and life; but only he who hath opened the eye of reality and who hath seen these lights will be saved.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 389*

Consider! When the rain, the heat, the sun and the gentle zephyrs cooperate with each other, what beautiful gardens are produced! How the various kinds of hyacinths, flowers, trees and plants associate with each other and are conducive to the adornment and charm of one another! Hence the oneness of the bounty of the sun, the oneness of rain and the oneness of the breeze have so overcome all other considerations, that the variety of hues, fragrances and tastes have increased the adornment, the attraction and sweetness of the whole. In a similar manner, when the divine Collective Center and the outpouring of the Sun of Reality and the breaths of the Holy Spirit are brought together, the variety of races and the differences existing between countries will become the cause of the embellishment, decoration and elegance of the world of humanity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 420*

The blessed Person of the Promised One is interpreted in the Holy Book as the Lord of Hosts, i.e., the heavenly armies. By heavenly armies those souls are intended who are entirely freed from the human world, transformed into celestial spirits and have become divine angels. Such souls are the rays of the Sun of Reality who will illumine all the continents. Each one is holding in his hand a trumpet, blowing the breath of life over all the regions. They are delivered from human qualities and the defects of the world of nature, are characterized with the characteristics of God, and are attracted with the fragrances of the Merciful. Like unto the apostles of Christ, who were filled with Him, these souls also have become filled with His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, i.e., the love of Bahá'u'lláh has so mastered every organ, part and limb of their bodies, as to leave no effect by the promptings of the human world. These souls are the armies of God and the conquerors of the East and the West. Should one of them turn his face toward some direction and summon the people to the Kingdom of God, all the ideal forces and lordly confirmations will rush to his support and reinforcement. He will behold all the doors open and all the strong fortifications and impregnable castles razed to the ground. Singly and alone he will attack the armies of the world, defeat the right and left wings of the hosts of all the countries, break through the lines of the legions of all the nations and carry his attack to the very center of the powers of the earth. This is the meaning of the Hosts of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 423*

Through the power of the divine springtime, the downpour of the celestial clouds and the heat of the Sun of Reality, the tree of life is just beginning to grow. Before long, it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruits, and cast its shade over the East and the West. This Tree of Life is the Book of the Covenant.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Baha'i World Faith - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 429*

The spirit of faith, the beloved, the spiritual ego, the friend, the adored one, the desired one, the rays of the sun of truth, the flame of reality, the radiations of the celestial world, the lord, the nightingale, etc., are all synonyms of the one reality of man. "This," says Abdul Baha, "has been the mission of all the divine messengers -- to make man conscious of his eternal part.

"By God, who is the only God and there is no God but he, this servant swears the masters did not come that man should adore them, or worship them or acknowledge their prophethood. Nay, rather, the masters of all time have suffered for none other than this -- the fleshly veils might be rent asunder and reality become manifest.

"Once again the dove of eternity hath descended from the rizwan* of nearness to sing the long-forgotten melody in this gloomy and disastrous age. O, when will one arise and while listening to this song don the garment of selflessness and hasten to the precinct of the friend!" *Rizwan -- a Persian word which means garden or paradise and symbolizes a heavenly condition. He is concealed by the intensity of manifestation, and he is hidden by the ardor of emanation. -- Bahá'u'lláh IN SEVEN VALLEYS

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 29

We must be adorers of the sun of reality from whatsoever horizon it may appear, rather than adorers of the horizon; for should we concentrate our attention in one direction, the sun may appear from quite another and leave us deprived of the sun's bestowals which are the wisdom and guidance of God and the favor of God, which constitute spiritual progress.

Praise be to God that the sun of reality of religion hath dawned. From all parts of the world, host after host are coming under its radiance and ere long it will become world-spread.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 33

At this moment the sun appears at the meridian and the day and night are equal. Until today the north pole has been in darkness. This sacred day when the sun illumines equally the whole earth is called the equinox and the equinox is the symbol of the divine messenger. The sun of truth rises on the horizon of divine mercy and sends forth its rays on all. This is the beginning of the spring. When the sun appears at the equinox it causes a movement in all living things. The mineral world is set in motion,, plants begin to sprout, the desert is changed into a prairie, trees bud and every living thing responds, including the bodies of animals and men.

The rising of the sun at the equinox is the symbol of life and the human reality is revived; our thoughts are transformed and our intelligence is quickened. The sun of truth bestows eternal life, just as the solar sun is the cause of terrestrial life.

The day of the appearance of God's messenger on earth is ever a sacred day, a day when man commemorates his lord.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 74

Let us listen to a symphony which will confer life on man; then we can obtain universal results; then we shall receive a new spirit; then we shall become illumined. Let us investigate a song which is above all songs; one which will develop the spirit and produce harmony and exhilaration, unfolding the inner potentialities of life.

Whenever the sun of reality dawns, the lower sphere expresses the virtues of the highest world. Why does not man harken to the soul-stirring music of the supreme concourse and not run wild with joy over the jarring notes of a street organ!

Strive day and night; perchance these sleeping ones may be awakened by the celestial strains of the city of melody and hear the soft, delicate music which is streaming down from the kingdom of El-Abha. Knowledge is one of the greatest benefits of God. To acquire knowledge is incumbent on all. These visible arts and present implements are

from the results of his knowledge and wisdom, which have been revealed from the supreme pen. In this day the mysteries of this earth are unfolded and have become visible before the eyes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 77

The spiritual light of the world has risen again from the eastern horizon. The night is finished; the day is come and the first rays of the dawn are destroying the shadows, dispersing the clouds, making the plants to grow, the trees to become verdant and ornamenting the flower-beds with roses. The sun of reality hath reappeared with tremendous power and soon the light of Bahá'u'lláh will be diffused throughout the world. See how the light of Christ's shining star took three hundred years to shed its rays on the world, whereas the light of Bahá'u'lláh has permeated all regions in less than half a century. His cause has been spread in every country and the mention of Bahá'u'lláh made in every tongue. In nearly every country there is an assembly of friends from Teheran to Paris, to San Francisco, to Japan. This is a different age and light is spreading with great rapidity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 80

There is, however, a faculty in man which unfolds to his vision the secrets of existence. It gives him a power whereby he may investigate the reality of every object. It leads man on and on to the luminous station of divine sublimity and frees him from all the fetters of self, causing him to ascend to the pure heaven of sanctity. This is the power of the mind, for the soul is not, of itself, capable of unrolling the mysteries of phenomena; but the mind can accomplish this and therefore it is a power superior to the soul.

There is still another power which is differentiated from that of the soul and mind. This third power is the spirit which is an emanation from the divine bestower; it is the effulgence of the sun of reality, the radiation of the celestial world, the spirit of faith, the spirit His Holiness the Christ refers to when he says, "Those that are born of the flesh are flesh, and those that are born of the spirit are spirit." The spirit is the axis round which the eternal life revolves. It is conducive to everlasting glory and is the cause of the exaltation of humanity.

In another instance His Holiness the Christ says, "Whosoever has not received a portion of the spirit is as dead. Let the dead bury their dead." This means that although the souls of humanity are living, yet if they are deprived of contact with the spirit they are as dead. In another place Christ says, "You must be baptized with the spirit." This spirit of faith is the flame of reality, the life of humanity and the cause of eternal illumination. It inspires man to attain the virtues and perfections of the divine world.

It is my hope that each one of you may become conscious of this flame.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 121

The universal light for this planet is from the sun and the special electric ray which to-night illumines this banquet hall appears through the invention of man. In like manner the activities which are trying to establish solidarity between the nations and infuse the spirit of universalism in the hearts of the children of men are like unto divine rays from the sun of reality and the brightest ray is the coming of the universal language. Its achievement is the greatest virtue of the age for such an instrument will remove misunderstandings from amongst the peoples of the earth and will cement their hearts together. This medium will enable each individual member of the human family to be informed of the scientific accomplishments of all.

The basis of knowledge and the excellencies of endeavor in this world are to teach and to be taught. To acquire sciences, and to teach them in turn, depends upon language, and when the international auxiliary tongue becomes universal it is easily conceivable that the acquirement of knowledge and instruction will likewise become universal.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 142

Let us, free from past tradition, investigate the reality of this matter. What is the meaning of the father and the son?

This fatherhood and sonship are allegorical and symbolical. The Messianic reality is like unto a mirror through which the sun of divinity has become resplendent. If this mirror expresses "The light is in me" - it is sincere in its claim; therefore Jesus was truthful when he said, "The Father is in me." The sun in the sky and the sun in the mirror are one, are they not? - and yet we see there are apparently two suns.

The Jews were expecting the coming of the Messiah, lamenting day and night, saying: "O God, send to us our deliverer!" But as they walked in the path of dogmas, rather than reality, when the Messiah appeared they denied him. Had they been investigators of reality, they would not have crucified - but would have recognized him instantly.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 152

Our aim is to free the foundation of religion from its moss grown dogmas; to dispel the black impenetrable fog of creed so that the religions may be flooded and illumined. May these foul clouds never return; may the rays of the eternal sun encircle all countries, for verily the resplendent sun of reality shines from age to age.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 157

"Tear asunder the veils and curtains of these dogmas, remove these accumulated, suffocating increments, dispel these dark impenetrable clouds, that the sun of reality may shine from the horizon of eternity."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 162

This station is the greatest of all stations, for this connection of the spirit of man with God is like unto a mirror and the sun of reality is reflected in it. Thus it becomes the collective center of all the virtues; its emanation is the bestowal of the king of bestowers; its radiations are the manifold splendors of the infinite luminary; its sanctity is from the highest summit of divine essence. This station is the station of heavenly inspiration and is called the station of the divine grace. It signifies that the rays of the sun of reality are resplendent in the mirror and the attributes of the sun of reality are reflected therein. This is the ultimate degree of human perfection, for the attainment of which the thinkers and philosophers of all time have longed and poets have dreamed; it is the mystery of mysteries and the light of lights wherein the spirit become eternal, self-subsistent, age-abiding.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 166

Spirit in the human world is the discoverer of the realities of existence. All the inventions, all the sciences, all the hidden mysteries are brought to light through the activity of the spirit on the plane of life. While living in the Orient it organizes affairs in the Occident; while living on the earth it discovers the heavenly constellations. These examples ought to show you that the spirit of life is omnipotent, especially when it establishes a communication with God and becomes the recipient of the eternal light - then it transforms itself into a ray of the effulgence of the eternal sun.

This station is the greatest of all stations, for this connection of the spirit of man with God is like unto a mirror and the sun of reality is reflected in it. Thus it becomes the collective center of all the virtues; its emanation is the bestowal of the king of bestowers; its radiations are the manifold splendors of the infinite luminary; its sanctity is from the highest summit of divine essence. This station is the station of heavenly inspiration and is called the station of the divine grace. It signifies that the rays of the sun of reality are resplendent in the mirror and the attributes of the sun of reality are reflected therein. This is the ultimate degree of human perfection, for the attainment of which the thinkers and philosophers of all time have longed and poets have dreamed; it is the mystery of mysteries and the light of lights wherein the spirit become eternal, self-subsistent, age-abiding.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 166

Two thousand years ago the Israelites expected the Messiah. Day and night they were praying in the temple, supplicating in the holy of holies, crying, "O God, send to us the true one, our deliverer and redeemer" - thus they lamented the bemoaned his delay. But when His Holiness the Christ appeared they jeeringly turned away; when the orb of reality dawned they could not see it, for their eyes were covered with the veils of traditions and names. These anxious waiting ones did not become the recipients of that bestowal; nor harken to the call of God; nor quaff from the chalice of love; nor behold the rays of the sun of reality. It is now nearly two thousand years since their Messiah appeared and still they await him!

May our eyes be ever awake; may the windows of our minds be flung aside, so that when the messenger appeareth, we may not be deprived of his glory through the veils of preconceived ideas; so that when the heavenly herald shouts the word of God, we may not be deaf; so that when the holy fragrance of the paradise of the Almighty be diffused, our nostrils may not be afflicted with cold. May we be enabled to inhale the perfume, behold the splendor, hearken to the voice and be regenerated with the spirit of the new day.

Then our life will be revived, we shall enjoy eternal existence, be refreshed with the breath of the Holy Spirit and become informed of the mysteries of creation. Then we shall be inspired to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity; we shall take a portion of the divine grace and become resplendent with the rays of the heavenly luminary; then the human race will mirror forth the attributes of the eternal kingdom and will move like a peaceful sea and each individual will appear as a wave. As we look upon the sea, we will comprehend it as the sea of God; as we look upon the waves, we will realize that they are the souls of humanity. The sun is one; all light is one; the rays are one; it shines on all. This century is the century of the oneness of the world of humanity, the century of justice; this century is the century of universal peace, the century of the dawn of the sun of reality; this century is the century of the establishment of the kingdom of God upon this earth; therefore let us grasp every means to promote the federation of the world, that we may become the recipients of the divine outpourings.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 170

While this is true and apparent, it is likewise evident that the Lord of mankind has bestowed infinite bounties upon the world in this century of maturity and consummation. The ocean of divine mercy is surging, the vernal showers are descending, the Sun of Reality is shining gloriously. Heavenly teachings applicable to the advancement in human conditions have been revealed in this merciful age. This re-formation and renewal of the fundamental reality of religion constitute the true and outworking spirit of modernism, the unmistakable light of the world, the manifest effulgence of the Word of God, the divine remedy for all human ailment and the bounty of eternal life to all mankind.
'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 10

THE SOURCE OF REALITY

In our solar system, the center of illumination is the sun itself. Through the will of God this central luminary is the one source of the existence and development of all phenomenal things. When we observe the organisms of the material kingdoms we find that their growth and training are dependent upon the heat and light of the sun. Without this quickening impulse there would be no growth of tree or vegetation, neither would the existence of animal or human being be possible; in fact no forms of created life would be manifest upon the earth. But 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. Without the bounty of the sun therefore the world would be in darkness. All illumination of our planetary system proceeds or emanates from the solar center.

Likewise in the spiritual realm of intelligence and idealism there must be a center of illumination, and that center is the everlasting, ever-shining Sun, the Word of God. Its lights are the lights of reality which have shone upon humanity, illumining the realm of thought and morals, conferring the bounties of the divine world upon man. These lights are the cause of the education of souls and the source of the enlightenment of hearts, sending forth in effulgent radiance the message of the glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God. In brief, the moral and ethical world and the world of spiritual regeneration are dependent for their progressive being upon that heavenly center of illumination. It gives forth the light of religion and bestows the life of the spirit, imbues humanity with archetypal virtues and confers eternal splendors. This Sun of Reality, this center of effulgences is the prophet or Manifestation of God. Just as the phenomenal sun shines upon the material world producing life and growth, likewise the spiritual or prophetic Sun confers illumination upon the human world of thought and intelligence, and unless it rose upon the horizon of human existence the kingdom of man would become dark and extinguished. The Sun of Reality is one Sun but it has different dawning-places, just as the phenomenal sun is one although it appears at various points of the horizon. During the time of spring the luminary of the physical world rises far to the north of the equinoctial; in summer it dawns midway and in winter it appears in the most southerly point of its zodiacal journey. These day-springs or dawning-points differ widely but the sun is ever the same sun whether it be the phenomenal or spiritual luminary. Souls who focus their vision upon the Sun of Reality will be the recipients of light no matter from what point it rises, but those who are fettered by adoration of the dawning-point are deprived when it appears in a different station upon the spiritual horizon.

Furthermore, just as the solar cycle has its four seasons, the cycle of the Sun of Reality has its distinct and successive periods. Each brings its vernal season or springtime. When the Sun of Reality returns to quicken the world of mankind a divine bounty descends from the heaven of generosity. The realm of thoughts and ideals is set in motion and blessed with new life. Minds are developed, hopes brighten, aspirations become spiritual, the virtues of the human world appear with freshened power of growth

and the image and likeness of God become visible in man. It is the springtime of the inner world. After the spring, summer comes with its fullness and fruitage spiritual; autumn follows with its withering winds which chill the soul; the Sun seems to be going away until at last the mantle of winter overspreads and only faint traces of the effulgence of that divine Sun remain. Just as the surface of the material world becomes dark and dreary, the soil dormant, the trees naked and bare and no beauty or freshness remain to cheer the darkness and desolation, so the winter of the spiritual cycle witnesses the death and disappearance of divine growth and extinction of the light and love of God. But again the cycle begins and a new springtime appears. In it the former springtime has returned, the world is resuscitated, illumined and attains spirituality; religion is renewed and reorganized, hearts are turned to God, the summons of God is heard and life is again bestowed upon man. For a long time the religious world had been weakened and materialism had advanced; the spiritual forces of life were waning, moralities were becoming degraded, composure and peace had vanished from souls and satanic qualities were dominating hearts; strife and hatred overshadowed humanity, bloodshed and violence prevailed. God was neglected; the Sun of Reality seemed to have gone completely; deprivation of the bounties of heaven was a fact; and so the season of winter fell upon mankind. But in the generosity of God a new springtime dawned, 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 breathed into the body of the world and continuous advancement became apparent. I hope that the lights of the Sun of Reality will illumine the whole world so that no strife and warfare, no battles and bloodshed remain. May fanaticism and religious bigotry be unknown, all humanity enter the bond of brotherhood, souls consort in perfect agreement, the nations of earth at last hoist the banner of truth and the religions of the world enter the divine temple of oneness, for the foundations of the heavenly religions are one reality. Reality is not divisible; it does not admit multiplicity. All the holy Manifestations of God have proclaimed and promulgated the same reality. They have summoned mankind to reality itself and reality is one. The clouds and mists of imitations have obscured the Sun of Truth. We must forsake these imitations, dispel these clouds and mists and free the Sun from the darkness of superstition. Then will the Sun of Truth shine most gloriously; then all the inhabitants of the world will be united, the religions will be one, sects and denominations will reconcile, all nationalities will flow together in the recognition of one fatherhood and all degrees of humankind gather in the shelter of the same tabernacle, under the same banner.

Until the heavenly civilization is founded, no result will be forthcoming from material civilization, even as you observe. See what catastrophes overwhelm mankind. Consider the wars which disturb the world. Consider the enmity and hatred. The existence of these wars and conditions indicates and proves that the heavenly civilization has not yet been established. If the civilization of the Kingdom be spread to all the nations, this dust of disagreement will be dispelled, these clouds will pass away and the Sun of Reality in its greatest effulgence and glory will shine upon mankind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 10

Thus may the Sun of Reality shine upon the East and West. The enveloping clouds shall pass away and the heat of the divine rays will dispel the mist. The reality of man shall develop and come forth as the image of God his creator. The thoughts of man shall take such upward flight that former accomplishments shall appear as the play of children; -- for the ideas and beliefs of the past and the prejudices regarding race and religion have ever been lowering and destructive to human evolution. I am most hopeful that in this century these lofty thoughts shall be conducive to human welfare. Let this century be the sun of previous centuries the effulgences of which shall last forever, so that in times to come they shall glorify the twentieth century, saying the twentieth century was the century of lights, the twentieth century was the century of life, the twentieth century was the century of international peace, the twentieth century was the century of divine bestowals and the twentieth century has left traces which shall last forever.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 21

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

That celestial reality, the third reality of the microcosm, delivers man from the material world. Its power causes man to escape from nature's world. Escaping, he will find an illuminating reality, transcending the limited reality of man and causing him to attain to the infinitude of God, abstracting him from the world of superstitions and imaginations, and submerging him in the sea of the rays of the Sun of Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 51

The virtues of humanity are many but science is the most noble of them all. The distinction which man enjoys above and beyond the station of the animal is due to this paramount virtue. It is a bestowal of God; it is not material, it is divine. Science is an effulgence of the Sun of Reality, the power of investigating and discovering the verities of the universe, the means by which man finds a pathway to God. All the powers and attributes of man are human and hereditary in origin, outcomes of nature's processes, except the intellect, which is supernatural. Through intellectual and intelligent inquiry science is the discoverer of all things. It unites present and past, reveals the history of bygone nations and events, and confers upon man today the essence of all human knowledge and attainment throughout the ages. By intellectual processes and logical deductions of reason, this super-power in man can penetrate the mysteries of the future and anticipate its happenings.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 60

In the Word of God there is still another unity, the oneness of the Manifestations of God, His Holiness Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. This is a unity divine, heavenly, radiant, merciful; the one reality appearing in its successive manifestations. For instance, the sun is one and the same but its points of dawning are various. During the summer season it rises from the northern point of the ecliptic; in winter it appears from the southern point of rising. Each month between it appears from a certain zodiacal position. Although these dawning-points are different, the sun is the same sun which has appeared from them all. The significance is the reality of prophethood which is symbolized by the sun, and the holy Manifestations are the

dawning-places or zodiacal points. There is also the divine unity or entity which is sanctified above all concept of humanity. It cannot be comprehended nor conceived because it is infinite reality and cannot become finite. Human minds are incapable of surrounding that reality because all thoughts and conceptions of it are finite, intellectual creations and not the reality of divine being which alone knows itself. For example, if we form a conception of divinity as a living, almighty, self-subsisting, eternal being, this is only a concept apprehended by a human intellectual reality. It would not be the outward, visible reality which is beyond the power of human mind to conceive or encompass. We ourselves have an external, visible entity but even our concept of it is the product of our own brain and limited comprehension. The reality of divinity is sanctified above this degree of knowing and realization. It has ever been hidden and secluded in its own holiness and sanctity above our comprehending. Although it transcends our realization, its lights, bestowals, traces and virtues have become manifest in the realities of the prophets, even as the sun becomes resplendent in various mirrors. These holy realities are as reflectors, and the reality of divinity is as the sun which although it is reflected from the mirrors, and its virtues and perfections become resplendent therein, does not stoop from its own station of majesty and glory and seek abode in the mirrors; it remains in its heaven of sanctity. At most it is this, that its lights become manifest and evident in its mirrors or manifestations. Therefore its bounty proceeding from them is one bounty but the recipients of that bounty are many. This is the unity of God; this is oneness; -- unity of divinity, holy above ascent or descent, embodiment, comprehension or idealization; -- divine unity -- the prophets are its mirrors; its lights are revealed through them; its virtues become resplendent in them, but the Sun of Reality never descends from its own highest point and station. This is unity, oneness, sanctity; this is glorification whereby we praise and adore God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 67

In the books of the prophets certain glad-tidings are recorded which are absolutely true and free from doubt. The East has ever been the dawning-point of the Sun of Reality. All the prophets of God have appeared there. The religions of God have been promulgated, the teachings of God have been spread and the law of God founded in the East.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 72

Holy souls are like soil which has been plowed and tilled with much earnest labor; the thorns and thistles cast aside and all weeds uprooted. Such soil is most fruitful and the harvest from it will prove full and plenteous. In this same way man must free himself from the weeds of ignorance, thorns of superstitions and thistles of imitations, that he may discover reality in the harvests of true knowledge. Otherwise the discovery of reality is impossible, contention and divergence of religious belief will always remain and mankind, like ferocious wolves will rage and attack each other in hatred and antagonism. We supplicate God that He may destroy the veils which limit our vision and that these becloudings which darken the way of the manifestation of the shining lights may be dispelled in order that the effulgent Sun of Reality may shine forth. We implore and invoke God, seeking His assistance and confirmation. Man is a child of God; most noble, lofty and beloved by God his creator. Therefore he must ever strive that the divine bounties and virtues bestowed upon him may prevail and control him. Just now the soil of human hearts seems like black earth, but in the innermost substance of this dark soil there are thousands of fragrant flowers latent. We must endeavor to cultivate and awaken these potentialities, discover the secret treasure in this very mine and depository of God, bring forth these resplendent powers long hidden in human hearts. Then will the glories of both worlds be blended and increased and the quintessence of human existence be made manifest.

We must not be content with simply following a certain course because we find our fathers pursued that course. It is the duty of everyone to investigate reality, and investigation of reality by another will not do for us. If all in the world were rich and one man poor, of what use are these riches to that man? If all the world be virtuous and a man steeped in vice, what good results are forthcoming from him? If all the world be resplendent and a man blind, where are his benefits? If all the world be in plenty and a man hungry, what sustenance does he derive? Therefore every man must be an investigator for himself. Ideas and beliefs left by his fathers and ancestors as a heritage will not suffice, for adherence to these are but imitations and imitations have ever been a cause of disappointment and misguidance. Be investigators of reality, that you may attain the verity of truth and life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 76

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. There can be no doubt that these bestowals, these bounties, these effulgences emanate from love. Unless love be the divine motive, it would be impossible for the heart of man to attain or receive them. Unless love exists the divine blessing could not descend upon any object or thing. Unless there be love the recipient of divine effulgence could not radiate and reflect that effulgence upon other objects. If we are of those who perceive, we realize that the bounties of God manifest themselves continuously, even as the rays of the sun unceasingly emanate from the solar center. The phenomenal world through the resplendent effulgence of the sun is radiant and bright. In the same way the realm of hearts and spirits is illumined and resuscitated through the shining rays of the Sun of Reality and the bounties of the love of God. Thereby the world of existence, the kingdom of hearts and spirits is ever quickened into life. 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.

'Abdu'l-Baha, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 89

Observe how rarely human souls sacrifice their pleasure or comfort for others; how improbable that a man would offer his eye or suffer himself to be dismembered for the benefit of another. Yet all the divine Manifestations suffered, offered their lives and blood, sacrificed their existence, comfort and all they possessed for the sake of mankind. Therefore consider how much they love. Were it not for their love for humanity, spiritual love would be mere nomenclature. Were it not for their illumination, human souls would not be radiant. How effective is their love! This is a sign of the love of God; a ray of the Sun of Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 89

Consequently we cannot say that the divine bounty has ceased, that the glory of divinity is exhausted or the Sun of Truth sunk into eternal sunset, into that darkness which is not followed by light, into that night which is not followed by a sunrise and dawn, into that death which is not followed by life, into that error which is not followed by truth. Is it conceivable that the Sun of Reality should sink into an eternal darkness? No! the sun was created in order that it may shed light upon the world and train all the kingdoms of existence. How then can the ideal Sun of Truth, the Word of God, set forever? For this would mean the cessation of the divine bounty, and the divine bounty by its very nature is continuous and ceaseless. Its sun is ever shining, its cloud is ever producing rain, its breezes are ever blowing, its bestowals are all-comprehending, its gifts are ever perfect. Consequently we must always anticipate, always be hopeful and pray to God that he will send unto us his holy Manifestations in their most perfect might, with the divine

penetrative power of his Word, so that these heavenly ones may be distinguished above all other beings in every respect, in every attribute, just as the glorious sun is distinguished above all stars.

Although the stars are scintillating and brilliant, the sun is superior to them in luminous effulgence. Similarly these holy divine Manifestations are and must always be distinguished above all other beings in every attribute of glory and perfection, in order that it may be proven that the Manifestation is the true teacher and real trainer; that he is the Sun of Truth endowed with a supreme splendor and reflecting the beauty of God. Otherwise it is not possible for us to train one human individual and then after training him, believe in him and accept him as the holy Manifestation of divinity. The real Manifestation of God must be endowed with divine knowledge and not dependent upon learning acquired in schools. He must be the educator, not the educated; his standard intuition instead of tuition. He must be perfect and not imperfect, great and glorious instead of being weak and impotent. He must be wealthy in the riches of the spiritual world and not indigent. In a word, the holy divine Manifestation of God must be distinguished above all others of mankind in every aspect and qualification, in order that he may be able to effectively train the human body politic, eliminate the darkness enshrouding the human world, uplift humanity from a lower to a higher kingdom, be able through the penetrative power of his Word to promote and spread broadcast the beneficent message of universal peace among men, bring about the unification of mankind in religious belief through a manifest divine power, harmonize all sects and denominations and convert all nativities and nationalities into one nativity and fatherland.

It is our hope that the bounties of God will encompass us all, the gifts of the divine become manifest, the lights of the Sun of Truth illumine our eyes, inspire our hearts, convey to our souls cheerful glad-tidings of God, cause our thoughts to become lofty and our efforts to be productive of glorious results. In a word, it is our hope that we may attain to that which is the summit of human aspirations and wishes. .

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 111

So we can say there must be a Mediator between God and Man, and this is none other than the Holy Spirit, which brings the created earth into relation with the 'Unthinkable One', the Divine Reality. The Divine Reality may be likened to the sun and the Holy Spirit to the rays of the sun. As the rays of the sun bring the light and warmth of the sun to the earth, giving life to all created beings, so do the 'Manifestations'[1] bring the power of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Sun of Reality to give light and life to the souls of men.
[1 Manifestations of God.]

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

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

Likewise the Holy Spirit is the very cause of the life of man; without the Holy Spirit he would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge by which his great influence over the rest of creation is gained. The illumination of the Holy Spirit gives to man the power of thought, and enables him to make discoveries by which he bends the laws of nature to his will. The Holy Spirit it is which, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man and enables him to attain Eternal Life.

All these blessings are brought to man by the Holy Spirit; therefore we can understand that the Holy Spirit is the Intermediary between the Creator and the created. The light and heat of the sun cause the earth to be fruitful, and create life in all things that grow; and the Holy Spirit quickens the souls of men.
'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 58

Some of the great questions unfolding from the rays of the Sun of Reality upon the mind of man are: the problem 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. They also meditate upon the scientific questions of the day, and these are likewise solved. These people, who are called 'Followers of the inner light', 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. All the divine and scientific questions are solved by them through the power of the spirit. Bahá'u'lláh says there is a sign from God in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time -- he cannot both speak and meditate.

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

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

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 173

But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained. Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed -- turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects -- so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit.

May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 176

Love is only of the four kinds that I have explained. a The love of God towards the identity of God. Christ has said God is Love. b The love of God for His children -- for His servants. c The love of man for God and d the love of man for man. These four kinds of love originate from God. These are rays from the Sun of Reality; these are the Breathings of the Holy Spirit; these are the Signs of the Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 181

O ye loved ones of God, ye helpers of this evanescent Servant! When the Sun of Reality shed its endless bounties from the Dawning-Point of all desires, and this world of being was lit with that sacred light from pole to pole, with such intensity did it cast down its rays that it blotted out the Stygian dark forever, whereupon this earth of dust became the envy of the spheres of heaven, and this lowly place took on the state and panoply of the supernal realm. The gentle breeze of holiness blew over it, scattering abroad sweet savours; the spring winds of heaven passed by it, and over it, from the Source of all bestowals, were wafted fruitful airs that carried boundless grace. Then the bright dawn rose, and there came tidings of great joy. The divine springtime was here, pitching its tents in this contingent world, so that all creation leapt and danced. The withered earth brought forth immortal blooms, the dead dust woke to everlasting life. Then came forth flowers of mystic learning, and, bespeaking the knowledge of God, fresh greenery from the ground. The contingent world displayed God's bounteous gifts, the visible world reflecting the glories of realms that were hidden from sight. God's summons was proclaimed, the table of the Eternal Covenant was readied, the cup of the Testament was passed from hand to hand, the universal invitation was sent forth. Then some among the people were set afire with the wine of heaven, and some were left without a share of this greatest of bestowals. The sight and insight of some were illumined by the light of grace, and there were some who, hearing the anthems of unity, leapt for joy. There were birds that began to carol in the gardens of holiness, there were nightingales in the branches of the rose tree of heaven that raised their plaintive cries. Then were decked and adorned both the Kingdom on high and the earth below, and this world became the envy of high heaven. Yet alas, alas, the neglectful have stayed fast in their heedless sleep, and the foolish have spurned this most sacred of bestowals. The blind remain shrouded in their veils, the deaf have no share in what hath come to pass, the dead have no hopes of attaining thereto, for even as He saith: 'They despair of the life to come, as the infidels despair that the dwellers in the tombs will rise again.' [1] [1 Qur'án 60:13]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 7

Shouldst thou, however, turn thy gaze unto a Mirror, brilliant, stainless, and pure, wherein the divine Beauty is reflected, therein wilt thou find the Sun shining with Its rays, Its heat, Its disc, Its fair form all entire. For each separate entity possesseth its allotted portion of the solar light and telleth of the Sun, but that Universal Reality in all Its splendour, that stainless Mirror Whose qualities are appropriate to the qualities of the Sun revealed within It -- expresseth in their entirety the attributes of the Source of Glory. And that Universal Reality is Man, the divine Being, the Essence that abideth forever. 'Say, Call upon God, or call upon the All-Merciful; whichsoever ye call upon, most beauteous are His Names.'

[1] [1 Qur'án 17:110]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 42

And further, all the earth's creatures require the bounty of the sun, for their very existence is dependent upon solar light and heat. Should they be deprived of the sun, they would be wiped out. This is the being with God, as referred to in the Holy Books: man must be with his Lord.

It is clear, then, that the essential reality of God is revealed in His perfections; and the sun, with its perfections, reflected in a mirror, is a visible thing, an entity clearly expressing the bounty of God. My hope is that thou wilt acquire a perceptive eye, a hearing ear, and that the veils will be removed from thy sight.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 50

As to the influence of holy Beings and the continuance of Their grace to mankind after They have put away Their human form, this is, to Bahá'ís, an indisputable fact. Indeed, the flooding grace, the streaming splendours of the holy Manifestations appear after Their ascension from this world. The exaltation of the Word, the revelation of the power of God, the conversion of God-fearing souls, the bestowal of everlasting life -- it was following the Messiah's martyrdom that all these were increased and intensified. In the same way, ever since the ascension of the Blessed Beauty, the bestowals have been more abundant, the spreading light is brighter, the tokens of the Lord's might are more powerful, the influence of the Word is much stronger, and it will not be long before the motion, the heat, the brilliance, the blessings of the Sun of His reality will encompass all the earth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 65

How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves of light, if they stand together side by side in a firm unbroken line. For now have the rays of reality from the Sun of the world of existence, united in adoration all the worshippers of this light; and these rays have, through infinite grace, gathered all peoples together within this wide-spreading shelter; therefore must all souls become as one soul, and all hearts as one heart. Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 76

It is at such times that the friends of God avail themselves of the occasion, seize the opportunity, rush forth and win the prize. If their task is to be confined to good conduct and advice, nothing will be accomplished. They must speak out, expound the proofs, set forth clear arguments, draw irrefutable conclusions establishing the truth of the manifestation of the Sun of Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 268

Praise be to God, throughout succeeding centuries and ages the call of civilization hath been raised, the world of humanity hath been advancing and progressing day by day, various countries have been developing by leaps and bounds, and material

improvements have increased, until the world of existence obtained universal capacity to receive the spiritual teachings and to hearken to the Divine Call. The suckling babe passeth through various physical stages, growing and developing at every stage, until its body reacheth the age of maturity. Having arrived at this stage it acquireth the capacity to manifest spiritual and intellectual perfections. The lights of comprehension, intelligence and knowledge become perceptible in it and the powers of its soul unfold. Similarly, in the contingent world, the human species hath undergone progressive physical changes and, by a slow process, hath scaled the ladder of civilization, realizing in itself the wonders, excellencies and gifts of humanity in their most glorious form, until it gained the capacity to express the splendours of spiritual perfections and divine ideals and became capable of hearkening to the call of God. Then at last the call of the Kingdom was raised, the spiritual virtues and perfections were revealed, the Sun of Reality dawned, and the teachings of the Most Great Peace, of the oneness of the world of humanity and of the universality of men, were promoted. We hope that the effulgence of these rays shall become more and more intense, and the ideal virtues more resplendent, so that the goal of this universal human process will be attained and the love of God will appear in the utmost grace and beauty and bedazzle all hearts.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 285

Therefore, the seeker must be endowed with certain qualities. First of all, he must be just and severed from all else save God; his heart must be entirely turned to the supreme horizon; he must be free from the bondage of self and passion, for all these are obstacles. Furthermore, he must be able to endure all hardships. He must be absolutely pure and sanctified, and free from the love or the hatred of the inhabitants of the world. Why? because the fact of his love for any person or thing might prevent him from recognizing the truth in another, and, in the same way, hatred for anything might be a hindrance in discerning truth. This is the condition of seeking, and the seeker must have these qualities and attributes. Until he reaches this condition, it is not possible for him to attain to the Sun of Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 38

"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven,"[1] meaning that from the invisible heaven they heard the voice of God, saying: You have performed all that was proper and fitting in delivering the teachings and glad tidings; you have given My message to the people and raised the call of God, and have accomplished your duty. Now, like Christ, you must sacrifice your life for the Well-Beloved, and be martyrs. And that Sun of Reality, and that Moon of Guidance,[2] both, like Christ, set on the horizon of the greatest martyrdom and ascended to the Kingdom of God. [1 Rev. 11:12.] [2 The Báb and Jinab-i-Quddus.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 55

The seventh angel is a man qualified with heavenly attributes, who will arise with heavenly qualities and character. Voices will be raised, so that the appearance of the Divine Manifestation will be proclaimed and diffused. In the day of the manifestation of the Lord of Hosts, and at the epoch of the divine cycle of the Omnipotent which is promised and mentioned in all the books and writings of the Prophets -- in that day of God, the Spiritual and Divine Kingdom will be established, and the world will be renewed; a new spirit will be breathed into the body of creation; the season of the divine spring will come; the clouds of mercy will rain; the sun of reality will shine; the life-giving breeze will blow; the world of humanity will wear a new garment; the surface of the earth will be a sublime paradise; mankind will be educated; wars, disputes, quarrels and malignity will disappear; and truthfulness, righteousness, peace and the worship of God will appear; union, love and brotherhood will surround the world; and God will rule for evermore -- meaning that the Spiritual and Everlasting Kingdom will be established. Such is the day

of God. For all the days which have come and gone were the days of Abraham, Moses and Christ, or of the other Prophets; but this day is the day of God, for the Sun of Reality will arise in it with the utmost warmth and splendor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 56

"And the nations were angry," for Thy teachings opposed the passions of the other peoples; "and Thy wrath is come"[1] -- that is to say, all will be afflicted by evident loss; because they do not follow Thy precepts, counsels and teachings, they will be deprived of Thy everlasting bounty, and veiled from the light of the Sun of Reality. [1 Rev. 11:18.]

"And the time of the dead, that they should be judged" means that the time has come that the dead [1] -- that is to say, those who are deprived of the spirit of the love of God and have not a share of the sanctified eternal life -- will be judged with justice, meaning they will arise to receive that which they deserve. He will make the reality of their secrets evident, showing what a low degree they occupy in the world of existence, and that in reality they are under the rule of death. [1 Rev. 11:18.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 58

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven"[1] means that the divine Jerusalem is found, and the Holy of Holies has become visible. The Holy of Holies, according to the terminology of the people of wisdom, is the essence of the Divine Law, and the heavenly and true teachings of the Lord, which have not been changed in the cycle of any Prophet, as it was before explained. The sanctuary of Jerusalem is likened to the reality of the Law of God, which is the Holy of Holies; and all the laws, conventions, rites and material regulations are the city of Jerusalem -- this is why it is called the heavenly Jerusalem. Briefly, as in this cycle the Sun of Reality will make the light of God shine with the utmost splendor, therefore, the essence of the teachings of God will be realized in the world of existence, and the darkness of ignorance and want of knowledge will be dispelled. The world will become a new world, and enlightenment will prevail. So the Holy of Holies will appear.

[1 Rev. 11:19.]

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven"[1] means also that by the diffusion of the divine teachings, the appearance of these heavenly mysteries, and the rising of the Sun of Reality, the doors of success and prosperity will be opened in all directions, and the signs of goodness and heavenly benedictions will be made plain.

[1 Rev. 11:19.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 59

When the season of winter has had its effect, again the spiritual springtime returns, and a new cycle appears. Spiritual breezes blow, the luminous dawn gleams, the divine clouds give rain, the rays of the Sun of Reality shine forth, the contingent world attains unto a new life and is clad in a wonderful garment. All the signs and the gifts of the past springtime reappear, with perhaps even greater splendor in this new season.

The spiritual cycles of the Sun of Reality are like the cycles of the material sun: they are always revolving and being renewed. The Sun of Reality, like the material sun, has numerous rising and dawning places: one day it rises from the zodiacal sign of Cancer, another day from the sign of Libra or Aquarius; another time it is from the sign of Aries that it diffuses its rays. But the sun is one sun and one reality; the people of knowledge are lovers of the sun, and are not fascinated by the places of its rising and dawning. The people of perception are the seekers of the truth, and not of the places of its appearance, nor of its dawning points; therefore, they will adore the Sun from whatever point in the zodiac it may appear, and they will seek the Reality in every Sanctified Soul Who

manifests it. Such people always attain to the truth and are not veiled from the Sun of the Divine World. So the lover of the sun and the seeker of the light will always turn toward the sun, whether it shines from the sign of Aries or gives its bounty from the sign of Cancer, or radiates from Gemini; but the ignorant and uninstructed are lovers of the signs of the zodiac, and enamored and fascinated by the rising-places, and not by the sun. When it was in the sign of Cancer, they turned toward it, though afterward the sun changed to the sign of Libra; as they were lovers of the sign, they turned toward it and attached themselves to it, and were deprived of the influences of the sun merely because it had changed its place. For example, once the Sun of Reality poured forth its rays from the sign of Abraham, and then it dawned from the sign of Moses and illuminated the horizon. Afterward it rose with the greatest power and brilliancy from the sign of Christ. Those who were the seekers of Reality worshiped that Reality wherever they saw it, but those who were attached to Abraham were deprived of its influences when it shone upon Sinai and illuminated the reality of Moses. Those who held fast to Moses, when the Sun of Reality shone from Christ with the utmost radiance and lordly splendor, were also veiled; and so forth.

Therefore, man must be the seeker after the Reality, and he will find that Reality in each of the Sanctified Souls. He must be fascinated and enraptured, and attracted to the divine bounty; he must be like the butterfly who is the lover of the light from whatever lamp it may shine, and like the nightingale who is the lover of the rose in whatever garden it may grow.

If the sun were to rise in the West, it would still be the sun; one must not withdraw from it on account of its rising-place, nor consider the West to be always the place of sunset. In the same way, one must look for the heavenly bounties and seek for the Divine Aurora. In every place where it appears, one must become its distracted lover. Consider that if the Jews had not kept turning to the horizon of Moses, and had only regarded the Sun of Reality, without any doubt they would have recognized the Sun in the dawning-place of the reality of Christ, in the greatest divine splendor. But, alas! a thousand times alas! attaching themselves to the outward words of Moses, they were deprived of the divine bounties and the lordly splendors!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 75

Observe that it is said, "The Son of man is in heaven," while at that time Christ was on earth. Notice also that it is said that Christ came from heaven, though He came from the womb of Mary, and His body was born of Mary. It is clear, then, that when it is said that the Son of man is come from heaven, this has not an outward but an inward signification; it is a spiritual, not a material, fact. The meaning is that though, apparently, Christ was born from the womb of Mary, in reality He came from heaven, from the center of the Sun of Reality, from the Divine World, and the Spiritual Kingdom. And as it has become evident that Christ came from the spiritual heaven of the Divine Kingdom, therefore, His disappearance under the earth for three days has an inner signification and is not an outward fact. In the same way, His resurrection from the interior of the earth is also symbolical; it is a spiritual and divine fact, and not material; and likewise His ascension to heaven is a spiritual and not material ascension. Beside these explanations, it has been established and proved by science that the visible heaven is a limitless area, void and empty, where innumerable stars and planets revolve.

Therefore, we say that the meaning of Christ's resurrection is as follows: the disciples were troubled and agitated after the martyrdom of Christ. The Reality of Christ, which signifies His teachings, His bounties, His perfections and His spiritual power, was hidden and concealed for two or three days after His martyrdom, and was not resplendent and manifest. No, rather it was lost, for the believers were few in number and were troubled

and agitated. The Cause of Christ was like a lifeless body; and when after three days the disciples became assured and steadfast, and began to serve the Cause of Christ, and resolved to spread the divine teachings, putting His counsels into practice, and arising to serve Him, the Reality of Christ became resplendent and His bounty appeared; His religion found life; His teachings and His admonitions became evident and visible. In other words, the Cause of Christ was like a lifeless body until the life and the bounty of the Holy Spirit surrounded it.

Such is the meaning of the resurrection of Christ, and this was a true resurrection. But as the clergy have neither understood the meaning of the Gospels nor comprehended the symbols, therefore, it has been said that religion is in contradiction to science, and science in opposition to religion, as, for example, this subject of the ascension of Christ with an elemental body to the visible heaven is contrary to the science of mathematics. But when the truth of this subject becomes clear, and the symbol is explained, science in no way contradicts it; but, on the contrary, science and the intelligence affirm it. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 103

Question. -- What is the Holy Spirit?

Answer. -- The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations; for the focus of the rays of the Sun of Reality was Christ, and from this glorious focus, which is the Reality of Christ, the Bounty of God reflected upon the other mirrors which were the reality of the Apostles. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles signifies that the glorious divine bounties reflected and appeared in their reality. Moreover, entrance and exit, descent and ascent, are characteristics of bodies and not of spirits -- that is to say, sensible realities enter and come forth, but intellectual subtleties and mental realities, such as intelligence, love, knowledge, imagination and thought, do not enter, nor come forth, nor descend, but rather they have direct connection. For example, knowledge, which is a state attained to by the intelligence, is an intellectual condition; and entering and coming out of the mind are imaginary conditions; but the mind is connected with the acquisition of knowledge, like images reflected in a mirror.

Therefore, as it is evident and clear that the intellectual realities do not enter and descend, and it is absolutely impossible that the Holy Spirit should ascend and descend, enter, come out or penetrate, it can only be that the Holy Spirit appears in splendor, as the sun appears in the mirror. In some passages in the Holy Books the Spirit is spoken of, signifying a certain person, as it is currently said in speech and conversation that such a person is an embodied spirit, or he is a personification of mercy and generosity. In this case, it is the light we look at, and not the glass.

In the Gospel of John, in speaking of the Promised One Who was to come after Christ, it is said in chapter 16, verses 12, 13: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak."

Now consider carefully that from these words, "for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak," it is clear that the Spirit of truth is embodied in a Man Who has individuality, Who has ears to hear and a tongue to speak. In the same way the name "Spirit of God" is used in relation to Christ, as you speak of a light, meaning both the light and the lamp.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 108

God is pure perfection, and creatures are but imperfections. For God to descend into the conditions of existence would be the greatest of imperfections; on the contrary, His manifestation, His appearance, His rising are like the reflection of the sun in a clear, pure, polished mirror. All the creatures are evident signs of God, like the earthly beings upon all of which the rays of the sun shine. But upon the plains, the mountains, the trees and fruits, only a portion of the light shines, through which they become visible, and are reared, and attain to the object of their existence, while the Perfect Man [1] is in the condition of a clear mirror in which the Sun of Reality becomes visible and manifest with all its qualities and perfections. So the Reality of Christ was a clear and polished mirror of the greatest purity and fineness. The Sun of Reality, the Essence of Divinity, reflected itself in this mirror and manifested its light and heat in it; but from the exaltation of its holiness, and the heaven of its sanctity, the Sun did not descend to dwell and abide in the mirror. No, it continues to subsist in its exaltation and sublimity, while appearing and becoming manifest in the mirror in beauty and perfection.

[1 The Divine Manifestation.]

Now if we say that we have seen the Sun in two mirrors -- one the Christ and one the Holy Spirit -- that is to say, that we have seen three Suns, one in heaven and the two others on the earth, we speak truly. And if we say that there is one Sun, and it is pure singleness, and has no partner and equal, we again speak truly.

The epitome of the discourse is that the Reality of Christ was a clear mirror, and the Sun of Reality -- that is to say, the Essence of Oneness, with its infinite perfections and attributes -- became visible in the mirror. The meaning is not that the Sun, which is the Essence of the Divinity, became divided and multiplied -- for the Sun is one -- but it appeared in the mirror. This is why Christ said, "The Father is in the Son," meaning that the Sun is visible and manifest in this mirror. The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God which becomes visible and evident in the Reality of Christ. The Sonship station is the heart of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the station of the spirit of Christ. Hence it has become certain and proved that the Essence of Divinity is absolutely unique and has no equal, no likeness, no equivalent.

This is the signification of the Three Persons of the Trinity. If it were otherwise, the foundations of the Religion of God would rest upon an illogical proposition which the mind could never conceive, and how can the mind be forced to believe a thing which it cannot conceive? A thing cannot be grasped by the intelligence except when it is clothed in an intelligible form; otherwise, it is but an effort of the imagination.

It has now become clear, from this explanation, what is the meaning of the Three Persons of the Trinity. The Oneness of God is also proved.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 113

The Christ sacrificed Himself so that men might be freed from the imperfections of the physical nature and might become possessed of the virtues of the spiritual nature. This spiritual nature, which came into existence through the bounty of the Divine Reality, is the union of all perfections and appears through the breath of the Holy Spirit. It is the divine perfections; it is light, spirituality, guidance, exaltation, high aspiration, justice, love, grace, kindness to all, philanthropy, the essence of life. It is the reflection of the splendor of the Sun of Reality.

The Christ is the central point of the Holy Spirit: He is born of the Holy Spirit; He is raised up by the Holy Spirit; He is the descendant of the Holy Spirit -- that is to say, that the Reality of Christ does not descend from Adam; no, it is born of the Holy Spirit. Therefore,

this verse in Corinthians, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," means, according to this terminology, that Adam [1] is the father of man -- that is to say, He is the cause of the physical life of mankind; His was the physical fatherhood. He is a living soul, but He is not the giver of spiritual life, whereas Christ is the cause of the spiritual life of man, and with regard to the spirit, His was the spiritual fatherhood. Adam is a living soul; Christ is a quickening spirit. [1 Abu'l-bashar, I.e., the father of man, is one of the titles given by the Muslims to Adam.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 118

As the pure mirror receives light from the sun and transmits this bounty to others, so the Holy Spirit is the mediator of the Holy Light from the Sun of Reality, which it gives to the sanctified realities. It is adorned with all the divine perfections. Every time it appears, the world is renewed, and a new cycle is founded. The body of the world of humanity puts on a new garment. It can be compared to the spring; whenever it comes, the world passes from one condition to another. Through the advent of the season of spring the black earth and the fields and wildernesses will become verdant and blooming, and all sorts of flowers and sweet-scented herbs will grow; the trees will have new life, and new fruits will appear, and a new cycle is founded. The appearance of the Holy Spirit is like this.

Whenever it appears, it renews the world of humanity and gives a new spirit to the human realities: it arrays the world of existence in a praiseworthy garment, dispels the darkness of ignorance, and causes the radiation of the light of perfections. Christ with this power has renewed this cycle; the heavenly spring with the utmost freshness and sweetness spread its tent in the world of humanity, and the life-giving breeze perfumed the nostrils of the enlightened ones. In the same way, the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh was like a new springtime which appeared with holy breezes, with the hosts of everlasting life, and with heavenly power. It established the Throne of the Divine Kingdom in the center of the world and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, revived souls and established a new cycle.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 145

Consequently, with reference to this plane of existence, every statement and elucidation is defective, all praise and all description are unworthy, every conception is vain, and every meditation is futile. But for this Essence of the essences, this Truth of truths, this Mystery of mysteries, there are reflections, auroras, appearances and resplendencies in the world of existence. The dawning-place of these splendors, the place of these reflections, and the appearance of these manifestations are the Holy Dawning-places, the Universal Realities and the Divine Beings, Who are the true mirrors of the sanctified Essence of God. All the perfections, the bounties, the splendors which come from God are visible and evident in the Reality of the Holy Manifestations, like the sun which is resplendent in a clear polished mirror with all its perfections and bounties. If it be said that the mirrors are the manifestations of the sun and the dawning-places of the rising star, this does not mean that the sun has descended from the height of its sanctity and become incorporated in the mirror, nor that the Unlimited Reality is limited to this place of appearance. God forbid! This is the belief of the adherents of anthropomorphism. No; all the praises, the descriptions and exaltations refer to the Holy Manifestations -- that is to say, all the descriptions, the qualities, the names and the attributes which we mention return to the Divine Manifestations; but as no one has attained to the reality of the Essence of Divinity, so no one is able to describe, explain, praise or glorify it. Therefore, all that the human reality knows, discovers and understands of the names, the attributes and the perfections of God refer to these Holy Manifestations. There is no access to anything else: "the way is closed, and seeking is forbidden."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 147

The third station is that of the divine appearance and heavenly splendor: it is the Word of God, the Eternal Bounty, the Holy Spirit. It has neither beginning nor end, for these things are related to the world of contingencies and not to the divine world. For God the end is the same thing as the beginning. So the reckoning of days, weeks, months and years, of yesterday and today, is connected with the terrestrial globe; but in the sun there is no such thing -- there is neither yesterday, today nor tomorrow, neither months nor years: all are equal. In the same way the Word of God is purified from all these conditions and is exempt from the boundaries, the laws and the limits of the world of contingency. Therefore, the reality of prophethood, which is the Word of God and the perfect state of manifestation, did not have any beginning and will not have any end; its rising is different from all others and is like that of the sun. For example, its dawning in the sign of Christ was with the utmost splendor and radiance, and this is eternal and everlasting. See how many conquering kings there have been, how many statesmen and princes, powerful organizers, all of whom have disappeared, whereas the breezes of Christ are still blowing; His light is still shining; His melody is still resounding; His standard is still waving; His armies are still fighting; His heavenly voice is still sweetly melodious; His clouds are still showering gems; His lightning is still flashing; His reflection is still clear and brilliant; His splendor is still radiating and luminous; and it is the same with those souls who are under His protection and are shining with His light.

Then it is evident that the Manifestations possess three conditions: the physical condition, the condition of the rational soul, and the condition of the divine appearance and heavenly splendor. The physical condition will certainly become decomposed, but the condition of the rational soul, though it has a beginning, has no end: nay, it is endowed with everlasting life. But the Holy Reality, of which Christ says, "The Father is in the Son," [1] has neither beginning nor end. When beginning is spoken of, it signifies the state of manifesting; and, symbolically, the condition of silence is compared to sleep. For example, a man is sleeping -- when he begins to speak, he is awake -- but it is always the same individual, whether he be asleep or awake; no difference has occurred in his station, his elevation, his glory, his reality or his nature. The state of silence is compared to sleep, and that of manifestation to wakefulness. A man sleeping or waking is the same man; sleep is one state, and wakefulness is another. The time of silence is compared to sleep, and manifestation and guidance are compared to wakefulness.

[1 Cf. John 14:11; 17:21.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 152

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

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 154

Under these conditions it cannot be said, "What is the necessity for the rays of the sun to descend upon the mirror?" -- for the connection which exists between the reality of things, whether they be spiritual or material, requires that when the mirror is clear and faces the sun, the light of the sun must become apparent in it. In the same way, 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.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 201

The Spirit and the Word mean the divine perfections that appeared in the Reality of Christ, and these perfections were with God; so the sun manifests all its glory in the mirror. For the Word does not signify the body of Christ, no, but the divine perfections manifested in Him. For Christ was like a clear mirror which was facing the Sun of Reality; and the perfections of the Sun of Reality -- that is to say, its light and heat -- were visible and apparent in this mirror. If we look into the mirror, we see the sun, and we say, "It is the sun." Therefore, the Word and the Holy Spirit, which signify the perfections of God, are the divine appearance. This is the meaning of the verse in the Gospel which says: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God";[1] for the divine perfections are not different from the Essence of Oneness. The perfections of Christ are called the Word because all the beings are in the condition of letters, and one letter has not a complete meaning, while the perfections of Christ have the power of the word because a complete meaning can be inferred from a word. As the Reality of Christ was the manifestation of the divine perfections, therefore, it was like the word. Why? because He is the sum of perfect meanings. This is why He is called the Word. [1 John 1:1.]
'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 206

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

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

We hope that the Friends of God, like an attractive force, will draw these bounties from the source itself, and that they will arise with such illumination and signs that they will be evident proofs of the Sun of Reality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 221

The rewards of this life are the virtues and perfections which adorn the reality of man. For example, he was dark and becomes luminous; he was ignorant and becomes wise; he was neglectful and becomes vigilant; he was asleep and becomes awakened; he was dead and becomes living; he was blind and becomes a seer; he was deaf and becomes a hearer; he was earthly and becomes heavenly; he was material and becomes spiritual. Through these rewards he gains spiritual birth and becomes a new creature. He becomes the manifestation of the verse in the Gospel where it is said of the disciples that they "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"[1] -- that is to say, they were delivered from the animal characteristics and qualities which are the characteristics of human nature, and they became qualified with the divine

characteristics, which are the bounty of God. This is the meaning of the second birth. For such people there is no greater torture than being veiled from God, and no more severe punishment than sensual vices, dark qualities, lowness of nature, engrossment in carnal desires. When they are delivered through the light of faith from the darkness of these vices, and become illuminated with the radiance of the sun of reality, and ennobled with all the virtues, they esteem this the greatest reward, and they know it to be the true paradise. In the same way they consider that the spiritual punishment -- that is to say, the torture and punishment of existence -- is to be subjected to the world of nature; to be veiled from God; to be brutal and ignorant; to fall into carnal lusts; to be absorbed in animal frailties; to be characterized with dark qualities, such as falsehood, tyranny, cruelty, attachment to the affairs of the world, and being immersed in satanic ideas. For them, these are the greatest punishments and tortures. [1 John 1:13.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 223

Therefore, though the world of contingency exists, in relation to the existence of God it is nonexistent and nothingness. Man and dust both exist, but how great the difference between the existence of the mineral and that of man! The one in relation to the other is nonexistence. In the same way, the existence of creation in relation to the existence of God is nonexistence. Thus it is evident and clear that although the beings exist, in relation to God and to the Word of God they are nonexistent. This is the beginning and the end of the Word of God, Who says: "I am Alpha and Omega"; for He is the beginning and the end of Bounty. The Creator always had a creation; the rays have always shone and gleamed from the reality of the sun, for without the rays the sun would be opaque darkness. The names and attributes of God require the existence of beings, and the Eternal Bounty does not cease. If it were to, it would be contrary to the perfections of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 281

The first emanation from God is the bounty of the Kingdom, which emanates and is reflected in the reality of the creatures, like the light which emanates from the sun and is resplendent in creatures; and this bounty, which is the light, is reflected in infinite forms in the reality of all things, and specifies and individualizes itself according to the capacity, the worthiness and the intrinsic value of things. But the affirmation of the Sufis requires that the Independent Wealth should descend to the degree of poverty, that the Preexistent should confine itself to phenomenal forms, and that Pure Power should be restricted to the state of weakness, according to the limitations of contingent beings. And this is an evident error. Observe that the reality of man, who is the most noble of creatures, does not descend to the reality of the animal, that the essence of the animal, which is endowed with the powers of sensation, does not abase itself to the degree of the vegetable, and that the reality of the vegetable, which is the power of growth, does not descend to the reality of the mineral.

Briefly, the superior reality does not descend nor abase itself to inferior states; then how could it be that the Universal Reality of God, which is freed from all descriptions and qualifications, notwithstanding Its absolute sanctity and purity, should resolve Itself into the forms of the realities of the creatures, which are the source of imperfections? This is a pure imagination which one cannot conceive.

On the contrary, this Holy Essence is the sum of the divine perfections; and all creatures are favored by the bounty of resplendency through emanation, and receive the lights, the perfection and the beauty of Its Kingdom, in the same way that all earthly creatures obtain the bounty of the light of the rays of the sun, but the sun does not descend and does not abase itself to the favored realities of earthly beings.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 295

Now regarding the question whether the faculties of the mind and the human soul are one and the same. These faculties are but the inherent properties of the soul, such as the power of imagination, of thought, of understanding; powers that are the essential requisites of the reality of man, even as the solar ray is the inherent property of the sun. The temple of man is like unto a mirror, his soul is as the sun, and his mental faculties even as the rays that emanate from that source of light. The ray may cease to fall upon the mirror, but it can in no wise be dissociated from the sun.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to August Forel*, p. 24

Wherefore, the lovers of the face of the Beloved have said: "O Thou, the One Whose Essence alone showeth the way to His Essence, and Who is sanctified above any likeness to His creatures." [1] How can utter nothingness gallop its steed in the field of preexistence, or a fleeting shadow reach to the everlasting sun? The Friend [2] hath said, "But for Thee, we had not known Thee," and the Beloved [2] hath said, "nor attained Thy presence."

[1 Hadith, i.e. action or utterance traditionally attributed to the Prophet Muhammad or to one of the holy Imams.]

[2 The Prophet Muhammad.]

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

In like manner, when thou strippest the wrappings of illusion from off thine heart, the lights of oneness will be made manifest. Then it is clear that even for the rays there is neither entrance nor exit -- how much less for that Essence of Being and that longed-for Mystery. O My Brother, journey upon these planes in the spirit of search, not in blind imitation. A true wayfarer will not be kept back by the bludgeon of words nor debarred by the warning of allusions. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 23

O God! Educate these children. These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, the roses of Thy garden. Let Thy rain fall upon them; let the Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love. Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grow and develop, and appear in the utmost beauty. Thou art the Giver. Thou art the Compassionate.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilations, Baha'i Prayers*, p. 34

O my God! O my God! Verily, these servants are turning to Thee, supplicating Thy kingdom of mercy. Verily, they are attracted by Thy holiness and set aglow with the fire of Thy love, seeking confirmation from Thy wondrous kingdom, and hoping for attainment in Thy heavenly realm. Verily, they long for the descent of Thy bestowal, desiring illumination from the Sun of Reality. O Lord! Make them radiant lamps, merciful signs, fruitful trees and shining stars. May they come forth in Thy service and be connected with Thee by the bonds and ties of Thy love, longing for the lights of Thy favor. O Lord! Make them signs of guidance, standards of Thine immortal kingdom, waves of the sea of Thy mercy, mirrors of the light of Thy majesty.

Verily, Thou art the Generous. Verily, Thou art the Merciful. Verily, Thou art the Precious, the Beloved. -

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilations, Baha'i Prayers*, p. 111

O Thou forgiving God! These servants are turning to Thy kingdom and seeking Thy grace and bounty. O God! Make their hearts good and pure in order that they may become worthy of Thy love. Purify and sanctify the spirits that the light of the Sun of Reality may shine upon them. Purify and sanctify the eyes that they may perceive Thy light. Purify and sanctify the ears in order that they may hear the call of Thy kingdom.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilations, Baha'i Prayers*, p. 112

O Lord! Have pity on these ignorant ones, and look upon them with the eye of forgiveness and pardon. Extinguish this fire, so that these dense clouds which obscure the horizon may be scattered, the Sun of Reality shine forth with the rays of conciliation, this intense gloom be dispelled and the resplendent light of peace shed its radiance upon all countries.

O Lord! Draw up the people from the abyss of the ocean of hatred and enmity, and deliver them from the impenetrable darkness. Unite their hearts, and brighten their eyes with the light of peace and reconciliation. Deliver them from the depths of war and bloodshed, and free them from the darkness of error. Remove the veil from their eyes, and enlighten their hearts with the light of guidance. Treat them with Thy tender mercy and compassion, and deal not with them according to Thy justice and wrath which cause the limbs of the mighty to quake.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilations, Baha'i Prayers*, p. 180

O Thou kind Lord! Praise be unto Thee that Thou hast shown us the highway of guidance, opened the doors of the kingdom and manifested Thyself through the Sun of Reality. To the blind Thou hast given sight; to the deaf Thou hast granted hearing; Thou hast resuscitated the dead; Thou hast enriched the poor; Thou hast shown the way to those who have gone astray; Thou hast led those with parched lips to the fountain of guidance; Thou hast suffered the thirsty fish to reach the ocean of reality; and Thou hast invited the wandering birds to the rose garden of grace.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilations, Baha'i Prayers*, p. 183

XX. When saying the Obligatory Prayer, one must turn towards the Holy Reality of Bahá'u'lláh, that Reality which encompasseth all things.

XXI. As to the Obligatory Prayer, it hath a Qiblih that is fixed, specified, holy and blessed. I ask God that He may open the gate of the knowledge of this station to thine heart so that thou mayest apprehend whatever is necessary and proper, garner spiritual bounties from the heaven of the All-Merciful, obtain the effulgences of knowledge from the Sun of Reality, and become a manifestation of inspiration from the Unseen and a source of glad-tidings from the All-Merciful.

Compilations, The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting

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