

LESSONS IN RELIGION

TRANSLATED FROM THE
ORIGINAL PERSIAN OF

MOHAMMED ALI ALKANY

*One of the renowned Bahai Teachers
of Ishkabad*

BY

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Blessed is he
who proclaims
the doctrine of
✦ Spiritual ✦
Brotherhood
for he shall be
a Child of
Light!



ABDUL BAHA

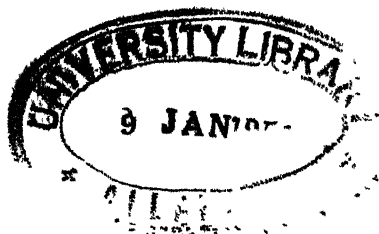
DEDICATION

The proceeds of the sale of the book are to go to the Mt. Carmel School for girls at Haifa, in Palestine.

It was submitted to Abdul Baha and it is interesting to note that one of the last suggestions he made concerning a work of the cause was, "Print this book. It will be very useful."

May the women of the West arise and help to educate the women of the East.

To this hope is
this little book
dedicated



THE BAHAI CAUSE



HE Bahai revelation, which had its rise in Persia in the year 1844, today has become known throughout the world. "It is not so much a new religion as Religion renewed and unified."

This unique movement for social and spiritual reconstruction was first centered in a radiant youth called the Bab, whose mission it was to proclaim the coming of a great world messenger. Many European historians have described the wonderful charm of this pure-hearted hero of progressive religion, who was martyred in 1850 after six years of brilliant teaching.

BAHA'U'LLAH (Glory of God), a Persian noble, then appeared as the one heralded by the Bab. He announced the dawn of a new age, an age when brotherhood and peace should cover the earth even as the waters cover the sea. The principles he advocated, however, were too universal for the limited minds of his contemporaries. He and a few of his followers were driven by the reactionary powers of Persia into exile and prison, and at last, in 1868, were immured in the desolate barracks of Acca in Syria.

But the persecutions of men cannot extinguish the light of God's Holy Spirit when it shines from the heart of His prophets. From the "Most Great Prison" of Acca, BAHU'U'LLAH spread his gospel of unity and love

throughout western Asia. In 1892, at the end of forty years of exile and imprisonment, he passed away, leaving his eldest son, Abdul Baha (Servant of Glory), as the appointed expounder of his word and the promulgator of his cause, the "Center of the Covenant."

Under the guidance of Abdul Baha the Bahai message has been carried to all lands and all religions. It has bound Christians and Mohammedans, Buddhists and Parsis, Jews and Hindus, into the most spiritual brotherhood the world has ever known.

The Bahais believe this is the beginning of that Golden Age upon earth, the age of universal peace and love when, as Christ foretold, men "shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down together in the kingdom of God."



FOREWORD



HIS book contains a few of the lessons employed by a Persian Bahai teacher to inculcate the universal principles of Abdul Baha in the minds and hearts of children.

Among the children so reached, probably not one but had some relative — father, grandfather or uncle — who had suffered grievously in person or property for his adherence to the Bahai Cause. Even to this day, in certain parts of Persia, the public acknowledgment of loyalty to the Bahai principles marks one for suspicion, contempt, hatred and abuse.

Under such circumstances, the teaching of religion assumes a simplicity, a dignity and a moving moral force difficult to realize in more enlightened or more indifferent lands.

The Persian child who learns to accept the equal validity of all the Holy Books, and to pass out from the narrow and literal acceptance of Mohammed as the “seal” or last of the prophets, displays a moral courage whose equivalent is needed in every religion today.

In America, the nearest parallel to such conditions was among the early settlers, when the constant danger from Indian tribe or inclement season compelled a strict discipline which influenced every act of every day.

But the Persian Bahais have been pioneers not in the world of nature but in the world of religion, and their ardent faithfulness to the new vision of unity and peace inspired by BAHÁ'U'LLAH is among the significant historical movements of this age. Upon the path of God, every soul is a child in need of discipline and instruction.

HORACE HOLLEY



*In the Name of Our Lord—Abha
Lord bestow Thy Mercy upon
me and give me the language of
Sublime Truth*

LESSON 1



THE first thing incumbent upon us and upon all those who wish to serve God, is that we should know for what purpose we are created, the difference there is between us and other created beings, and the way we should conduct ourselves as regards behavior, speech and action.

That is to say: Know ourselves, recognise our duties and obligations, and act in accordance with what is worthy of our station and suitable to it; so that in this world and in the next, freed from self, we may become pleasing to God, passing the days of our lives fruitfully and cheerfully.



LESSON 2



OD has not created us (His servants) for no purpose. On the contrary, we have been created for a great end and an important reason, that of attaining to the knowledge of God, as is clearly explained in the Scripture. — “I have created men in order that they may worship Me.”

It is evident that we can worship God only after we know Him, and that worship is the consequence of our knowledge of Him.

A well-known verse testifies to this: —
“I was a hidden treasure — I wished
to be known, therefore I
created thee.”



LESSON 3



THE first thing for us to do is to attain to the station of the knowledge of God (Glorious is His Glory), and to become familiar with His prophets and noble messengers, who are the channels of Divine bestowals amongst mankind, and the means of approach for the servants of God to the holy plane of the Merciful.

For if the divine messengers had not appeared in the world, man would not have understood the duties of life. He would have remained uneducated and unprogressive, and the evolution of the human race would not have transpired. Like the wild animals of the desert and the ferocious beasts of the jungle, men would have passed their lives in distress and hardship. No love or familiarity or kindness or affection would have appeared among them, nay rather, they would have destroyed and devoured one another.

The prophets deserve our gratitude and veneration because our peace and tranquility are the result of their effort and

endeavor, and our guidance and instruction the result of their blessed teachings.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to know them, to understand their importance and their station and to choose humbly to serve them with all our heart and soul, not deviating in the slightest degree from their laws and commandments.

“If it had not been for the efforts of the Prophet, thou also, like unto thine ancestors, would be a worshipper of idols.”

LESSON 4



THE first duty of the servants of God (Glorious is His Glory), is to strive to know and understand Him, and then to act according to the divine instructions which the prophets and the Manifestations of God have brought into the world.

For, though we may know God, if we do not act in accordance with His commandments, we are ignorant.

On the other hand, he who acts merely from a sense of duty or blind obedience, but does not acknowledge God, his acts are false and trivial and are neither agreeable nor acceptable to God.

Therefore, to know God and to act according to His commandments is alone acceptable; not merely the knowledge of God without good acts, or charity without the knowledge of God. As it is written:—*"When one has reached this high and lofty station of the knowledge of God, it is incumbent upon one to obey the injunctions of God, as belief without deeds is not acceptable."*



LESSON 5



BAHAIS acknowledge and confess the unity and oneness of God, and testify with soul and body to the fact that God has ever been and will always be matchless and without associate and that no created being either on the earth or in the heavens has attained to or will ever attain to His Holy Essence.

He is the Creator, and all else is the created. He is the artisan and creation is his handiwork. How is it possible for that which is formed and fashioned to attain to the holy sublime essence of the One who has created and formed it? This is impossible and contrary to intelligence.

Therefore, the Bounty and Mercy of the Absolute has chosen in every age and cycle a Blessed Being from amongst mankind, has clad him in the garment of spiritual authority and elevated him to the honor of Prophethood. That is to say: He has made that Blessed Being His ruler and viceregent on this earth and has laid the injunction upon all to acknowledge and to follow him.

All those who know him, know
God, and those who obey
him, obey God.

LESSON 6



THESE holy existences and luminous temples, the prophets (upon them be glory and praise) have appeared in each age, with different names and customs, bringing new laws and ethics. Their manner and action, their language, special terminology, country and station in life varied; but in essence there is neither separation nor difference between them. They are like arbiters of one being, forming one temple, because they all rise from one dawning-place and shine forth from the same horizon. In other words, they all appear through the will of God, act according to His commands and are sent for the guidance of souls, the improvement and instruction of peoples and for the repose and tranquility of the inhabitants of the world. It is this which God the Merciful says:—

“There is no difference between any of My Messengers, but they have appeared according to the requirements of the times. The brilliancy and luminosity of their teachings has ever been in accordance with the capacity and ability of the different peoples among whom they have manifested.”

LESSON 7



RELIGIONS with their accompanying laws are, for example, like unto a mantle which God, the Beneficent, has woven with merciful hands and placed on the body of the world and its inhabitants; so that, outwardly and inwardly, they may become beautiful and perfected and be guarded and protected from every kind of material and spiritual misfortune.

But unfortunately this noble garment, through misuse, becomes in the hands of the ignorant worn and soiled. That is to say: by their carnal desires, satanic thoughts, corrupt imaginations, and erroneous opinions, the ignorant pollute the religion of God and change the real course of the divine commandments, interpreting and explaining the lordly verses according to their likes and dislikes until things reach such a condition that nought but the name of religion remains.

That is why God (Glorified be His Favor) renews the religious laws in accordance with His Bounty and Eternal Mercy, and from time to time gives to the world a new religious impetus.

LESSON 8



THE Bahais believe that the Ancient Beauty, BAHÁ'U'LLAH (Glorious is His appearance), is the Manifestation of the Spirit of God, that he is the Dawning Place of the Concealed One, the Appearance of the Hidden Treasure, and the Guarded Mystery of all ages and cycles.

This greatest Manifestation of the Divine Spirit is the Promised One expected by the people of the world, mentioned in all the holy books and heavenly writings, and through his blessed appearance the promises of God and the glad tidings of the prophets have been fulfilled.

The Bahais also believe that the Greatest Branch, Abdul Baha (may our souls be his sacrifice), is the Center of the Covenant, the Pole Star of the Command of God and the appearance of the Beauty of Abha. No one does nor ever will resemble him nor be his associate. He is the only one who is informed of the mysteries of the Manifestation of the Eternal Beauty.

The foundation of the Cause is the Most Holy Manifestation, and the interpreter of the Cause is the beloved of God, Abdul Baha.

LESSON 9



THE First Point, the Bab (Glorious is his Exalted Mention), is the appearance of the promised Kaim, the expected one of the people of the world, who at a given time, that is to say — in the year 1260 A.H. (1844 A.D.) — appeared as the Annunciator of the Ancient Beauty (Glorified be His greatest Name); and gave to the world the glad tidings of the Supreme Manifestation.

Although that Blessed Being (may our souls be his sacrifice) at the time of his appearance was absolutely independent and a universal Manifestation of God, for through his appearance the laws of the Books were abrogated; a new religion was established and he revealed the Beyan containing commandments and laws from the Heaven of his Will, still, from the standpoint of his absolute effacement in the Holy Name of Abha, he submitted the commandments of the Beyan to the approval and acceptance of BAHĀ'U'LLĀH, thus rendering the most selfless and loving assistance of preparation for the Greatest Manifestation.

LESSON 10



THE religious laws of BAHÁ'U'LLAH are entirely spiritual.

The first duty of a Bahai is to show forth love, friendship, affection, and kindness to all the people of the earth. Bahais should never look upon any one with the eyes of a stranger nor consider any one other than in the spirit of love, nor should they make any distinction between Bahais, Mohammedans, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Brahmans, or Buddhists; all are brothers and equals—the only difference is this: that some do not know of the Manifestation of the Eternal Beauty, BAHÁ'U'LLAH (Glorious is His mention), and as yet do not believe in Him.

Bahais, after the announcement of faith in the purity and oneness of God and the sanctity of his holy Essence, which is beyond description and praise, acknowledge the truth of all the Prophets and Manifestations of Unity and accept all the Holy Books of the past.



LESSON 11



BAHAIS have no means of arriving at this honourable station (that is: to instruct and guide mankind), except by acting in accordance with the divine command and by distinguishing themselves from others in their speech, actions, morals, and ethics, in such a way that the proof of their sincerity will be seen in the attributes and qualities which characterise them.

Good morals, spiritual qualities, and benevolent manners should attract the hearts of men in such a way that through meeting and associating with the Bahais they become God's captives.

The Eternal Beauty, BAHÁ'U'LLAH, has written in the Sura on Wisdom, the following lines with regard to this station: "Be a perfect example like unto a beautiful image which makes a lasting impression on the minds of men." Thus will they attain their desire, and we also.



LESSON 12

IT is the duty of all Bahais to spread the teachings and to serve in the Cause of the King of Names, BAHÁ'U'LLAH, but if a person for some very real reason is prevented from doing so, then that person should through love for the Beauty of the Beloved assist those who are serving.

Every one who has sincerely turned towards God in service, who is active in proclaiming the word of God, excelling in diffusing its traces, spreading its light, and who has given all his time to the teaching and guiding of souls, is like unto a meadow in the Cause of God with fruit-bearing trees, and a rose garden of Abha with beautiful fragrant flowers.

In regard to such souls, BAHÁ'U'LLAH has written in the *Kitab el Akdas*: "O people, help those who have arisen to mention me amongst my creatures and to proclaim my word in the world; they are the stars of the heaven of my generosity and the torch-bearers of guidance for the whole universe."



LESSON 13



HE who has drunk from the river of divine knowledge has a true and spiritual conception of God (Glorified be His Glory). His soul's desire is realized in the sweetness of servitude and worship and he will certainly arise to assist this blessed Cause and make it victorious and will in no way desist from spreading the religion of God and proclaiming His word.

It has been decreed that to serve the Cause of God in the time of the blessed appearance of the Eternal Beauty (Glorified be His Greatest Name!), one must show wisdom in explaining the teachings, must perform good deeds, be endowed with praiseworthy morals and be truly sanctified and godly. As it is written: "The victory in the time of this Greatest Manifestation depends upon wisdom and explanation. God's army has ever been good, pure deeds and holy, praiseworthy morals; and the commander of this army is the fear of God." Elsewhere BAHÁ'U'LLAH has written: "I have repeatedly said that the victory men-

tioned in the books, pamphlets, and tablets of this oppressed one refers to wisdom and explanation and moral actions. I swear by God that the most powerful army in the world has been and is praiseworthy morals and pure deeds. The sword of piety is more powerful than the sword of steel, were ye of those who know." And again he says: "The victorious armies in this Manifestation are pleasing acts and good morals and the Commander of this army is the fear of God. He rules over all."



LESSON 14



ALL are commanded to observe love, friendship, kindness and fraternity. As it is written: "O people of God, know for a certainty that iniquity, dispute, murder, and plunder are characteristics of the wild beasts of the earth, whereas knowledge and good deeds belong to the station of man."

Again BAHÁ'U'LLAH says: "O people of God, associate with all the peoples of the earth in friendship and love. Iniquity and its consequences are absolutely forbidden in the Book of God, the Lord of the Universe." In another passage he says: "This day is the day of Greatest Mercy and Assistance because religious wars have been abolished and prohibited. All are commanded to associate with the peoples of different religions in fragrance and spirituality."

To conclude: the heavenly teachings referring to this are incomparable and incumbent on all.



LESSON 15



REAL Bahai, who has drunk the wine of the love of the Eternal Beauty and has tasted the sweetness of the blessed explanations, is obedient to the divine commandments and acts according to the will of God. If he possess the treasures of the world, he will expend all in the path of love for the Eternal Beauty so as to spread one word of His words through the world.

As the Tongue of Might says: "If some one understands the sweetness of the words of explanation which have issued from the mouth of the Merciful, he will expend all that he has, though he may possess the treasures of the world, to promulgate even one of the teachings which have dawned from the Horizon of His Blessing. Moreover, in addition to spending all his earthly goods, he will offer even his eyes as targets for the arrows of the enemy and his body as food for their swords, and, after offering all these gifts, which he considers unworthy of the Incomparable Beloved One, he will remain in the attitude of humility and supplication in the path of God."

LESSON 16



It becomes incumbent on man, when he reaches the age of reason, to follow the divine commandments and to perform his religious duties. According to BAHĀ'U'LLĀH's teachings, man is of age at fifteen, and this law is the same for both man and woman; but from childhood we should strive to enter under the shadow of the divine injunctions and to be instructed according to the heavenly teachings so as to become deserving and worthy subjects, ready and prepared to act in accordance with these commandments.

Because, if the power of understanding and assimilating the words of God, His lordly commandments and injunctions, is not developed in us, we shall never be conscious of the divine guidance or relish the sweetness of service and worship. We shall be like unto a person who has lost the sense of taste. It is evident that to such a one bitter and sweet are one and the same. Therefore, happy is that fortunate man who is able to understand the divine command-

ments, who tastes of their sweetness through the power of the spirit and who lives in absolute joy and delight on account of his knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and perception. Surely such a person is a true believer, a chosen servant of God, the Beloved of the worlds.



LESSON 17



HE laws of God and His lordly teachings are pure bounty for the people of the world. The organisation of affairs and correcting of evil amongst the masses depend on the observance of the laws and ordinances of God. Every just man who looks upon the world with the eyes of equity will certainly be grateful to God for His favors; but it is a pity that the people of the world are negligent and ignorant of this bounty, this limitless favor and grace, and are indifferent to that which is for their own good, salvation, and prosperity.

The people of God, that is to say, the Bahais, who are entirely surrounded by these heavenly bounties and favors, should not transgress in the slightest degree the heavenly teachings nor slacken in acting according to the commands of God, for they know with certainty that every one who commits a faulty action is just so much the farther away from God and separated from the soul of religion.

For example, a person who transgresses

the moral law is like a sick person who does not follow the course a skilful doctor has prescribed for him, and through excessive ignorance, acts according to his own likes and dislikes. Without a doubt, the doctor will be displeased and he himself will not recover his health but through his own stubbornness and obstinacy will finally meet his death. We also (God forbid!), if we do not abide in the commandments of the Eternal Beauty and do not obey His blessed teachings, shall finally become the cause of God's displeasure. His anger will encompass us, we shall remain far from His mercy and shall be grievously punished.



LESSON 18



FASTING is one of the divine commandments which has existed from all time in all the holy books. Only the mode of fasting in every new dispensation has been changed in accordance with the requirements of the times, and the wisdom of this and the mode in which it should be done is known to none save the Beloved of the world.

The Bahai fast has been appointed for the month of "Ola" (Sublimity), and its duration is from sunrise to sunset, during which time Bahais must abstain from eating and drinking.

Although our defective intelligence and thoughts cannot understand the real wisdom of the holy ordinances of God, comprehend the mysteries or realize the benefits deposited and concealed therein, still, what we have been able to glean in regard to this station from the holy and explicit verses of Abdul Baha (may our souls be his sacrifice) is as follows: that this material fasting symbolises a spiritual fast which involves the heart, soul, thought, conscience, and all the members of the body abstaining from all sensual desires.

In this way we fast outwardly and inwardly, in body and soul, and this is the real fast.

LESSON 19



THE people of every nation and various religions have a special place to which they go at fixed times in worship. For example, the Mosque of the Mohammedans, the Church of the Christians, the Synagogue of the Jews, the Fire-Temple of the Zoroastrians and the Pagoda of the Brahmans and Buddhists.

The Bahai place of worship is the Meshrak ol Azkar, which we must enter at dawn, which is the best time of the day to be occupied in the mention of God, also at noon and in the evening, repenting of our sins and supplicating God's pardon and forgiveness. When we enter the Meshrak ol Azkar we must sit in silence, in perfect humility and great reverence, turning our hearts towards God, and entirely absorbed in listening to the holy verses. As it is written: "Blessed is he who turns toward the Meshrak ol Azkar at dawn, praying and supplicating God's pardon, and who in silence listens to the divine verses."

Since the Meshrak ol Azkar is especially established for the mention of God, all else save this is forbidden. Only sacred verses should be chanted in the most beautiful fashion and lordly admonitions and exhortations sung in the sacred temple.

LESSON 23



HE who chants the verses of God in a melodious voice, and he who listens in deep earnestness with the ears of the soul, enter into such a condition of inward joy that they would not exchange it for a kingdom. Verily, through the effect of the holy utterances, pure hearts become attracted to the spiritual realms which surpass all description and definition.

The special nature of these realms can only be understood by the souls which are pure and it can be perceived and felt only by the illumined conscience, the spirit.

Ah! happy is that fortunate soul which ascends to these realms on the wings of these holy utterances and through the power of the spirit of detachment soars into these holy and divine regions and mounts into this purified atmosphere of reality and spiritual significance.



LESSON 21



THE tranquility of the heart, the radiance of the soul, and the ascent of the spirit is through the mention of God.

The remembrance of God is a remedy for the sick, and limpid water for him who thirsts: it becomes like a friend to the destitute, a redresser of grievances for the needy, a shelter for the timid, an intercessor for the criminal, a remover of trouble, a dispeller of sorrow, a companion for the lonely, a consolation for the fearful, a key to all difficulties and a torch dispelling the darkness.

He who neglects the mention of God is in a condition of spiritual darkness and confusion; his soul is weary and afflicted; although he may seem to be in a sea of affluence, in reality he is subject to a hundred thousand calamities because he is deprived of the spiritual repose and real tranquility which emanates from a detached heart, whence radiates the divine light. Peace of conscience depends upon confidence and trust in the aid and assistance of God the Merciful.

It is this that gives repose of heart to the true believer though he may be in distress and difficulty, whereas the unbeliever is agitated and troubled by the slightest trial or temptation. There is an asylum and refuge for the troubled believer, but for the opposer there is none; the former considers all afflictions as a means of illumination, purification, and spirituality, while as for the latter, afflictions increase the dark and turbid condition of his soul. A narrow, obscure prison becomes to the real believer like unto a spacious palace, but the entire world becomes narrower than the grave for him who denies God.



LESSON 22



OBEDIENCE to the laws and commandments of God and acting in accordance with His divine exhortations and injunctions is the outcome of knowledge and vigilance. This knowledge cannot be attained except through reading and listening to the holy verses, recognizing the manifest signs, thinking and meditating on the truths, spiritual significances, laws and mysteries concealed and contained therein.

Therefore, it is a religious duty for every real believer to read the holy verses morning and evening but not in a way to produce weariness or diminish ardour, but rather to lay in a stock of spiritual force for the day and the night; that is to say, he should act during the day in accord with that which he has seen and understood in the morning's meditation, doing the same after reading the holy verses in the evening.

Every one who transgresses this command and acts according to his likes and dislikes is not benefited by reading the holy verses. Such a person is not faithful to the promise

and covenant of God, and is amongst those people who have always opposed God (Glorious is His Glory). These people have been severely admonished by the Blessed Perfection (BAHA'U'LLAH) in the Kitab el Akdas: "Chant the verses of God morning and evening. He who chants these verses is faithful to the Covenant and Alliance of God, but he who turns away from the divine verses in this day is considered like the one who has eternally turned away from God, O my servants!"

How is it possible for a faithful believer, after having heard this command from the divine verses, to act in opposition to it, since his very life is bound up in these sacred teachings!

Therefore, he who opposes the verses is not a true believer, is deprived of the breezes of spiritual life and is reckoned amongst those who have eternally been in opposition to the divine teachings.

LESSON 23



OME people undertake a certain line of action which causes them infinite trouble and distress, thinking that, by so doing, they are worshipping God and that such actions are acceptable in the Court of Unity.

For example: the mortifications of the Hindoos, the austerities of the Christians and the painful abstinences of the Sufis of Islam. They do not realize that these actions are of no importance in the eyes of God because they are the outcome of superstition and imagination and are rejected by the Beloved of the world. It is the spirit in which an action is performed which is pleasing to God, and its value depends upon God's acceptance. Therefore if a person mortifies his flesh all his life long, thinking to perform an act of worship, and no perfume of the Divine good-pleasure emanates from his life, such mortifications are useless and such a form of worship is not permissible.

There is still another thing which causes the religious practices of a believer to be vain, and is a means of his falling from the

horizon of acceptance, and that is dissimulation and hypocrisy, which belong to his lower nature and arise out of his own personal desire. How much this resembles charity and alms-giving which is done grudgingly and as a thing which is obligatory. It is as if deceit were mixed with sincerity, exaction with generosity.



LESSON 24



HE who has drunk the wine of knowledge and certainty and has reached the station of absolute assurance knows of a certainty that none save God is informed of the affairs and requirements of the times, and that everything He says through His Holy Manifestations is for the good of humanity and the prosperity of the world. Every one who attains to this station and reaches this high degree of "God doeth whatsoever He willeth and ordereth what He pleaseth," is truly wise, is protected from every fear and has attained to the real unity or oneness of God.



LESSON 25



THE holy religious laws permit listening to songs and melodies and when these are sung in such wise as not to exceed the limit of refinement and dignity which are as ornaments to the temple (body) of man they aid the soul to mount into the loftiest realms of exaltation. It is well known that this condition is produced when the Tablets and holy verses are sung, or the odes and enconiums composed in praise of BAHÁ'U'LLAH or Abdul Baha are chanted by a beautiful voice. But when music ceases to be refined and dignified, becoming frivolous and sensual, it is assuredly forbidden and is unlawful. For in so doing, that which made it lawful, that is, its power of attracting intelligences and liberating souls so as to enable them to mount unto divine horizons, is completely annulled and the contrary effect is produced: that is, the mind is veiled, the soul becomes turbid and man sinks into a condition which is not worthy of his station.



LESSON 26



RELIGION is the path to God. We call a religious person one who obeys the commands and laws of God. That is to say: One who conforms to that which is ordained and abstains from doing that which by God (Exalted be His Glory) is prohibited, not even allowing himself to dwell upon it in thought.

Every just, intelligent person will testify that the state of honor, tranquility and felicity in this world and the next depends upon conforming to and living under the shadow of the divine laws and ordinances.

The true believer who worships God is every moment in an attitude of contemplation. Every work which he undertakes he first considers if it will be agreeable to God, weighing his undertaking in the divine balance. If he finds it is not in accord with the teaching, he desists; his eyes are never closed to that which is pleasing to God and he never turns away from the word of truth or the path of probity; before he is judged in the divine house of God he judges himself

and corrects his errors, and passes in review his own actions.

If it happens that he has acted contrary to the divine good pleasure, neglecting some religious duty through ignorance, negligence or forgetfulness, he immediately becomes penitent and sorrowful, supplicating God's pardon and forgiveness, and occupies himself in repairing and correcting his shortcomings so that this fault never appears again.



LESSON 27



WE must always strive, and be mindful to progress day by day in every possible way both outwardly and inwardly, physically and spiritually, so that our mornings will be better than our evenings and tomorrow more perfect than today.

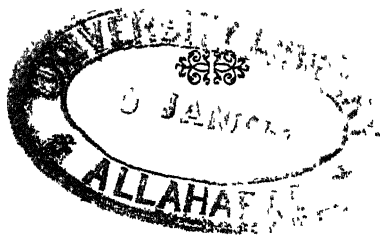
As BAHÁ'U'LLAH says: "Let your morning be better than your evening and your day an improvement on the morning. Man's honor lies in service and perfection, not in ornamentation, wealth and possessions." Mohammed said: "It is not permissible for two days to resemble each other." Then what can be said as to months and years!

We must therefore be continually progressing, passing from one station to another, mounting from one world into another, always ascending into different planes of evolution, that is: passing from a low animal condition into the lofty station of man, from the world of darkness into one of spiritual light, from the degree of ignorance to the degree of knowledge; to linger in any one of these is forbidden, because in so doing one retrogrades and slips backward.

We know that God (Exalted be His Glory) has appointed for His faithful followers lofty and sublime conditions, and if we are not lazy, indolent and lukewarm, we

will attain thereunto. These states or degrees of soul progress depend upon virtues and perfectibility, divine attributes, lordly wisdom and spiritual illumination by which means humanity becomes enlightened. Thus man is enabled to live a noble life, to enjoy affluence and attain to eternal honor.

Alas! how regrettable is the condition of one whose entire life is made up of days that are all alike, void of acquiring virtues or divine attributes! Such a one does not advance one step higher than the animal world of darkness and remains uninformed of the luminous human world. He is no further advanced at the age of seventy than he was at the age of seven. Surely such a person is not any higher in the world order than useless wood or stones.



LESSON 28



OD (Glorious is His mention) manifested himself in the world for the sake of correcting, instructing and ameliorating all peoples. Sedition, dispute, war, wrangling, and all that causes distress and sadness is clearly and strongly prohibited, whereas that which is the means of bringing about love, affection and reconciliation is urgently encouraged.

Bahais must first of all strive to correct and adjust their own lives, abstain from strife and sedition and never step into the arena of dispute.

A seditious and destructive person is far from the mercy of God. There is no difference between him and the wild ferocious beast or harmful creeping things of the earth, nay rather he is in a lower condition and much more dangerous.



LESSON 29



THE most unworthy person in the sight of God is one who passes his life in laziness and indifference, occupied only with vanities, depending upon others for his livelihood, whose excessive pride prevents him from working and who considers all industry as a disgrace, looking upon himself as the master and leader of man and others as his slaves and servants.

The Eternal Beauty (Glorious is His Greatest Name!) says in one of the Tablets that this condition lowers man from his real station and increases vainglory.

Man's life must be fruitful. According to the sayings of His Holiness, Christ, a fruitless life is like unto a fruitless tree which is only worthy of being uprooted and burned.

In the Tablet of Wisdom BAHÁ'U'LLAH says: "Turn away from idleness and attach yourselves to that which will be beneficial to the world." Again he says in the most holy book: "Do not pass your time uselessly and in laziness, but occupy yourselves with that which will be of benefit to you and others. Thus has it been decreed in this

Tablet which has descended from the horizon of the Sun of Wisdom and Explanation."

LESSON 30



HEREFORE, in accordance with the firm command of the Eternal Beauty (Glory be to His Greatest Name!), Bahais must not be lazy or remain without work, or debase or lower themselves. Every one should be occupied in an industry of some kind, acquiring a trade or business. Work liberates people from the disgrace of poverty which is the result of laziness and idleness. Our tranquility and repose depend upon capacity for self-support. We must not be dependent upon others; nor go begging from one to the other with a long face and in a mournful attitude, nor be doubtful as to God's bounty; nay, rather we should concentrate our efforts upon being the means of helping others, thus solving the difficult problem of the hopeless and delivering this world from oppression.

The Eternal Beauty, through pure bounty and mercy, has decreed that to be occupied with a trade or industry is in itself an act of worship. It is seen from this that laziness and idleness are sins in themselves. BAH-

'U'LLAH has written in the Kitab el Akdas:

“O people of Baha; verily it is necessary
for every one to be engaged in an art or
trade. We have so decreed that before God
work is an act of worship. Think, O people,
of the Mercy of God and His Grace,
then thank Him morning
and evening.”



LESSON 31



VERY work has a border line of moderation; up to that point it is praiseworthy, but when it goes beyond that border line it ceases to be a blessing and becomes a means of damage and loss.

For example: it is well to occupy one's time with business when it does not prevent one from the mention and remembrance of God, otherwise, it ceases to be an act of worship but on the contrary becomes sinful.

The reason why the Eternal Beauty has decreed an occupation to be an act of worship is, that apart from the many evils, such as depraved morals, resulting from idleness, it is conducive to disgrace, debasement and adversity, and God (Glorified be His Glory!) is not pleased to see His creatures in an abject condition, nor does He like them to be in poverty and need. These evils may be avoided by having a business of some kind.

Besides the aforementioned benefits derived from labor, there is still another benefit which is: that trade and making money, if undertaken in a spirit which con-

forms with the laws of justice, are conducive to wealth and prosperity and are means of attracting well-being and blessing.

If a wealthy man is desirous of serving and assisting the cause of God, it is evident that he is better equipped to do so than one who is not wealthy, and this in itself is a great blessing and an accepted act of worship.



LESSON 32



IF we look with the eyes of penetration and justice into the luminous signs and holy commandments of the Beauty of Abha and the blessed teachings of Abdul Baha, we shall testify that for the afflicted body of the world and the infected condition of the sons of Adam, there is no remedy or medicine save this: that all the people of the world enter under the shadow of this great Manifestation, cling to the hem of the garment of its holy commandments and be illumined by the lights of its blessed counsels and exhortations.

That which during this greatest manifestation has descended from the heavens of the Will of the Lord of Eternity, is the cause of tranquility, safety, increase of affluence and wealth and the means of progress, instruction, and prosperity for the world.

Oh! Would that man could open the eyes of penetration, and observe that which would be the cause of liberty and salvation to mankind!

We must continually call upon God's pity for these ignorant ones and remove the curtain of imagination from before their eyes, guiding them from error to truth until they attain to that which God has desired, and obtain the fruits of their own existence.

LESSON 33



EGGING, according to the holy religious laws, is considered a sin and it is also unlawful to give in case any one should transgress these laws.

But if on account of old age or some other reason one is incapable of working and falls into distress and difficulties, it is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice and upon the wealthy ones of the people to assist such a person, providing for him in a way that will be sufficient for his station in life and for his tranquility and peace.

The members of the House of Justice in regard to this matter should pay untiring attention and always be informed of the poor, the helpless, and hopeless of every sect and race. They should not allow one hopeless one to remain in a condition of destitution; for, through distress and difficulties, the nights of the hopeless are turned into days and their days into nights and their tears and sighs of despair mounting up to the Court of the Divine Provider and the King

of Retribution become the cause of bringing down upon the oppressors and negligent ones the breath of destruction.

In regard to this question it is written in the Book of Akdas (Glorified be His Kindness!):

“Begging is forbidden and it is not permissible to give to those who beg. It has been commanded that all should work—but for those who cannot, it belongs to the members of the House of Justice and to the wealthy ones to provide what is sufficient for their sustenance.

“Follow the commands of God and guard
them as the pupil of thine eye
and do not be of those
who deny.”



LESSON 34



TENDERNESS and kindness are human characteristics; to be without love or affection belongs to the animal nature. Through love and kindness everything can be accomplished. These qualities are the means of physical and spiritual tranquility and repose, but this love and kindness cannot be realized except through meeting and associating with one another.

Since it is agreeable to God that love and friendship should increase day by day amongst His servants and that they should be informed of each other's condition and mutually assist one another in their affairs in such wise that their individual efforts be alleviated and their troubles and labors lessened, BAHÁ'U'LLAH has decreed that the Bahais should at least once every month (which is composed of nineteen days) exercise hospitality. Now since these receptions are designed for the purpose of increasing love, friendship, unity and spirituality, they must be a cause of difficulty to no one.

The richer classes are given free choice in

extending hospitality, and in organizing entertainments, but the poorer members can follow this wise injunction in simply offering a beverage of some kind or a mere glass of water.

The revealed commands in regard to this matter are in the Kitab el Akdas (May His Words be Glorified!). He says: "It is decreed that all should extend hospitality once a month, even though it be in the most simple manner. Verily God's desire is to create harmony in the world, both by spiritual and material means."



LESSON 35



THE divine laws and religious ordinances are established upon a spiritual foundation of pure love, real amity and universal solidarity; that which has been the cause of separation, remoteness, estrangement, repulsion, aversion and vexation has been entirely abolished in these holy laws, and all that produces kindness, love, unity, concord and fraternity is to be found therein.

These luminous laws and brilliant signs have descended from the heaven of bestowals and the mercy of God with such joy and prodigality that soon the plenitude of His beneficence, like unto the waves of the sea, will without ceasing engulf the world of existence, and the shining lights of His teachings will dispel the pervading darkness. The surface of the earth will be under the shadow of His government, the standard of His power will be established above all other ensigns and the tent of His grandeur will be spread over all humanity.

We know with certainty that this poison which is apparent in the minds of men and

which has entirely depraved their morals cannot be cured by any antidote or eradicated by any efficient remedy unless the Universal Physician diagnoses the case and prescribes the powerful and decisive medicine, which medicine is: the holy commandments and blessed teachings of the Eternal Beauty (Glorified be His Greatest Name!).



LESSON 36



IN one of the Tablets revealed by the brilliant pen of Abdul Baha for the American people, which is also an address to all Bahais, are to be found these lofty words (Glorious is His Utterance!):

“O friends of God, the world is like unto a sick person who having become weak and infirm has lost his sight and hearing and all his power of perception. The divine friends must become like unto skilled physicians and nurse this sick one and revive him according to the heavenly teachings. God willing! health will be restored and the recovery be eternal; thus the benumbed faculties will be revived; and the body of the world will be rejuvenated and appear in a new beauty, freshness and grace.

“A just remedy for humanity is guidance, which enables man to turn towards God, to listen to the heavenly instructions, and become endowed with attentive ears and inward vision.

“When this swift healing medicine has taken effect, then one must teach man by means of the divine admonitions, the conduct, morals and deeds of those souls who abide in the highest spiritual spheres, thus enflaming hearts with longing for the blessings of the Kingdom of Abha.

"The heart must be purified from all trace of hatred and animosity and be filled with a spirit of justice, peace, fraternity and love towards all, so that East and West may embrace like unto lovers, enmity and rancour be removed from the face of the earth, and universal peace be established.

"O friends of God! be kind to all the peoples of the world, love all and as far as possible strive to purify hearts and sanctify minds. Be a refreshing dew for every pasture, the water of life for every tree, a sweet perfume for every nostril, a spirit-reviving breeze for every sick one, a salubrious water for every thirsty one, a wise guide for every wandering one, a kind parent to every orphan, a spiritual son or daughter to the aged, and a worthy refuge for the poor.

"Know that the real Paradise is love and kindness, and animosity and hostility a hell of torment. Strive with all your heart and take no rest, supplicate and implore, seeking God's assistance and favor till this world become the paradise of Abha and this earth a heavenly garden.

"If you strive it is certain that these lights will shine, this cloud of mercy will rain, this spirit-reviving breeze will waft and this perfume of sweet-scented musk will be diffused."

LESSON 37



AN other Tablet has appeared the brilliant light of instruction and education in these explicit words: He says (Glorified be His Proof): "O friends of God! The holy utterances are conducive to eternal life and the cause of illumination for humanity. They mean peace and uprightness, love and prosperity, they are the foundation for reconciliation, honesty and fidelity in the created world and the means of unity, agreement, adjustment and concord amongst all the people of the world.

"Therefore you must establish the foundations of these teachings in this perishable world so that they may become the means of eternal life and the cause of spiritual illumination for the world of contingency.

"It is incumbent upon the Bahais to associate with all the people of the world in love and kindness, and to show forth courtesy, compassion, friendship and assistance to all the different sects and denominations.

"Be a remedy for every pain, a balm for every wound, a protector for every weak one,

a shelter for every timid one and an asylum for those in distress.

“Although it is permissible to recognize existing differences amongst people; that which is agreeable and acceptable in these great days is: that distinctions between people be annulled and that the servants of God observe mercy and benevolence, persevere in service to humanity and show forth kindness toward all and even towards animals.

“Mercy precedes all things.”



LESSON 38



ALTHOUGH that which has been mentioned pertaining to the teachings of BAHÁ' 'LLAH is no more than a spray of this surging sea, the foundation of the Cause and the line of conduct of the Bahais have been made clear.

However, it now seems suitable to insert this Tablet which is another of the luminous writings of Abdul Baha, so that the sincere ones may attain and in this greatest Manifestation realize God's desire.

"He is God!

"O true friends! The people of the world are like unto school children, and the Dawning Places of Light and Centers of divine revelation are wonderful, glorious, incomparable teachers in the school of Reality.

"They instruct these children with heavenly teachings and nourish them in the bosom of divine assistance, so as to enable them to progress in all the degrees of life, to become the objects of God's grace and centers of merciful bounty combining all human perfections. Through their holy admonitions humanity develops in every way outwardly and inwardly, consciously and unconsciously, physically and spiritually, till this perishable world becomes like a mirror reflecting the heavenly world.

"O true friends! The Sun of Reality has arisen from the vernal equinoctial point in this greatest Cycle.

"It has shone forth unto all horizons, has caused such a resurrection, thrown existence into such a tumult and clamor, bestowed such growth and development, spread such brilliancy and light, the cloud of its favor and assistance has burst into such abundant showers, and the rain of its mercy has poured down so copiously that the plain and the desert have blossomed into flower, dust has become the Paradise of Abha, the face of the earth a veritable Eden, vast as the encompassing heavens, the world of existence a praiseworthy abode and this bit of earth the dawning-place of divine favors.

"Therefore, O friends of God! make a great effort so that you may manifest within yourselves this development and heavenly assistance, be centers from which appear divine attributes, dawning places of the Light of Unity and messengers of the heavenly civilization.

"In every region be a guide to human perfection, spread science and knowledge, strive to progress in arts and inventions, improve your moral conduct and try to excel the people of the world in good disposition; instruct children from their babyhood and nourish them in the cradle of

virtues, bringing them up in the spirit of love. Help them to participate in every useful science and give them a portion of all the wonderful arts. Be courageous and endure every distress, learn to take part in all important affairs and increase your ardor for acquiring that which is beautiful; establish affairs whether individual or collective on a basis of consultation and do not undertake an important matter without first consulting others.

“Be considerate of one another, promote each other’s interests, share in each other’s sorrows, and do not overlook the need of any one, but mutually assist one another so that entirely united you will move
and act like unto
one body.”



LESSON 39



COURTESY is the best of moral characteristics. A courteous person holds a high station and is loved and respected both by friends and strangers; no ugly word or unbecoming deed appears from him nor does he commit an unworthy action; but the heart of an uncourteous person is forever weary.

One instinctively avoids meeting and associating with such a one and shuns all transactions and conversations. He is himself generally heart weary, and in the sight of God and man alike is undignified, spiritually veiled, and deprived of spiritual assurance. Through lack of courtesy he has deprived himself of divine grace.

Thus the Eternal Beauty has revealed in one of His Tablets: "We have appointed courtesy as a distinctive quality belonging to those who are near to God; it is like unto a mantle which puts the lowly and the lofty into the same ranks. Blessed are those who have ornamented the temple of their being

with courtesy, and woe unto those who are deprived thereof.”

In another Tablet it is written: “O people of God! I enjoin upon you to observe courtesy, it is the chief moral characteristic and holds the first station. Blessed are those who are illumined by its lights and are adorned with the ornament of rectitude. He who is the possessor of courtesy holds a high station.

“It is to be hoped that this oppressed one and all others may ever be mindful of courtesy, attaining, clinging and adhering thereunto.

“This firm command has been
revealed by the pen of the
Greatest Name.”

LESSON 40



THE worst of creatures is he who slanders and divulges the faults and vices of the servants of God. It is forbidden to slander or to listen to slander; one is as evil as the other.

Slander is injurious to man physically and spiritually; it darkens the spirit and causes it to become turbid, belittling men in the sight of others; it destroys the foundation of friendship and love, strengthens the edifice of enmity, animosity and hostility.

The poisonous effect of back-biting is so penetrating that no medicine however powerful can counteract it. It kills all religion and faith and is a calamity both for heart and soul. Verily, it is an unpardonable sin, a breach that cannot be repaired.

God the Merciful says in the Koran: "O thou who art faithful, shun slander and do not say evil one of the other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of your dead brother? Therefore shun such a person and fear God. Verily, He is the Forgiver, the Pardoner."

That which has been revealed by the pen of the King of Names (BAHA'U'LLAH) in the Arabic Hidden Words is sufficient for the

traveller upon the road of guidance, and the seeker after God's good pleasure.

"O son of man! Breathe not the sins of any one as long as thou art a sinner. If thou doest contrary to this command thou art not of me: To this I bear witness.

"O son of existence! Attribute not to any soul that which thou desirest not to be attributed to thyself, and do not promise that which thou dost not fulfill. This is My command to thee: obey it."

In the Persian Hidden Words one finds:

"O emigrants! The tongue is especially for the mention of me; stain it not with slander, and if the fire of self overcome thee, be mindful to remember thine own faults and speak not evil of My creatures, because each one of you is more conscious and better informed of his own self than of My creatures."

Bahais who are nourished by the exhortations and injunctions of God, have drunk from the source of the teachings of the Ancient Beauty and have rested under the shadow of the Blessed Perfection must never open their lips in slander of any one and at no time take pleasure in divulging the faults of any of God's creatures.

As it is explained in the Hidden Words: "If (God is my refuge) at any time the spirit of evil desires should overcome and

conquer you and you wish to occupy yourselves in the mention of some one's imperfections, immediately turn your thoughts unto yourself, be mindful of the divine exhortations and look to your own faults, thus turning away from the faults of others so that God through His bounty and mercy will also veil your shortcomings."



LESSON 41



IN the Book of God there are many injunctions regarding outward purity, cleanliness, beauty and neatness; to such an extent has this subject been developed that one cannot imagine anything more being written about it.

In truth, how lowering is it for a man to be unkempt and dirty in his appearance; it is in the nature of man to have a feeling of aversion and repulsion on observing that which is not clean. With the exception of some of the lower animals, all of them, including birds, have an aversion for dirt. Supposing some part of their body becomes soiled or dirty, they remove the dirt with either their tongue or beak, as we have often observed with our own eyes; therefore think how careful we should be, we who are men and the most noble of all created beings! Undoubtedly we should express in our person perfect cleanliness.



LESSON 42



It is therefore evident that Bahais must show great attention to this question of cleanliness. Try not to transgress this established command. After following the ordinances pertaining to the purity of the body, turn towards ameliorating the spiritual condition, purifying the heart, improving the character and perfecting the inward being, for the people of Baha must be both inwardly and outwardly pure and clean, otherwise they will be like unto soulless idols and lifeless paintings, outwardly polished and inwardly empty.

“Their bodies are like the tombs of infidels and their souls are full of the wrath of God.” The real inward adornments are godlike qualities, spiritual characteristics and heavenly virtues and perfections, such as science, knowledge, justice, equity, love, affection, veracity, trustworthiness, munificence, liberality, mercy, courtesy, pardon, beneficence, independence, energy, detachment from all save God, attachment to the horizon of Abha, service to the world of humanity and striving to advance the Cause of God.

LESSON 43



WHEN we observe all the different kinds of existing beings we see that each species is under a universal law and organization which in His wisdom, God, in the beginning and origin of things, established to protect and render permanent His creation; and this law can never be transgressed.

This law contains two powers or life forces: one is the vegetable power which is characterized by composition and decomposition, the other is animal soul or life force which possesses sense perception. These two life forces flow through the channels of nature according to their various capacities without encountering any obstacles, and in the very way which God has decreed.

But man is a center of contention, the playground of opposing forces, his nature is kneaded out of two opposites. That is to say, besides these two powers, the vegetable and the animal spirit, man possesses the human spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is called the rational soul. Now this rational soul has two parts, one divine, the other satanic; it is double-faced, one face is turned toward the spirit and the other toward the senses. Therefore, the door is continually open to wrangling,

dispute and fighting between these two natures. The spiritual side inclines towards acquiring virtues and perceptions and the satanic side turns towards that which is debasing; the nobler side seeks to mount up to the degrees of God's good pleasure, and the sensual side likes to descend into the lowest degrees of lust. One side or the other gains the victory. If the spiritual side conquers, then man becomes the noblest of created beings, but if the satanic side predominates, man sinks to the lowest and vilest condition.

Thus characterized man is subject to many dangers, and if he is not spiritually assisted and does not receive the divine bounty through the spirit of faith which emanates from the revealed Word of God, and does not find an abode or refuge under the ample mercy of God, there is no doubt that his soul will fall to the level of the animal soul, will become dark and turbid, nay, rather will become disintegrated and perish.

We mean by spirit of faith and divine bounty acceptance of the revealed Word, and entering under the shadow of the heavenly laws and ordinances; obeying the commandments of God, being aflame with the fire of the love of God, and freely choosing the station of worship and servitude in the path of God.

We can see that in past ages and up to our

own day some people from excessive ignorance, being submerged in the sea of matter, are walking on the road of infidelity and disobedience, they shun that which is the means of eternal honor, human nobility and the cause of their real protection and tranquility. These are the people who have departed from under the shadow of the religion and the laws of God, and have pitched their tent in the desert of ignorance and error. They are seeking only animal freedom, and in their ignorance are proud and boastful. Such people can truly be said to be the corrupt members of society and are like poisonous microbes; nothing can be expected of them save
sedition and trouble.



LESSON 44



ALL desirable liberty and freedom is to be found in following the law and in abiding under the shadow of the religion of God, not in pursuing one's animal instincts.

Alas! how ignorant and abject is man, who, having been created the most noble of creatures, seeks his pleasure in those things which belong to the animal kingdom. Alas! that man, who is worthy of respect and is the most perfect of created beings, should through his own choice return to that which is contemptible.

These creatures, although they have the form of men and appear in the degree of humanity, are in reality lower than animals. As the Scripture says: "They are like wild animals, even lower." Because if it were not for fear of one another and fear of the laws of the country, such men would not hold back from performing and inflicting every kind of pain, torment, violence and injury upon one another. They are verily the enemies of the life, possessions and good reputation of other men, ever seeking to

excel in that which is perverse, wicked and inhuman. They look upon the moral characteristics of man as useless and meaningless, the pure deeds of the man of God as senseless and unproductive, and the saints as stupid and ignorant.



LESSON 45



INORDINATE liberty has its seat in the animal nature, and that which is worthy of the estate of man is that he allow himself to be governed by laws and regulations which protect him from his own wickedness and that of others.

We know of a certainty and have observed that an abuse of freedom leads to a lack of religion and not only deprives man of his finer characteristics such as politeness, modesty, intelligence, moderation, love, fidelity, purity, devotion, etc., but little by little draws him down to a condition lower than the animal, and finally he becomes so degraded that no power can control or correct him.

The people of Baha who have turned to the highest horizon and who have drunk the sweet waters of knowledge which have flowed from the pen of Abha, are reposing under the shadow of the Sadrat el Montaha. They know that true freedom and real liberty are to be found by abiding under the protection of religious teachings, in follow-

ing the laws and commandments of God and in acting according to the heavenly precepts and ordinances. This lofty station of freedom they would not exchange for a kingdom, and they realize that by clinging to the firm rope of servitude (to God and His Holy Manifestations), they will find that which will help them to reach to the highest stations and loftiest degrees of spiritual attainment, from which blessings and prosperity descend.



LESSON 46



OW can these, who are ignorant of the manner in which they should conduct themselves in regard to their own requirements, who have failed repeatedly in their journeyings through life, and have often regretted their lack of judgment and intuition, be capable of forming infallible laws for the protection of the country, and combining all the important requirements of man's present and future conditions?

In the inauguration of these laws men of wisdom have devoted time and attention, with untiring trouble and labor they have drawn up codes and have compiled books on law which kings and sultans have, with their sovereign power, put into practice. They have expended much effort and energy in thus doing; with the hope that the spreading of these laws would bring some tranquility, considering themselves independent of the Divine law-giver.

However, we see that every day these people meet with evils and difficulties which arise from the very laws they have established, and for this reason the man-made laws are continually in the process of becoming changed and altered.

Bahais know of a certainty, and firmly believe, that aside from God (Glorious is His

Glory!), no one has been or is informed of the requirements of the times, the necessities of the world and the affairs of mankind.

He is the One who encompasses the world and its inhabitants and according to His love and mercy has laid the foundation for laws and religious ordinances which under all circumstances are sufficient, complete and binding.

Every one who seeks an abode under the shelter of these laws is free from man-made laws with their imperfect regulations.¹

¹ This means that we are spiritually free, for according to the firm commands of BAHÁ'U'LLAH we must abide by the laws of the country in which we live.



LESSON 47



THE people of God are promised assistance from the heaven of Abha and aid from the Celestial Hosts; that which attracts this aid and assistance and brings the promise of God contained in the Holy Books nearer to us, is: perseverance in the Cause, firmness and confidence in the Covenant, and belief in the promises of the Beloved of the world.

What is meant by belief or faith in the Promise is wholly turning toward the Center of the Covenant, Abdul Baha (may our souls be His sacrifice!). He is the Dawning-place of splendor, Servant of Glory, the King of the horizon of explanation of the Holy Book, the Appointed Center, and all that pertains to the Cause of Baha is subject to His will and desire.

That Blessed Being (may His Name be glorified!), is the Jewel of the Sea of the Cause of God, the Fruit of the Sadrat (tree in Paradise) of the Manifestation of God and the luminous Sun in the heaven of the Will of God.

The Ancient Beauty, BAHÁ'U'LLAH (glory be to the Greatest Name!) has said in the book of Akdas (glorious is its mention!):

“When the Ocean of my Presence hath disappeared and the book of Origin (BAHA-

'U'LLAH) is achieved to the end, turn your faces towards Him whom God hath purposed, who hath branched from this pre-existent Root." "The aim of this blessed verse hath been the Greatest Branch." "Thus have we manifested the Command as a favor on our part: Verily I am the Generous, the Bestower."

Of all the verses revealed by the Supreme Pen this is the greatest, for we see therein that BAHÁ'U'LLAH has appointed for the people of Baha a center and refuge towards which they are to turn after the setting of the Sun of His Beauty.

In another passage of the Kitab el Akdas BAHÁ'U'LLAH writes:

"O people of creation! When the incomparable Dove has mounted from the place of praises and disappeared into the Hidden Abode, for all of that which is not understood in the Book turn towards the Branch which has come forth from the pre-existent Root."

By this blessed verse, He has appointed an Expounder of the verses and has decreed that no one excepting Abdul Baha is or will be informed of the hidden mysteries contained therein.

In a Tablet revealed for Mirza Mohammed Quli Aabziwari in the year 1291 A.H. (1875 A.D.), BAHÁ'U'LLAH (glorious is His mention!) says: "O thou who art troubled!

when the Heaven of my Will shall be folded,
and the waves of the Sea of My Desire have
become calm; turn to the Gulf which is
formed in this Sea which has encompassed
the world. It is thus that the rain of my
bounty through my generosity in regard
to thee has showered abundant grace upon
thee and upon those who turn toward God."

Witness what a deep significance is con-
tained in the words: "Turn thou," which in
two different passages have been revealed.

Let those who doubt —
ponder!



LESSON 48



HE Pre-existent Root, the Powerful Root, the World-encompassing Sea refer to the Divine Luminous Reality (BAHA'U'LLAH). Traces of this divine reality (manifested in BAHA'U'LLAH) are to be found in all existence and it encompasses the visible and invisible worlds.

His Holiness the Desire of God, Abdul Baha (may our souls be His sacrifice), has grown out of that Root and forms a part of that Sea, whereas all else are created from the sum total of the world of matter which is the station of visible objects.¹

We can prove and defend this assertion by decisive arguments and clear demonstrations (out of the Holy Writings) a few of which we will now give. For example — His Highness Sadiq² (peace be upon him), said to one of his sons who did not accept the Covenant of Mohammed, that is: who went in opposition to the divine teachings: "O servant of God! Why art thou not like thy brother?" The son answered rudely, saying:

¹ The Divine spirit, traces of which are to be found in all existence, is manifested in BAHA'U'LLAH in all its perfection. He is as it were a direct emanation of the will of God, while all else in the world of phenomena is simply illumined by the divine spirit.

² One of the twelve Imams of the Mohammedan religion.

"What do you mean, is my mother not his mother, and is not my father his father?" Then His Highness answered, "Yea! but he was born of my spirit, but thou art born only of my flesh, that is to say: he is of the essence of my being, whereas thou art my son according to the flesh." It is the same in the story of Cain and Abel, in that of Joseph and of Noah, to whom God said: "Your son is not of your family." This was also said of the sons of Moses, therefore the outward relationship and human lineage or progeny is of no consequence, nay, rather it is the spiritual and moral perfections which characterise us.

"Whoever thou seest with illumined face having drunk from the Kawtha (river in Paradise), he is of the nature of Mohammed; try to partake of his qualities; but he whom thou seest with dry lips, consider him as an enemy (to Mohammed or the divine messengers), like Abu-lahab (the uncle of Mohammed who did not accept him). Even if he is your parent, in reality he is your enemy. O son! take to heart the history of the friend of God (Abraham), who was the first to turn away from his father."³

³ Abraham's father was a worshipper of idols.

LESSON 49



THE blessed verses of the Most Lofty Pen are sufficient for all Bahais, and it is not necessary to give proofs or explanations as to the purity of the Centre of the Covenant (Abdul Baha). However, merely to help open the eyes of those who are veiled and make them attentive, also to remove the doubts and mistakes of the Nakazins (those who have violated the Covenant) we declare that through conscientious investigation we can give clear proofs and logical arguments to help one to distinguish between truth and error, the real sovereign from the usurper and veracity from falsehood; which proofs admit of no doubt either in the minds of the intelligent or ignorant, the wise or stupid; nay rather it is impossible for any one with understanding or insight to deny them!

In one of the arguments we say: The real Master and rightful owner of the House of the Cause of God is one who expends the jewels of generosity and dispenses the treasures of his soul in continually improving its foundations and in constructing and strengthening its pillars and columns, standing with absolute firmness and authority, resisting the attacks of the opposers and the flood of hostility of the enemy, repulsing all

through the power and might of God.

We also affirm that the real master of the world and educator of the people is he who, out of pure bounty, never failing one moment in his task, is the cause of their tranquility, repose, education, progress and priority, whose intentions and devotion are flawless and above reproach, who has neither slumbered nor lessened his devotion (towards humanity), whom blame or torment cannot hold back, and who is ever consoling and protecting the sorrowful, whether friend or foe.

Is it possible to imagine a man able to administer material and spiritual benefits to numberless peoples unless he be inspired by the spirit of truth? No, by God! especially as these people belong to every category of religious faith, differing in nationality, in intelligence and in the material and social positions they hold in the world. All, whether men, women or children, are subject to his influence, are happy in his presence and feel that they have attained to their greatest desire; they praise him with ardour, stand firm in his service and are ready to sacrifice their lives in his path.

Every just and wise person will acknowledge that it is beyond the ability of any man of influence and authority to bring about this penetrating power of real kindness and love, or to create unity, concord, agreement

and friendship in one nation or one family; nay, even between two people; then how could it be possible to do so between all kinds of mentalities of different nations and peoples who are antagonistic one to the other, each with his individual temperament, inclinations, conduct, customs and peculiarities. Abdul Baha, however, through the favor of the Word of God, has diffused such a spirit of unity and concord that all these injurious conditions, evil customs and immorality, which are causes of destruction and desolation in this world and the next, have been removed and abolished.

Through the torrent of his injunctions and blessed teachings, hearts are cleansed and impurities removed. The light of unity and rays of fraternity are illumined in the hearts of men, East and West are joined together, and the assemblies of North and South are animated with union and concord. Verily, the Beloved of Abha has scattered these pure seeds upon the fertile soil of the heart of mankind and has planted these young shoots in the garden of the world.

Who is this person who has sown and diffused these seeds, planted these tender off-shoots, caused them to grow and bear fruit, who has husbanded these sown fields, protected and cultivated these lovely gardens? Who is he? He is that person who, night and day, is attentive and watchful,

who above all others is ever ready, and who under all circumstances is a well-wisher and as far as is wise shares in the sorrows of those who grieve and rejoices with those who are happy. If he sees a praiseworthy action his pleasure is so real that all things seem to be the happier for it, whereas, if he observes an evil deed his grief is such that it is felt by all.

Now truly, if such a blessed person is not the head of the Cause and the Master of the world, then how account for his services and devotion to the people of the world?

If another claims this station then where are his signs and proofs?

“If thou art from the garden of the Beloved

Where is thine offering of roses?

If thou hast come from the spring, why art thou thirsty?

If thou art the navel of the deer,
where is thy perfume
of musk?”



LESSON 50



IN this blessed manifestation BAHÁ'U'LLAH has abrogated the laws of the Book of Beyan, with the exception of a few which he has sanctioned and renewed in the Kitab el Akdas.

Every one who looks with a clear and just vision into the Beyan and reads what has therein been revealed, will see that His Highness, the Annunciator, the First Point (glorified be His Purpose!), has no other object save that of praising, reverencing, honoring and glorifying the station of the universal manifestation of God, that is: the Dawning-place of the Sun of the Beauty of Abha (BAHÁ'U'LLAH), and all his blessed efforts were to quicken his followers and the peoples of the world, that they might become capable of understanding this greatest Manifestation and powerful Edifice.

Those commandments and laws which were revealed according to this essential purpose and universal object were purely to serve and devotedly assist the Supreme Manifestation. Thus, if the laws of the Beyan were confirmed by BAHÁ'U'LLAH nobody would dare trouble him with questions regarding the commandments until that Blessed Tree had decided to proclaim

his own suitable commands. That is why the Bab has written: "The Beyan and all contained therein is a present from me to him; if it is accepted it is through His bounty, and if it is rejected it is through His justice." Again he says: "All of the Beyan is like a seal-ring on my finger, and I myself am like a seal-ring on his blessed finger; he does all that he desires."

It is therefore evident that the Bab's purpose in revealing commandments was to serve BAHĀ'U'LLĀH, and not to establish a new religion. Bahais need not turn to the laws of the Beyan; their Holy Book of laws is the Kitab el Akdas, which
was revealed by the
Supreme Pen.



LESSON 51



THROUGH the explicit text of the Beauty of Abha, and the clear, luminous teachings of His Highness, the Desire of God, it is absolutely forbidden for the people of Abha to occupy themselves with politics: nor should they discuss them in their meetings.

Kings, sultans, rulers and chiefs are centers of control for the affairs of the world. Through the bounty of God the reins of government have passed into the hands of their power, might and good will, and the government of the world has been bestowed upon them.

The Highest Pen has revealed in the Kitab el Akdas these lofty words:

“O saints of God and His loyal ones! Kings are the appearance of power and the day springs of the might and wealth of the True One. Pray on their behalf, for the government of the earth has been ordained to these souls, but the hearts He hath appointed for Himself.

“He hath forbidden dispute and strife, the greatest prohibition of the Book! This is the command of God in this greatest Manifestation and He hath preserved it from any order of annulment and hath

adorned it with the ornament of confirmation. Verily, He is the All Knower, the All Wise! It is enjoined upon all to assist these manifestations of power and dawning-places of command (rulers and kings), who are adorned with the ornaments of justice and equity."

The people of Baha, in whatever country and under whatever government they abide, must, in accordance with their duty toward that country, show forth their good will. They must not hold forth adverse criticism; must not act in opposition to the law and must conduct themselves in absolute sincerity and honesty.

They must consider that service to a just government is obedience toward God and that any opposition shown the just king is opposing God. How, indeed, could they act otherwise when the above is a command of their religion? The people of Baha are not attracted to this world and its perishable conditions. They express in their lives, inwardly and outwardly, attachment for spiritual things and not for that which is transitory and perishable.

Their object and intention is the city of hearts and souls, not the world of matter and appearance. Their effort is for those who are unfortunate or of difficult disposition. Their weapons are: fear of God — not

instruments of war; their armies are good actions, pure morals; and their power consists in heavenly virtues and spiritual attainments. Their sole object and desire is to guide and instruct the world of humanity. Upon them
be Peace.



PRAYER



MY GOD AND MY BELOVED!
I acknowledge Thy singleness and Unity, and Thy past and present munificence. Thou art the Merciful One who showers the rain of Thy mercy upon the rich and poor alike, and the radiance from the light of the sun of Thy beneficence shines upon the sinner as well as Thy faithful follower.

O Thou Merciful One, before whose doors pure mercy is worshipping and whose command is encompassed by the essence of assistance, we supplicate and beg thee for Thy eternal favor, seeking the new life Thou art so mercifully bestowing upon all existence.

Deprive us not of Thy bounty. We are
all poor and needy and Thou art
the Rich, the Victorious, the
Powerful!



HE IS GOD!

WE know from past years of experience that if the lessons contained herein are simply related orally to children they do not retain and remember them as they should; on the contrary, they are quickly effaced from their memory.

Therefore we have printed these lessons in this form, and we hope that they may prove beneficial and useful.

MOHAMMED ALI ALKANY.

Ishkabad, 1913 A.D.



BAHAI FEASTS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Feast of Naurooz *March 21*

Feast of Rizwan *April 21 to May 3*

Declaration of the Bab and Anniversary
of the Birth of Abdul Baha *May 23 (1844)*

Anniversary of the Departure of
BAHA'U'LLAH *May 28 (1892)*

Anniversary of the Martyrdom
of the Bab *July 9 (1850)*

Anniversary of the Birth of
BAHA'U'LLAH *November 12 (1817)*

Anniversary of the Departure of
Abdul Baha *November 28 (1921)*

