



Methods and qualities of the seekers of Reality in Some Answered Questions in the light of Bahá'í Scriptures

In Some Answered Questions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá illustrates some criteria and qualities of the seekers of Reality. He mentions the senses, the method of reason or intellect, the text of the Holy Writings, and the Holy Spirit's bounty. He emphasizes the fallacy of the first three criteria and the foremost importance of the last one. A combined and balanced use of the senses, the method of reason and the text of the Holy Writings undoubtedly brings the seeker closer to Reality. However, only the bounty of the Holy Spirit bestows enlightenment and certitude upon her. If the seeker wants to obtain the bounty of the Holy Spirit, she should realize some indispensable qualities and conditions. The enlightenment and certitude bestowed by the Holy Spirit are necessary so that any good action performed by the seeker may be conducive to her true salvation and prosperity.

Such is the importance ascribed to search after and knowledge of Reality in the Bahá'í teachings that they are described as the purpose of human life in the short Obligatory Prayer. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says in Some Answered Questions:

the people of knowledge are lovers of the sun . . . The people of perception are the seekers of the truth . . . man must be the seeker after the Reality. . . 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 . . . and like the nightingale who is the lover of the rose . . . (76-7, ch.14, para.9)

'Abdu'l-Bahá describes in the same book 'four accepted method of comprehension (*mizán-i-idrāk*): '[1] the senses (*ḥiss*) . . . [2] the method of reason (*'aql*). . . of the understanding (*idrāk*) . . . [3] tradition (*naql*) – that is, . . . the text of the Holy Scriptures (*nuṣṣ-i-kitáb-i-muqaddasih*) . . . [4] the bounty of the Holy Spirit (*fayḍ-i-Rúḥu 'l-Quds*)' (297-9, ch.83, paras.2, 3, 4 and 5, M207-8). He also explains these four methods in other circumstances. In His Tablet to Dr Forel, He mentions the 'reasoning power (*qavá'id-i-'aqlíyyih*)', 'observation (*naẓaríyyih*)', (*manṭiqíyyih*, dialectic, not translated) the 'intuitive faculties (*ṭulú'át-i-fikríyyih*, lit.

revelations of the thought) and the revealing power of . . . faith (*iktisháfát-i-vijdaníyyih*, lit. the discoveries of the soul)' (*Bahá'í World* 15:37-43, *Makátib* 1:259). In His talk at Hotel Ansonia in New York on 17 April 1912,¹ He mentions 'first, sense perception; second, reason; third, traditions; fourth, inspiration'. In another talk delivered at the Eireinion in Green Acre Eliot (Maine) on 16 August 1912,² He says: 'Proofs are of four kinds: first, through sense perception; second, through the reasoning faculty; third, from traditional or scriptural authority; fourth, through the medium of inspiration. That is to say, there are four criteria or standards of judgment by which the human mind reaches its conclusions' (253). Also, Isabel Fraser Chamberlain records a talk where 'Abdu'l-Bahá mentions 'four means of knowledge' (*Divine Philosophy* 88): 'the senses, principally through observation . . . logic . . . the sacred text . . . inspiration' (ibid.). Finally, in a talk delivered at Open Forum, or Materialists Club, in San Francisco (California) on 10 October 1912,³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá mentions only 'the senses (*hiss*)' and 'the intellect (*'aql*)' (356, K601).

If one reflects on these various sources, one may obtain a quite coherent concept. Human knowledge depends on four instruments: sense perception, intellect or reason, the Holy Writings and insight or inspiration. Each of these four instruments is fallible in itself. Each of them may be refined and supported through another one. The mistakes of the senses may be rectified through the intellect; the mistakes of intellect may be rectified through one's study of the Holy Writings, 'the Unerring Balance established amongst men' (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitab-i-Aqdas* 13, para.99), 'the science of the love of God' (Bahá'u'lláh, *Four Valleys* 52); human mistakes in one's interpretation of the Holy Writings may be rectified through proper use of insight or the 'inner eye' (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitab-i-Iqan* 197, para.217); the mistakes of the 'inner eye' and any other one may be corrected through 'the spirit of faith' ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 144, sec.36, para.4). A balanced and coordinated use of all the four instruments draws the seeker closer to reality.

¹ This talk was first published in *Star of the West* 3.10 (September 1912):10-1 and later, with a few changes, in *Promulgation* 20-2, on notes taken by Howard MacNutt.

² This talk was first published in *Star of the West* 3.16 (December 1912):5-9 and later in *Promulgation* 253-61, on notes taken by Edna McKinney from Amin Farid's translation.

³ This talk was published in English in *Promulgation* 355-61, on notes taken by Bijou Straun, and in Persian in *Khatábát* 600-10. See also *Star of the West* 5.3 (April 1914):42.

However, what confers certitude is only the bounty of the Holy Spirit that draws her closer and closer to Reality and finally to enlightenment and certitude.

Sense perception

The senses are fallacious, but the intellect may rectify their mistakes. Sight tells us that the earth is flat, but a rational observation of the universe has enabled scientists to discover that the earth is round. The senses enable us to perceive only material or outer reality. However, our insight, properly refined through our study of the Holy Writings, prayer, meditation and the practice of good deeds, enables our senses to ‘discover in whatever hath been created by Thee in the kingdoms of earth and heaven nothing but Thy wondrous Beauty and the revelation of the splendours of Thy face’ (Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations* 337, sec.CLXXXIV, para.19). In this vein Bahá’u’lláh writes:

Every time I lift up mine eyes unto Thy heaven, I call to mind Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; and every time I turn my gaze to Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. And when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence.

I swear by Thy might, O Thou in Whose grasp are the reins of all mankind, and the destinies of the nations! I am so inflamed by my love for Thee, and so inebriated with the wine of Thy oneness, that I can hear from the whisper of the winds the sound of Thy glorification and praise, and can recognize in the murmur of the waters the voice that proclaimeth Thy virtues and Thine attributes, and can apprehend from the rustling of the leaves the mysteries that have been irrevocably ordained by Thee in Thy realm. (*Prayers and Meditations* 272, sec.CLXXVI, para.16)

Intellect and logic

The modern Western world has full confidence in its intellect and thinks that intellect is, together with the senses, the supreme guarantor of human knowledge. A number of statements in *Some Answered Questions* seemingly show that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had

not the same confidence in human intellect as modern Westerners. He recognizes that human intelligence and thought, when adequately trained,

may attain complete development, so that knowledge and science may increase, and the reality of things, the mysteries of beings and the properties of existence may be discovered; that, day by day, instructions, inventions and institutions may be improved; and from things perceptible to the senses conclusions as to intellectual things may be deduced. (SAQ9, ch.3, para.9)

However, seemingly interpreting Bahá'u'lláh's statement that 'the highest thought of men, however deep their contemplation, can never hope to outsoar the limitations imposed upon Thy creation, nor ascend beyond the state of the contingent world' (*Prayers and Meditations* 327, sec.CLXXXIV, para.6), 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that intellect by itself cannot understand metaphysical verities. He says that intellect 'must depend on the help of the spiritual and divine power to be able to undertake this mission' (SAQ9, ch.3, para.11), 'so that intelligence and comprehension may penetrate the metaphysical world, and may receive benefit from the sanctifying breeze of the Holy Spirit, and may enter into relationship with the Supreme Concourse' (SAQ9, ch.3, para.10). In the same vein 'Abdu'l-Bahá also states that

This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul (*nafs-i-nátiqih*), embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits discovers the realities of things and becomes cognizant of their peculiarities and effects, and of the qualities and properties of beings. But the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith (*ruh-i-ímání*), does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, polished and brilliant, is still in need of light. Until a ray of the sun reflects upon it, it cannot discover the heavenly secrets. (SAQ208-9, ch.55, para.5, M148)

Only in this condition, our intellect can reach its highest expression, which Bahá'u'lláh describes as follows:

Having recognized thy powerlessness to attain to an adequate understanding of that Reality which abideth within thee, thou wilt readily admit the futility of such efforts as may be attempted by thee, or by any of the created things, to fathom the mystery of the Living God, the Day Star of unfading glory, the

Ancient of everlasting days. This confession of helplessness which mature contemplation must eventually impel every mind to make is in itself the acme of human understanding, and marketh the culmination of man's development. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 165-6, sec.83, para.4)

In summary, concerning spiritual knowledge, our intellect is inferior to the inner perception acquired through the bounty of the Spirit of Faith and of the Holy Spirit. In this vein 'Abdu'l-Bahá says: %

These obvious arguments (*adillah*) are adduced for **weak (*dá'ífih*) souls**; but if the **inner perception** (*didiy-i-başırat*) be open, a hundred thousand clear proofs become visible. Thus, when man feels the indwelling spirit (*ihsás-i-rúh-i-dashtih bashad*), he is in no need of arguments for its existence; but for those who are deprived of the bounty of the spirit (*faýd-i-rúh*), it is necessary to establish external arguments (*dalá'il-i-khárjih*) (SAQ6, ch.2, para.11, M5)

The Holy Writings

Infalible in themselves, the Holy Writings become fallible whenever they are analyzed by a weak human intellect, which may introduce every kind of mistake. Also, in this case, the human intellect may be assisted through the inspiration of the spiritual powers. Bahá'u'lláh explains:

Know thou that the passages that We have called 'ambiguous (*mutishábihát*)' appear as such only in the eyes of them that have failed to soar above the horizon of guidance and to reach the heights of knowledge in the retreats of grace. For otherwise, unto them that have recognized the Repositories of divine Revelation and beheld through **His inspiration** (*fí má ilqá alláh 'ala anfusahum*, lit. in that which God hath handed down unto them) the mysteries of divine authority, all the verses of God are perspicuous and all His allusions are clear. Such men discern the inner mysteries that have been clothed in the garment of words as clearly as ye perceive the heat of the sun or the wetness of water, nay even more distinctly. Immeasurably exalted is God above our praise of His loved ones, and beyond their praise of Him! (*Gems of Divine Mysteries* 26-7, para.34)

Insight or inspiration

A master in its use of intellect, Western man is suspicious of insight. And in many ways, he is not wrong. Inspiration has been described as: ‘A special immediate action or influence of the Spirit of God . . . upon the human mind or soul’ (*Oxford* 7:1036). It also has been defined (Battaglia 8:593) as:

A sudden enlightenment of the spirit, which appears as a guidance for one’s behavior emerging from unknown depths of one’s personality and coordinating past and future experience through intuitive ways . . . Influence exerted by God upon a person, who is enlightened in his mind, spurred in his will, directed and sustained in his action, for the attainment of a supernatural goal . . . an impulsion (considered of divine origin or arising from a mysterious force or an inner wealth) which . . . leads a person, in a sort of enrapture or creative ecstasy, to translate circumstances, impressions, feelings, etc. into works of art.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to Mrs Parson on 28 April 1912:⁴

‘This material world has an outer appearance. It has also a hidden aspect. All created things are interlinked in a chain leading to spirituality ‘[the unseen’, in *Star of the West*] and ultimately ending in abstract [‘spiritual’ in *Star of the West*] realities. I hope that these spiritual links will become stronger day by day and that this communication of hearts, which is termed inspiration, will continue. When this connection exists, bodily separation is not important; this condition is beyond the world of words and above all description’. (qtd. in *Mahmud’s Diary* 66)

He explains elsewhere that ‘inspiration’ is the ‘influx’ (*Promulgation* 22) or ‘the promptings or susceptibilities of the human heart’ (ibid. 254). He adds that the human heart may be influenced by ‘satanic’ and ‘divine promptings.’ The former, which He also calls ‘imagination’ (ibid. 251), comes from our lower self. The latter ones are a ‘prompting of the heart through the merciful assistance’ (*Promulgation* 254). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also says that imagination ‘can only picture that which it can create’ (*Paris Talks* 11, ch.5, para.6), that it is ‘accidental (or non-essential)’ (*Tablets*

⁴ These words are also quoted in ‘Communication and Divine Inspiration’, in *Star of the West* 14.7 (October 1923):209.

3:562), limited and often at odds with reality. Therefore, He seemingly uses the term ‘imagination’ as a ‘creative power of the mind that conceives dreams, illusions, abstractions, fictitious and bizarre forms, activities of idle thinking, of conjecturing’ (Battaglia 7:342). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that we can differentiate between ‘inspiration’ and ‘imagination’ because ‘inspiration is in conformity with the Divine Texts, but imaginations do not conform therewith’ (*Tablets* 1:195). Another difference is that the ideas

which owe their source to the Light of Truth will be realized in the outward world; while others of a different origin vanish, come and go like waves on the sea of imagination and find no realization in the world of existence. (*Tablets* 2:301)

As to the difference between inspiration and imagination . . . A real, spiritual connection between the True One and the servant is a luminous bounty which causeth an ecstatic (or divine) flame, passion and attraction. When this connection is secured (or realized) such an ecstasy and happiness become manifest in the heart that man doth fly away (with joy) and uttereth melody and song. Just as the soul bringeth the body in motion, so that spiritual bounty and real connection likewise moveth (or cheereth) the human soul. (*Tablets* 1:195)

In other words, ‘The spirit has great perception without the intermediary of any of the five senses, such as the eyes or ears’ (SAQ252, ch.71, para.7). However,

The mind and the thought of man sometimes discover truths, and from this thought and discovery signs and results are produced. This thought has a foundation. But many things come to the mind of man which are like the waves of the sea of imaginations; they have no fruit, and no result comes from them. (SAQ253, ch.71, para.9)

In this context, we could say that ideas conceived under the impulse of imagination do not bear fruit—that is, they do not produce fruits of unity, harmony and peace.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that inspiration may be received through ‘Obligatory Prayer’ (in *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. XXI) and ‘during meditation’ (*Paris Talks* 187, ch.54, para.11). He writes in this regard:

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. (in *The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*, no. XXI)

He also writes: ‘when the heart becometh confident, the imagination of Satan and evil vanisheth away. If the heart becometh absolutely tranquil, suspicion and imagination will entirely pass away’ (*Tablets* 1:104). He explains this concept in detail (*Tablets* 3:706):

if thy mind become empty and pure from every mention and thought and thy heart attracted wholly to the Kingdom of God, forget all else besides God and come in communion with the Spirit of God, then the Holy Spirit will assist thee with a power which will enable thee to penetrate all things, and a Dazzling Spark which enlightens all sides, a Brilliant Flame in the zenith of the heavens, will teach thee that which thou dost not know of the facts of the universe and of the divine doctrine.

He also says in an address He delivered to the Paris Theosophical Society at the Theosophical Headquarters, 59 Avenue de la Bourdonnois, on 13 February 1913:

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. (*Divine Philosophy* *166-7)

And finally, He describes (*Tablets* 1:195) the condition of a person who receives inspiration from the Holy Spirit:

A real, spiritual connection between the True One and the servant is a luminous bounty which causeth an ecstatic . . . flame, passion and attraction. When this connection is secured . . . such an ecstasy and happiness become manifest in the heart that man doth fly away (with joy) and uttereth melody and song. Just as the soul bringeth the body in motion, so that spiritual bounty and real connection likewise moveth (or cheereth) the human soul.

Shoghi Effendi explains, in a letter written on his behalf on 25 January 1943, that inspiration ‘can be received through meditation’ and that ‘God can inspire into our minds things that we had no previous knowledge of, if He desires to do so’ (in *Compilation* 2:241, no.1771). He also makes clear, in a letter written on his behalf on 19 November 1945, that ‘we cannot say that any inspiration which a person, not knowing Bahá’u’lláh, or not believing in God, receives is merely from his own ego’ (in *Compilation* 2: 241, no.1774).

A key to a better understanding of the guidance given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as to inspiration may be found in the following Tablet (*Tablets* 3:669):

Know, that the pure hearts upon which the mysteries of the Kingdom of God are printed and pictured, are reflections one upon another and thus the one can discover the secrets of the other, because such hearts are only mirrors confronting each other on which the secrets of unity, affinity and concord are printed and reflected. Accordingly, it would be possible that a certain servant of the servants of the Merciful might discover a treasured mystery or a preserved sign, whatever his shortcomings or defects might be; yet we do indeed rely upon God the Forgiver. I supplicate Him to deliver us from the pangs of lust and its dangers and from the destructive conditions of passion.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá uses the versatile metaphor of light and mirrors in this Tablet. He describes human hearts as mirrors capable of reflecting ‘the mysteries of the

Kingdom of God' (ibid.), and light may be reflected from one heart to another. Although 'it would be possible that a certain servant of the servants of the Merciful might discover a treasured mystery or a preserved sign, whatever his shortcomings or defects might be' (ibid.), however, the light's 'appearance in every mirror is conditioned by the colour of that mirror' (Bahá'u'lláh, in *Compilation* 3:19, no.22). And thus it is better for a seeker trying to be delivered 'from the pangs of lust and its dangers and from the destructive conditions of passion' ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets* 3:669). Then his heart will be 'moved by the fragrance of the love of God', and his 'memory' will be a 'fountain overflowing with the water of the knowledge of God', and he will be able to express ideas whereby 'the breast of the believers may be refreshed and dilated with joy' (ibid.). In other words, the seeker's struggle toward spiritual perfection is the soundest guarantee that his words and actions may be inspired and thus capable of inspiring her fellow beings with noble ideas and feelings. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote in a Tablet to Y. Dawud:

'O God quicken me with the breaths of the Holy Spirit.' For that which contains the fulfilment of all human inspiration, for that which we supplicate in words is the breath of the Holy Spirit. Verily, it changeth the earthly man into a heavenly one, the materialist into a spiritual being, the unenlightened into a reflection of the divine, and the satanic man into a godly person. It maketh the blind to see and quickeneth the dead. (quoted in Rabb 100)

A seeker is mainly inspired whenever she relies on the guidance vouchsafed by the Manifestation of God (SAQ236, ch.64, para.4):

Man is said to be the greatest representative of God, and he is the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of beings exist in him. If he comes under the shadow of the True Educator and is rightly trained, he becomes the essence of essences, the light of lights, the spirit of spirits; he becomes the center of the divine appearances, the source of spiritual qualities, the rising-place of heavenly lights, and the receptacle of divine inspirations (*ilhámát*). If he is deprived of this education, he becomes the manifestation of satanic qualities, the sum of animal vices, and the source of all dark conditions.

Attaining the bounty of the Holy Spirit

Since the only way to attain certitude is through the bounty of the Holy Spirit, a seeker needs to know how to attain it. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions in *Some Answered Questions* ‘the state in which one should be to seriously search for the truth . . . the condition of seeking’ (38, ch.10, paras.11, 12).

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.

His words are quite concise; however, they are supported by many explanations of this issue in the Bahá’í Writings. This literature includes (1) place the five paragraphs in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* improperly known as ‘Tablet of the True Seeker’ (KI 192-8, paras.213-18; KMI 148-53), (2) the Valley of Search in the Seven Valleys, (3) the passages in *Gems of Divine Mysteries* where the Garden of Search is described, and also the *Lawḥ-i-Aḥmad bih Fársí*, a Tablet written in Adrianople describing ‘the path of faith and belief’ (Taherzadeh, *Revelation* 2:137-8). This Tablet is almost entirely translated into English by Shoghi Effendi in *Gleanings* (322-9, nos. CLII and CLIII; see *Muntakhabátí* 207-11). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá dwelt on the same subject in His talk delivered on 26 May 1912 at Mount Morris Baptist Church, Fifth Avenue and 126th Street, New York, published in English in *Promulgation* 147-50 on notes taken by Esther Foster and in Persian in *Kháṭábát* 394-400:

Behold how the sun shines upon all creation, but only surfaces that are pure and polished can reflect its glory and light. The darkened soul has no portion of the revelation of the glorious effulgence of reality; and the soil of self, unable to take advantage of that light, does not produce growth . . . Therefore, man must seek capacity (*isti ‘dád*) and develop readiness (*qábiliyyat*). As long as he lacks susceptibility (*isti ‘dád va qábiliyyat*) to divine influences, he is incapable of reflecting the light and assimilating its benefits . . . We must make the soil of our hearts receptive and fertile by tilling in order that the rain of

divine mercy may refresh them and bring forth roses and hyacinths of heavenly planting. We must have perceiving eyes (*chasm-i-bíná*) in order to see the light of the sun . . . (*Promulgation* 148-9, *Kháṭábát* 397-8)

This ‘capacity’ or ‘readiness’ can be attained in several ways. Some individuals derive ‘infinite significance and wisdom from the Book of Divine Revelation (*kitáb-i-vaḥíyy-i-iláhí*), and . . . draw inspiration (*ilhám*) from the unseen world of God (*ghaybí-i-rabbání*)’, (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Secret* 58, *Risálih* 68). Others make ‘mention of the name of . . . [their] Lord’ and ‘the hosts of Divine inspiration . . . descend upon . . . [them] from the heaven of . . . [His] name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise’ (Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 280 sec.129, para.3). Still others ‘for the sake of God, arise to serve His Cause’ and thus become ‘the recipients of divine inspiration from the unseen Kingdom’ (Bahá’u’lláh, ‘*Bishárát*’ 27, ‘*Ishráqát*’ 129).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá describes such a ‘ready’ soul as follows:

This is what is meant by the Qur’anic verse: ‘. . . whose oil would well nigh shine out, even though fire touched it not! It is light upon light’. That is, this oil is so fully prepared, so ready to be lit, that it almost catches fire of itself, though no flame be at hand; which means that the capacity for faith, and the deserving it, can be so great, that without the communication of a single word the light shines forth. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Memorials* 77)

The result of this kind of search and effort made according to this guidance and blessed by the bounty of the Holy Spirit is described as

gain[ing] a true knowledge of your own selves – a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being. Ye would find yourselves independent of all else but Me, and would perceive, with your inner and outer eye, and as manifest as the revelation of My effulgent Name, the seas of My loving-kindness and bounty moving within you. (*Gleanings* 326, CLIII, para.6)

Enlightenment and certitude

Having obtained the bounty of the Holy Spirit, a seeker will be able to attain enlightenment and certitude. Certitude is a kind of knowledge quite different from the ‘assured’ knowledge pursued by the Western man, relying on his senses, intellect, and sometimes his insight without striving to attain the bounty of the Holy Spirit. This kind of knowledge, described as enlightenment and certitude, is the discovery

of the image of God in oneself, a discovery that becomes manifest as the capacity to express the Names of God in the form of thoughts, feelings, words and actions.

Enlightenment and certitude and fulfilling the purpose of one's life

Attaining enlightenment and certitude is a fundamental prerequisite in view of fulfilling the purpose of one's life and becoming an efficient servant of the Cause of God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the first verse of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas as follows:

'good actions alone, without the knowledge of God, cannot be the cause of eternal salvation, everlasting success, and prosperity, and entrance into the Kingdom of God'. (SAQ238, ch.65, para.4)

He also says:

if to the knowledge of God is joined the love of God, and attraction, ecstasy and goodwill, a righteous action is then perfect and complete. Otherwise, though a good action is praiseworthy, yet if it is not sustained by the knowledge of God, the love of God, and a sincere intention, it is imperfect. (SAQ302, ch.84, para.7)

We may conclude that the entire course of our life should be an unrelenting search after such conditions as will make us ready to receive, through the correct use of the four instruments of knowledge as well as of our willpower, the bounties of the Holy Spirit so that we may fulfill the purpose of our lives.

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