

## La verdadera espiritualidad, ¿Qué es y cómo alcanzarla?

Otra mañana 'Abdu'l-Bahá comenzó a hablar en el mismo momento en que un grupo de buscadores se sumaba a la concurrencia . 'Abdu'l-Bahá dijo: "Alabado sea Dios, este siglo es un siglo glorioso. Ojalá que el amor aumente día a día, y que prenda fuego hasta encender el candil en la oscuridad, cual regalo y bondad de Dios".

"Sabed, oh vosotros los poseedores de percepción, que la verdadera espiritualidad es como un lago de aguas claras donde se refleja lo divino. Tal era la espiritualidad de Jesucristo. Hay otra clase que es como un espejismo, que parece ser espiritual, y no lo es. Lo que es auténticamente espiritual debe iluminar el camino hacia Dios y debe desembocar en obras. No podemos dar crédito al llamamiento a ser espirituales si no hay resultados. El espíritu es la realidad, y cuando el espíritu de cada uno de nosotros busca unirse a la Gran Realidad, **debe a su vez dar vida.** En los tiempos de Cristo los judíos estaban muertos, carecían de vida real, y Jesús les confirió un nuevo aliento a sus cuerpos. ¡Ved lo que desde entonces se ha conseguido!" (Abdu'l-Baha, Abdul-Bahá en Londres)

El problema a que se enfrenta es un problema que afecta y desconcierta gravemente a muchos jóvenes de hoy. Cómo alcanzar la espiritualidad es, efectivamente, una cuestión a la que cada joven, ya sea hombre o mujer, tendrá, tarde o temprano, que buscar una respuesta satisfactoria. Es precisamente debido a que no se ha dado ni se ha hallado tal respuesta satisfactoria por lo que la juventud moderna se encuentra perpleja y, en consecuencia, se ve arrastrada por las fuerzas del materialismo, que con tanta fuerza están socavando las bases de la vida moral y espiritual del hombre.

En efecto, la razón principal de los males que actualmente son endémicos en la sociedad es la falta de espiritualidad. La civilización materialista de nuestra época ha absorbido la energía y el interés de la humanidad de tal manera que la gente en general ya no siente la necesidad de elevarse por encima de las fuerzas y condiciones de su existencia material diaria. No existe la suficiente demanda de aquellas cosas que debiéramos calificar de espirituales como para diferenciarlas de las necesidades y exigencias de nuestra existencia física.

Las causas de la crisis universal que aflige a la humanidad son, por lo tanto, fundamentalmente espirituales. El espíritu de la época, en general, es irreligioso. La actitud del hombre hacia la vida es demasiado grosera y materialista como para permitirle elevarse hacia los reinos más altos del espíritu.

Es esta situación tan tristemente morbosa en que ha caído la sociedad la que la religión trata de mejorar y transformar; pues el núcleo de la fe religiosa es aquel sentimiento místico que une al hombre con Dios. Este estado de comunión espiritual puede darse y preservarse mediante la meditación y la oración. Ésta es la razón por la cual Bahá'u'lláh ha hecho tanto hincapié en la importancia de la adoración. No basta con que el creyente simplemente acepte y observe las enseñanzas. Debe, además, cultivar el sentido de la espiritualidad, que puede conseguir principalmente mediante la oración. La Fe Bahá'í, como todas las demás Religiones divinas, es de índole esencialmente mística. Su objetivo principal es el desarrollo de la persona

y de la sociedad, mediante la adquisición de virtudes y poderes espirituales. El alma del hombre es lo que ha de alimentarse en primer lugar. Y lo que mejor puede proporcionarle este alimento espiritual es la oración. Las leyes y las instituciones, según las concibe Bahá'u'lláh, sólo pueden llegar a ser realmente efectivas cuando nuestra vida espiritual interior haya sido perfeccionada y transformada. De otro modo, la religión degenerará, se convertirá en una simple organización y pasará a ser algo muerto.

Los creyentes, especialmente los jóvenes, deberían darse cuenta perfectamente de la necesidad de la oración. Pues la oración es absolutamente indispensable para su desarrollo espiritual interior, y esto, como ya se ha dicho, es la propia base y el propósito de la Religión de Dios."34 (Casa Universal de Justicia, La Importancia de la Oración la meditación y la Actitud devocional)

"Por tanto, lo que digo es que el hombre debe recorrer la senda de Dios. Día a día debe enfocarse por mejorar, su creencia debe recrecerse y volverse más firme, sus otras cualidades y su remisión a Dios han de ser mayores, el fuego del amor debe arder con mayor brillo; luego, día a día, debe hacer progresos, mas detenerse sobre la marcha es tanto como retroceder. Cuando el pájaro aletea remonta vuelo cada vez más alto, pues tan pronto como deja de hacerlo empieza su descenso. Cada día, por la mañana al levantarnos, deberíais comparar la nueva jornada con su víspera y ver en que condición os halláis. Si veis que vuestra creencia es más firme y que vuestro corazón está más entregado a Dios y que ha aumentado vuestro amor y que vuestra libertad respecto al mundo es mayor, dad entonces gracias a Dios y solicited que estas cualidades crezcan y aumenten. Debéis comenzar rezando y arrepintiéndoos de cuanto hayáis actuado mal e implorar y solicitar la ayuda y asistencia para volveros mejores que ayer, de modo que

## podáis continuar realizando progresos." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West 8,nº6 (24 de Junio 1917)

¡Oh amigos de Dios! Si tenéis confianza en la Palabra de Dios y sois fuertes; si seguís los preceptos de Bahá'u'lláh de atender al enfermo, levantar al caído, cuidar del pobre y del necesitado, dar cobijo al indigente, proteger al oprimido, consolar a los atribulados y amar al género humano con todo vuestro corazón, entonces puedo deciros que antes de que pase mucho tiempo, este lugar de reunión recogerá una maravillosa cosecha. Día a día cada miembro progresará y se volverá más y más espiritual. Pero debéis tener una base firme, y vuestros propósitos y aspiraciones deben ser comprendidos claramente por cada uno de los miembros. Deben ser los siguientes:

- 1.- Mostrar compasión y buena voluntad a todo el género humano.
- 2.- Rendir servicio a la humanidad.
- 3.- Esforzarse por guiar e iluminar a quienes están en oscuridad.
- 4.- Ser bondadosos con todos, y manifestar afecto hacia toda alma viviente.
- 5.- Ser humildes en vuestra actitud hacia Dios, ser constantes en la oración a Él, para crecer diariamente en el acercamiento a Dios.
- 6.- Ser tan fieles y sinceros en todas vuestras acciones que cada uno de los miembros se distinga por la encarnación de las cualidades de honestidad, amor, fe, amabilidad, generosidad y valor. Ser desprendidos de todo lo que no sea Dios, atraídos por el Hálito Celestial, un alma divina; para que el mundo pueda conocer que un bahá'í es un ser perfecto.

Tratad de alcanzar esto en vuestras reuniones. ¡Entonces, en verdad, vosotros, los amigos de Dios, os reuniréis con gran alegría! Ayudaos los unos a los otros, convertíos en un solo ser, y habréis alcanzado la unidad perfecta.

Ruego a Dios que diariamente podáis avanzar en espiritualidad, que el amor a Dios se manifieste cada vez más en vosotros, que los pensamientos de vuestros corazones se purifiquen, y que vuestros rostros puedan estar siempre vueltos hacia Él. Que todos y cada uno de vosotros alcance el umbral de la unidad y entre en el Reino. Que cada uno de vosotros sea como una antorcha llameante, encendida y ardiendo vivamente con el fuego del Amor de Dios. (Abdu'l-Baha, LA SABIDURIA DE 'ABDU'L-BAHA)

### **Requisitos esenciales del crecimiento espiritual**

**Bahá'u'lláh ha firmado muy claramente en Sus Escritos los requisitos esenciales de nuestro crecimiento espiritual, y éstos los recalca una y otra vez 'Abdu'l-Bahá en Sus charlas y Tablas. Cabe resumirlos brevemente de esta manera:**

- 1. La recitación diaria y con devoción pura de una de las Oraciones Obligatorias.**
- 2. La lectura regular de las Sagradas Escrituras, específicamente al menos por la mañana y por la noche, con reverencia, atención y pensamiento.**
- 3. Meditación orante de las Enseñanzas, de modo que las comprendamos más profundamente, las cumplamos con mayor fidelidad, y las hagamos llegar con mayor precisión a los demás.**
- 4. Esforzarse todos los días por hacer que nuestra conducta concuerde más con las elevadas pautas establecidas en las Enseñanzas.**
- 5. Enseñanza de la Causa de Dios**
- 6. Servicio abnegado en los quehaceres de la Causa y en el desempeño de nuestra profesión u oficio.**

**Estos puntos, expresados con otras palabras, ya los han transmitido a los amigos de Europa los Consejeros, pero la Casa de Justicia desea subrayarlos, debido a que representan la senda hacia la consecución de la verdadera espiritualidad, tal como la ha dejado sentada la Manifestación de Dios para esta época.**

#### **Oración y meditación: ejercicios personales**

**Resulta sorprendente en la Fe cuán íntimos y personales son los ejercicios espirituales más fundamentales de la oración y la meditación. Por supuesto, los bahá'ís cuentan con reuniones de devociones, tal como ocurre en el Mashriqu'l-Adhkáres, o en las Fiestas de 19 Días, pero las oraciones obligatorias diarias están dispuestas para recitarse en la intimidad del retiro personal, en tanto que la meditación sobre las Enseñanzas, asimismo, constituye una actividad personal, no una forma de terapia de grupo. En Sus alocuciones 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe la oración como «conversación con Dios», y lo que respecta a la meditación afirma que «mientras meditáis habláis con vuestro propio espíritu. En ese estado de conciencia planteáis ciertas preguntas a vuestro espíritu y éste responde: la luz se abre paso y la realidad queda revelada».**

Por supuesto, existen otras cosas que pueden acrecentar nuestra espiritualidad. Por ejemplo, Bahá'u'lláh no ha especificado procedimiento alguno que deba seguirse al meditar, por lo que los creyentes disponen de libertad para hacerlo como gusten en este campo, siempre que ello esté en armonía con las Enseñanzas, pero tales actividades son puramente personales y bajo ninguna circunstancia deberían confundirse con los actos que Bahá'u'lláh mismo considera que son de fundamental importancia para nuestro crecimiento espiritual. Algunos creyentes quizá encuentren provechoso seguir un método particular de meditación, y quizá así lo vean, pero tales métodos no deberán enseñarse en las Escuelas Bahá'ís de Verano o llevarse a cabo durante alguna sesión de la Escuela puesto que, si bien pueden atraer a ciertas personas, quizá repelan a otras. Nada tienen que ver con la Fe y deberían mantenerse separadas de modo que los buscadores no se confundan.

Al parecer existen en Noruega numerosos creyentes que obtienen provecho de la meditación. La Casa de Justicia sugiere que en sus meditaciones personales quizá deseen utilizar la repetición del Más Grande Nombre, Alláh'u'Abhá, 95 veces al día, disposición que si bien no se aplica en occidente, figura entre las Leyes, Disposiciones y Exhortaciones del Kitáb-i-Aqdas. (Véase p.46 de Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas). *(Nota intercalada de Emilio. En muchas prácticas de meditación se usan mantras –repetición de un sonido o una frase una y otra vez como manera de concentrarse- La repetición del Más Grande Nombre 95 veces, siendo una ley de Báha'u'lláh muy bien podría –y con mayor provecho-sustituir los mantras que tal vez estos amigos noruegos estén usando en sus meditaciones, es lo que creo viene a decir la CUJ en esta carta)*

La Casa de Justicia tiene la seguridad de que los creyentes de toda Europa procurarán conscientemente acrecentar su espiritualidad de las seis formas bosquejadas más arriba, haciéndose conscientes en su ser más íntimo de que en todos sus servicios no son sino vehículos del poder confirmador de Dios, vehículos que atraerán los corazones de sus conciudadanos y penetrarán en la miasma del materialismo que ofusca la visión de tantos compatriotas. El esfuerzo, la actividad, la unidad y la fe constante en el poder de Bahá'u'lláh sin duda superarán todos los obstáculos. (Carta de la Casa de Justicia a la AEN de Noruega 1-9-1983)

## Notes on Baha'i concept of spirituality – by Adib Taherzadeh

In their message to the participants at the International Conference in Dublin, the Universal House of Justice called for a campaign of spiritualization of the Baha'i community. Some friends have been asking the true meaning of spiritualization and want to know how to achieve it. The word "spiritual" when used in a non-Baha'i context has connotations which could mislead the individual. To be spiritual is not to hold one's head in the clouds and walk in the air, or become careless of the affairs of this world.

The Baha'i concept of spirituality is simple. When the soul draws near to Baha'u'llah it becomes spiritual. A true Baha'i whose heart is closely linked with Baha'u'llah will grow in spirituality. He will become so enamored of Him that he will obey His teachings wholeheartedly and serve His Cause with the utmost devotion.

### The knowledge of the soul

The study of the Holy Writings will enable us to appreciate this important subject. A human being has a soul and a body. We have acquired a great deal of knowledge about our bodies, but the knowledge of our spiritual nature is far more important.

The soul of man does not originate from the world of matter; it is an emanation from the spiritual worlds of God. During the period when the embryo is growing in the womb of the mother, the soul becomes associated with the body. Because the soul is a spiritual and not a material entity, it does not enter the body or leave it. The soul is exalted above entry or exit, ascent or descent. It is independent of any earthly agency. Its association with the body is similar to the association of light with a mirror. The light is not inside the mirror; it is reflected in it, and when the mirror is removed, the light remains unaffected.

Since the soul is exalted above all physical creation, our minds are incapable of grasping its nature and powerless to fathom its essence. We can perceive only the attributes and qualities of the soul. In this life we have a limited capacity to understand spiritual verities. Our knowledge of the soul is derived from the Manifestations of God Who, through Their words, have conveyed some of its significances. And words are inadequate tools for explaining spiritual realities.

God's creation is one entity. It includes both the spiritual and physical worlds. The same laws and principles that are in nature are to be found in the spiritual realms, but they are applied on a higher level and contain features that are non-existent in the lower kingdom.

### Physical and spiritual counterparts

Because the basic principles and laws of existence run through the whole of creation, many of the physical phenomena we notice on this earth have counterparts in the spiritual realms. Let us therefore examine some aspects of the soul in the light of these common principles. From the study of the Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha it appears that the counterpart of the soul in this physical world is the embryo growing in the womb. We note many similarities between the two, and the knowledge of the one will lead to a limited understanding of the other.

We know that man's physical body grows in the womb of the mother and acquires limbs and organs which are needed only after birth. The same principle applies to the spiritual realms.

For the soul progresses in the womb of this world, acquiring spiritual qualities which are essential to its existence in the next life. The child in the womb of the mother and the soul in this life are indeed counterparts.

The soul can only acquire good qualities

We notice in the physical world that the embryo in the womb of the mother starts its life with one cell. With the passage of time the cell multiplies, limbs and organs come into existence, eventually the embryonic life comes to an end, and the child is born as a perfect being. Here we see the vast contrast between the first cell at the beginning and its consummation at the time of birth.

The same phenomenon occurs with the soul. At its inception it is without experience, and its qualities and powers lie latent within it. As a result of its association with the body in this "womb-world," its individuality develops and it later acquires spiritual qualities and divine attributes which it carries to the next world. But the soul cannot take with it bad qualities, for in fact these are but the lack of good qualities and do not exist, just as poverty is the lack of riches. If a man has lived an ungodly life, his soul is impoverished and can take only a small measure of goodness with it to the next world.

From study of the Writings we gather that similar to this world, where there are degrees of existence such as the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and man -- and even within each kingdom there are many divisions -- in the spiritual worlds of God the souls of men will also progress on different levels depending on what good qualities they take with them to the next world.

Those on a lower level will not be able to understand those on a higher one. Here we see an example of how the same principle which operates in the physical world, namely the diversity of God's creation, is also operative in the spiritual realms.

Where is the next world?

Another example is the principle that higher forms of life revolve around and depend upon the lower. In this physical world we observe that all living things derive their sustenance from the mineral world which is the lowest kingdom. In one of His Tablets, Baha'u'llah testifies that all the spiritual worlds revolve around this world. This indicates that the next world is not divorced from life in this world, but rather encompasses it. We see in nature that the child grows in the womb of the mother unable to discover that the world into which he is destined to be born is amazingly close to him. Only a thin barrier separates the two worlds. Again this principle applies in the spiritual realms. The soul will discover after its separation from the body how close the spiritual world has been to it. But as long as it is in this mortal abode, the next world and its grandeur are hidden from its eyes.

Baha'u'llah states in another of His Tablets that should the station destined for a true believer in the world beyond be revealed to the extent of a needle's eye, every soul would expire in ecstasy! Just as the unborn child is incapable of discovering the vastness and beauty of this world, so the soul cannot discern the exalted domain of the spiritual world while on this earth.

The main purpose of man's creation

What then is the purpose of the creation of man in the light of Baha'u'llah's Revelation? "The purpose of God in creating man," Baha'u'llah proclaims, "hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence." And this can be attained only through the recognition of His Manifestation. By turning to Him and receiving the outpourings of His glory, the soul becomes illuminated with the spirit of faith. It is not unlike the birth of a child. The child cannot come into existence without a father, and the soul cannot acquire the spirit of faith without the help of the Manifestation of God. The soul needs to recognize and establish a spiritual link with Him.

In this age the main purpose of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is to illumine the human soul, endow it with the spirit of faith, and thereby create a new race of men. By turning to Baha'u'llah with devotion, by learning to love Him, by submitting itself to the influence of His Revelation, and by establishing spiritual communion with Him, the soul will become fertilized and will give birth to the spirit of faith. This is the ultimate and the most glorious destiny of the soul, the purpose for which it was created.

#### The spiritual food

When a person's heart is touched by the love of Baha'u'llah and says, "I believe," the spirit of faith is newly born in him. This is the "second birth" spoken of in the Gospels. Like a newborn babe which has to take food in order to grow, we have to take spiritual food to nourish our souls.

The spiritual food is the Word of God revealed by Baha'u'llah for this age. By reading His words, the spirit of faith will grow step by step and the believer will become steadfast in his faith, and assured and happy in his life. If he neglects this vital necessity, his faith will diminish in strength and he may even lose it altogether.

#### The first step toward spiritual growth

Like a mother who offers food to her child several times a day, Baha'u'llah has enjoined on His followers to read His words twice a day, in the morning and the evening, and states that those who do not read them are not faithful to the Covenant of God.

The reading of the words is not to be confused with the saying of prayers, which is a different matter altogether. The words of Baha'u'llah are contained in His Tablets and books. Their reading exerts the same influence upon the soul as food does on the body.

In the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah says that there is no merit in reading His words when one is tired. He says to read a few lines with a spirit of joy and fragrance is better than to read a whole book when depressed and weary. This commandment is very much in tune with the laws of nature wherein a person eats his food only when he is hungry. Another similarity is that in nature one must eat food regularly every day. To eat but once in a lifetime is not sufficient. It is the same with reading the words of God, which is the food of the spirit. To read the Holy Writings once in a while is not enough. As ordained by Baha'u'llah, an individual must, if he is to grow spiritually, read His words, which are recorded in His Tablets, twice each day.

#### Allow the power of the words to enter into our hearts

These words with all their vivifying force must then be allowed to penetrate into the heart, and to strengthen one's faith. This penetration will take place when we are conscious that they are



words which are charged with tremendous potency. Having read in the morning with this spirit, we can then commune with Baha'u'llah during the day at our work or wherever we may be and meditate on His words, so that like food which is absorbed in the body, these words may be; absorbed in our hearts and souls. It is then that we will hunger for more reading of the words in the evening. If we do not, it is a sign that we have not allowed the words to penetrate into our hearts.

#### The second step

Allied with reading the Writings, and comparable to it in the influence it can exert upon one's soul, is Baha'u'llah's commandment of daily obligatory prayers. The obligatory prayer is different from other prayers in that it constitutes one of the major ordinances of Baha'u'llah, and there are certain rites associated with it including the turning toward the Qiblih when reciting it in the privacy of one's own chamber. There are three obligatory prayers, and the individual may choose any of the three.

Baha'u'llah has attached utmost importance to this particular commandment; 'Abdu'l-Baha, in one of His Tablets, describes the obligatory prayer as "the very foundation of the Cause of God" and "the cause of spiritual life" for the individual. In another Tablet, He states that the observance of the ordinance of obligatory prayer is binding on all and no excuse is acceptable, except when a person is mentally deranged or is confronted by extraordinary circumstances.

It is impossible to draw nigh to Baha'u'llah without the daily observance of this important commandment.

Apart from obligatory prayers, which are enjoined on all believers, there are many prayers revealed by the Bab, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha which are of a different nature, the recital of which does not constitute a religious rite. Their recital is voluntary and can be done whenever the individual is moved to do so, either in private or in public.

#### The power of prayer

Prayer to become empty of self is a vital necessity for spiritual growth. Man's natural link with God is through prayer. A prayer that is without desire can exert a potent influence upon the soul.

Through it, the channels of God's grace will be opened and the outpouring of His bounties will refresh and invigorate the soul. Like a tree which, if alive, stretches its branches and leaves toward the sun to absorb its life-giving rays, the soul of man, if illumined with the light of faith, yearns for God in prayer, loves to extol Him, and longs to commune with Him. If not, prayer may become an act of lip service, devoid of joy and sincerity, and man's heart will then be unable to receive the outpouring of God's favors released in this day. A tree that is insensitive to the life-giving rays of the sun is dead, though the sun pours out its energies without ceasing. In the same way, the vivifying energies of God's infinite love are diffused throughout the whole of creation; yet not until man turns his heart toward God in adoration can he become the recipient of these energies.

The power that can be generated in the heart of the believer, when he is freed from all desire and turns to God with songs of praise and glorification, is beyond the comprehension of man. Suffice it to say that many heroes of our Faith have derived their courage and steadfastness

from this source. They have used the power of prayer to teach, and, as a result, have become worthy instruments to bring thousands under the shadow of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

#### The third step

Reading the words of Baha'u'llah, vital as it is, cannot be conducive to spiritual progress unless it is combined with service to the Cause. Should a person take food regularly and in abundance, but fail to move about and use his muscles every day, he soon would become an invalid. In the same way, reading the Writings must be accompanied by action. The greatest service to the Cause in this day is to teach the Faith as a daily obligation and to engage in building and consolidating local Spiritual Assemblies everywhere.

Teaching, which is the act of conveying the message of God to a soul, has been given a pre-eminent position in this Dispensation. Not only has Baha'u'llah enjoined upon every believer the duty of teaching His Cause, but He regards it as "the most meritorious of all deeds." And 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated, "Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of teaching. It draweth unto us the grace of God, and is our first obligation." And again: "Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance for it is the head cornerstone of the foundation itself."

#### The fourth step

The spiritual growth of the believer depends also upon pure and goodly deeds, and obedience to the laws and teachings of Baha'u'llah. To live the life in accordance with the teachings of God is the goal of every true Baha'i. It is also a prerequisite of successful and effective teaching.

Baha'u'llah, in one of His Tablets, states: "God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of teaching His Cause. Whosoever ariseth to discharge this duty must needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an upright and praiseworthy character, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call. Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers."

This statement leaves no room for doubt, for Baha'u'llah says: "Without it (an upright and praiseworthy character), he can never hope to influence his hearers." The word "never" is emphatic and rules out any other method. In many other Tablets, Baha'u'llah has revealed similar statements.

#### The protection of one's faith

We observe in nature that when a child is born, a most vital task then begins, and that is the rearing of the child and its protection, which calls for loving care and vigilance on the part of parents. It is the same with the spirit of faith. Once a person says, "I am a Baha'i," he must protect this most precious gift of faith, and enable it to grow steadily.

Reading the Holy Writings, and taking other steps mentioned in these pages, will put us on the highway toward spiritual progress, and bring us closer to Baha'u'llah.

#### The three great robbers of faith and spirituality

As we tread the path of spiritual progress we must be vigilant lest we are robbed of our faith by the forces of negation and ungodliness.

1. The first of these robbers is attachment to this world. The Baha'i understanding of detachment is not to renounce the world and its affairs; however, anything that becomes a barrier between the believer and Baha'u'llah is attachment to this world. Love of one's self is the most formidable of these barriers. The greatest enemy that man has is the passion of his own self and ego.

2. The second robber of one's faith is bad company. Friendship with the ungodly may endanger or destroy one's faith. This is Baha'u'llah's ominous warning:

O Son of Dust! Beware! Walk not with the ungodly and seek not fellowship with him, for such companionship turneth the radiance of the heart into infernal fire." The word "ungodly" should not be misunderstood. An ungodly person may profess belief in God, while many who regard themselves as agnostics or atheists may not in reality be ungodly.

In contrast to this, we receive spiritual upliftment when we come in contact with someone who is on fire with the love of Baha'u'llah. The very company of such a person increases one's faith in God. Baha'u'llah says in The Hidden Words: "... He that seeketh to commune with God, let him betake himself to the companionship of His loved ones; and he that desireth to hearken unto the word of God, let him give ear to the words of His chosen ones."

3. The third enemy is gossip and backbiting. To find fault in others and speak of it will undermine the very foundation of our faith in Baha'u'llah. He counsels us in these words: "O Emigrants! The tongue I have designed for the mention of Me, defile it not with detraction. If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others."

A summary of practical suggestions

In conclusion, let us summarize some of the points already mentioned. The four steps which are vital in our lives are:

1. The regular reading of the Writings twice a day. This is an act of devotion to God. To miss reading either in the morning or evening is like missing one's food.

There are many Writings of Baha'u'llah available in English. The Gleanings, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, and The Hidden Words are a few examples. The latter is "a marvelous collection of gem-like utterances" by Him.

Let us remember that if one misses reading the words of Baha'u'llah in the morning due to lack of time and haste, it is easy to take a book to one's work, and if circumstances permit, to read a few passages there so as not to miss one's spiritual food.

Reading the words every morning and evening is, as we said, an act of devotion to God. The study of the Writings, however, is somewhat different from this act of devotion. We must study the Writings and the history of the Faith in order to deepen our understanding of it. This can be done anytime during the day or night. There are now some marvelous collections available, prepared by the Universal House of Justice. The following are particularly recommended for study: "The Power of Divine Assistance," "Excellence in All Things," "Family Life," and "The Gift of Teaching."

2. The recital of one of the three daily obligatory prayers.

3. Teaching the Cause of God by giving the message of Baha'u'llah to others, by making friends and inviting them to regular firesides, by travel-teaching, and by praying to be led to receptive souls.

Indeed, the best way to attract people to the Cause of God, and infinitely more effective than any campaign of publicity, is to pray earnestly to be led to receptive souls. Should there be sincerity and perseverance on the part of the Baha'i teacher, there is no doubt that, as promised by the Founders of our Faith, his prayers will be answered and many pure souls will be led to the Fountain of Truth.

4. And last, but not least, living the life as a true Baha'i.

#### Conclusion

If the individual who has recognized the Station of Baha'u'llah perseveres in reading the Word of God in the morning and evening every day, if he opens his heart to the influences of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, if he recites the obligatory prayers in the manner ordained by Him, if he associates with devoted Baha'is who are on fire with the Faith and eschews fellowship with the ungodly, and if he arises to serve to the best of his ability the Cause of God, then his love for Baha'u'llah will increase day by day and he will be assisted from on high to grow in spirituality and faith. (Adib Taherzadeh, Baha'i News May 1986; reprinted from an article entitled 'Insights into the Spiritualization of the Community', by Adib Taherzadeh, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Europe, published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Republic of Ireland in May-June issue of New Day)