

O thou distinguished personage, thou seeker after truth!

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



— 21 —

O thou distinguished personage, thou seeker after truth! Thy letter of 4 April 1921 hath been read with love.

The existence of the Divine Being hath been clearly established, on the basis of logical proofs, but the reality of the Godhead is beyond the grasp of the mind. When thou dost carefully consider this matter, thou wilt see that a lower plane can never comprehend a higher. The mineral kingdom, for example, which is lower, is precluded from comprehending the vegetable kingdom; for the mineral, any such understanding would be utterly impossible. In the same way, no matter how far the vegetable kingdom may develop, it will achieve no conception of the animal kingdom, and any such comprehension at its level would be unthinkable, for the animal occupieth a plane higher than that of the vegetable: this tree cannot conceive of hearing and sight. And the animal kingdom, no matter how far it may evolve, can never become aware of the reality of the intellect, which discovereth the inner essence of all things, and comprehendeth those realities which cannot be seen; for the human plane as compared with that of the animal is very high. And although these beings all coexist in the contingent world, in each case the difference in their stations precludeth their grasp of the whole; for no lower degree can understand a higher, such comprehension being impossible.

The higher plane, however, understandeth the lower. The animal, for instance, comprehendeth the mineral and vegetable, the human understandeth the planes of the animal, vegetable and mineral. But the mineral cannot possibly understand the realms of man. And notwithstanding the fact that all these entities coexist in the phenomenal world, even so, no lower degree can ever comprehend a higher.

Then how could it be possible for a contingent reality, that is, man, to understand the nature of that preexistent Essence, the Divine Being? The difference in station between man and the Divine Reality is thousands upon thousands of times greater than the difference between vegetable and animal. And that which a human being would conjure up in his mind is but the fanciful image of his human condition, it doth not encompass God's reality but rather is encompassed by it. That is, man graspeth his own illusory conceptions, but the Reality of Divinity can never be grasped: It, Itself, encompasseth all created things, and all created things are in Its grasp. That Divinity which man doth imagine for himself existeth only in his mind, not in truth. Man, however, existeth both in his mind and in truth; thus man is greater than that fanciful reality which he is able to imagine.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

The furthestmost limits of this bird of clay are these: he can flutter along for some short distance, into the endless vast; but he can never soar upward to the Sun in the high heavens. We must, nevertheless, set forth reasoned or inspired proofs as to the existence of the Divine Being, that is, proofs commensurate with the understanding of man.

It is obvious that all created things are connected one to another by a linkage complete and perfect, even, for example, as are the members of the human body. Note how all the members and component parts of the human body are connected one to another. In the same way, all the members of this endless universe are linked one to another. The foot and the step, for example, are connected to the ear and the eye; the eye must look ahead before the step is taken. The ear must hear before the eye will carefully observe. And whatever member of the human body is deficient, produceth a deficiency in the other members. The brain is connected with the heart and stomach, the lungs are connected with all the members. So is it with the other members of the body.

And each one of these members hath its own special function. The mind force — whether we call it preexistent or contingent — doth direct and coordinate all the members of the human body, seeing to it that each part or member duly performeth its own special function. If, however, there be some interruption in the power of the mind, all the members will fail to carry out their essential functions, deficiencies will appear in the body and the functioning of its members, and the power will prove ineffective.

Likewise, look into this endless universe: a universal power inevitably existeth, which encompasseth all, directing and regulating all the parts of this infinite creation; and were it not for this Director, this Coordinator, the universe would be flawed and deficient. It would be even as a madman; whereas ye can see that this endless creation carrieth out its functions in perfect order, every separate part of it performing its own task with complete reliability, nor is there any flaw to be found in all its workings. Thus it is clear that a Universal Power existeth, directing and regulating this infinite universe. Every rational mind can grasp this fact.

Furthermore, although all created things grow and develop, yet are they subjected to influences from without. For instance, the sun giveth heat, the rain nourisheth, the wind bringeth life, so that man can develop and grow. Thus it is clear that the human body is under influences from the outside, and that without those influences man could not grow. And likewise, those outside influences are subjected to other influences in their turn. For example, the growth and development of a human being is dependent upon the existence of water, and water is dependent upon the existence of rain, and rain is dependent upon the existence of clouds, and clouds are dependent upon the existence of the sun, which causeth land and sea to produce vapor, the condensation of vapor forming the clouds. Thus each one of these entities exerteth its influence and is likewise influenced in its turn. Inescapably then, the process leadeth to One Who influenceth all, and yet is influenced by none, thus severing the chain. The inner reality of that Being, however, is not known, although His effects are clear and evident.

And further, all created beings are limited, and this very limitation of all beings proveth the reality of the Limitless; for the existence of a limited being denoteth the existence of a Limitless One.

To sum it up, there are many such proofs, establishing the existence of that Universal Reality. And since that Reality is preexistent, It is untouched by the conditions that govern phenomena; for whatever entity is subject to circumstances and the play of events is contingent, not preexistent. Know then: that divinity which other communions and peoples have conjured up, falleth within the scope of their imagination, and not beyond it, whereas the reality of the Godhead is beyond all conceiving.

As to the Holy Manifestations of God, They are the focal points where the signs, tokens and perfections of that sacred, preexistent Reality appear in all their splendor. They are an eternal grace, a heavenly glory, and on Them dependeth the everlasting life of humankind. To illustrate: the Sun of Truth dwelleth in a sky to which no soul hath any access, and which no mind can reach, and He is far beyond the comprehension of all creatures. Yet the Holy Manifestations of God are even as a looking glass, burnished and without stain, which gathereth streams of light out of that Sun, and then scattereth the glory over the rest of creation. In that polished surface, the Sun with all Its majesty standeth clearly revealed. Thus, should the mirrored Sun proclaim, "I am the Sun!" this is but truth; and should It cry, "I am not the Sun!" this is the truth as well. And although the Daystar, with all Its glory, Its beauty, Its perfections, be clearly visible in that mirror without stain, still It hath not come down from Its own lofty station in the realms above, It hath not made Its way into the mirror; rather doth It continue to abide, as It will forever, in the supernal heights of Its own holiness.

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

It is clear, then, that the essential reality of God is revealed in His perfections; and the sun, with its perfections, reflected in a mirror, is a visible thing, an entity clearly expressing the bounty of God.

My hope is that thou wilt acquire a perceptive eye, a hearing ear, and that the veils will be removed from thy sight.

