

Investigating Reality  
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1. The first teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the investigation of reality. Man must seek reality himself, forsaking imitations and adherence to mere hereditary forms. As the nations of the world are following imitations in lieu of truth and as imitations are many and various, differences of belief have been productive of strife and warfare. So long as these imitations remain, the oneness of the world of humanity is impossible. Therefore, we must investigate reality in order that by its light the clouds and darkness may be dispelled. Reality is one reality; it does not admit multiplicity or division. If the nations of the world investigate reality, they will agree and become united. Many people and sects in Persia have sought reality through the guidance and teaching of Bahá'u'lláh. They have become united and now live in a state of agreement and love; among them there is no longer the least trace of enmity and strife.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 180

2. ... know ye that God has created in man the power of reason whereby man is enabled to investigate reality. God has not intended man to blindly imitate his fathers and ancestors. He has endowed him with mind or the faculty of reasoning by the exercise of which he is to investigate and discover the truth; and that which he finds real and true, he must accept. He must not be an imitator or blind follower of any soul. He must not rely implicitly upon the opinion of any man without investigation; nay, each soul must seek intelligently and independently, arriving at a real conclusion and bound only by that reality. The greatest cause of bereavement and disheartening in the world of humanity is ignorance based upon blind imitation. It is due to this that wars and battles prevail; from this cause hatred and animosity arise continually among mankind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 73-74

3. God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain. Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God. Therefore depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation; otherwise you will be utterly submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the bounties of God. Turn to God, supplicate humbly at His threshold, seeking assistance and confirmation, that God may rend asunder the veils that obscure your vision. Then will your eyes be filled with illumination, face to face you will behold the reality of God and your heart become completely purified from the dross of ignorance, reflecting the glories and bounties of the Kingdom.

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

4. Everything must needs have an origin and every building a builder. Verily, the Word of God is the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world-- a world which is adorned with the splendours of the Ancient of Days, yet is being renewed and regenerated at all times. Immeasurably exalted is the God of Wisdom Who hath raised this sublime structure.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 141

5. And also He saith: “Know thou with absolute certainty, and through the firmly established and most irrevocable decree, that He - exalted be His glory, and magnified be His might, and sanctified be His holiness, and glorified be His grandeur, and lauded be His ways, maketh each thing to be known through its own self; who then can know Him through any one except Himself?”

Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 153

6. Behold, how many are the mysteries that lie as yet unravelled within the tabernacle of the knowledge of God, and how numerous the gems of His wisdom that are still concealed in His inviolable treasures! Shouldest thou ponder this in thine heart, thou wouldst realize that His handiwork knoweth neither beginning nor end. The domain of His decree is too vast for the tongue of mortals to describe, or for the bird of the human mind to traverse; and the dispensations of His providence are too mysterious for the mind of man to comprehend. His creation no end hath overtaken, and it hath ever existed from the “Beginning that hath no beginning”; and the Manifestations of His Beauty no beginning hath beheld, and they will continue to the “End that knoweth no end.” Ponder this utterance in thine heart, and reflect how it is applicable unto all these holy Souls.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 167

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

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’í World Faith*, pp. 259-260

8. When we consider the world of existence, we find that the essential reality underlying any given phenomenon is unknown. Phenomenal, or created, things are known to us only by their attributes. Man discerns only manifestations, or attributes, of objects, while the identity, or reality, of them remains hidden. For example, we call this object a flower. What do we understand by this name and title? We understand that the qualities appertaining to this organism are perceptible to us, but the intrinsic elemental reality, or identity, of it remains unknown. Its external appearance and manifest

attributes are knowable; but the inner being, the underlying reality or intrinsic identity, is still beyond the ken and perception of our human powers. Inasmuch as the realities of material phenomena are impenetrable and unknowable and are only apprehended through their properties or qualities, how much more [p. 422] this is true concerning the reality of Divinity, that holy essential reality which transcends the plane and grasp of mind and man? That which comes within human grasp is finite, and in relation to it we are infinite because we can grasp it. Assuredly, the finite is lesser than the infinite; the infinite is ever greater. If the reality of Divinity could be contained within the grasp of human mind, it would after all be possessed of an intellectual existence only—a mere intellectual concept without extraneous existence, an image or likeness which had come within the comprehension of finite intellect. The mind of man would be transcendental thereto. How could it be possible that an image which has only intellectual existence is the reality of Divinity, which is infinite? Therefore, the reality of Divinity in its identity is beyond the range of human intellection because the human mind, the human intellect, the human thought are limited, whereas the reality of Divinity is unlimited. How can the limited grasp the unlimited and transcend it? Impossible. The unlimited always comprehends the limited. The limited can never comprehend, surround nor take in the unlimited. Therefore, every concept of Divinity which has come within the intellection of a human being is finite, or limited, and is a pure product of imagination, whereas the reality of Divinity is holy and sacred above and beyond all such concepts.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 421-422

9. The greatest bounties of God in this phenomenal world are His Manifestations. This is the greatest postulate. These Manifestations are the Suns of Reality. For it is through the Manifestation that the reality becomes known and established for man. History proves to us that apart from the influence of the Manifestations, man sinks back into his animal condition, using even his intellectual power to subserve an animal purpose. Therefore there is no cessation whatsoever in the future for the appearance of the Manifestation of God, because God is infinite and His purpose cannot be limited in any way. If we ever dare to limit and circumscribe God’s purpose within any bounds, then of necessity we have dared to set limitations to the omnipotence of God. The created has dared to define his Creator!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 53

10. In brief, the purport is this: The teachings of Bahá’u’lláh are boundless, innumerable; time will not allow us to mention them in detail. The foundation of progress and real prosperity in the human world is reality, for reality is the divine standard and the bestowal of God. Reality is reasonableness, and reasonableness is ever conducive to the honorable station of man. Reality is the guidance of God. Reality is the cause of illumination of mankind. Reality is love, ever working for the welfare of humanity. Reality is the bond which conjoins hearts. This ever uplifts man toward higher stages of progress and attainment. Reality is the unity of mankind, conferring everlasting life. Reality is perfect equality, the foundation of agreement between the nations, the first step toward international peace.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 375-376

11. According to the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh all religious, racial, patriotic and political prejudice must be abandoned, for these are the destroyers of the real foundation of humanity. He has announced that the religion of God is one, for all revelations of it are based upon reality. Abraham summoned the people to reality; Moses proclaimed reality; Christ founded reality. Likewise, all the Prophets were the servants and promulgators of reality. Reality is one and indivisible. Therefore, the prejudices and bigotries which exist today among the religions are not justifiable, inasmuch as they are opposed to

reality. All prejudices are against the will and plan of God. Consider, for instance, racial distinction and enmity. All humanity are the children of God; they belong to the same family, to the same original race. There can be no multiplicity of races, since all are the descendants of Adam. This signifies that racial assumption and distinction are nothing but superstition. In the estimate of God there are no English, French, Germans, Turkish or Persians. All these in the presence of God are equal; they are of one race and creation; God did not make these divisions. These distinctions have had their origin in man himself. Therefore, as they are against the plan and purpose of reality, they are false and imaginary. We are of one physical race, even as we are of one physical plan of material body—each endowed with two eyes, two ears, one head, two feet. Among the animals racial prejudice does not exist. Consider the doves; there is no distinction as to whether it is an oriental or an occidental dove. The sheep are all of one race; there is no assumption of distinction between an eastern and a western sheep. When they meet, they associate with perfect fellowship. If a dove from the West should go to the Orient, it will associate with the eastern doves unhesitatingly. There will be no attitude of unwillingness as if saying, “You belong to the East; I am from the West.” Is it reasonable or allowable that a racial prejudice which is not observed by the animal kingdom should be entertained by man?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 299

12. Each one of the divine religions has established two kinds of ordinances: the essential and the accidental. The essential ordinances rest upon the firm, unchanging, eternal foundations of the Word itself. They concern spiritualities, seek to stabilize morals, awaken intuitive susceptibilities, reveal the knowledge of God and inculcate the love of all mankind. The accidental laws concern the administration of outer human actions and relations, establishing rules and regulations requisite for the world of bodies and their control. These are ever subject to change and supersedure according to exigencies of time, place and condition. For example, during the time of Moses, ten commandments concerning the punishment of murder were revealed in His Book. Divorce was sanctioned and polygamy allowable to a certain extent. If a man committed theft, his hand was cut off. This was drastic law and severe punishment applicable to the time of Moses. But when the time of Christ came, minds had developed, realizations were keener and spiritual perceptions had advanced so that certain laws concerning murder, plurality of wives and divorce were abrogated. But the essential ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation remained unchanged. These were the fundamental realities of the knowledge of God and the holy Manifestations, the purification of morals, the awakening of spiritual susceptibilities—eternal principles in which there is no change or transformation. Briefly, the foundation of the divine religions is one eternal foundation, but the laws for temporary conditions and exigencies are subject to change. Therefore, by adherence to these temporary laws, blindly following and imitating ancestral forms, difference and divergence have arisen among followers of the various religions, resulting in disunion, strife and hatred. Blind imitations and dogmatic observances are conducive to alienation and disagreement; they lead to bloodshed and destruction of the foundations of humanity. Therefore, the religionists of the world must lay aside these imitations and investigate the essential foundation or reality itself, which is not subject to change or transformation. This is the divine means of agreement and unification.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 338-339

13. When we ponder over the conditions of phenomena, we observe that all phenomena are composed of single elements. This singular cell-element travels and has its coursings through all the grades of existence. I wish you to ponder carefully over this. This cellular element has at some time been in the mineral kingdom. While staying in the mineral kingdom it has had its coursings and transformations through myriads of images and forms. Having perfected its journey in the mineral

kingdom, it has ascended to the vegetable kingdom; and in the vegetable kingdom it has again had journeys and transformations through myriads of conditions. Having accomplished its functions in the vegetable kingdom, the cellular element ascends to the animal kingdom.

In the animal kingdom again it goes through the composition of myriads of images, and then we have it in the human kingdom. In the human kingdom likewise it has its transformations and coursings through multitudes of forms. In short, this single primordial atom has had its great journeys through every stage of life, and in every stage it was endowed with a special and particular virtue or characteristic.

Consequently, the great divine philosophers have had the following epigram: All things are involved in all things. For every single phenomenon has enjoyed the postulates of God, and in every form of these infinite electrons it has had its characteristics of perfection.

Thus this flower once upon a time was of the soil. The animal eats the flower or its fruit, and it thereby ascends to the animal kingdom. Man eats the meat of the animal, and there you have its ascent into the human kingdom, because all phenomena are divided into that which eats and that which is eaten. Therefore, every primordial atom of these atoms, singly and indivisible, has had its coursings throughout all the sentient creation, going constantly into the aggregation of the various elements. Hence do you have the conservation of energy and the infinity of phenomena, the indestructibility of phenomena, changeless and immutable, because life cannot suffer annihilation but only change.

The apparent annihilation is this: that the form, the outward image, goes through all these changes and transformations. Let us again take the example of this flower. The flower is indestructible. The only thing that we can see, this outer form, is indeed destroyed, but the elements, the indivisible elements which have gone into the composition of this flower are eternal and changeless. Therefore the realities of all phenomena are immutable. Extinction or mortality is nothing but the transformation of pictures and images, so to speak—the reality back of these images is eternal. And every reality of the realities is one of the bounties of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 51-52

14. To be brief; our purpose is to show that the divine sovereignty, the Kingdom of God, is an ancient sovereignty; that it is not an accidental sovereignty; just as a kingdom presupposes the existence of subjects, of an army, of a country; for otherwise the state of dominion, authority and kingdom cannot be conceived of. Therefore if we should imagine that the creation is accidental we would be forced to admit that the creator is accidental whereas the divine bounty is ever flowing and the rays of the Sun of Truth are continuously shining. No cessation is possible to the divine bounty, just as no cessation is possible to the rays of the sun. This is clear and obvious.

Thus there have been many holy Manifestations of God. One thousand years ago, two hundred thousand years ago, one million years ago the bounty of God was flowing, the radiance of God was shining, the dominion of God was existing.

Why do these holy Manifestations of God appear? What is the wisdom and purpose of their coming? What is the outcome of their mission? It is evident that human personality appears in two aspects,—the image or likeness of God and the aspect of Satan. The human [p. 109] reality stands between these two,—the divine and the satanic. It is manifest that beyond this material body, man is endowed with another reality which is the world of exemplars constituting the heavenly body of man. In speaking, man says, “I saw,” “I spoke,” “I went.” Who is this “I”? It is obvious that this “I” is different from this body. It is clear that when man is thinking, it is as though he were consulting with some other person. With whom is he consulting? It is evident that it is another reality or one aside from this body with whom he enters into consultation when he thinks, “Shall I do this work or not?” “What will be the result of my doing this?” Or when he questions the other reality, “What is the

objection to this work if I do it?" And then that reality in man communicates its opinion to him concerning the point at issue. Therefore that reality in man is clearly and obviously other than his body, an ego with which man enters into consultation and whose opinion man seeks.

Often a man makes up his mind positively about a matter; for instance he determines to undertake a journey. Then he thinks it over, that is, he consults his inner reality and finally concludes that he will give up his journey. What has happened? Why did he abandon his original purpose? It is evident that he has consulted his inner reality which expresses to him the disadvantages of such a journey, therefore he defers to that reality and changes his original intention.

Furthermore man sees in the world of dreams. He travels in the East, he travels in the West, although his body is stationary, his body is here. It is that reality in him which makes the journey while the body sleeps. There is no doubt that a reality exists other than the outward, physical reality. Again for instance a person is dead, is buried in the ground. Afterward you see him in the world of dreams and speak with him although his body is interred in the earth. Who is the person you see in your dreams, talk to and who also speaks with you? This again proves that there is another reality different from the physical one which dies and is buried. Thus it is certain that in man there is a reality which is not the physical body. Sometimes the body becomes weak but that other reality is in its own normal state. The body goes to sleep, becomes as one dead but that reality is moving about, comprehending things, expressing them and is even conscious of itself.

This other and inner reality is called the heavenly body, the ethereal form which corresponds to this body. This is the conscious reality which discovers the inner meaning of things, for the outer body of man does not discover anything. The inner ethereal reality grasps the mysteries of existence, discovers scientific truths and indicates their technical application. It discovers electricity, produces [p. 110] the telegraph, the telephone and opens the door to the world of arts. If the outer material body did this, the animal would likewise be able to make scientific and wonderful discoveries, for the animal shares with man all physical powers and limitations. What then is that power which penetrates the realities of existence and which is not to be found in the animal? It is the inner reality which comprehends things, throws light upon the mysteries of life and being, discovers the heavenly Kingdom, unseals the mysteries of God and differentiates man from the brute. Of this there can be no doubt.

As we have before indicated, this human reality stands between the higher and the lower in man, between the world of the animal and the world of divinity. When the animal proclivity in man becomes predominant, he sinks even lower than the brute. When the heavenly powers are triumphant in his nature, he becomes the noblest and most superior being in the world of creation. All the imperfections found in the animal are found in man. In him there is antagonism, hatred and selfish struggle for existence; in his nature lurk jealousy, revenge, ferocity, cunning, hypocrisy, greed, injustice and tyranny. So to speak, the reality of man is clad in the outer garment of the animal, the habiliments of the world of nature, the world of darkness, imperfections and unlimited baseness.

On the other hand, we find in him justice, sincerity, faithfulness, knowledge, wisdom, illumination, mercy and pity coupled with intellect, comprehension, the power to grasp the realities of things and the ability to penetrate the truths of existence. All these great perfections are to be found in man. Therefore we say that man is a reality which stands between light and darkness. From this standpoint of view, his nature is threefold, animal, human and divine. The animal nature is darkness; the heavenly is light in light.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 108-110; *Promulgation of World Unity*, pp. 463-465

15. The world, indeed each existing being, proclaims to us one of the names of God, but the reality of man is the collective reality, the general reality, and is the center where the glory of all the perfections of God shine forth. That is to say, for each name, each attribute, each perfection which we affirm of God, there exists a sign in man; if it were otherwise, man could not imagine these perfections, and could not understand them. So we say that God is the seer, and the eye is the sign of His vision; if this sight were not in man, how could we imagine the vision of God? for the blind, that is one born blind, cannot imagine sight; and the deaf, that is one deaf from birth, cannot imagine hearing; and the dead cannot realize life. Consequently the Divinity of God, which is the sum of all perfections, reflects itself in the reality of man; that is to say, the Essence of Oneness is the gathering of all perfections, and from this unity He casts a reflection upon the human reality. Man then is the perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth, and is the center of radiation: the Sun of Truth shines in this mirror. The reflection of the divine perfections appears in the reality of man, so he is the representative of God, the messenger of God. If man did not exist, the universe would be without result, for the object of existence is the appearance of the perfections of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 310-311