

"WHAT IS A BAHAI?"

PART TWO

To know the manifestation of God means to love Him. One is impossible without the other. According to Baha'u'llah, the purpose of man's creation is that he may know God and adore Him. He says in one of his tablets: "The cause of the creation of all contingent beings has been love, as it is said in the well-known tradition, 'I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known; therefore I created the creation in order to be known.'"

And in the "Hidden Words" He says: "O son of existence: Love me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest me not, my love can never reach thee. Know this, O servant."

"O Son of the Highest Sight! I have placed in thee a Spirit from Me that thou mightest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought to love another?"

To be God's lover! That is the sole object of life for the Bahai. To have God as his closest companion and most intimate friend, his Peerless Beloved, in Whose Presence is fullness of joy! And to love God means to love everything and everybody, for all are of God. The real Bahai will be the perfect lover. He will love every one with a pure heart, fervently. He will hate no one. He will despise no one, for he will have learned to see the Face of the Beloved in every face and to find His traces everywhere. His love will know no limit of sect, nation, class or race. Baha'u'llah says: "In former ages it hath been said: 'To love one's native land is faith.' But the Tongue of Grandeur hath said in the day of this manifestation: 'Glory is not his who loves his country, but glory is his who loves his kind.'"

"Tablet of the World."
And again: "Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself: such an one is of the people of Baha."—"Words of Paradise."

Abdul-Baha tells us we must be "as one soul in many bodies, for the more we love each other the nearer we shall be to God." To a Christian minister he said: "All the prophets were sent, all the books were revealed, that the law of love might be promoted. . . . Let us have love and more love, a love that melts all opposition, a love that conquers all foes, a love that sweeps away all barriers, a love that abounds in charity, large-heartedness, tolerance and noble striving; a love that triumphs over all obstacles; a boundless, an irresistible, a sweeping love!"

Again he says: "Every soul of the beloved ones must love the others and withhold not his possessions and life from them, and by all means he must endeavor to make the others joyous and happy. But these others must also be disinterested and self-sacrificing. Thus may this sunrise flood the horizons, this melody gladden and make happy all the people, this divine remedy become the panacea for every disease, this spirit of truth become the cause of life for every soul."

Implies Severance

Devotion to God implies also severance from everything that is not of God—severance, that is, from all selfish and worldly and, even other-worldly, desires. The path of God may lie through riches or poverty, health or sickness; through palace or dungeon, rose garden or torture chamber. Whichever it be, the Bahai will learn to accept his lot with "radiant acquiescence." Severance does not mean stolid indifference to one's surroundings or passive resignation to evil con-

ditions; nor does it mean despising the good things which God has created. The true Bahai will not be callous, nor apathetic, nor ascetic. He will find abundant interest, abundant work and abundant joy in the path of God, but he will not deviate one hair's breadth from that path in pursuit of pleasure nor hanker after anything that God has denied him. When a man becomes a Bahai, God's will becomes his will; for to be at variance with God is the one thing he cannot endure. In the path of God no terrors can appall, no troubles dismay him. The light of love irradiates his darkest days, transmutes suffering into joy and martyrdom itself into an ecstasy of bliss. Life is lifted to the heroic plane and death becomes a glad adventure. Baha'u'llah says:

"He that hath in his heart even less than a mustard seed of love for anything besides Me, verily he cannot enter My kingdom."

"O sun of humanity! If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; if My will thou seekest, regard not thine own, that thou mayest die in Me and I live in thee."

"O My servant! Free thyself from the fetters of this world and escape from the prison of self. Appreciate the value of time, for thou shalt never see it again, nor shalt thou find a like opportunity."—"Hidden Words."

Means Obedience

Devotion to God means implicit obedience to His revealed commands, even when the reason for these commands is not understood. The sailor implicitly obeys his captain's orders even when he does not know the reason for them; but his acceptance of authority is not blind. He knows full well that the captain has served proofs of competence as a navigator. Were it not so, he would be foolish indeed to serve under him. So the Bahai must implicitly obey the Captain of his salvation, but he will be foolish indeed if he has not first ascertained that this Captain has given ample proofs of trustworthiness. Having received such proofs, however, to refuse obedience would be even greater folly, for only by intelligent and open-eyed obedience to the Wise Master can we reap the benefits of His wisdom and acquire this wisdom for ourselves. Be the captain never so wise, if none of the crew obey him, how shall the ship reach its port or the sailors learn the art of navigation? Christ clearly pointed out that obedience is the path of knowledge. He said: "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself."—St. John vii, 16-17.

So Baha'u'llah says: "Faith in God and the knowledge of Him cannot be fully attained except . . . by practicing all that He hath commanded and all that is revealed in the Book from the Pen of Glory."—"Tablet of Tajalliyat."

Implicit obedience is not a popular virtue in these democratic days, and indeed entire submission to the will of any mere man would be disastrous. But the unity of humanity can be attained only by complete harmony of each and all with the Divine Will. Unless that Will be clearly revealed and men abandon all other leaders and obey the Divine Messenger, then conflict and strife will go on and men will continue to oppose each other, to devote a large part of their energy to frustrating the efforts of their brother men instead of working harmoniously together for the glory of God and the common good.

(To Be Continued.)