

One True God

INTRODUCTION: *Approaching the Sacred Valley...*

Facilitator

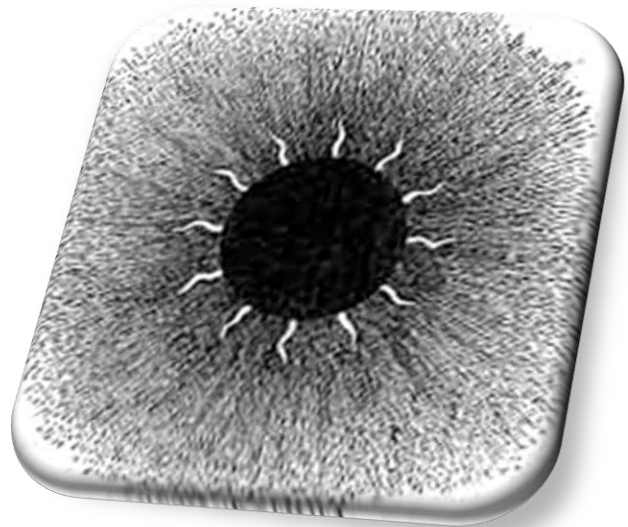
The following is an introduction. Please read it out loud without comment, and then proceed with the study of the quotations.

The idea that there is just one real and true God is not a new concept. Most probably it has been the topic of discussion around camp fires since time immemorial. It has been proclaimed by the Founders of the Great Religions for as far back as we have recorded history. And, according to the Bahá'í Writings, it was introduced long before that. The Bahá'í writings reaffirm that there is only one real and true God, and state that all the great Prophets have collectively drawn the attention of the people towards recognition and belief in one creative and sustaining Force that exists behind all things.

For most, the evidence of a creator is obvious. Concerns arise when it comes to *defining* It, and understanding our relationships *to* It. The evidence of the existence of God is revealed in a simple concept. It is without question that there is a universal law of cause and effect. It is a fundamental law of the universe and is one of the first things we learn as human beings. There is not one thing in the universe that is known to come from nothingness. Every effect has a cause, every cause an effect. Everything is consequential to something else, be it energy, force or something physical. So close your eyes, and open them again; behold the evidence before you. Everywhere you turn is evidence of a creation, the effect of something that started all that is. This effect had to have a cause, and that ultimate cause of all things is what we refer to as the "One True God".

The Bahá'í Writings have a great deal to say about the one true God. All the descriptive terms are infinite in character, making an imagined or fixed concept of God impossible. May we explore together, with enthusiasm and open-mindedness, the following Bahá'í references to the One True God. And may these sacred verses draw us ever closer to a truer understanding of ourselves and our relationship to that ultimate Force that sustains all things in the Universe.

Please note the Bahá'í concept asserts that God is neither male nor female. The use of the masculine pronoun "Him" to refer to God is merely a convention of language and a convenience, not a description of God.



An Ancient Symbol for "One God"

OBJECTIVE: *A look to the horizon...*

Facilitator

Review the following objective with the participants:

The purpose of this group experience is to *explore* the concept of “One True God” through a study of selected Bahá’í Writings.

THE STUDY PROCESS: *Attaining the water of life...*

Facilitator

Review the following study process with the participants. Then study the numbered quotations that follow, one at a time as described below.

1. READING: *A drink from the cup of guidance...*

A. Read the quotation out loud in its entirety.

2. CONFIRMING MEANING: *A spray from the fountain of light...*

To better understand certain words used in the quotation, take turns with the following:

A. Each participant **choose a word** from the quotation and **state it** for the whole group to hear. (Like a fun game – pick a word!) Then...

B. Read out loud the sentence that contains the **word** you selected, **while substituting for that word**, its given phrase, definition, or synonym from the boxes below the quotation.

C. Repeat A and B above until everyone is satisfied with their understanding of the words.

D. Read the quotation out loud again in its entirety.

3. FINDING VALUE: *Gem-like discoveries...*

In the tradition of the “talking circle” ask the participants to take turns sharing, one at a time, in a round, **WHAT WAS PERSONALLY MOST MEANINGFUL FROM THE QUOTATION AND WHY.** (Remember show and tell?) Remind the participants that *whatever* is shared should be considered as a valid perspective, and that in this *exploratory study* there are no right or wrong perceptions and no lesser or greater understandings. All are therefore asked to avoid comments, corrections, or judgments on the perceived insights of others. This is not a time for questions and answers, it is an exercise for the purpose of bonding hearts by sharing and receiving personal heartfelt perspectives without discussion.

QUOTATIONS: *Within the meadows of Thy nearness...*

1. *“Regard thou the one true God as One Who is apart from, and immeasurably exalted above, all created things. The whole universe reflecteth His glory, while He is Himself independent of, and transcendeth His creatures. This is the true meaning of Divine unity. He Who is the Eternal Truth is the one Power Who exerciseth undisputed sovereignty over the world of being, Whose image is reflected in the mirror of the entire creation. All existence is dependent upon Him, and from Him is derived the source of the sustenance of all things.”*

(Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 166)

being: living entities
dependent: subject to or conditioned
derived: received or obtained
Divine: God's
Eternal: continually existing and everlasting
exalted: elevated in rank and power
exerciseth: carries into action
glory: distinguishing qualities and magnificence
image: symbolic representation
independent: free from influence, control, and requirements
reflecteth: mirrors forth

regard: look upon or consider
source: cause and origin
sovereignty: supreme and independent authority and rule
sustenance: means of maintenance and support necessary for existing
transcendeth: is far above and beyond all possible experience or knowledge of
true: real and actual
Truth: transcendental spiritual reality
undisputed: without argument, question, or opposition
unity: quality or state of being one

2. *“...God, the unknowable Essence, the Divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress. Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is, and hath ever been, veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men.”*

(Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 46-47)

ancient: long standing
ascent: advancing or progressing in status
attribute: ascribed feature, quality, or characteristic
corporeal: physical or material
descent: descending in station or value
Divine: supernatural; superhuman; celestial
egress: a coming out of confinement
Essence: True Being
eternity: ever existence
exalted: elevated in rank and power
fathomless: immeasurable; incomprehensible

glory: distinguishing qualities and magnificence
heart: spiritual consciousness; soul; spirit
immensely: exceeding all bounds in size, amount, or degree
Reality: true existence
recount: tell in detail of
regress: a going back to a previous lesser state
tongue: speech
veiled: covered or hidden

3. *“He is, and hath from everlasting been, one and alone, without peer or equal, eternal in the past, eternal in the future, detached from all things, ever-abiding, unchangeable, and self-subsisting. He hath assigned no associate unto Himself in His Kingdom, no counsellor to counsel Him, none to compare unto Him, none to rival His glory.”*

(Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 192)

assigned: given by appointment
associate: one joined as a partner or companion
compare: represent as like or similar
detached: separated
ever-abiding: ever-lasting; ever-continuing
glory: distinguishing qualities and magnificence

Kingdom: spiritual realm
peer: one of equal standing
rival: compete, equal, or excel
self-subsisting: able to exist without the aid of another

4. *“Some worship the product of their own imagination: they make for themselves an imaginary God and adore this, when the creation of their finite minds cannot be the Infinite Mighty Maker of all things visible and invisible!”*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 145)

adore: with profound reverence, worship
creation: invention or made up [images]
finite: naturally limited
imaginary: existing only in the mind, unreal image [of]

imagination: creative thoughts
Infinite: limitless; endless; inconceivable; indeterminate
Maker: God
product: outcome

5. *“God grant that, with a penetrating vision, thou mayest perceive, in all things, the sign of the revelation of Him Who is the Ancient King, and recognize how exalted and sanctified from the whole creation is that most holy and sacred Being. This, in truth, is the very root and essence of belief in the unity and singleness of God. ‘God was alone; there was none else besides Him.’ He, now, is what He hath ever been. There is none other God but Him, the One, the Incomparable, the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the Most Great.”*

(Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 191-92)

Almighty: One having absolute power over all
Ancient King: God
essence: ultimate and essential quality
exalted: elevated in rank and power
Incomparable: eminent beyond comparison
penetrating: perceiving; insightful
perceive: become aware and understand; comprehend

revelation: that which is made known
sacred: revered; holy
sanctified: set apart with sacredness
sign: indication of the presence or existence
unity: quality or state of being one
vision: sense of perception

6. “The divine Manifestations have been iconoclastic in Their teachings, uprooting error, destroying false religious beliefs and summoning mankind anew to the fundamental oneness of God.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 154)

anew: again, but differently
divine: God inspired; holy; sacred
fundamental: basic and essential
false: mistaken or incorrect
iconoclastic: opposing and destructive of settled beliefs and institutions, as being based on error or superstition; opposing and destructive of the use of images, pictures, or other representative objects (imagined or real) for spiritual devotion

Manifestations: great Prophets or chosen Messengers [some being Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, and in this Day, Bahá’u’lláh]
oneness: singleness and indivisibility
summoning: stirring, arousing, and calling
uprooting: tearing up or removing

APPLICATION: *Showing forth divine light...*

Facilitator

Read through #1 together and proceed as stated. Then take time for the participants to write out their individual plans for action in #2. (these are not shared) When everyone has finished, move on to the closing reading.

1. IMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES: *Visions of radiant lights...*

Bahá’u’lláh wrote: “*It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....*” Imagine how the Bahá’í Teachings in this study class could be translated into reality and action. Take turns sharing the possibilities. Begin your statements with: “***One could....***” Suggest as many ideas as you want.

2. DECIDING ACTION: *Mirroring forth a beam of light...*

From your experience in this study class on the One True God, describe what ***you*** are inspired to put into reality and action. ***I will make conscious efforts to...*** _____

My next step will be... _____

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CLOSING MEDITATION: A heart song...

Facilitator

Read the following out loud.

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

All praise be unto God Who was Ever-Existent ere created things were called into being, when there was no one else besides Him. He is the One Who hath been Ever-Abiding while no element of His creation did yet exist. Indeed the souls of them that are endued with understanding fail to comprehend the least manifestation of His attributes, and the minds of those who have acknowledged His unity are unable to perceive the most insignificant token of His omnipotence.

Sanctified art Thou, O Lord my God. The tongues of men fall short in extolling Thy glorious handiwork, how much more then would they falter in lauding the majesty of Thy transcendent power; and since human understanding is sore perplexed to fathom the mystery of a single object of Thy creation, how can anyone ever attain the recognition of Thine Own Being?

I have known Thee by Thy making known unto me that Thou art unknowable to anyone save Thyself. I have become apprised by the creation Thou hast fashioned out of sheer non-existence that the way to attain the comprehension of Thine Essence is barred to everyone. Thou art God, besides Whom there is none other God. No one except Thine Own Self can comprehend Thy nature. Thou art without peer or partner. From everlasting Thou hast been alone with no one else besides Thee and unto everlasting Thou wilt continue to be the same, while no created thing shall ever approach Thine exalted position.

All men, O my God, confess their powerlessness to know Thee as Thou knowest Thine Own Being; the generative impulse Thou hast released is manifest throughout the entire creation, and all created things which Thou hast fashioned are but expressions of Thy wondrous signs. Magnified be Thy name; Thou art immeasurably exalted above the strivings of anyone among Thy creatures to attain Thy recognition as is befitting and worthy of Thee.

Praise be unto Thee! The way in which Thou hast called into being Thy creation out of non-existence preventeth all created things from recognizing Thee, and the manner in which Thou hast fashioned the creatures, with the limitations imposed upon them, proclaimeth their utter nothingness before the revelations of Thine attributes.

Exalted art Thou, O my God! All mankind are powerless to celebrate Thy glory and the minds of men fall short of yielding praise unto Thee. I bear witness in Thy presence, O my God, that Thou art made known by Thy wondrous tokens and art recognized through the revelations of Thy signs. The fact that Thou hast brought us forth into existence prompteth me to acknowledge before Thee that Thou art immeasurably exalted above our praise, and by virtue of the qualities wherewith Thou hast endowed our beings I testify unto Thee that Thou art transcendent beyond our comprehension.

Grant that I may soar to the noblest heights in approaching Thee, and enable me to draw nigh unto Thee through the fragrance of Thy holiness. Thus may all impediments be dissolved by the light of ecstasy, and all remoteness from Thee be dissipated by my attainment unto the seats of reunion, and the subtle veils which have hindered me from entering Thy mansion of glory become so rarified that I may gain admittance into Thy presence, take up my abode near Thee, and voice the expressions of praise wherewith Thou hast described Thine Own Self unto me, bearing witness that Thou art God, that there is no God but Thee, the One, the Incomparable, the Ever-Abiding, that Thou dost not beget, neither art Thou begotten, that Thou hast no offspring, no partner, nor is there any protector against humiliation but Thee, and Thou art the Lord of all worlds. I bear witness also that all besides Thee are but Thy creatures, and are held within Thy grasp. No one is favoured with means or liveth in want except by Thy Will. Thou art the King of everlasting days and the supreme Ruler. Thy might is potent over all things and all created things exist by Thy Will. All mankind recognize their lowly servitude and confess their shortcomings and naught is there which doth not celebrate Thy praise.

I beseech Thee, O my God, by the glory of Thy merciful Countenance and by the majesty of Thine ancient Name not to deprive me of the vitalizing fragrance of the evidences of Thy Days - such Days as Thou Thyself hast inaugurated and brought forth.

Thou art God, no God is there but Thee.

(Selections from the Writings of the Báb, pp. 196-98)