

Independent Investigation of Truth

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 Bahá'í Writings state that the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, on occasion, communicates guidance to the human beings by directly inspiring an individual Soul. Historically, we have called these Souls the Prophets or Messengers of God. Bahá'ís refer to them as the “Manifestations” of God, in that they *manifest* the qualities, attributes and will of God in their words and deeds.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Bahá'u'lláh, Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was divinely inspired to reveal to humankind the guidance necessary for our spiritual and material wellbeing. This guidance renews and clarifies the spiritual teachings given to us in the past by previous Manifestations of God, and additionally provides us with new direction relative to the needs and conditions of the modern world. One of these spiritual principles of guidance is referred to as the independent investigation of truth. All the Manifestations of God claim that the guidance they give to humankind is the truth. Therefore, all religions and their various sects claim to have the truth. So why are the religions so different, and why are they in disagreement?

The Bahá'í Writings suggest that the inspired Words of all the Manifestations of God are harmonious and they only appear to conflict due to the human interpretation. That is, over time, superstitious interpretation begins to divert the original intent of sacred Scripture. Traditions, customs and rituals are developed that are no longer consistent with the original intent of the sacred Word. Consequently religious disagreement, conflict and confusion ensues. To help us deal with the current disagreement, conflict and confusion of religious truth, we have to engage in meaningful and effective approaches to arrive at the truth on any given matter. The Bahá'í Writings propose that in order to arrive at the truth of something, we must first lay aside what we have been taught or told by society around us. Then, with earnest intent, question and investigate the truth of religion with an unfettered, unbiased heart and mind. Let us explore together the following sacred verses from the Bahá'í Writings as it pertains to this subject.



*“...society will be freed from the darkness
of continually repeating the past.”*

— `Abdu'l-Bahá

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 “independent investigation of truth”, 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.

1. “The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Fountain of Wisdom*, p. 145 ¶10.22)

discern: perceive, recognize, or make out clearly
essence: real importance
eye: perception, opinion, or estimation
fancy: imaginary or mistaken beliefs
free: liberate from personal and external influences
handiwork: creation
His: God's

idle: worthless and useless
imitation: thoughtless copying of the behavior of others
justice: in conformity with what is right, good and true before God
oneness: unity and harmony of purpose
searching: examining, investigating, questioning, and penetrating

2. “First among the great principles revealed by Him [Bahá'u'lláh] is that of the investigation of reality. The meaning is that every individual member of humankind is exhorted and commanded to set aside superstitious beliefs, traditions and blind imitation of ancestral forms in religion and investigate reality for himself. Inasmuch as the fundamental reality is one, all religions and nations of the world will become one through investigation of reality. The announcement of this principle is not found in any of the sacred Books of the past.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 433)

ancestral: that which belonged to ones ancestors
blind imitation: thoughtless copying or unquestioned repetition of the behavior of others
commanded: ordered and directed
exhorted: advised and encouraged
forms: manner or expressions
fundamental: basic and essential
investigate: seek out information with questions and examination

investigation: seeking information with questions and examination
one: in agreement and union
principles: comprehensive truths or standards
reality: that which is actual and real
revealed: made know through divine inspiration
superstitious: false beliefs proceeding from misinformation, misdirection, or ignorance
traditions: inherited, established, or customary patterns of thought, action, or behavior

3. “Therefore, man must endeavor in all things to investigate the fundamental reality. If he does not independently investigate, he has failed to utilize the talent God has bestowed upon him.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 313)

bestowed upon: gifted to; deposited in
endeavor: try with earnest effort
fundamental: basic and essential
independently: free from the control, influence, and opinions of others

investigate: seek out information with questions and examination
reality: of what is actual and real
talent: general intelligence or mental power
utilize: make use of

4. “First, man must independently investigate reality, for the disagreements and dissensions which afflict and affect humanity primarily proceed from imitations of ancestral beliefs and adherences to hereditary forms of worship. These imitations are accidental and without sanction in the Holy Books. They are the outcomes of human interpretations and teachings which have arisen, gradually obscuring the real light of divine meaning and causing men to differ and dissent. The reality proclaimed in the heavenly Books and divine teachings is ever conducive to love, unity and fellowship.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 314)

accidental: unintended or from careless misfortunes
adherences: attachment or conformity
ancestral: that which belonged to ones ancestors
conducive: tending to promote and lead
dissensions: differences in opinion, causing separating or opposing groups
dissent: disagree in opinion
divine: holy; sacred
forms: manner or expressions
hereditary: established by predecessors or traditional
imitations: thoughtless copying of the behavior of others

independently: free from the control, influence, and opinions of others
investigate: seek out information with questions and examination
light: emanating spiritual knowledge and goodness
obscuring: hiding or darkening
outcome: result or consequence
proclaimed: formally and publicly declared
reality: that which is actual and real
sanction: validity or authority
unity: heartfelt condition of peace, love, and harmony in human relations, free of conflict, contention, dissension, and the struggle for dominance

5. “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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 291)

animosity: ill will or resentment, tending toward active hostility
bereavement: suffering from loss
blind imitation: thoughtless copying or unquestioned repetition of the behavior of others

disheartening: hopelessness, discouragement, and depression of the spirit
prevail: continue and persist

6. “If we abandon these time-worn blind imitations and investigate reality all of us will be unified. No discord will remain; antagonism will disappear. All will associate in fellowship. All will enjoy the cordial bonds of friendship. The world of creation will then attain composure. The dark and gloomy clouds of blind imitations and dogmatic variances will be scattered and dispelled; the Sun of Reality will shine most gloriously.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 44)

abandon: give up influence or control of
antagonism: actively expressed opposition or hostility
blind imitations: thoughtless copying or unquestioned repetition of the behaviors of others
composure: a settled, calm, and tranquil state
cordial: sincere and deeply felt
discord: active disagreement or conflict

dogmatic: rigidly held to (beliefs or opinions)
investigate: seek out information with questions and examination
reality: that which is actual and real
Sun of Reality: the Source of emanating spiritual knowledge and goodness – God
time-worn: out-of-date
variances: disputed differences

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 Independent Investigation of Truth, describe what **you** are inspired to put into reality and action. ***I will make conscious efforts to...*** _____

My next step will be... _____

CLOSING MEDITATION: *A heart song...*

Facilitator

Read the following out loud.

“O MY God, my Lord and my Master! I have detached myself from my kindred and have sought through Thee to become independent of all that dwell on earth and ever ready to receive that which is praiseworthy in Thy sight. Bestow on me such good as will make me independent of aught else but Thee, and grant me an ampler share of Thy boundless favours. Verily Thou art the Lord of grace abounding.”

(Selections from the writings of the Báb, p. 209)

“O my God! O Thou Who art the Maker of the heavens and of the earth, O Lord of the Kingdom! Thou well knowest the secrets of my heart, while Thy Being is inscrutable to all save Thyself. Thou seest whatsoever is of me, while no one else can do this save Thee. Vouchsafe unto me, through Thy grace, what will enable me to dispense with all except Thee, and destine for me that which will make me independent of everyone else besides Thee. Grant that I may reap the benefit of my life in this world and in the next. Open to my face the portals of Thy grace and graciously confer upon me Thy tender mercy and bestowals.”

(Selections from the writings of the Báb, pp. 212-13)

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