

# Explanation of Spiritual Evolution as Taught from the Bahá'í Teachings

by [Lua Getsinger](#), [Edward C. Getsinger](#), and [Curtis Kelsey](#)

1899/1911/1958/1997

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**About this chart:** `Abdu'l-Bahá's chart below, prepared by Lua and Edward Getsinger, and the text by Curtis Kelsey, accompanied each other (see [archivist's note](#)). In a letter from 1997, the Universal House of Justice refers to it as Lua Getsinger's chart called "Cycle of Life" (see [uhj\\_diagram\\_evolution](#)). In a talk from 1911, Lua Getsinger said "One time in Acca, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was trying to make us understand the possibility of man more clearly knowing God, He used this chart." Edward Getsinger dates the chart to 1899. In a letter from 1916, he wrote:

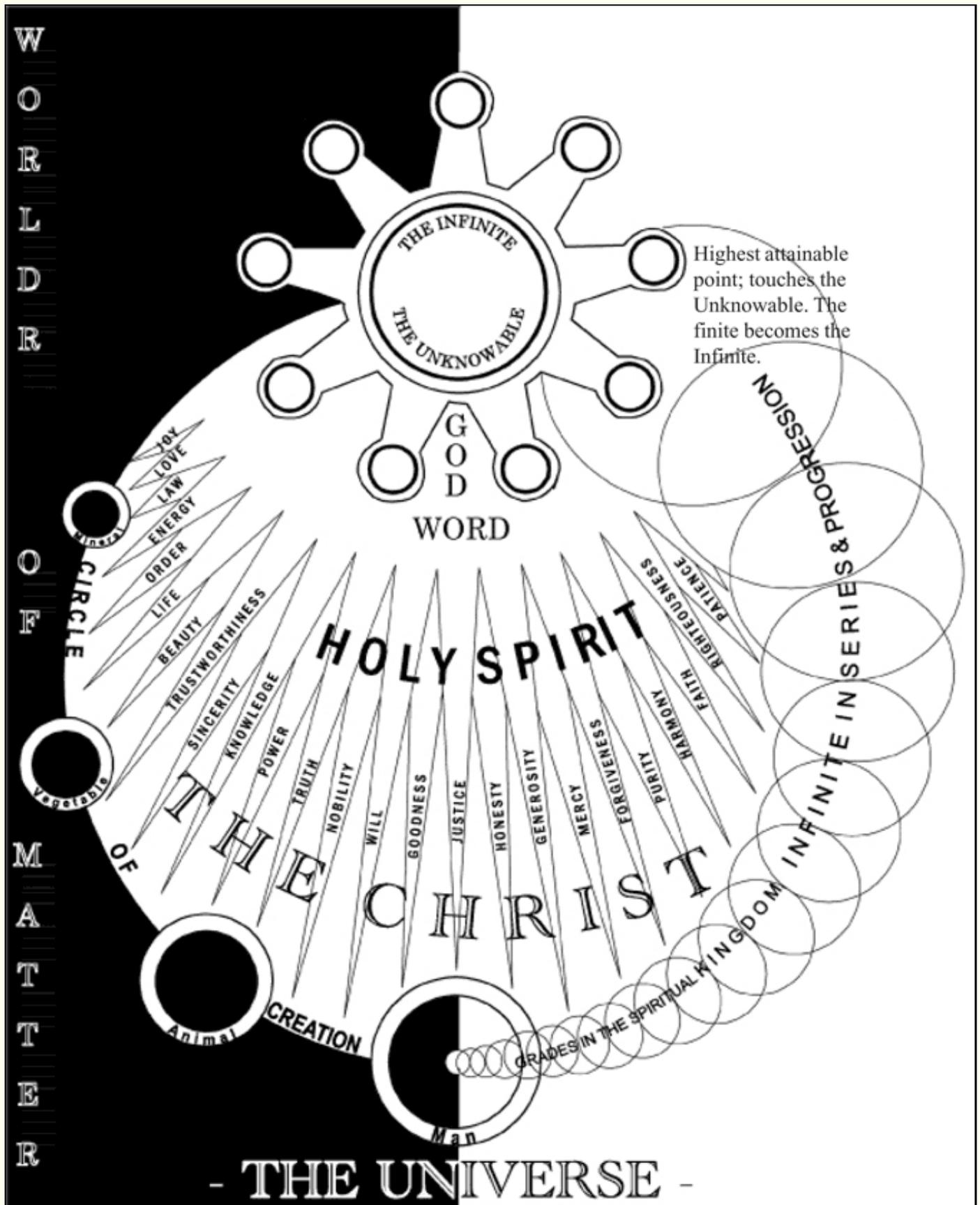
"When we went to Acca on my first pilgrimage, in 1899, the theory of reincarnation had almost captured me. ... At last we got the true idea as to the meaning of 'return' then with paper and pencil we began to draw on paper the illustrations Abdul Baha had been making in the air until we got a complete diagram and one He endorsed. This illustration was later used by Mrs. G... in her lectures to illustrate the 'return' of qualities, powers, characteristics, functions and stations in men and women from time to time without necessarily reincarnating the soul. ... Some Friends are actually utilizing this same drawing to prove that reincarnation was illustrated and taught by Abdul Baha with this diagram, when, in fact it was given us to refute it!" (From [bahai-library.com/getsinger\\_letter\\_reincarnation\\_return](#).)

## 1. Letter from the Universal House of Justice discussing this diagram

[bahai-library.com/uhj\\_diagram\\_evolution](#) (1997)

## 2. Chart

new version of the chart, redrawn digitally by Duane Troxel, 2004-06-19:



### **3. Explanatory text accompanying the above chart, compiled by Curtis Kelsey**

The evolution of the soul of man is one of the most fundamental teachings of the Bahá'í World Faith. For centuries men have struggled over the question of Evolution. Shortly after Charles Darwin produced his work on evolution, a stormy battle ensued between certain fundamental religionists and the Darwinists. Men fought and died over this issue. But nothing was ever resolved.

The fury that erupted over the evolution question has been filed in the halls of history, but the issue remains alive, burning unanswered in the hearts of millions of people around the world. From where did man come? What is the purpose of life? Does life end with death?

Unlike other periods of history, the answers to these questions can be answered today, for we are living in the era all mankind has longed for ... prayed for... the time when "the Holy Books that were sealed until the time of the end", have been unlocked and explained. And this has been achieved through the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, the Promised One of all Ages, THE LORD OF HOSTS.

Through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh we find that both the 19th century religionists and Darwinists were in part right. Certainly God is the source of all knowledge and the Creator of man, but on the other hand, evolution is real and has always existed, but not as Darwin described it.

Only the creator of Evolution can explain what it really is and describe how it works. And since God is unapproachable, for how can any creation comprehend its creator. God informs and enlightens man through His Manifestations. So it is a Christ, a Moses, a Buddha, a Mohammed who singularly possesses the power of providing man with God's teachings and instructions for a particular age. Only the prophet of God can tell us definitely what is rightfwhat is wrong.

And Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation for this day, has cast God's simple light of truth into the deepest recesses of the evolution question, transforming what was once a great mystery into an understandable process. He explains as only a Prophet of God can, the truth about the physical evolution and the spiritual evolution of the human soul.

Abdu'l Baha, the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh and appointed interpreter and perfect exemplar of His teachings, gave Mrs. Lua Getsinger, an early American believer, a diagram illustrating the true story of evolution. (The diagram is attached to the script.)

The following is Abdu'l Baha's explanation of His evolution diagram:

"As the world follows a circle, so human beings travel in cycles." "This illustration represents the cycle of man. All existence is created by the Infinite Essence. Man starts with God and first attains the mineral condition which is only matter, but this condition contains a latent power from God. Then he attains the vegetable kingdom

which is also matter but which possesses the power of growth which the mineral kingdom lacked. Next he arrives in the animal kingdom which possesses the united powers of those preceding, but with a third power, that of sensation (the five senses)."

"At birth he enters the human kingdom. This progression is simply through the power of God. Souls are not created independently of bodies. The germ of the child grows by the power of God in the human body, just as the seed of the tree grows to be a tree through the power of the sun. The human being has the power of all the other conditions and has attained the furthest point and the most distant from God. He has passed through all the conditions of the material side of the circle by the hidden power of God. The first or descending circle is the natural or material circle, the second or ascending circle is the spiritual. The first half is the night, the second half is the day. The human world is the point furthest away from God, but the rays of God shine directly on man. The world is in darkness and obscurity reigns always before the dawn, and on the side of the ascending circle light appears. Thus the world is the worst condition for the soul if that soul lives in that condition, because it is the point furthest from God. It is a worse condition than the kingdoms of the mineral, the vegetable or animal because it is the furthest point from God. But if a man desires the light, he may receive the Rays powerfully and directly, while the other kingdoms receive only the indirect rays of the Holy Spirit. If he does not desire the Light, man's condition is worse than all the others. Thus, the Manifestation of God appears always in human form, because the Sun of Truth shines directly on that Manifestation and he thus receives the entire power of God."

"The soul leaves God and if it enters the spiritual world, it returns to God."

"There are three births, first the material birth; second to be born of the water; third to be born of the Spirit. When man enters the spiritual world he is born of the water of truth and of the knowledge of God. He should become as a little child, detached from the world; without jealousy, without hate, without envy, without the love of money or earthly desires."

"To be born of the Spirit means to renounce all earthly desires, to aspire to the qualities of God and to begin to ascend the second half of the circle. The spiritual grades have infinite degrees and conditions ever ascending upward. It is possible in one step to leave the lowest condition and to enter the highest. The Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, said that the believers will go directly to God, but that all will not be in the same condition, each one will have his degree in accordance with his spiritual progress. When we die we can see those who are in the same condition as ourselves and we can understand those who are in a lower degree, but we cannot understand those who are in conditions above us."

If a soul journeys through the cycle, can it return and begin again? Will it return to the mineral kingdom? "This is not possible, but the spirit can return."

"Each nation has awaited the re-incarnation of its greatest Prophet in accordance with its religious belief. The Jews await the return of Moses as the Messiah; the Christians, Christ; the Mohammedans, Husein, son of Fatima and the twelve Imams. They awaited the return of the soul and of the personality. When they asked if John the Baptist was Elijah he answered, "Yes"; and when they interrogated John Baptist, he replied "No". Both replies were the truth. The reply of Christ was spiritual, that is John the Baptist returned in the same spirit of God, but not in the same soul, but John the Baptist meant that his soul and his body were not the same as those of Elijah.

All human beings have two stations, the one of the body, the other of the soul. Neither the body nor the soul will return to this world, but the spirit of God in them may return, and thus it is with all the Prophets: the same spirit is speaking in Bahá'u'lláh today as in Christ; all the Prophets of God were Manifestations of God. Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, and the Bab were the four greatest prophets, because they reflect the light of God in a higher degree than others and left Books to guide the people in the path of God."

Let us suppose that the mirror represents the Prophet, the sun represents God and the rays of the sun the Holy Spirit. The mirror of Adam was dim, because the people were not sufficiently advanced at that time to receive the greater rays than the mirror of Adam reflected; consequently God caused the light to reflect from a dim mirror. The mirror of Moses was more brilliant and could thus receive greater rays because the people of that time of Moses were more advanced than the people in the time of Adam. The mirror of Jesus was absolutely clear and could reflect the full light of the Sun. He was the Perfect Image of the sun. This is the significance of the words of Jesus, "The Father is in Me. I and the Father are one." But when the Manifestation of God (Bahá'u'lláh) came, He was a magnifying mirror who received all the rays of the sun as did Jesus, but received also its heat to shed upon the world. The Blessed Perfection was like a fine glass of crystal filled with wine. The crystal was so perfect that the glass was not visible and one beheld only the precious wine. Thus the Manifestation of God was so perfect that by itself alone the Holy Spirit was seen in Him.

In the study of this subject, as illustrated in the chart, the thought to realize is that the human station has its limitations the same as the Mineral, the Vegetable or Animal kingdoms. It is not possible to transcend our human station without a plus quality, the same as seen in previous stations of the chart. For instance, on page 55 of PUP., Abdu'l-Bahá states, "It (the human station) cannot comprehend the phenomena of the kingdom transcending the human station, for it is captive of powers and life forces which have their operation upon its own plane of existence and it cannot go beyond that boundary."

Therefore, if we cannot go beyond our human boundary, what is the plus quality needed to transcend the human station? The Bahá'í teachings tell us that it is the Spirit of Faith. Faith is "Conscious knowledge plus action." It is a bounty, a gift, a bestowal, bestowed upon the soul at a given point of readiness. We are all familiar with the statement of Christ concerning the dead, "Let

the dead bury the dead. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit." He meant (page 241 PUP) that those who were simply born of the human body were dead spiritually, while those quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit were living and eternally alive.

It is written that "God screens us evermore from premature ideas... our eyes are holden that we cannot see things that stare us in the face until the hour arrives when the mind is ripened.... then we behold them, and the time when we saw them not is like a dream." This readiness of the human soul is known only to God.

### References:

- P.U.P. page 220 through 223 on Evolution
- A.Q. page 205 Modification of Species
- A.Q. page 209 The Universe is without Beginning.
- A.Q. page 270 State of man and his progress after death
- A.Q. page 267 Perfections are without limit.

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Source: Archival papers of Emma Jones (1904 – 1984).

#### Archivist's note:

Three copies of this "The Universe" chart and two copies of the accompanying text above were found in Emma's archival papers.

One chart with text printed on 11 x 17 inch card stock folded in the center comprising 2 pages, both sides were used for this document.

One chart and typewritten text was on 8.5 x 11 inch paper single sided, 7 pages.

One smaller Chart printed on 7 x 8.75 inch plate paper affixed to card stock with this note handwritten in red pencil on the reverse side:

"Abdul Baha stood by Lua Gestinger and directed her in making this chart as He wanted it."

## 4. Talk by Lua Getsinger, December 1911, in San Francisco, about this chart

**from *Lua Getsinger: Herald of the Covenant*, by Velda Piff Metelmann  
(George Ronald, 1996) pp. 359-372**

**Talk given by Mrs. Lua M. Getsinger  
California Club Hall, San Francisco, California  
Sunday evening, December 17, 1911  
Stenographically reported by B.S. Straum**

One time in Acca, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was trying to make us understand the possibility of man more clearly knowing God, He used this chart.

*(The chart is dark one side, light on the other and consists of circles. At the top a circle labeled INFINITE ESSENCE - GOD. Next circle to the right and on the light side written "Highest possible attainment by man - the Prophets". Circles descending to the bottom circle which is half in the dark and half in the light labeled "Human Kingdom." Three circles on the left labeled (ascending) "Animal Kingdom", "Vegetable Kingdom", "Mineral Kingdom". From the large circle at the top are rays going out labeled "Love, Life, Knowledge, Faith, Forgiveness, justice, Mercy, Primal Will, Beauty, Power, Generosity, Munificence, Peace, Righteousness, Purity". The chart is circular in itself with words written upon the rays at the top "Word of God", along the side "Spirit", at the bottom "The Christ Holy Spirit", and to the left "Matter".)*

Just a word of explanation regarding the chart itself.

He likened the Infinite Essence, the Incomprehensible, unto the sun, the substance of which we do not know save through the analyzation of the waves of light emanating therefrom.

The first Effulgence emanating from the Infinite Essence, is the Word of God, the Creator. The rays of light emanating from the First Effulgence constitute the Holy Spirit, or the Christ.

The darkened half of the chart represents the world of matter, and the other half the world of Spirit, or the Heavenly Kingdom.

We have, then, the Illuminator, the Illumination, and that which is to be illuminated.

Taking it for granted that the statements made in mythic or God-given writings must be absolutely true, however anomalous or irreconcilable with the facts of modern science and the deductions of enlightened reason they may appear to the natural mind, we affirm that the sacred scriptures are true in their own domain - the soul. By the sacred scriptures we mean the Word of God, the revealed Word of God, considered apart from its setting of Man's interpretation, or interpretations of that Word. And, farther, that they are equally true in respect to physical science; that through them Deity speaks to men, who may thus learn, if their comprehension will allow them, the secret nature of things, whether pertaining to the life of earth or of the hereafter.

According to the sacred Scripture, we are told: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God, and the Word was God." But before this, there was no beginning, because that which existed before this beginning of the Word, and the manifestation thereof, always was the Infinite Essence, the Unknowable, Incomprehensible, Almighty God, for we are told that all That is is as a result of the Word, that by the Word were all things made that are made.

Then the Word becomes the power through which creation takes place, and the process of this Word producing creation is the science of Divinity, which embraces the hidden and mysterious principles of every science, sacred and secular, for it is the science of Divine action in the works of creation, the science of universal existence, both active and passive, and its original foundation is not speculation, deduction or theory, but the revealed Word of God through Prophets and Speakers whom He has selected, anointed and sent into the world.

The Bahá'í Reformation teaches that all things existing in this material world were originally spoken into existence through the power of this Word - God. As to how, or what was the process, we do not pretend to say we know. That belongs to the realm of the divine alchemy of the Almighty Creator, which He forever secretes from the knowledge of His created beings. But through this Word were all things made that are made. All things – the mineral kingdom, the animal kingdom and the kingdom of man - were spoken into existence, after which the law of evolution was declared and established, and through this law they maintain their existence.

What called for this lesson on the part of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a question, and the question was, "What is soul?" In answer to this question, He instructed me how to draw this chart - not this one, but one from which this one was reproduced. And now I wish to use his words, to give you the lesson verbatim. He said:

"As to thy question concerning the soul, know thou, verily, soul is a term applied to numerous realities, according to the exigence of those realities in regard to development in the world of existence."

Let us take one attribute now emanating from the First Effulgence of the Sun of Truth, the Word, - the attribute of life - and let us evolve it through the different kingdoms, until we find it manifesting itself in the kingdom of man.

"In the mineral kingdom it is called latent force, silently working away for the disintegration of the substances of that kingdom."

This power of life, or soul, then, manifesting itself in the rocks, is latent force. That is the term applied to it in that kingdom

"In the vegetable kingdom it is called virtue augmentative, or the power of growth, which attracts and absorbs the delicate materials of inorganic matter and transforms them to the condition of growth. Thus the inorganic substances found in the mineral kingdom become growing vegetable life through the effect of the Word of God. This vegetable soul, or virtue augmentative, or power of growth, is a quality which is produced by the admixture of elements, and appears in accidental or contingent organisms of which contingency is an essential necessity or attribute.

"In the animal kingdom this same power, latent force, virtue augmentative, becomes sense perception or instinct. This term soul, as applied to the animal kingdom, is also a natural quality resulting from the mixture of the elements, and it appears from their mingling and combination, for it is a quality which results from the composition of bodies, organism, and is dispersed at their decomposition. From this we are to understand that the animal soul, or the sense perception, is not endowed with the capacity of attaining immortality, as the life force is dispersed at the decomposition of the animal tissues.

"All things, then, up to this point, or to the human kingdom, are contingent realities, and not divine realities. A contingent reality, which continues as it is, and is perpetuated by the fullness of existence, will suffer no corruption, and will thus become a divine reality, for the accidental reality is only distinguished from the pre-existent reality by its subjection to corruption, for transformation is an essential necessity to every contingent reality, and this is what the Mature Wisdom has deemed advisable. This is also proven by physical science.

"The term soul, which in its fourth application, or in the kingdom of man, is called rational being; soul, mind, has a potential existence before its appearance in human life. It is like unto the existence of a tree within the seed. The existence of a tree within the seed is potential, but, when the seed is sown and watered, the signs thereof - its roots and branches and all its different qualities - appear. Likewise, the rational soul has a potential existence before its appearance in the human body, and through the mixture of elements and a wonderful combination, according to the natural law of conception and birth, it appears in its identity and becomes an individuality."

Well, now, what is soul?

Life, manifesting in the mineral kingdom, is latent force; manifesting in the vegetable kingdom, it is the power of growth; the same life, in the animal kingdom, becomes sense perception; and then as a human soul, it is endowed with certain attributes which will enable it to attain for itself that something by which it can become perpetuated and become a divine reality.

All beings, to this point, have not the capacity to receive it, and we can liken existence unto a tree, and call it the tree of existence. In the mineral kingdom we find the roots of the tree of existence. The vegetable kingdom produces the trunk and branches. The animal kingdom brings forth its leaves and blossoms. But only in the kingdom of man do we find its fruit, the heart of which contains that which can reproduce the tree, for in the heart we find the seed from which the original tree was produced.

"Be it known that to know the reality or essence of the soul of man is impossible, for in order to know a thing, one must comprehend it, and since a thing cannot comprehend itself, therefore man cannot comprehend himself. To know oneself in substance or essence is absolutely impossible. As the comprehender cannot be the comprehended, man cannot know himself in reality or essence.

"In order to obtain any knowledge of the reality or soul of man, the student must study the

manifestations, qualities, names and characteristics of man.

"This much can be stated, that the reality of man is a pure and unknown essence, a Divine depositary; that is, it is an emanation from the Light of the Ancient Entity - God. This Divine essence, or soul of man, because of its innate purity and its connection with the unseen and Ancient Entity, is old as regards time, but new as regards individuality. This connection is similar to that of the ray with the sun, or the effect to the Primal Cause. Otherwise, the thing that is generated, or the creature, has no connection with, or relation, individually, to the Generator and Creator.

"Therefore, since the reality or soul of man is a ray of light emanating from the Sun of the Word of God, it is capable of manifesting all the perfections of Being. It is then worthy to be the throne upon which may be established the manifestation of the Names, the Qualities and the Attributes of the Ancient Entity. Inasmuch as this entity is capable of expressing the great virtues of Being, and is the greatest and purest of all existing beings on earth, from its earliest rise in the human temple to its resurrection from the grave of the body, it can be likened to a mirror which reveals the seen and the unseen, which possesses the virtues of the world and of the Kingdom.

"The difference which exists between the mirror and the pure essence of the elements is the same which exists between the animal and man. The mirror reveals the image, but it is not conscious of the act, while the reality or soul of man, the pure mirror of God, is conscious of the reflection and the fact that it is revealing. (The animals are not conscious. They possess not the attribute of consciousness.)

"The human soul is an essence spiritual in entity and material or physical in function. It is defined as essence because it is independent in itself, while the body is accidental and dependent upon the soul.

"The personality and activity of the body are due to the individuality of the soul. Thus the soul is the cause of the life of the body, and the body, with all its organs, is but the vehicle of its expression.

"Since that pure essence (the human soul), whose identity is unknown, possesses the virtues of the worlds of matter and of the Kingdom, it has two sides: First, the material and physical; second, the mental and spiritual, attributes not found as qualities of matter: It is the same reality, which is given different names according to the conditions wherein it becomes manifest. Because of its attachment to matter and to the phenomenal world – that is, when it governs the physical functions of the body - it is called the human soul. 'When it manifests itself as the thinker and comprehender of things, it is called the mind. When it soars in the atmosphere of God and travels in the spiritual worlds, it is designated as Spirit.' (The School of the Prophets)

The soul of man, the great substance which is a ray of this light, or which is life manifested in the most perfect organism which has been formed upon this earth, possesses nine great attributes or qualities which distinguish it as an identity, separate it from all other creatures upon this earth,

and we can say of these qualities that they are to the soul what the organs are to the body. They are: perception, memory, imagination, abstraction, reason, judgment, consciousness, mental taste and will.

By perception we mean that faculty or organ of the soul which sees, hears, feels, tastes.

Memory is that which records.

Imagination forms.

Abstraction classifies, is that faculty or organ which enables us to know the difference between materials, and the proper use to which those materials ought to be put.

Reason argues.

Judgment decides.

Consciousness knows.

Mental taste detects.

Will acts.

Upon this tree of existence anything not possessing these nine attributes falls short of possessing the ability to become immortal. All the creatures below the kingdom of man are devoid of these nine faculties. The animals possess five, or less, of these faculties, but any being who does not possess them all has not the capacity to attain immortality or eternal life.

We have now reached the dividing line -- the human soul.

"This rational or human soul, when quickened through the breath of the Holy Spirit, is eternal, everlasting, divine, heavenly, and shall continue with the continuation of its Lord. Otherwise, it returns to the contingent reality or potential existence in the sphere of its oblivion, concealment or extinction. This station is the lowest degree in the world of contingent life."

Hear that sentence well. "This station is the lowest degree in the world of contingent life." There is no death, then, for the human soul. When once the ray of light, life, has become developed through the different kingdoms of matter until it enters the human organism, it is forever established. It cannot be annihilated. It only can go back to the lowest degree in the world of contingent life, because for it there is no death.

Then, the line which divides the station of man into two parts, the material and the spiritual, becomes the point of man's extremity and God's opportunity.

How?

I had a dear brother who became greatly agitated over this question, and he studied and gave the matter a great deal of thought. He was a medical student at the time, or had just graduated from the Medical College, and after giving it a great deal of thought he wrote me a letter one day. I am going to read you a portion of his letter; because it very ably explains the point how man is to escape from the world of matter into the world of spirit.

"I read one day a definition of eternal life given by Mr. Herbert Spencer which appealed to me very strongly for some reason. I thought over it and tried to see if it would hold.

"Perfect correspondence with environment would be eternal life."

"That looked true enough in this life, for a man lives just as long as he can correspond with environment, and when he ceases to do so he dies. But would this hold true of the soul?

"Christ said: This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent.'

"That did not conflict with my friend's definition, for 'to know God' is to correspond with Him. Life, then, is correspondence, or the union of the organism with environment. Life is not in the organism by itself, for, without environment, it is not. The organism is only half of being; environment is its complement.

"This is true in the natural life. Now I looked to see if it were equally true of the spiritual life .

"The natural man cannot, according to our definition, live eternally, even though he has perfect correspondence with the natural environment, for to last eternally the environment must be eternal, while we know nature is not eternal - that is, creation is not - but is temporary. Therefore, a man, to live eternally, must become a new creature, must acquire a correspondence with an environment which in its nature is eternal.

"Now, as I was trying to prove the spiritual from the natural, I began to look for something analogous to this new birth, this change from natural to spiritual. It is surely according to natural law or order - this new birth; in fact, must be another step higher than the one that led up to it, as from the mineral to the plant, the plant to the animal, and so on. How, then, are these steps brought about? Is it not also a new birth in each instance? Is there not a new creation?

"The mineral, be it ever so refined, can never become a plant, because plant life is a higher life. The life principle of the mineral cannot correspond to the environment of the plant life.

"The principle of plant life must bend down and touch the mineral ere it can enter the higher life. In other words, it is transformed, or has acquired greater correspondence with environment, but it must needs have another birth to become a bird, for the bird life is still higher and the plant cannot correspond with the environment of the bird life.

"We can easily see, therefore, that the evolution is due to a higher principle bending down to the kingdom below it and elevating that kingdom to its standing, but it cannot carry it beyond the point of its own correspondence. Therefore, man cannot of himself go higher than natural man. His correspondence is only with the natural world, therefore he has no life beyond the natural world. A new and higher principle must enter into him and establish a higher correspondence, or he ceases to be when he dies the natural death.

"Now to return to Christ's definition: 'This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and

Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent.' It is not in the power of man to know God, for naturally he has no correspondence beyond the natural world. How, then, is he to acquire this correspondence? Just as the mineral acquired its higher life, and that was when it was touched by the higher principle.

"Is this not Christ's teaching also? He said: 'The Father and I are one' - or the same principle. And again He said: 'I came that ye might have life.'

"From a spiritual standpoint, the natural man is dead, as the tree is dead from man's standpoint. But the God principle bends down, and touches man, and he acquires a new life, is a new creature, has a correspondence with a new environment, and, as this environment is eternal, the man born of the spirit is eternal, even according to science, as long as he maintains his correspondence.

"We have now the capacity for eternal life, but, as no organism can live out of environment, neither can the soul.

"The natural environment of the soul is God, and cut off from it the soul dies as surely as the body dies when cut off from its environment or food.

"Thus the only life of the soul is attained through communion with God by means of prayer."

You can readily see now how man as a human being, at this point, is indeed in grave extremity. He constitutes the highest organism in which and to which all life in kingdoms below him ascend and become involved. Through man, all things in this world rise and become manifest. But man is dependent for his evolution or ascension beyond the state of the human being upon the Word of God. This Word constitutes the natural environment of his soul, and without it he passes into the next state of existence dead - dead from the standpoint of the spiritually enlightened being. He lives - he exists.

When we reached this point with 'Abdu'l-Bahá I remember a lady said: "But what becomes of such souls? Will they always exist in the outer state, in the state of outward darkness?" He had referred us to some of the descriptions found in Revelation, describing the conditions of those souls who depart from this world untouched by the Spirit of God, unregenerated by the Word of God, who had not acquired a correspondence with the environment of the Word of God.

He replied by asking this question; "When you become enlightened upon this earth a little with the knowledge of God, when you have felt the touch of His Spirit upon your soul, and you have become the recipient of His mercy and His love, what do you wish to do first?"

She answered, "Of course I wish to tell others about it."

Then he said: "If in this world of matter, of ignorance and spiritual darkness, your first impulse is to communicate to others what little light you have received from coming in contact with the knowledge of God, what you have received from feeling His mercy and knowing a little bit of His

love, how do you think you will feel when you have left this world entirely, which for the soul constitutes the glass through which we see but darkly? When you have ascended into the station or grade which you have attained for yourself in the next world, how will you feel toward those creatures who are below you?"

She replied: "If I had received light, and if I knew more than I did here, certainly I would be more anxious there to teach them."

He said, "That is exactly what will happen."

Those souls who have left this world unregenerated and unborn spiritually can be compared to those souls in this world born deprived of sight and hearing. What have we done for those souls in that condition? Have we not, through love and a greater and higher understanding, invented ways and means by which and through which they have come in contact with knowledge? Have we not institutions for the blind and deaf and dumb? If we know enough to do that here, and if we are impelled by the spirit - the little amount of the spirit we possess - to do those good things to those who are deprived, shall we forget to be good when we get into the world of spirit?

So it resolves itself to this: that those who have received the spirit, who have felt its touch and have become regenerated by it, wholly or in part, ascend to the station in the next world which corresponds to their attainment. And, by the way, we shall have no more treasures than we lay up for ourselves while here. What constitute the treasures of the soul in the next world? That which enables the human creature to assume the title man.

Bahá'u'lláh says that the human soul is not called man because of wealth, adornment, education or environment. It ascends to that glorious station, the image of God, when as a soul it adorns itself with all the heavenly characteristics: love, life, knowledge, faith, forgiveness, justice, mercy, obedience to the Divine Will, beauty, power, generosity, munificence, peace, righteousness and purity.

If we have adorned ourselves in part, as souls, with these heavenly characteristics, we ascend only in part to the glorious stations prepared for the souls of God in the next or spiritual world.

If we have adorned ourselves completely and entirely, we ascend to the station of the highest possible attainment. The souls who have ascended to that station thus far are those who have descended from that station. Those souls are the Prophets and Messengers of God, who have come, through mercy on the part of God, to teach us how to adorn ourselves with those attributes and characteristics with which they are adorned.

Therefore, the station we shall occupy in the great hereafter depends upon ourselves.

Man, in his extremity, comes to the dividing line. There he meets or sees before him, the Primal Will of God. Just as the mineral had to sacrifice its own kingdom, the mineral, and become disintegrated before it could be taken into a higher environment, to form part of a higher life principle; just as the vegetable had to sacrifice its own kingdom, the vegetable, before it could

become part of a higher life principle; and just as the animal must sacrifice itself and its kingdom before it can become part of the human kingdom of man; so must man sacrifice himself and the human kingdom. He must lay down on this altar of the Primal Will of God his human side, his human qualities, and adorn himself with the qualities of God, and must look up, in his extremity, and ask God to bestow upon him these attributes.

As a soul, and as souls, we are in need of food. We are in need of water and clothing. Here, at the altar of the Primal Will, we must ask first for the food which will sustain us as souls, for the water which will quench our thirst as souls, and for that garment which will screen us, protect us, from the inclement elements and forces all around us.

Therefore, first of all, we must ask for knowledge – that knowledge which constitutes food and makes us independent of all creatures, dependent only upon God. We must then ask and demand that faith in God which becomes the substance, the very essence, of all our hopes, and the evidence of this great unseen God -- this great unseen Holy Spirit upon which our eternal existence depends.

Then we must ask for love, that love which will enable us to turn away from all else save God and be satisfied, that love which will enable us to go out and sacrifice even life itself for the Beloved -- God -- when we, as souls, have found Him.

Therefore, you can readily see from this chart that the Baha'i teaching does not teach the doctrine or philosophy of reincarnation. We do not believe in the reincarnation of the human soul, because the human soul, when it has become touched with the Divine Spirit, is no longer human. It has left the world of the human. It has come forth in the full image and likeness of God, and when it has once extricated itself, through the mercy and love of God, from this dark world, why should it, to gain spiritual knowledge, go down again and put itself in this place where it might lose all it had attained, as the doctrine of reincarnation does not teach the soul retaining its memory. Some think they have recurrent memory, but there is a question. Imagination, that wonderful attribute of the soul which forms everything, plays us many false tricks. The reincarnation of the human soul is not a part of the Bahá'í teaching.

We believe in the incarnation of the Holy Spirit, for there is One which has incarnated itself many times upon this earth, that man may come in contact with the higher life principle, and be forever taken from the dark confines of matter into the realms of spirit.

"There is a law of involution as well as evolution, and there must be some point where forces meet and balance or find equilibrium.

"Human beings evolve, or ascend, and unfold into spiritual beings.

"The Holy Spirit involves, or descends.

"Humanity ascends, which is evolution.

"Spirit descends, which is involution, and finds embodiment in humanity.

"The Dove, or Holy Spirit, descended from on high to build its nest in the heart of Jesus that He, being lifted up, should draw all men unto Him.

"The fifth aspect of the soul is the soul of faith born from the Spirit of God. This is an irradiation from the Divine Spirit and traces and fragrances from the Supreme Holy Spirit. This is what assures eternal life for the human rational soul. This is that of which Christ said, 'That which is born of spirit is spirit.'

"We have also another aspect of soul, and that is the Holy Soul, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God manifested in the human temple, shining forth like the Sun of Truth to all horizons, and from which the penetration appears, the lights spread, the fragrances waft, the mentioning is raised, and the commands of God prevail."

Regarding the soul, after it has ascended into the other world, I wish to read to you what Bahá'u'lláh has revealed on this subject, or a quotation of what He has revealed:

"Concerning that which you asked about the Spirit, or the soul born of the Spirit, and its everlastingness after its ascension, know that it will ascend at the time of its departure until it enters the Presence of God in a form which, throughout all centuries, times, and throughout all circumstances and events of the world will remain unchanged, but will be everlasting as the perpetuity of the Kingdom of God, His Sovereignty, His Power and His Might, and from it will appear the traces of God, His Qualities, Providences and Favors."

The providences and favors are those things which the soul receives through the mercy, bounty and munificence of God.

"The Pen cannot move at the mentioning of this Station as it is in its Supremeness and Exaltation. The hand of the Divine Bounty will cause it to enter into a station that cannot be comprehended by expression, nor he explained by all the creatures of the existence."

'Abdu'l-Bahá likened our condition in this material world, in comparison with what the condition will be in the spiritual world, to that of a child while it is still in the matrix. As a child ready for birth, it possesses feet, hands, eyes, ears, nose and mouth, but in that little space, in that little dark world of the matrix, if it were endowed with consciousness, with speech, it might say: "Of what use are these hands? Why have I these eyes? For what purpose are these ears? And to what use shall I put these feet?" But when the time comes for it to leave the dark confines, the world of the matrix, and it comes forth into this great spacious world, it soon learns the use and purpose of the hands and feet, the eyes, ears, nose and the mouth, and it soon becomes conscious of the fact that were any of them missing or imperfect it would indeed be in a state of deprivation.

And so we, while we cannot comprehend what is this form which is spoken of, or what will constitute our vision, our hearing, our senses in that next state, we know that the substance or essence of the soul exists, that it will exist because it is a ray emanating from the Sun of the Word

of God, and that owing to the nature of His bounty it will receive all that it can possibly take according to its capacity.

"Blessing be upon the spirit who departed from the body purified from the doubts and superstitions of the nations. Verily, it moves in the atmosphere of God's desire, and enters into the Supreme Paradise.

"All the angels of the Supreme paradise attend and surround it, and it will have fellowship with all the Prophets of God and His saints, and speak with them, and tell them what happened to it in the cause of God, the Lord of the Universe.

"Prophets and Messengers came only to guide the creatures to the straight path of God, and in order that people may be trained.

"Then, at the time of their ascension, with a perfect holiness and separation, and having been cut from the things of this world, they will repair to the Supreme Station."

The Supreme Station is that station prepared for those who have clothed themselves as souls entirely with these attributes, and, not only that, but they become Speakers of the Word itself.

"By the Self of God the rays of those spirits are the cause of the development of the people and the station of the nations. These are the leaven of the existence and the greatest causes of the Appearances of Divinity, and the works of the Universe. By them the clouds will shower and the plants of earth spring up; not one thing, of all the things, is existing without cause, reason and beginning.

"The greatest cause is that the Spirits were and are forever above us equal, and the difference between this earthly kingdom and the other is like the difference between the embryonic world and this world - though after the ascension it will enter in the Presence of God in a form suited for eternity and for the Kingdom."

In closing, I wish to read a quotation from Persia's greatest poet, Jalalu'd-Din Rumi, from his masterpiece, called the "Masnavi," and you will see that to all the wise souls this has not been a new thought.

The line on the chart called the arc of descent and ascent is as old as God. It is the way through which the soul is evolved and ascends.

He said:

[Extract from *The Masnavi*] by Jalalu'd-Din Rumi (Translation by Prof. E. G. Browne)]

"I died from the mineral and became a plant;  
I died from the plant and reappeared in an animal;  
I died from the animal and became a man;  
Wherefore then should I fear? When did I grow less by dying?  
Next time I shall die from the man

That I may grow the wings of the angels.  
From the angel, too, must I seek advance;  
'All things shall perish save His Face.'<sup>[The Qur'an XXVIII:88]</sup>  
Once more shall I wing my way above the angels,  
I shall become that which entereth not the imagination.  
Then let me become naught, naught; for the harp-string  
Crieth unto me 'Verily unto Him do we return!'"

## **5. See also a letter by Edward C. Getsinger which discusses this chart:**

[Reincarnation, The Return, and the "Cycle of Life" Chart \(1916\)](#)

## **6. Request for authentication from the U.S. National Bahá'í Archives**

Source: Reply email from the National Bahá'í Archives to Ernie Jones referring to request authentication of the chart and accompanying text [above].

RE: Authentication request

Date: 03/08/2012

Dear Friend,

The portions of the text which Mr. Kelsey put in quotation marks apparently are the pilgrim notes of Lua Getsinger about what she heard the Master say. We have a carbon copy of them (verbatim as found in your attachment) which is headed "EXPLANATION of CHART on EVOLUTION OF THE SPIRIT / WORDS OF `ABDU'L-BAHA / From Notes by Lua Getsinger -- Nov. 21-Dec. 2, 1900" . The source for that copy is not known; we have pilgrim notes of hers covering Nov. 23 - Feb. 8 which Fannie Lesch had and which do not have the text (or mention the chart). So the chart-related pilgrim notes themselves cannot be authenticated in the sense of: (1) an original having been found in Lua's Papers or (2) a signed copy, or (3) a copy with a cover letter from her, being available.

With warm regards,  
Lewis V. Walker  
for the National Bahá'í Archives