



## Program — In The Garden

### April

‘In the stillness of the mighty wood, man is made aware of the divine.’

*Richard St Barbe Baker*

#### Paradise Brought Near

Mortal charm shall fade away, roses shall give way to thorns, and beauty and youth shall give their day and be no more. But that which eternally endureth is the Beauty of the True One, for its splendour perisheth not and its glory lasteth for ever; its charm is all-powerful and its attraction infinite. Well is it then with that countenance that reflecteth the splendour of the Light of the Beloved One!

*Baha’i Writings*

\* \* \* \*

Dear heart, where do you find  
the courage to seek the Beloved  
when you know He has annihilated  
so many like you before?  
I do not care, said my heart,  
my only wish is to become  
one with the Beloved.

*Rumi*

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#### The Coming of the Beloved

Marzieh Gail

There is a poem by Vachel Lindsay called *The Chinese Nightingale*. It has a refrain that says “spring came on forever.” That is a lovely line – spring came on forever. It expresses the season – its lack of finality and its recurrence.

Emerson says something like it in his famous address to the senior class of the Harvard Divinity School, which he gave in 1838. He speaks of “the never-broken silence with which the old bounty goes forward...”

Spring comes on and the old bounty goes forward. Men seem to have forgotten this. They have lost hope – they are milling around in the shadow of the atomic bomb and they have forgotten the bounty and the yearly rebirth of hope.

This is the day when, to borrow a phrase from Thomas Mann, the Beloved has returned. The life of the spirit has been re-introduced into human affairs. The Prophet of God has come again. He is called in Baha’i terminology “the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable”.

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When a divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest in the world of humanity, when divine instruction and guidance appear, then enlightenment follows, a new spirit is realised within, a new power descends, and a new life is given.

*The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things may be regenerated and made new... This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful...*

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The Festival of Ridvan (April 21-May 2) termed by Bahá'u'lláh the “Most Great Festival” and the “King of Festivals” provides the occasion for the holiest days of the Baha’i year.

The arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in the Najjibiyih Garden, subsequently designated by His follows the Garden of Ridvan, signals the commencement of what has come to be recognised as the holiest and most significant of all Baha’i festivals, the festival commemorating the Declaration of His Mission to His companions.

During the twelve days that Bahá'u'lláh remained in the Garden of Ridvan, great numbers came to pay their respects to Him. Nabil has left to posterity the following vivid description of the joyous atmosphere of that historic time:

‘Every day ere the hour of dawn, the gardeners would pick the roses which lined the four avenues of the garden, and would pile them in the centre of the floor of His blessed tent. So great would be the heap that when His companions gathered to drink their morning tea in His presence, they would be unable to see each other across it. All these roses Bahá'u'lláh would, with His own hands, entrust to those whom he dismissed from his presence every morning to be delivered, on His behalf, to His Arab and Persian friends in the city... One night, the ninth night of the waxing moon, I happened to be one of those who watched beside His blessed tent. As the hour of midnight approached, I saw Him issue from His tent, pass by the places where some of His companions were sleeping, and begin to pace up and down the moonlit, flower-bordered avenues of the garden. So loud was the singing of the nightingales on every side that only those who were near Him could distinctly hear His voice. He continued to walk until, pausing in the midst of one of these avenues, he observed: “Consider these nightingales. So great is their love for these roses, that sleepless from dusk till dawn, they warble their melodies and commune with burning passion with the object of their adoration. How then can those who claim to be afire with the rose-like beauty of the Beloved choose to sleep?” For three successive nights I watched and circled round His blessed tent. Every time I passed by the couch whereon He lay, I would find Him wakeful, and every day, from morn till eventide, I would see Him ceaselessly engaged in conversing with the stream of visitors who kept flowing in from Baghdád. Not once could I discover in the words He spoke any trace of dissimulation.

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### **In The Garden**

At the gate of the garden some stand and look within, but do not care to enter.  
Others step inside, behold its beauty, but do not penetrate far.  
Still others encircle this garden inhaling the fragrance of the flowers, having enjoyed its full beauty, pass out again by the same gate.  
But there are always some who enter and becoming intoxicated with the splendour of what they behold, remain for life to tend the garden.

Abdu'l-Baha

\* \* \* \*

O Great Spirit,  
Whose voice I hear in the winds,  
And whose breath gives life to all the world,

hear me!

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes  
ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make  
my hands respect the things you have made  
and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in  
every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than  
my brother, but to fight my greatest  
enemy – myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with  
clean hands and straight eyes.

So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my  
spirit may come to you without shame.

*Native American*

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Sweeter than the perfume of sandalwood or of the lotus-flower is the perfume of virtue.

Like a beautiful fragrant lotus, springing up on a pile of the rubbish thrown out on the highway, so a disciple of the Enlightened One stands out among rubbish-like and blinded ordinary people by virtue of his wisdom.

*Buddhist Writings*

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...>From heaven We have sent down the blessed rain whereby We made the gardens grow,  
and grain of harvest and tall palm trees laden with clustered dates, in provision for men,  
thereby bringing again to life a land that was dead. Thus will be the Resurrection.

*Qur'an: Surah 50*

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And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, ...

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

*Sermon on the Mount: 6, 7, 8, 9, 16*

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### **A tribute to Richard St Barbe Baker, O.B.E.**

A man of vision who foresaw and strove all his life for a return to a green Earth covered in trees and peopled by nations who lived in harmony.

Richard St Barbe Baker was born in a country house in the South of Hampshire, England, on 9 October 1889 and, from his earliest days, developed a keen awareness of the beauty of the forests and trees and the creatures therein.

In 1924 Baker founded *Men of Trees* in England and the same year became interested in the Baha'i Faith, a faith which he pursued until his death in 1982.

In 1931 Baker went to Palestine at the invitation of Sir John Chancellor, the Governor, to assist in establishing a tree planting program in the hope of uniting warring factions. He spent some time in Jerusalem, coordinating a meeting of the heads of the Arab, Hebrew and Catholic communities to plant trees under the banner of *Men of Trees*.

In 1979 Baker again visited the Holy Land this time to present a large variety of rare seeds for the beautification of the renowned Baha'i gardens on Mount Carmel.

The following poem by Roger White is a tribute to this remarkable man:

### **Notes Toward Survival**

You were parchment frail  
quaintly exquisite as the courtesy accorded me  
when you enlisted my pad and rusty Pitman  
To record you notes.

Only your fingers looked young.  
Slender and white as peeled twigs  
they moved with a rosary-teller's nimble reverence  
among the dry rustling seeds, to me  
anonymous as lint or dust motes  
till, devoutly sorting, dividing,  
you named them, told their ancestries and lives,  
coaxed into vision by excited words  
groves and orchards and gardens.  
Carmel would be greener for your conjuring.

You would have me convert to your benign obsession,  
under your tutelage touch the dehydrated miracles,  
package and label, recite like a novice  
their names, mythical and gallant  
as those of legendary conquerors.

*Man must resuscitate his planet with trees,  
his heart with faith.* So you simplified  
survival's creed. Your coniferous hope  
sealed my discipleship. What Sahara  
could resist your passion for verdancy?

Leaving your monkish intensity  
a forest of images crowded my mind  
thrusting zealously toward light.  
Now I cannot see a leaf but think  
love's task was ever reclamation.

\* \* \* \*

### **The Hour of Unity**

Today the light of Truth is shining upon the world in its abundance; the breezes of the heavenly garden are blowing throughout all regions; the call of the Kingdom is heard in all lands, and the breath of the Holy Spirit is felt in all hearts that are faithful. The Spirit of God is giving eternal life. In this wonderful age the East is enlightened, the West is fragrant, and

everywhere the soul inhales the holy perfume. The sea of the unity of mankind is lifting up its waves with joy, for there is real communication between the hearts and minds of men...

This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes. You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundations of true humanity.

The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great peace shall come...

*'Abdu'l-Bahá*

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'In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the roses of Love,...

*Baha'u'llah*