



## Program — Renewal

### March 2002

‘To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life.’  
*Robert Louis Stevenson*

#### Renewal

‘What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly.’  
*Richard Bach*

#### In the Ebb of Joy and Sorrow

From the sweet scented streams of Thine eternity give me to drink, O my God, and of the fruits of the tree of Thy being enable me to taste, O my Hope! >From the crystal springs of Thy love suffer me to quaff, O my Glory, and beneath the shadow of Thine everlasting providence let me abide, O my Light! Within the meadows of Thy nearness, before Thy presence, make me able to roam, O my Beloved, and at the right hand of the throne of Thy mercy, seat me, O my Desire! From the fragrant breezes of Thy joy let a breath pass over me, O my Goal, and into the heights of the paradise of Thy reality let me gain admission, O my Adored One! To the melodies of the dove of Thy oneness suffer me to hearken, O Resplendent One, and through the spirit of Thy power and Thy might quicken me, O my Provider! In the spirit of Thy love keep me steadfast, O my Succourer, and in the path of Thy good pleasure set firm my steps, O my Maker! Within the garden of Thine immortality, before Thy countenance, let me abide forever, O Thou Who art merciful unto me, and upon the seat of Thy glory stablish me, O Thou Who art my Possessor! To the heaven of Thy loving-kindness lift me up, O my Quickener, and unto the Daystar of Thy guidance lead me, O Thou my Attractor! Before the revelations of Thine invisible spirit summon me to be present, O Thou Who art my Origin and my Highest Wish, and unto the essence of the fragrance of Thy beauty, which Thou wilt manifest, cause me to return, O Thou Who art my God!

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, the All-Highest.

*Bahá'u'lláh*

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The time of Easter, Passover and Naw-Ruz – all reflective of humanity’s hope for renewal – is the season when people review their beliefs about life and immortality.

Today, when world around us seems catching its breath in a sense of impending events, is surely a day for reflection and reassessment of our aims and aspirations.

Twenty centuries on, still the sacrifice of Christ and the wonder of the Resurrection is the deepest significance of Easter – a message of hope and joy.

The joy of Easter at the time of Passover, that commemorates the deliverance of Jewish people from oppressors, in the spiritual sense is implicit to all religions and traditions.

The hope of Easter is one of rebirth and renewal and its echo once again can be heard in the words of *Abdu'l-Baha* in memory of Naw-Ruz – the Baha’i New Year:

*It is New Year: therefore it is very blessed.*

*I wish this blessing to appear and become manifest to the end that the old earth may disappear and the new earth appear. The new star shine and gleam: the new breeze blow.*

*I desire for you that you will partake of this great bounty and that in spirit and heart you will strive and endeavour, until the world of war becomes the world of peace; the world of darkness the world of light; the ruined places become built up; the sword be turned into the olive branch; the flash of hatred became the flame of love of God, and the noise of gun the voice of the Kingdom; the soldiers of death the soldiers of life; all the nations of the world one nation; all the races as one race; and all national anthems harmonised into one melody.*

*Abdu'l-Baha*

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### **A Time for Everything**

Look to this day,  
For it is life,  
The very life of life.  
In its brief course, lies all  
The realities and verities of Existence,  
The bliss of growth,  
The splendour of action,  
The glory of power;  
For yesterday is but a dream,  
And tomorrow is only a vision,  
But today, well lived,  
Makes every yesterday a dream  
Of happiness,  
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.  
Look well therefore, to this day.

*Sanskrit Proverb*

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

*Ecclesiastes 3*

Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banner of unity... and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one. This is the time for growing, the season for joyous gathering... If we are not happy and joyous at this season, for what other season shall we wait and for what other time shall we look?

*Abdu'l-Baha*

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## A Dedication for You

I urge you  
to trudge not through life  
leaving ugly gashes,  
to tiptoe not through life  
leaving half-formed impressions,  
but  
to tread gently, lovingly and purposefully,  
leaving graceful heart prints.

*Unity Dow*  
High Court Judge, Botswana

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*...to think that human nature cannot improve is a flawed conclusion. Ghandi writes:  
We do see men constantly becoming better under effort and discipline. There is no occasion  
for limiting the capacity for improvement. Life to me would lose all its interest if I felt that I  
could not attain perfect love on earth. After all, what matters, is that our capacity for loving  
ever expands...*

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*You  
Are a part of the Great Spirit.  
You  
Are perfection.  
Yet you have allowed others  
To place limitations upon you.  
Now is the time of awareness.  
Now is the time for remembrance.  
You have chosen this.  
No other  
Can choose it for  
You.*

*Trust yourself.  
Trust your own knowing.  
Take it by the hand and follow it.  
Listen and you will hear  
The silent voice  
That speaks to you  
From your heart.  
Follow it  
And you will know  
Great beauty.*

From the words of *Clear Water*

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Many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires.

It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

It is a fact of the human condition that each shall, like a meteor – a mere brief passing moment in time and space – flit across the human stage and pass out of existence.

*From Nelson Mandel's address  
to the Joint Session of the House of Congress of the USA,  
Washington DC, 26 June 1990.*

After a climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

Nelson Mandela

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### **Fragrance of Spirituality**

A reflection on *Gravity and Flight* by J.A. McLean:

Everyone has two contending tendencies of soul. One is to fly. The other is to remain grounded. The desire for flight is a longing for spiritual freedom, a yearning after brilliance, to know fire and light, to soar in the rarest of climes. It is to be *Icarus*. When we experience gravity, we seek the cool darkness of the night season. We experience desire. We want to be held down, to mix with the earth and the elements, to remember that we are made of blood and bone, to take delight in the flesh.

Gravity is not materialism or gross sensuality. It is connectedness to earth mother. It is recalling our origins in the womb, of being nurtured at our mother's breast, remembering that we have come from the matrix of life. It is a desire to return to the source and as medieval pilgrims once did in the great cathedrals of Europe, seek sanctuary and protection. Gravity is knowing that only through the body and the senses can the spirit express itself. Gravity says that the body takes on qualities of soul, that the soul becomes flesh, that it seeks the heart's other half, the *animus/anima*.

But gravity can become a prison. We can easily become enmeshed in gravity. If the bird of the soul flies too low, it becomes trapped in the fowler's net. Then it flutters helplessly until it is either consumed or released by the fowler. Gravity can become addiction in its many forms, 'the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire' in the frenetic, inverted search for peace.

We must learn to walk a tightrope between two worlds, to dance between heaven and earth, to walk on air and return gently to *terra firma*. We must learn to raise aspiring, upraised hands to the sky while moving carefully over ground. We must glance heavenward even as we dip our feet into the fast-flowing stream of the source of life. For if we linger too long on earth, our wings will become sullied and we may find ourselves forced to dwell in the dust, unable to take flight again.

We know when gravity becomes life-threatening, for we hear an ominous note of caution being sounded. If the joy that we have sought is followed by sorrow, then we know that we are being overpowered by gravity. If we find ourselves caught in a tournament of fears, when sorrow jousts repeatedly with joy and passion altercates with pain, we are being held fast by gravity. Then we must fly upward again where the air is pure and sweet, and where the sky is clean and blue. As we learn to defy gravity and fly, even as we welcome the return to earth, we shall no longer be forced to dwell in the dust, but shall spread our wings and fly again with ease.

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Be generous in prosperity and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, and answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgement, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the

human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Baha'i Faith: *Gleanings p130*

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'Here is  
a test to find  
whether your mission on earth is finished:  
If you're alive, it isn't.'

*Richard Bach*