

city of Thy presence, and to disappoint not the hopes I have set on the manifestations of Thy grace amidst Thy creatures." Who has not, in order to better visualize himself in relation to the Kingdom of God, seen his own soul as a wanderer, weary and hopeful, standing at the Gates of the Heavenly City and longing for admittance? The worshipper gazes at the brightening sky in the east and waits, expectant of the mercy of God. He hears the "most sweet Voice" and supplicates that by the "most exalted Word" he may draw ever nearer the threshold of God's door and enter under the shadow of the canopy of His bounty - a canopy which is already spreading itself, in mighty symbolic form, over the world in crimson, gold and gray clouds.

The day waxes; the oncoming sun, in the prayer of Bahá'u'lláh, becomes the face of God Himself to which He turns, addressing words of infinite sweetness and yearning: "I beseech Thee, O my God, by the splendor of Thy luminous brow and the brightness of the light of Thy countenance, which shineth from the all-highest horizon, to attract me by the fragrance of Thy raiment, and make me drink of the choice wine of Thine utterance."

The soft winds of dawn, which must have often played over His face and stirred His black locks against His cheek, may have given rise to this beautiful phrase in His prayer: "I beseech Thee, O my God, by Thy hair which moveth across Thy face, even as Thy most exalted pen moveth across the pages of Thy tablets, shedding the musk of hidden meanings over the kingdom of Thy creation, so to raise me up to serve Thy Cause that I shall not fall back, nor be hindered by the suggestions of them who have cavilled at Thy signs and turned away from Thy face." How deep, how poetical, how sincere are His words! The playing of the strands of hair recall to Him the fine tracing of the Persian script, revealing words from God that shed a divine fragrance in the lives of men. But that is not all. In His communion all the love and loyalty of His heart is roused, He supplicates to be made of the faithful, whom naught shall turn aside from the Path that leads them to their Lord.

The sun has risen, as if in answer to the cry of the worshipper to "enable me to gaze on the Day-Star of Thy Beauty...." And as he continues his prayer it seems as if all nature were moving in harmony with it: "I beseech Thee, O my God, by the Tabernacle of Thy majesty on the loftiest summits, and the Canopy of Thy Revelations on the highest hills, to graciously aid me to do what Thy will hath desired and Thy purpose hath manifested." North and south the glory spreads, a faint echo of that celestial beauty visible to the eye of Bahá'u'lláh and which He says: "shineth forth above the horizon of eternity." So deeply does it penetrate the heart that it evokes the desire to "die to all that I possess and live to whatsoever belongeth unto Thee." The soul is moved; all earthly things pale before the vision which, as symbolized in the sunrise, it beholds in the inner world; God, the "Well-beloved" seems to have drawn very near.

The winds flit over the land; some tree calls to the Prophet's mind, as it shivers and stirs, the Tree of Himself that over-shadows all mankind: "I beseech Thee, O my God, by the rustling of the Divine Lote-Tree and the murmur

of the breezes of Thine utterance in the kingdom of Thy names, to remove me far from whatsoever Thy will abhorreth, and draw me nigh unto the station wherein He who is the Day-Spring of Thy signs hath shone forth." Bahá'u'lláh puts the words into our mouths whereby we may draw nigher to God and receive from Him the heavenly gifts: "I beseech Thee ... to make known unto me what lay hid in the treasures of Thy knowledge and concealed within the repositories of Thy wisdom." "I beseech Thee ... to number me with such as have attained unto that which Thou hast sent down in Thy Book and manifested through Thy will." "I beseech Thee ... to write down for me what Thou hast written down for Thy trusted ones..."

And finally, in words designed for those countless worshippers for whom He wrote this glorious Fasting Prayer, He asks God to "write down for everyone who hath turned unto Thee, and observed the fast prescribed by Thee, the recompense decreed for such as speak not except by Thy leave, and who forsook all that they possessed in Thy path and for love of Thee." He asks that the silence of the good may descend upon them - both the silence and the speech of those who are wholly dedicated to that Divine Will which alone can lead men to their highest destiny. The last thought of all is that those who have obeyed the decrees of God may be forgiven their trespasses.

This majestic prayer is composed of fourteen verses, each opening with the words "I beseech Thee..." and closing with the same refrain: "Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Most Holy, the Most Luminous, the Most Mighty, the Most Great, the Most Exalted, the Most Glorious, and clinging to the hem of the robe to which have clung all in this world and in the world to come." The rhythmical emphasis on the thoughts contained in these words is not only very powerful but very artistic - if one may borrow the term for lack of a better one - and the sense that all creatures living, and those gone before into the invisible realms of God, are clinging to the skirt of His mercy, dependent on Him and Him alone, exerts a profound influence on one's mind, particularly so when taken in conjunction with what one beholds at this hour of the day: The sky kindling with light, the brush of the wind gently over the face of nature; the whole world waking to the tasks of living on all sides; all things dependent on God; they always have and they always will be. This is a little of what this long prayer conveys to those who partake of it.

Another unique prayer of Bahá'u'lláh's is His congregation prayer for the Dead. His Revelation throughout has aimed at doing away with every form of ritual; He has abolished priesthood; forbidden ceremonials, in the sense of church services with a set form; reduced the conduct of marriages to a naked simplicity, with a minimum uniform rite required of those concerned. The one exception to this general policy is the Prayer for the Dead, portions of which are repeated while all present are standing. Prayers such as this and the one for the Fast, can never be properly appreciated by merely reading them. They are living experiences. The difference is as great as that between looking at a brook when you are not thirsty, and drinking from it when you are. If you lose someone you love and then read aloud these glorious words, you come to know

what "living waters" are:

"This is Thy servant who hath believed in Thee ... deal with him, O Thou Who forgivest the sins of men and concealest their faults, as beseemeth the heaven of Thy bounty and the ocean of Thy grace. Grant him admission within the precincts of Thy transcendent mercy that was before the foundation of earth and heaven..." Simple words, words which follow our loved one out into the spaces where we may not follow. But the profound experience of this prayer is in the refrain, each sentence of which is repeated 19 times. "We all, verily, worship God. We all, verily, bow down before God. We all, verily, are devoted unto God. We all, verily, give praise unto God. We all, verily, yield thanks unto God. We all, verily, are patient in God."

The very strength of the prayer is in the repetition. It is so easy to say just once, "We... bow down before God" or "We yield thanks unto God" or "We are patient in God"; the words slip off our minds swiftly and leave them much as before. But when we say these things over and over, they sink very deep, they go down into the puzzled, the rebellious, the grief stricken or numbly resigned heart and stir it with healing powers; reveal to it the wisdom of God's decrees, seal it with patience in His ways, - ways which run the stars in their courses smoothly and carry us on to our highest good.

No form of literature in the whole world is less objective than prayers. They are things of motion, not of repose. They are speeches addressed to a Hearer; they are medicine applied to a wound; they stir the worshipper and set something in his heart at work. That is their whole purpose. Teachings, discourses, even meditations, can be read purely objectively and critically, but the man who can read a real prayer in the cold light of reason alone, has indeed strayed far from his own innate human nature, for all men, everywhere, at every period in their evolution, have possessed the instinct of supplication, the necessity of calling out to something, some One, greater than themselves, whether in their abasement it was a stone image, thunder or fire, or, in their glory, the invisible God of all men that they called upon, the instinct was there just as deeply.

Many wonderful prayers exist in all languages and all religions; but the prayers of Bahá'u'lláh possess a peculiar power and richness all their own. He calls upon God in terms of the greatest majesty, of the deepest feeling; sometimes with awe; sometimes with pathos; sometimes in a voice of such exultation that we can only wonder what transpired within his soul at such moments. He uses figures of speech that strike the imagination, stir up new concepts of the Divinity and expand infinitely our spiritual horizons. Much, no doubt, of their perfection is lost in translation as He often employed the possibilities and peculiarities of the Arabic and Persian languages to their fullest. Some of His prayers, following the style of the Surihs of the Qur'an, end every sentence in rhyme - though they are not poems - and the custom of alliterating words, thus imparting a flowing sense of rhythm to the sentences, is very often resorted to in all His writings, including His prayers. Nevertheless the original charm and beauty pervades the translations and none

of the lyric quality of the following prayer seems to have been lost. It rises like a beautiful hymn which lifts the soul on wings of song:

"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 Succorer, 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 for ever, O Thou Who art merciful unto me, and upon the seat of Thy glory establish me, O Thou Who art my Possessor! To the heaven of Thy loving-kindness lift me up, O my Quickener, and unto the Day-Star 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."

At times Bahá'u'lláh put words into the mouth of the worshipper according to his need: He writes a supplication for a child, for one who is ill, one who is sad, one who is pregnant, one who is a sinner, one who pours forth his heart to God - capturing the whole gamut of human emotions in His various communions. But at times it is obvious the prayer is His own. We read it, but we cannot be the speaker, or mortal feet cannot tread the path that lay between His soul-the soul of the Prophet Himself - and the God Who sent Him here among men to labor and suffer for them. "I know not," He declares, "what the water is with which Thou hast created me, or what the fire Thou hast kindled within me, or the clay wherewith Thou hast kneaded me. The restlessness of every ocean hath been stilled, but not the restlessness of this Ocean which moveth at the bidding of the words of Thy will. The flame of every fire hath been extinguished, except the Flame which the hands of Thine omnipotence have kindled, and whose radiance Thou hast, by the power of Thy name, shed abroad before all that are in Thy heaven and that are on Thy earth. As the tribulations deepen, it waxeth hotter and hotter." The Holy fire that burned within His being is not for us, frail creatures that we are, to comprehend. We can only gaze into its heart and marvel at its shifting hues and beauty, much as we marvel at the flames that leap and dance on our own hearth fires, though we may not approach or touch them.

Bahá'u'lláh exalts the being and nature of God, in His addresses to Him, as

no other Prophet ever has. He defines His relation to Him; He gives us glimpses of the forces surging within His soul; He lay bare the emotions that stir within His turbulent breast. In words of honey He cries out: "Thou beholdest, O my God, how every bone in my body soundeth like a pipe with the music of Thine inspiration...." A love far beyond our ken burns in His heart for the One God who sent Him down amongst men: "Thou seest, O Thou Who art my All-Glorious Beloved, the restless waves that surge within the ocean of my heart in my love for Thee....", "Thou art, verily, the Lord of Bahá and the Beloved of his heart, and the Object of his desire, and the Inspirer of his tongue, and the Source of his Soul." "Lauded be Thy name, O Thou Who art my God and throbbest within my heart!" "O would that they who serve Thee could taste what I have tasted of the sweetest of Thy love!" How keenly His soul thrilled with appreciation for the aid that poured into His inmost being from the Invisible Source: "Were I to render thanks unto Thee for the whole continuance of Thy kingdom and the duration of the heaven of Thine omnipotence, I would still have failed to repay Thy manifold bestowals." How ardent is His gratitude to His Lord for raising Him up to serve His fellowmen: "How can I thank Thee for having singled me out and chosen me above all Thy servants to reveal Thee, at a time when all have turned away from Thy beauty!"

Ever and again He confesses His readiness, nay, His eagerness, to bear every trial and hardship for the sake of shedding the light of God upon this darkened world, and in order to demonstrate the greatness of the love He feels for His Creator: "I yield Thee thanks for that Thou hast made me the target of diverse tribulations and manifold trials in order that Thy servants may be endued with new life and all Thy creatures may be quickened." "I yield Thee thanks, O my God, for that Thou hast offered me up as a sacrifice in Thy path ... and singled me out for all manner of tribulation for the regeneration of Thy people." "I swear by Thy glory! I have accepted to be tried by manifold adversities for no purpose except to regenerate all that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth." "How sweet is the thought of Thee in times of adversity and trial, and how delightful to glorify Thee when compassed about by the fierce winds of Thy decree." "Every hair of my head proclaimeth: 'But for the adversities that befall me in Thy path how could I ever taste the divine sweetness of Thy tenderness and love?'"

With what passion and majesty He testifies to the unquenchable power and purpose of His Lord -the Lord Whom He called His "Fire" and His "Light" - which burned within His breast: "Were all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth to unite and seek to hinder me from remembering Thee and from celebrating Thy praise, they would assuredly... fail... And were all the infidels to slay me, my blood would... lift up its voice and proclaim: 'There is no God but Thee, O Thou Who Art all my heart's desire!' And were my flesh to be boiled in the cauldron of hate, the smell which it would send forth would rise towards Thee and cry out: 'Where art Thou, O Lord of the Worlds, the One Desire of them that have known Thee!' And were I to be cast into fire, my ashes would - I swear by Thy glory - declare: 'The Youth hath, verily, attained that for which he had besought His Lord the All Glorious, the Omniscient!'"

Reading such testimonials that sprang - in moments of who knows what exaltation? - from the heart of the prophet, we cannot but marvel at the mighty and strange bond that binds such a Being to the Source of all power. It is as if an invisible umbilical cord tied Him to His Creator; all His life, His motivations, His inspiration, His very words, flowed down this divine channel, as all the life, blood, and food of the babe flows in through that one bond it has with its mother. He throbbed in this mortal world with the vibrations of a celestial world; He set all things pulsating with Him, whether they knew it or not, and drew them up and closer to the throne of God. One of His most moving and sublime rhapsodies is included in a meditation in which He testifies to the power of the praise which He pours out to God, to transform and influence the hearts of others: "I yield Thee such thanks," He declares, "as can direct the steps of the wayward towards the splendors of the morning light of Thy guidance.... I yield Thee such thanks as can cause the sick to draw nigh unto the waters of Thy healing, and can help those who are far from Thee to approach the living fountain of Thy presence.... I yield Thee such thanks as can stir up all things to extol Thee... and can unloose the tongues of all beings to... magnify Thy beauty... I yield Thee such thanks as can make the corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit... and revive the bodies of all beings with the gentle winds of Thy transcendent grace.... I yield Thee such thanks as can cause Thee to forgive all sins and trespasses, and to fulfill the needs of the peoples of all religions, and to waft the fragrances of pardon over the entire creation.... I yield Thee such thanks as can satisfy the wants of all such as seek Thee, and realize the aims of them that have recognized Thee. I yield thee such thanks as can blot out from the hearts of men all suggestions of limitation..."

Poetic and stirring as these words are, we need not assume them to be merely the effusions of an exalted and over-filled heart. Bahá'u'lláh was never idle in His words. If He tells us that enshrined in the thanks He poured forth to His God is a power that can blot out every limitation from the hearts of men, it is so. The trouble is with us. How many Seers and Prophets, how many scientists and pioneers, have brought men tidings of truths and powers they knew not of and offered them to their generation, only to be spat upon, laughed to scorn, killed or ignored? And in the end a more enlightened people would take the key and open the door and find the wonders that the incredulous disbelieved, to be all true, ready at hand, waiting to be used for their good. The Prophets of God are intent on giving us both the good of this world and the one awaiting us after death, but most of the time we will not have it. We, blind and perverse, prefer our own ways! Did not Christ say: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered Thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" It is not a new story. Every Divine Manifestation has placed jewels in the hands of man, only to see them flung aside for some foolish toy of his choosing. Yet each Prophet has assured us that God's pity knows no bounds. "Thou art, in truth," states Bahá'u'lláh in one of His prayers, "He Who mercy hath encompassed all the worlds, and Whose grace hath embraced all who dwell on earth and in heaven. Who

is there who hath cried after Thee, and whose prayers hath remained unanswered? Where is he to be found who hath reached forth towards Thee, and whom Thou hast failed to approach? Who is he who can claim to have fixed his gaze upon Thee, and towards whom the eye of Thy loving kindness hath not been directed? I bear witness that Thou hadst turned toward Thy servants ere they had turned toward Thee, and hadst remembered them ere they had remembered Thee."

It is an education in divinity to read Bahá'u'lláh's prayers. He maintained the unique nature of God, the utter impossibility of any creature approaching or comprehending Him, in a clear and graphic manner. The unseen God of Moses; the "Father" of Christ, unto Whom none cometh to but through the Son; the One of Whom Muhammad so beautifully said: "Eyes see Him not but He sees the eyes," is exalted, one might say, to unimaginable heights by Him. "Thou art He Whom all things worship and Who worshipeth no one, Who is the Lord of all things and the vassal of none, Who knoweth all things and is known of none." "From everlasting Thou hast existed alone with no one beside Thee, and wilt, to everlasting, continue to remain the same, in the sublimity of Thine essence and the inaccessible heights of Thy glory," He declares. In a short and wonderful prayer He solemnly sets forth the fundamental doctrine of the nature of God with a lucidity and power that would, in any past dispensation, have gained it first place in the dogmas of the church:

"God testifieth to the unity of His Godhood and to the singleness of His Own Being. On the throne of eternity, from the inaccessible heights of His station, His tongue proclaimeth that there is none other God but Him. He Himself, independently of all else, hath ever been a witness unto His own oneness, the revealer of His own nature, the glorifier of His own essence. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the Beauteous.

"He is supreme over His servants, and standeth over His creatures. In His hand is the source of authority and truth. He maketh men alive by His signs, and causeth them to die through His wrath. He shall not be asked of His doings and His might is equal unto all things. He is the Potent, the All-Subduing. He holdeth within His grasp the empire of all things, and on His right hand is fixed the Kingdom of His Revelation. His power, verily, embraceth the whole of creation. Victory and overlordship are His; all might and dominion are His; all glory and greatness are His. He, of a truth, is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful, the Unconditioned."

The "Unconditioned." That one word provides ample food for thought. Some of the adjectives Bahá'u'lláh uses for the Godhead are most striking and seem to plow up our minds and prepare them for an infinitely deeper and richer concept of the One on Whom we depend for everything we have, be it physical or spiritual. For instance: "O God Who art the Author of all Manifestations... the Fountain-Head of all Revelations, and the Well-Spring of all Lights." As words are the tools of men's thoughts, they are tremendously important. The "Well-Spring of all Lights," though but another way of saying, that all the Prophets are generated by God, presents a tremendous mental picture to a man who has studied something of modern astronomy, of a universe which is light

upon light, of matter which itself is the stuff of which light is made. Compare the mental picture this phase conjures up with that of an anthropomorphic God, bearded, stern and much like a human grandfather, who created the world in six days and took a rest on the seventh! Though no doubt when that metaphor was propounded it opened up men's minds to a new and wider concept of the Divinity. A being Who could do all that in six days was worthy of worship and to be strictly obeyed!

Bahá'u'lláh calls God "the Pitier of thralls," "the Pitier of the downtrodden," "the Help in peril," "the Great Giver," "the Restorer" - words which sink into our hearts these dark days with an added comfort as we see so many of our fellowmen downtrodden, in deadly danger, despoiled and broken. He tells us that this "King of Kings," this "Quickener of every mouldering bone," this "Enlightener of all creation" Who is the "Lord of all mankind" and the "Lord of the Judgment Day" is the One "Whom nothing whatsoever can frustrate." Such a God will right all wrongs and rule the world for the good of man! Grievous, on the other hand, as are our sins, as testified by these words: "Wert Thou to regard Thy servants according to their deserts . . . they would assuredly merit naught except Thy chastisement..." He yet assures us, in the words He addresses to God that: "All the atoms of the earth testify that Thou art the Ever-Forgiving, the Benevolent, the Great Giver...", and that "the whole universe testifieth to Thy generosity." Even though He be the Lord "Whose strength is immense, Whose decree is terrible," yet we can confidently turn to Him, and, in Bahá'u'lláh's words declare: "A drop out of the ocean of Thy mercy sufficeth to quench the flames of hell, and a spark of the fire of Thy love is enough to set ablaze a whole world."

Our world is steadily sinking into ruin. We have waxed proud and forgotten our God - as many a people has before us to its soul's undoing - and turned away from Him, disbelieved in Him, followed proudly our own fancies and desires. No Being that was not such a Being as Bahá'u'lláh depicts would still hold open His door to us! And yet in how many passages such as these the way back, the way we once trod but have now, for the most part, forgotten, is pointed out to us and words placed in our mouths that are food for our sick hearts and souls: "Cleanse me with the waters of Thy Mercy, O my Lord, and make me wholly Thine....", "I am all wretchedness, O my Lord, and Thou art the Most Powerful, the Almighty!", "Thy Might, in truth, is equal to all things!", "Whosoever has recognized Thee will turn to none save Thee, and will seek for naught else except Thyself." "Help me to guard the pearls of Thy love, which by Thy decree, Thou hast enshrined in my heart." "Many a chilled heart, O my God, hath been set ablaze with the fire of Thy Cause, and many a slumberer hath been awakened by the sweetness of Thy voice."

Of such stuff as these is the treasury of prayers which Bahá'u'lláh has left us. They are suited to the child before he goes to sleep at night, to the mystic, to the busy man of practical outlook, to the devout. An instance of the comprehension and tolerance with which He viewed human nature is the fact that He revealed a choice of three daily, and obligatory, prayers. While imposing on

men the obligation of turning to their Creator once, at least, during every day, He provided a means of doing so suited to widely different natures. One takes about thirty seconds to recite and is to be said at the hour of noon; one is longer and is to be used three times during the day; and the third is very long and profound, accompanied by many genuflexions, and may be used any time during the twenty-four hours of the day. The Divine Physician provided us with what we might call a spiritual polish with which to brighten our hearts. We need this renewal which comes through turning to the Sun of Eternal Truth - as every bird and beast, be it ever so humble, responds to the light of the physical sun at dawn - but he gave latitude to the individual state of development and temperament.

Some Westerners have found the long Daily Prayer very strange; no doubt this is because the present generation has ceased to feel intimate with its God. For a man to stand alone in his room and stretch his arms out to nothingness, or kneel down before a blank wall, in the midst of familiar objects, seems to him unnatural and even foolish. This is because he has lost the sense of the "living God." God, far from being to him, as the Qur'an says, "nearer than his life's vein," has become more of an X in some vast equation. And yet men that we honor and men that we long to emulate have not felt shy before their God. Many a burly crusader knelt on the stones of Jerusalem where he felt His Lord's feet might have trod, and the Pilgrim Fathers did not feel self-conscious on their knees when turning to the God who had led them to a new and freer homeland. The prayers of Bahá'u'lláh will help lead us back to that warm sense of the reality and nearness of God, through use. He makes no compulsion, He takes our hand and guides us into the safe road trodden by our forefathers.

No survey, however cursory and inadequate, of His Prayers would be complete without quoting one of the most passionate and moving of them all, one associated with probably the saddest hours of His whole life. After His banishment from Persia to 'Iraq the initial signs of envy and hatred began to be apparent from His younger brother, Mirza Yahya. In order to avoid open rupture and the consequent humiliation of the Faith in the eyes of the non-believers, Bahá'u'lláh retired for two years to the wilderness of Kurdistan and lived, unknown, as a dervish among its people.

During His absence the situation, far from improving, now that the field was left open and uncontested to Mirza Yahya, steadily deteriorated. Shameful acts took place and conditions became so acute that the believers sent a messenger in search of Bahá'u'lláh to report to Him and beseech His return. Reluctantly He turned His face towards Baghdad. He was going back to mount the helm; storms lay ahead of Him of a severity and bitterness no other Prophet had ever known; behind Him, once and for all, He left a measure of peace and seclusion. For two years He had communed with His own soul. He had written wonderful poems and revealed beautiful prayers and treatises. Now He headed back into the inky blackness of an implacable hatred and jealousy, where attempts against His very life were to be plotted and even prove partially successful. As He tramped along through the wilderness, beautiful in its dress of spring, the messenger

that had gone to fetch Him back testified that He chanted over and over again this prayer. It rolled forth like thunder from His agonized heart:

"O God, my God! Be Thou not far from me, for tribulation upon tribulation hath gathered about me. O God, my God! Leave me not to myself, for the extreme of adversity hath come upon me. Out of the pure milk, drawn from the breasts of Thy loving-kindness, give me to drink, for my thirst hath utterly consumed me. Beneath the shadow of the wings of Thy mercy shelter me, for all mine adversaries with one consent have fallen upon me. Keep me near to the throne of Thy majesty, face to face with the revelations of the signs of Thy glory, for wretchedness hath grievously touched me. With the fruits of the tree of Thine Eternity nourish me, for uttermost weakness hath overtaken me. From the cups of joy, proffered by the hands of Thy tender mercies, feed me, for manifold sorrows have laid mighty hold upon me. With the brodered robe of Thine omnipotent sovereignty attire me, for poverty hath altogether despoiled me. Lulled by the cooing of the Dove of Thine Eternity, suffer me to sleep, for woes at their blackest have befallen me. Before the throne of Thy oneness, amid the blaze of the beauty of Thy countenance, cause me to abide, for fear and trembling have violently crushed me. Beneath the ocean of Thy forgiveness, faced with the restlessness of the leviathan of glory, immerse me, for my sins have utterly doomed me."

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