



PARIS TALKS: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1911

STUDY GUIDE

EHSAN BAYAT

Brief Introduction

Paris Talks is a book transcribed from talks given by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá while in Paris in the first stages of his journeys to the West. It was originally published as Talks by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá Given in Paris in 1912. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá did not read and authenticate the transcripts of his talks in Paris, and thus the authenticity of the talks is not known. Shoghi Effendi, head of the Bahá’í Faith in the first half of the 20th century, has said that, while the texts are not authenticated, the compilations can still be used by Bahá’ís and in the future work will be done to find which parts are authentic.

Lady Blomfield's copious notes are the basis of the volume.

Book Review

By Kathleen Javid
PARIS TALKS by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

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Through *Paris Talks*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá lighted the flame of spirit in the hearts of the small nucleus of the believers gathered to receive Him, and prepared them for service to the threshold of unity and entrance into the Kingdom. It was autumn, 1911, and these were the first talks given in the West by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Each day the Master delivered one of these talks to those gathered either at the apartment, rented for Him at 4 Avenue de Camoens near the River Seine across from the Eiffel Tower, or at churches, Esperanto meetings, theological seminaries, the Scott studio, and various other locations.

It was 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who requested that notes taken on the talks be arranged for publication. It was He Who read the text and remarked He was well pleased with the English translation (the talks had been given in Persian and translated into French). It was He Who asked that the book be published without delay. *Paris Talks* was printed in 1912, and published in America as *Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*.

Single Unifying Purpose

A wide variety of subject matter is covered in *Paris Talks*, each talk being geared to the mentality and background of the audience. Yet, through all the talks runs a single unifying purpose: To uplift those with a hearing ear to a spiritual atmosphere far removed from materialistic goals; to enfold them in such an aura of divine love that they would dedicate their very lives to proclamation of the Kingdom of the Most High.

"Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings."¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá reiterated, and explaining further, "Likewise the Holy Spirit is the very cause of the life of man; without the Holy Spirit he would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge by which his great influence over the rest of creation is gained. The illumination of the Holy Spirit gives to man the power of thought, and enables him to make discoveries by which he bends the laws of nature to his will."

He adds, "The Holy Spirit it is which, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man and enables him to attain eternal life."²

Again He exhorts, "We must look higher than all earthly thoughts; detach ourselves from every material idea, crave for the things of the spirit; fix our eyes on the everlasting bountiful mercy of the Almighty, Who will fill

our souls with the gladness of joyful service to His command 'Love one another.'"³

While leading us through the logical reasons why we should detach ourselves from material aims and earthly ambitions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá enlightens us on the nature of the soul, its continual progress, its training through grief and sorrow; and finally, He commissions us to establish love and unity.

Station of the Servants of God

He gives us the vision of the station to which we may arise as disciples of the Most High, saying, "You will be servants of God, who are dwelling near to Him, His divine helpers in the service, ministering to all humanity. All humanity! Every human being! *Never forget this!*"⁴

"Let your hearts be filled with the great love of God, let it be felt by all," 'Abdu'l-Bahá counsels, "for every man is a servant of God, and all are entitled to a share of the divine bounty."⁵ "Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man."⁶

"Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words—these alone are without effect. In order that love may manifest its power there must be an object, an instrument, a motive," He explains.⁷ And in another talk, "Wherever you find the attributes of God, love that person, whether he be of your family or of another. Shed the light of a boundless love on every human being whom you meet . . ."⁸ "Especially to those whose thoughts are material and retrograde show the utmost love and patience, thereby winning them into the unity of fellowship by the radiance of your kindness."⁹

"Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble. Enrich the poor, raise the fallen, comfort the sorrowful, bring healing to the sick, reassure the fearful, rescue the oppressed, bring hope to the hopeless, shelter the destitute!"¹⁰ Thus 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells how to manifest, in action, the divine love with which He surrounded those early believers.

The Master's Example

His words in *Paris Talks* were reinforced by the mighty force of His example. Day after day His actions were symbolic of the activities He expected of the believers, individually and in groups.

Though wearied by a long, tiring day in Paris, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the Hotel d'Jena through cold and rain to

visit a lady who, He had been told, desired the privilege of meeting Him, but a severe cold had prevented her from coming to Him. She was the wife of the Japanese Ambassador to Madrid, Spain, Viscount Arawak.

He showered kindness on the children, tenderly lifting them into His arms, smiling upon them, and giving them the roses He carried as He descended the steps to the Trocadero gardens with His entourage.

'Abdu'l-Bahá offered comfort, consolation, and assurance to a widow, still in deepest mourning, whose child was ill. Workers in humanitarian societies who came to hear Him, and who were actively helping the poor, received His special sympathy and blessing.

Theosophists, agnostics, materialists, spiritualists, Christian Scientists, social reformers, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and social workers — these were among the many who came to hear 'Abdu'l-Bahá, according to Lady Blomfield, who had collected the notes on the talks.

Deepen by Study of the Writings

'Abdu'l-Bahá fired the believers with the desire to serve the Faith, and repeatedly advised them to deepen by studying the Writings. "The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart — so you will become strong followers of the Light, truly spiritual, heavenly soldiers of God, acquiring and spreading the true civilization. . . ." ¹¹

Again, He said, ". . . ye should strive to follow the counsels of these blessed Books, and so order your lives that ye may, following the examples set before you, become yourselves the saints of the Most High!" ¹² "I counsel you that you study earnestly the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, so that, God helping you, you may in deed and truth become Bahá'is." ¹³

The ultimate goal toward which the believers are directed in *Paris Talks* is the building of the new spiritual civilization in accordance with God's supreme design.

The Circle of Unity

"Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity, he has made a design for the uniting of all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of universal unity. This is the work of the divine bounty, and we must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us. Leave all thought of self, and strive only to be obedient and submissive to the will of God. In this way only shall we become citizens of the Kingdom of God, and attain unto life everlasting." ¹⁴

How well the Master knew the hearts, and the pitfalls to be encountered in the quest for unity, when He said, ". . . when you meet those whose opinions differ from your own, do not turn away your face from them. All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading thereto. Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever one.

"Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought, to separate you from your fellowmen, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred, and strife in your hearts." ¹⁵

In another talk He commented, "If five people meet together to seek for truth, they must begin by cutting themselves free from all their own special conditions and renouncing all preconceived ideas. In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial

notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the Water of Life. The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is necessary if we would reach truth, for truth is one." ¹⁶

In the last part of *Paris Talks* there is a synopsis of the various social teachings and spiritual truths given by Bahá'u'lláh, several talks by the Master on the power of the Holy Spirit, and two selections not found elsewhere — one, a talk known as "The Illuminati" ¹⁷ concerns meditation, and the second, a Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, explains the station of women.

The Master's Sacred Charge

Bahá'u'lláh laid upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá a sacred charge to carry to all lands the call to peace, justice, love, and truth, with special insistence on the translating of all praiseworthy ideals into action. The *Paris Talks*, coupled with the example which 'Abdu'l-Bahá set before the believers, found heralds to proclaim the Cause. He urged them to "try with all your hearts to be willing channels for God's bounty. For I say unto you that He has chosen you to be His messengers of love throughout the world, to be His bearers of spiritual gifts to man, to be the means of spreading unity and concord on the earth. Thank God with all your hearts that such a privilege has been given unto you. For a life devoted to praise is not too long in which to thank God for such a favor." ¹⁸

To anyone desiring to become a herald of the Kingdom, to rise to a higher plane of spirit, or to deepen himself or another in the basics of the Faith, *Paris Talks* is recommended.

(*Paris Talks* is available in both clothbound and paperbound editions from the Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 415 Linden Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois 60091)

Page references: (1) 17; (2) 59; (3) 39; (4) 38; (5) 27; (6) 30; (7) 35; (8) 38; (9) 27; (10) 81; (11) 22; (12) 62; (13) 96; (14) 54; (15) 53; (16) 136; (17) 173; (18) 68.

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Paris Talks

Addresses Given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1911

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Part One

– 1 –

The Duty of Kindness and Sympathy towards Strangers and Foreigners

October 16th and 17th, 1911

When a man turns his face to God he finds sunshine everywhere. All men are his brothers. Let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people

from other countries. Do not look at them as though you suspected them of being evildoers, thieves and boors. You think it necessary to be very careful, not to expose yourselves to the risk of making acquaintance with such, possibly, undesirable people.

I ask you not to think only of yourselves. Be kind to the strangers, whether come they from Turkey, Japan, Persia, Russia, China or any other country in the world.

Help to make them feel at home; find out where they are staying, ask if you may render them any service; try to make their lives a little happier.

In this way, even if, sometimes, what you at first suspected should be true, still go out of your way to be kind to them—this kindness will help them to become better.

After all, why should any foreign people be treated as strangers?

Let those who meet you know, without your proclaiming the fact, that you are indeed a Bahá'í.

Put into practice the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, that of kindness to all nations. Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path.

Oh, you of the Western nations, be kind to those who come from the Eastern world to sojourn among you. Forget your conventionality when you speak with them; they are not accustomed to it. To Eastern peoples this demeanor seems cold, unfriendly. Rather let your manner be sympathetic. Let it be seen that you are filled with universal love. When you meet a Persian or any other stranger, speak to him as to a friend; if he seems to be lonely try to help him, give him of your willing service; if he be sad console him, if poor succor him, if oppressed rescue him, if in misery comfort him. In so doing you will manifest that not in words only, but in deed and in truth, you think of all men as your brothers.

What profit is there in agreeing that universal friendship is good, and talking of the solidarity of the human race as a grand ideal? Unless these thoughts are translated into the world of action, they are useless.

The wrong in the world continues to exist just because people talk only of their ideals, and do not strive to put them into practice. If actions took the place of words, the world's misery would very soon be changed into comfort.

A man who does great good, and talks not of it, is on the way to perfection.

The man who has accomplished a small good and magnifies it in his speech is worth very little.

If I love you, I need not continually speak of my love—you will know without any words. On the other hand if I love you not, that also will you know—and you would not believe me, were I to tell you in a thousand words, that I loved you.

People make much profession of goodness, multiplying fine words because they wish to be thought greater and better than their fellows, seeking fame in the eyes of the world. Those who do most good use fewest words concerning their actions.

The children of God do the works without boasting, obeying His laws.

My hope for you is that you will ever avoid tyranny and oppression; that you will work without ceasing till justice reigns in every land, that you will keep your hearts pure and your hands free from unrighteousness.

This is what the near approach to God requires from you, and this is what I expect of you.

Summary:

The passage emphasizes the duty of kindness and sympathy towards strangers and foreigners, encouraging a warm and open approach to people from various countries. It calls for practical actions, not just verbal expressions of ideals, stressing the importance of manifesting love through deeds. The text highlights the value of genuine, humble service and warns against mere professions of goodness.

Key Points:

1. Universal Brotherhood: All men are considered brothers when one turns to God.
2. Avoiding Prejudice: Caution against prejudging strangers from different countries as evildoers.
3. Kindness in Action: Actively welcoming and assisting strangers, making their lives happier.
4. Application of Bahá'u'lláh's Teaching: Kindness to all nations, translating ideals into tangible actions.
5. Sympathy towards Eastern Visitors: Westerners advised to be warm and sympathetic to those from the Eastern world.
6. Importance of Actions: Emphasizes the need for actions over mere words, expressing ideals through deeds.
7. Humility in Good Deeds: Doing good without boasting, letting actions speak louder than words.
8. True Love: Genuine love is expressed through deeds, not just verbal declarations.
9. Avoiding Tyranny: Encourages working for justice, keeping hearts pure, and hands free from unrighteousness.

Questions and Answers:

1. What does the passage suggest about the attitude towards strangers from different countries?
- Answer: The passage encourages kindness and sympathy, advising against suspicion or prejudice.
2. How does the text advise Westerners to interact with Eastern visitors?
- Answer: It recommends being warm, sympathetic, and avoiding conventional coldness in demeanor.
3. What is emphasized regarding the application of ideals in the passage?
- Answer: The text stresses the importance of translating ideals into practical actions for meaningful impact.
4. According to the passage, what is the value of deeds compared to words?
- Answer: Actions are considered more valuable than words; genuine goodness is demonstrated through deeds.
5. What does the passage suggest about humility in doing good?
- Answer: It highlights the virtue of doing good without boasting, with actions speaking for themselves.

– 2 –

The Power and Value of True Thought Depend upon Its Manifestation in Action

October 18th

The reality of man is his thought, not his material body. The thought force and the animal force are partners. Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings.

If a man's thought is constantly aspiring towards heavenly subjects then does he become saintly; if on the other hand his thought does not soar, but is directed downwards to center itself upon the things of this world, he grows more and more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal.

Thoughts may be divided into two classes:

(1st) Thought that belongs to the world of thought alone.

(2nd) Thought that expresses itself in action.

Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds. A philosopher's thought may, however, in the world of progress and evolution, translate itself into the actions of other people, even when they themselves are unable or unwilling to show forth their grand ideals in their own lives. To this class the majority of philosophers belong, their teachings being high above their actions. This is the difference between philosophers who are Spiritual Teachers, and those who are mere philosophers: the Spiritual Teacher is the first to

follow His own teaching; He brings down into the world of action His spiritual conceptions and ideals. His Divine thoughts are made manifest to the world. His thought is Himself, from which He is inseparable. When we find a philosopher emphasizing the importance and grandeur of justice, and then encouraging a rapacious monarch in his oppression and tyranny, we quickly realize that he belongs to the first class: for he thinks heavenly thoughts and does not practice the corresponding heavenly virtues.

This state is impossible with Spiritual Philosophers, for they ever express their high and noble thoughts in actions.

Summary:

The passage underscores the significance of thought and its connection to action. It distinguishes between two types of thoughts—those confined to the mental realm and those translated into actions. Emphasis is placed on the value of thoughts being manifested in deeds, contrasting philosophers who merely express ideals with Spiritual Teachers who exemplify their teachings through actions.

Key Points:

1. Man's True Reality: The essence of man is his thought, superior to the material body.
2. Power of Aspiring Thoughts: Aspiring towards heavenly subjects elevates a person to saintliness.
3. Downward-directed Thoughts: Thoughts centered on worldly matters lead to a more materialistic and animalistic state.
4. Two Classes of Thoughts: Thoughts are categorized into those confined to the mental realm and those expressed in action.
5. Value of Thought in Action: The true power of thought lies in its manifestation through deeds.
6. Philosophers vs. Spiritual Teachers: Philosophers may have high thoughts but might not reflect them in actions, unlike Spiritual Teachers who embody their teachings.
7. Divine Thoughts in Action: Spiritual Teachers express divine thoughts through actions, making their ideals tangible.
8. Inseparability of Thought and Action: A Spiritual Teacher's thought is inseparable from themselves, reflecting in their actions.
9. Contrast in Philosophers: Some philosophers may advocate noble ideas but fail to practice corresponding virtues.

Questions and Answers:

1. What is highlighted as the true reality of man according to the passage?
- Answer: The true reality of man is his thought, not his material body.
2. How does the passage categorize thoughts, and what is the significance of each category?
- Answer: Thoughts are categorized into those confined to the mental realm and those expressed in action. The passage emphasizes that the true power of thought lies in its manifestation through deeds.
3. What distinguishes Spiritual Teachers from mere philosophers in the context of the passage?
- Answer: Spiritual Teachers exemplify their high thoughts through actions, while philosophers may express ideals without practicing corresponding virtues.
4. Why does the passage suggest that the power of thought depends on its manifestation in deeds?
- Answer: The passage highlights that thoughts, if not translated into actions, remain useless; the true value of thought is realized through its manifestation in deeds.
5. According to the passage, what is the inseparable connection between a Spiritual Teacher's thought and action?
- Answer: A Spiritual Teacher's thought is inseparable from themselves, and they express their divine thoughts through actions, making their ideals tangible in the world.

– 3 –

God Is the Great Compassionate Physician Who Alone Gives True Healing

October 19th

All true healing comes from God! There are two causes for sickness, one is material, the other spiritual. If the sickness is of the body, a material remedy is needed, if of the soul, a spiritual remedy.

If the heavenly benediction be upon us while we are being healed then only can we be made whole, for medicine is but the outward and visible means through which we obtain the heavenly healing. Unless the spirit be healed, the cure of the body is worth nothing. All is in the hands of God, and without Him there can be no health in us!

There have been many men who have died at last of the very disease of which they have made a special study. Aristotle, for instance, who made a special study of the digestion, died of a gastric malady. Avicenna was a specialist of the heart, but he died of heart disease. God is the great compassionate Physician who alone has the power to give true healing.

All creatures are dependent upon God, however great may seem their knowledge, power and independence.

Behold the mighty kings upon earth, for they have all the power in the world that man can give them, and yet when death calls they must obey, even as the peasants at their gates.

Look also at the animals, how helpless they are in their apparent strength! For the elephant, the largest of all animals, is troubled by the fly, and the lion cannot escape the irritation of the worm. Even man, the highest form of created beings, needs many things for his very life; first of

all he needs air, and if he is deprived of it for a few minutes, he dies. He is also dependent on water, food, clothing, warmth, and many other things. On all sides he is surrounded by dangers and difficulties, against which his physical body alone cannot cope. If a man looks at the world around him, he will see how all created things are dependent and are captive to the laws of Nature.

Man alone, by his spiritual power, has been able to free himself, to soar above the world of matter and to make it his servant.

Without the help of God man is even as the beasts that perish, but God has bestowed such wonderful power upon him that he might ever look upward, and receive, among other gifts, healing from His divine Bounty.

But alas! man is not grateful for this supreme good, but sleeps the sleep of negligence, being careless of the great mercy which God has shown towards him, turning his face away from the light and going on his way in darkness.

It is my earnest prayer, that ye be not like unto this, but rather that ye keep your faces steadfastly turned to the light, so that ye may be as lighted torches in the dark places of life.

Summary:

The passage emphasizes that true healing comes from God, addressing both material and spiritual sickness. It highlights the dependence of all creatures, including powerful kings and seemingly strong animals, on God. The text underlines the unique spiritual power of man, enabling him to rise above material constraints. It calls for gratitude towards God's mercy and a conscious orientation towards the light.

Key Points:

1. Dual Causes of Sickness: Sickness has two causes—material and spiritual.
2. Healing from God: True healing comes from God, and material remedies are only outward means for heavenly healing.
3. Dependence on God: Despite knowledge and power, all creatures, including kings and animals, are dependent on God.
4. Spiritual Power of Man: Man, with spiritual power, can free himself and make the material world his servant.
5. Gratitude and Negligence: The passage contrasts man's dependence on God's mercy with ingratitude and negligence.
6. Man's Unique Abilities: Man, unlike other creatures, has the ability to rise above material limitations.
7. Call to Gratitude: Despite God's bestowed power, there is a plea for humanity to be grateful and not neglectful.
8. Turning Towards the Light: Encouragement to keep faces turned towards the light and become beacons in life's dark places.

Questions and Answers:

1. What does the passage assert about the causes of sickness, and how does it suggest they should be addressed?

- Answer: Sickness has material and spiritual causes, requiring material remedies for bodily illness and spiritual remedies for the soul.

2. According to the text, where does true healing come from, and why is the spiritual aspect emphasized?

- Answer: True healing comes from God, and the spiritual aspect is emphasized because without the healing of the spirit, the cure of the body is considered worthless.

3. How does the passage illustrate the dependence of all creatures, including powerful kings and animals, on God?

- Answer: Despite their seeming knowledge and strength, all creatures, including kings and animals, are depicted as ultimately obedient to death and subject to the laws of nature.

4. What unique ability does the passage attribute to man, and how is it described?

- Answer: Man, through spiritual power, can rise above the material world and make it his servant, distinguishing himself from other creatures.

5. What is the earnest prayer expressed in the passage, and what is the desired outcome for humanity?

- Answer: The earnest prayer is for humanity not to be negligent and ungrateful but to keep faces turned towards the light, becoming beacons in life's dark places.

– 4 –

The Need for Union between the Peoples of the East and West

Friday, October 20th

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

In the past, as in the present, the Spiritual Sun of Truth has always shone from the horizon of the East.

Abraham appeared in the East. In the East Moses arose to lead and teach the people. On the Eastern horizon arose the Lord Christ. Muḥammad was sent to an Eastern nation. The Báb arose in the Eastern land of Persia. Bahá’u’lláh lived and taught in the East. All the great Spiritual Teachers arose in the Eastern world. But although the Sun of Christ dawned in the East the radiance thereof was apparent in the West, where the effulgence of its glory was more clearly seen. The divine light of His Teaching shone with a greater force in the Western world, where it has made a more rapid headway than in the land of its birth.

In these days the East is in need of material progress and the West is in want of a spiritual idea. It would be well for the West to turn to the East for illumination, and to give in exchange its scientific knowledge. There must be this interchange of gifts.

The East and the West must unite to give to each other what is lacking. This union will bring about a true civilization, where the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material.

Receiving thus the one from the other the greatest harmony will prevail, all people will be united, a state of great perfection will be attained, there will be a firm cementing, and this world will become a shining mirror for the reflection of the attributes of God.

We all, the Eastern with the Western nations, must strive day and night with heart and soul to achieve this high ideal, to cement the unity between all the nations of the earth. Every heart will then be refreshed, all eyes will be opened, the most wonderful power will be given, the happiness of humanity will be assured.

We must pray that by the Bounty of God, Persia will be enabled to receive the material and mental civilization of the West, and by Divine Grace to give in return her spiritual light. The devoted energetic work of the united peoples, occidentals and orientals, will succeed in establishing this result, for the force of the Holy Spirit will aid them.

The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart—so will you become strong followers of the light, truly spiritual, heavenly soldiers of God, acquiring and spreading the true civilization in Persia, in Europe, and in the whole world.

This will be the paradise which is to come on earth, when all mankind will be gathered together under the tent of unity in the Kingdom of Glory.

Summary:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasizes the historical significance of spiritual leaders emerging from the East, stating that while their origins were in the East, the impact of their teachings was more pronounced in the West. He asserts the current needs of both regions, with the East requiring material progress and the West seeking spiritual enlightenment. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advocates for a mutual exchange between East and West, believing that their unity will lead to a true civilization where spiritual ideals harmonize with material progress.

Key Points:

1. Spiritual leaders historically emerged from the East.
2. The radiance of Christ's teachings was more apparent in the West.
3. The current needs: East requires material progress, West seeks spiritual ideas.
4. Mutual exchange: East and West should share their strengths.
5. Unity between East and West will bring about true civilization.
6. Prayer for Persia to receive Western civilization and reciprocate with spiritual light.
7. Devoted efforts of united peoples can establish this unity.
8. Studying the principles of Bahá’u’lláh's teachings is essential for spiritual strength.
9. Vision of a future paradise on earth through unity and the Kingdom of Glory.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is emphasized regarding the historical emergence of spiritual leaders?
- A: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasizes that spiritual leaders historically emerged from the East.
2. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, where did the radiance of Christ's teachings become more apparent?
- A: The radiance of Christ's teachings was more apparent in the West.
3. Q: What are the current needs of the East and the West, as mentioned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?
- A: The East requires material progress, while the West seeks spiritual ideas.
4. Q: What is the key idea for achieving true civilization according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?
- A: The East and the West must unite and exchange their strengths to bring about true civilization.
5. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá envision for the future through the unity of East and West?
- A: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá envisions a paradise on earth, where all mankind is united under the tent of unity in the Kingdom of Glory.

Friday evening, October 20th

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

Numerous meetings are held in Paris every day for different purposes, to discuss politics, commerce, education, art, science and many other subjects.

All these meetings are good: but *this* assembly has met together to turn their faces towards God, to learn how best to work for the good of humanity, to seek how prejudices may be abolished, and the seed of love and universal brotherhood sown in the heart of man.

God approves of the motive of our gathering together and gives us His blessing.

In the Old Testament we read that God said, “Let us make man in Our own image.” In the Gospel, Christ said, “I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.”¹ In the Qur’án, God says, “Man is my Mystery and I am his.” Bahá’u’lláh writes that God says, “Thy heart is My home; purify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.”

All these sacred words show us that man is made in God’s image: yet the Essence of God is incomprehensible to the human mind, for the finite understanding cannot be applied to this infinite Mystery. God contains all: He cannot be contained. That which contains is superior to that which is contained. The whole is greater than its parts.

Things which are understood by men cannot be outside their capacity for understanding, so that it is impossible for the heart of man to comprehend the nature of the Majesty of God. Our imagination can only picture that which it is able to create.

The power of the understanding differs in degree in the various kingdoms of creation. The mineral, vegetable, and animal realms are each incapable of understanding any creation beyond their own. The mineral cannot imagine the growing power of the plant. The tree cannot understand the power of movement in the animal, neither can it comprehend what it would mean to possess sight, hearing or the sense of smell. These all belong to the physical creation.

Man also shares in this creation; but it is not possible for either of the lower kingdoms to understand that which takes place in the mind of man. The animal cannot realize the intelligence of a human being, he only knows that which is perceived by his animal senses, he cannot imagine anything in the abstract. An animal could not learn that the world is round, that the earth revolves round the sun, or the construction of the electric telegraph. These things are only possible to man. Man is the highest work of creation, the nearest to God of all creatures.

All superior kingdoms are incomprehensible to the inferior; how therefore could it be possible that the creature, man, should understand the almighty Creator of all?

That which we imagine, is not the Reality of God; He, the Unknowable, the Unthinkable, is far beyond the highest conception of man.

All creatures that exist are dependent upon the Divine Bounty. Divine Mercy gives life itself. As the light of the sun shines on the whole world, so the Mercy of the infinite God is shed on all creatures. As the sun ripens the fruits of the earth, and gives life and warmth to all living beings, so shines the Sun of Truth on all souls, filling them with the fire of Divine love and understanding.

The superiority of man over the rest of the created world is seen again in this, that man has a soul in which dwells the divine spirit; the souls of the lower creatures are inferior in their essence.

There is no doubt then, that of all created beings man is the nearest to the nature of God, and therefore receives a greater gift of the Divine Bounty.

The mineral kingdom possesses the power of existing. The plant has the power of existing and growing. The animal, in addition to existence and growth, has the capacity of moving about, and the use of the faculties of the senses. In the human kingdom we find all the attributes of the lower worlds, with much more added thereto. Man is the sum of every previous creation, for he contains them all.

To man is given the special gift of the intellect by which he is able to receive a larger share of the light Divine. The Perfect Man is as a polished mirror reflecting the Sun of Truth, manifesting the attributes of God.

The Lord Christ said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"—God manifested in man.

The sun does not leave his place in the heavens and descend into the mirror, for the actions of ascent and descent, coming and going, do not belong to the Infinite, they are the methods of finite beings. In the Manifestation of God, the perfectly polished mirror, appear the qualities of the Divine in a form that man is capable of comprehending.

This is so simple that all can understand it, and that which we are able to understand we must perforce accept.

Our Father will not hold us responsible for the rejection of dogmas which we are unable either to believe or comprehend, for He is ever infinitely just to His children.

This example is, however, so logical that it can easily be grasped by all minds willing to give it their consideration.

May each one of you become a shining lamp, of which the flame is the Love of God. May your hearts burn with the radiance of unity. May your eyes be illumined with the effulgence of the Sun of Truth!

The city of Paris is very beautiful, a more civilized and well-appointed town in all material development it would be impossible to find in the present world. But the spiritual light has not shone upon her for a long time: her spiritual progress is far behind that of her material civilization. A supreme power is needed to awaken her to the reality of spiritual truth, to breathe the breath of life into her dormant soul. You must all unite in this work of arousing her, in reanimating her people by the help of that Superior Force.

When an illness is slight a small remedy will suffice to heal it, but when the slight illness becomes a terrible disease, then a very strong remedy must be used by the Divine Healer. There are some trees that blossom and bear fruit in a cool climate, others there are which need the hottest rays of the sun to bring them to perfect maturity. Paris is one of those trees for whose spiritual unfoldment a great flaming Sun of the Divine Power of God is needed.

I ask you all, each one of you, to follow well the light of truth, in the Holy Teachings, and God will strengthen you by His Holy Spirit so that you will be enabled to overcome the difficulties, and to destroy the prejudices which cause separation and hatred amongst the people. Let your hearts be filled with the great love of God, let it be felt by all; for every man is a servant of God, and all are entitled to a share of the Divine Bounty.

Especially to those whose thoughts are material and retrograde show the utmost love and patience, thereby winning them into the unity of fellowship by the radiance of your kindness.

If you are faithful to your great work, following the Holy Sun of Truth without swerving, then will the blessed day of universal brotherhood dawn on this beautiful city.

Summary:

In this discourse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addresses a gathering in Paris, emphasizing the purpose of their assembly to turn towards God and work for the good of humanity. He discusses the incomprehensibility of God's essence to human understanding, highlighting that while man is made in God's image, God's nature exceeds human comprehension. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains the unique attributes of man, asserting that the human soul is superior and receives a greater gift of Divine Bounty. The discourse concludes with a call for unity, love, and patience to overcome prejudices and promote universal brotherhood.

Key Points:

1. Purpose of the assembly: Turn towards God, work for the good of humanity.
2. God's essence is incomprehensible, but man is made in God's image.
3. The superiority of man over other created beings.
4. The special gift of intellect and the Perfect Man as a mirror reflecting the Sun of Truth.
5. The simplicity of the example of the polished mirror and acceptance based on understanding.
6. A call for unity, love, and patience to overcome prejudices and promote universal brotherhood.
7. Paris's need for spiritual awakening despite material development.
8. A metaphor of spiritual illness and the need for a strong remedy.
9. Urging followers to follow the light of truth in the Holy Teachings for spiritual strength.
10. Encouragement to show love and patience, especially to those with materialistic thoughts.
11. Faithfulness to the work for universal brotherhood will bring a blessed day.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the purpose of the assembly according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?
- A: The assembly gathers to turn towards God, work for the good of humanity, and promote universal brotherhood.
2. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describe God's essence in relation to human understanding?
- A: God's essence is incomprehensible to the human mind, and while man is made in God's image, the nature of God exceeds human comprehension.
3. Q: What attributes make man superior to other created beings, as explained by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?
- A: Man has a soul with a divine spirit, making him superior, and he receives a greater gift of Divine Bounty.
4. Q: What metaphor does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá use to describe the spiritual state of Paris?
- A: Paris is likened to a tree that needs the Divine Power of God as a great flaming Sun for its spiritual unfoldment.
5. Q: What is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's advice for promoting universal brotherhood in Paris?

- A: Followers are encouraged to follow the light of truth, show love and patience, and work faithfully for universal brotherhood, leading to a blessed day.

– 6 –

The Pitiful Causes of War, and the Duty of Everyone to Strive for Peace

October 21st

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

I hope you are all happy and well. I am not happy, but very sad. The news of the Battle of Benghazi grieves my heart. I wonder at the human savagery that still exists in the world! How is it possible for men to fight from morning until evening, killing each other, shedding the blood of their fellowmen: And for what object? To gain possession of a part of the earth! Even the animals, when they fight, have an immediate and more reasonable cause for their attacks! How terrible it is that men, who are of the higher kingdom, can descend to slaying and bringing misery to their fellow-beings, for the possession of a tract of land!

The highest of created beings fighting to obtain the lowest form of matter, earth! Land belongs not to one people, but to all people. This earth is not man’s home, but his tomb. It is for their tombs these men are fighting. There is nothing so horrible in this world as the tomb, the abode of the decaying bodies of men.

However great the conqueror, however many countries he may reduce to slavery, he is unable to retain any part of these devastated lands but one tiny portion—his tomb! If more land is required for the improvement of the condition of the people, for the spread of civilization (for the substitution of just laws for brutal customs)—surely it would be possible to acquire peaceably the necessary extension of territory.

But war is made for the satisfaction of men’s ambition; for the sake of worldly gain to the few, terrible misery is brought to numberless homes, breaking the hearts of hundreds of men and women!

How many widows mourn their husbands, how many stories of savage cruelty do we hear! How many little orphaned children are crying for their dead fathers, how many women are weeping for their slain sons!

There is nothing so heartbreaking and terrible as an outburst of human savagery!

I charge you all that each one of you concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. Thoughts of war bring destruction to all harmony, well-being, restfulness and content.

Thoughts of love are constructive of brotherhood, peace, friendship, and happiness.

When soldiers of the world draw their swords to kill, soldiers of God clasp each other’s hands! So may all the savagery of man disappear by the Mercy of God, working through the pure in heart and the sincere of soul. Do not think the peace of the world an ideal impossible to attain!

Nothing is impossible to the Divine Benevolence of God.

If you desire with all your heart, friendship with every race on earth, your thought, spiritual and positive, will spread; it will become the desire of others, growing stronger and stronger, until it reaches the minds of all men.

Do not despair! Work steadily. Sincerity and love will conquer hate. How many seemingly impossible events are coming to pass in these days! Set your faces steadily towards the Light of the World. Show love to all; "Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit in the heart of Man." Take courage! God never forsakes His children who strive and work and pray! Let your hearts be filled with the strenuous desire that tranquillity and harmony may encircle all this warring world. So will success crown your efforts, and with the universal brotherhood will come the Kingdom of God in peace and goodwill.

In this room today are members of many races, French, American, English, German, Italian, brothers and sisters meeting in friendship and harmony! Let this gathering be a foreshadowing of what will, in very truth, take place in this world, when every child of God realizes that they are leaves of one tree, flowers in one garden, drops in one ocean, and sons and daughters of one Father, whose name is love!

Summary:

In this discourse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses sadness over the Battle of Benghazi and questions the savagery of war. He emphasizes the futility of fighting for land and highlights the universal ownership of the Earth. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá calls for unity, love, and the eradication of thoughts promoting war. He stresses the importance of concentration on thoughts of peace and the power of love to overcome hatred. The discourse encourages the pursuit of global friendship, emphasizing that with sincerity and love, positive change is possible. The gathering in the room, representing various races, serves as a hopeful symbol of universal brotherhood.

Key Points:

1. Expresses sadness over the Battle of Benghazi and questions the savagery of war.
2. Criticizes the pursuit of land through war and emphasizes the universal ownership of the Earth.
3. Calls for concentration on thoughts of love and unity.
4. Encourages opposition to thoughts of war with stronger thoughts of peace.
5. Highlights the constructive nature of thoughts of love and their impact on brotherhood, peace, and happiness.
6. Urges the concentration of thoughts on global friendship and the spread of positive desires.
7. Promotes the idea that nothing is impossible to the Divine Benevolence of God.
8. Encourages steady work, sincerity, and love to conquer hate.
9. Inspires courage and emphasizes that God never forsakes those who strive, work, and pray.
10. Envisions a world where every child of God realizes unity and universal brotherhood.
11. Describes the gathering in the room as a foreshadowing of a harmonious world where everyone recognizes their interconnectedness.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What grieves ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s heart in the discourse?
- A: The news of the Battle of Benghazi and the savagery of human conflict grieve ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s heart.
2. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the futility of fighting for land?
- A: Land belongs not to one people but to all people, and the Earth is not man’s home but his tomb.
3. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggest overcoming thoughts of war?
- A: Oppose thoughts of war with stronger thoughts of peace and concentrate on thoughts of love and unity.
4. Q: What is encouraged to spread positive change according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?
- A: Sincerity and love are encouraged to spread positive change, and the desire for global friendship is emphasized.

5. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá envision the gathering in the room?

- A: The gathering in the room, representing various races, is seen as a foreshadowing of a world where everyone recognizes their interconnectedness and lives in harmony.

– 7 –

The Sun of Truth

October 22nd

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

It is a lovely day, the sun shines brightly upon the earth, giving light and warmth to all creatures. The Sun of Truth is also shining, giving light and warmth to the souls of men. The sun is the life-giver to the physical bodies of all creatures upon earth; without its warmth their growth would be stunted, their development would be arrested, they would decay and die. Even so do the souls of men need the Sun of Truth to shed its rays upon their souls, to develop them, to educate and encourage them. As the sun is to the body of a man so is the Sun of Truth to his soul.

A man may have attained to a high degree of material progress, but without the light of truth his soul is stunted and starved. Another man may have no material gifts, may be at the bottom of the social ladder, but, having received the warmth of the Sun of Truth his soul is great and his spiritual understanding is enlightened.

A Greek philosopher living in the days of the youth of Christianity, being full of the Christian element, though not a professing Christian, wrote thus: “It is my belief that religion is the very foundation of true civilization.” For, unless the moral character of a nation is educated, as well as its brain and its talents, civilization has no sure basis.

As religion inculcates morality, it is therefore the truest philosophy, and on it is built the only lasting civilization. As an example of this, he points out the Christians of the time whose morality was on a very high level. The belief of this philosopher conforms to the truth, for the civilization of Christianity was the best and most enlightened in the world. The Christian Teaching was illumined by the Divine Sun of Truth, therefore its followers were taught to love all men as brothers to fear nothing, not even death! To love their neighbors as themselves, and to forget their own selfish interests in striving for the greater good of humanity. The grand aim of the religion of Christ was to draw the hearts of all men nearer to God’s effulgent Truth.

If the followers of the Lord Christ had continued to follow out these principles with steadfast faithfulness, there would have been no need for a renewal of the Christian Message, no necessity for a reawakening of His people, for a great and glorious civilization would now be ruling the world and the Kingdom of Heaven would have come on earth.

But instead of this, what has taken place! Men turned away their faces from following the divinely illuminated precepts of their Master, and winter fell upon the hearts of men. For, as the body of man depends for life upon the rays of the sun, so cannot the celestial virtues grow in the soul without the radiance of the Sun of Truth.

God leaves not His children comfortless, but, when the darkness of winter overshadows them, then again He sends His Messengers, the Prophets, with a renewal of the blessed spring. The Sun of Truth appears again on the horizon of the world shining into the eyes of those who sleep, awaking them to behold the glory of a new dawn. Then again will the tree of humanity blossom

and bring forth the fruit of righteousness for the healing of the nations. Because man has stopped his ears to the Voice of Truth and shut his eyes to the Sacred Light, neglecting the Law of God, for this reason has the darkness of war and tumult, unrest and misery, desolated the earth. I pray that you will all strive to bring each child of God into the radiance of the Sun of Truth, that the darkness may be dissipated by the penetrating rays of its glory, and the winter's hardness and cold may be melted away by the merciful warmth of its shining.

Summary:

In this discourse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá draws a parallel between the physical sun and the Sun of Truth. He explains that just as the sun is essential for the physical growth and development of all creatures, the Sun of Truth is necessary for the spiritual development and enlightenment of souls. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá highlights the importance of moral education through religion, emphasizing that it is the foundation of true civilization. He references a Greek philosopher who recognized the value of religion in building lasting civilization. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá notes that the followers of Christ did not consistently adhere to the principles of love and morality, leading to a decline in civilization. The discourse ends with a call to strive for bringing all individuals into the radiance of the Sun of Truth to dispel darkness and foster spiritual growth.

Key Points:

1. The Sun of Truth is compared to the physical sun, providing light and warmth to souls.
2. Without the Sun of Truth, a man's soul is stunted, despite material progress.
3. Religion is considered the foundation of true civilization, educating the moral character of a nation.
4. Reference to a Greek philosopher who acknowledged the importance of religion for civilization.
5. The failure of Christians to consistently follow the illuminated precepts of Christ led to a decline in civilization.
6. The renewal of divine teachings through Messengers brings about a new dawn and righteousness.
7. The consequences of turning away from the Voice of Truth and neglecting the Law of God.
8. A prayer for bringing each child of God into the radiance of the Sun of Truth.
9. The metaphor of dissolving darkness with the penetrating rays of truth.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá liken the Sun of Truth to the physical sun?
- A: Just as the physical sun provides light and warmth to all creatures, the Sun of Truth is essential for the spiritual development of souls.
2. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasize about the relationship between material progress and the Sun of Truth?
- A: Despite material progress, a man's soul is stunted without the warmth of the Sun of Truth.
3. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the foundation of true civilization?
- A: Religion is considered the foundation of true civilization as it educates the moral character of a nation.
4. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reference a Greek philosopher in the discourse?
- A: The philosopher recognized the value of religion as the foundation of civilization, supporting the discourse's theme.

5. Q: What is the consequence of turning away from the Voice of Truth, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

- A: Neglecting the Law of God leads to the darkness of war, tumult, unrest, and misery on earth.

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The Light of Truth Is Now Shining upon the East and the West

Monday, October 23rd

When a man has found the joy of life in one place, he returns to that same spot to find more joy. When a man has found gold in a mine, he returns again to that mine to dig for more gold.

This shows the internal force and natural instinct which God has given to man, and the power of vital energy which is born in him.

The West has always received spiritual enlightenment from the East. The Song of the Kingdom is first heard in the East, but in the West the greater volume of sound bursts upon the listening ears.

The Lord Christ arose as a bright Star in the Eastern sky, but the light of His Teaching shone more perfectly in the West, where His influence has taken root more firmly and His Cause has spread to a greater degree than in the land of His birth.

The sound of the Song of Christ has echoed over all the lands of the Western World and entered the hearts of its people.

The people of the West are firm, and the foundations on which they build are of rock; they are steadfast, and do not easily forget.

The West is like a strong sturdy plant; when the rain falls gently upon it to give it nourishment and the sun shines upon it, then does it blossom in due time and bring forth good fruit. It is a long time since the Sun of Truth mirrored forth by the Lord Christ has shed its radiance upon the West, for the Face of God has been veiled by the sin and forgetfulness of man. But now again, praise be to God, the Holy Spirit speaks anew to the world! The constellation of love and wisdom and power is once more shining from the Divine Horizon to give joy to all who turn their faces to the Light of God. Bahá’u’lláh has rent the veil of prejudice and superstition which was stifling the souls of men. Let us pray to God that the breath of the Holy Spirit may again give hope and refreshment to the people, awakening in them a desire to do the Will of God. May heart and soul be vivified in every man: so will they all rejoice in a new birth.

Then shall humanity put on a new garment in the radiance of the love of God, and it shall be the dawn of a new creation! Then will the Mercy of the Most Merciful be showered upon all mankind and they will arise to a new life.

My earnest desire is that you will all strive and work for this glorious end; that you will be faithful and loving workers in the building of the new spiritual civilization; the elect of God, in willing joyful obedience carrying out His supreme design! Success is truly near at hand, for the Flag of Divinity has been raised aloft, and the Sun of the Righteousness of God appeareth upon the horizon in the sight of all men!

Summary:

In this discourse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá speaks about the natural instinct in man to return to a place of joy or abundance, drawing parallels to the spiritual realm. He emphasizes the historical connection between the East and the West, stating that while spiritual enlightenment often originates in the East, the West becomes the place where the influence takes root more firmly. The West is likened to a strong plant that blossoms and bears fruit when nourished. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses hope for a new spiritual birth and the dawn of a new creation, as the Holy Spirit speaks anew to the world through Bahá’u’lláh, tearing down prejudices and superstitions. The discourse concludes with a call for individuals to strive for the building of a new spiritual civilization in joyful obedience to the supreme design of God.

Key Points:

1. Natural instinct and internal force drive man to return to places of joy or abundance.
2. The historical connection between the spiritual enlightenment of the East and its firm establishment in the West.
3. The West is described as a strong plant that blossoms and bears fruit when nourished by spiritual influence.
4. The Sun of Truth mirrored by the Lord Christ has shed radiance on the West, though veiled at times.
5. Bahá’u’lláh has rent the veil of prejudice, and the Holy Spirit speaks anew, bringing hope and refreshment.
6. A prayer for humanity to be awakened to the Will of God and experience a new birth.
7. The anticipation of a new spiritual civilization and the dawn of a new creation.
8. A call for faithful and loving workers to carry out God's supreme design.
9. The assurance that success is near as the Flag of Divinity is raised, and the Sun of Righteousness appears.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What analogy does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá use to describe the West and its spiritual influence?
- A: The West is likened to a strong plant that blossoms and bears fruit when nourished by spiritual influence.
2. Q: What historical connection does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasize between the East and the West?
- A: Spiritual enlightenment often originates in the East, but its influence takes root more firmly in the West.
3. Q: What is the hope expressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá regarding spiritual birth?
- A: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses hope for a new spiritual birth and the dawn of a new creation.
4. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá attribute to Bahá’u’lláh in the discourse?
- A: Bahá’u’lláh has rent the veil of prejudice and superstition, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak anew with hope and refreshment.

5. Q: What is the call in the discourse regarding the new spiritual civilization?

- A: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá calls for faithful and loving workers to strive for the building of a new spiritual civilization in joyful obedience to God's supreme design.

– 9 –

The Universal Love

October 24th

An Indian said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“My aim in life is to transmit as far as in me lies the message of Krishna to the world.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: The Message of Krishna is the message of love. All God’s prophets have brought the message of love. None has ever thought that war and hate are good. Everyone agrees in saying that love and kindness are best.

Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words—these alone are without effect. In order that love may manifest its power there must be an object, an instrument, a motive.

There are many ways of expressing the love principle; there is love for the family, for the country, for the race, there is political enthusiasm, there is also the love of community of interest in service. These are all ways and means of showing the power of love. Without any such means, love would be unseen, unheard, unfelt—altogether unexpressed, unmanifested! Water shows its power in various ways, in quenching thirst, causing seed to grow, etc. Coal expresses one of its principles in gaslight, while one of the powers of electricity is shown in the electric light. If there were neither gas nor electricity, the nights of the world would be darkness! So, it is necessary to have an instrument, a motive for love’s manifestation, an object, a mode of expression.

We must find a way of spreading love among the sons of humanity.

Love is unlimited, boundless, infinite! Material things are limited, circumscribed, finite. You cannot adequately express infinite love by limited means.

The perfect love needs an unselfish instrument, absolutely freed from fetters of every kind. The love of family is limited; the tie of blood relationship is not the strongest bond. Frequently members of the same family disagree, and even hate each other.

Patriotic love is finite; the love of one’s country causing hatred of all others, is not perfect love! Compatriots also are not free from quarrels amongst themselves.

The love of race is limited; there is some union here, but that is insufficient. Love must be free from boundaries!

To love our own race may mean hatred of all others, and even people of the same race often dislike each other.

Political love also is much bound up with hatred of one party for another; this love is very limited and uncertain.

The love of community of interest in service is likewise fluctuating; frequently competitions arise, which lead to jealousy, and at length hatred replaces love.

A few years ago, Turkey and Italy had a friendly political understanding; now they are at war!

All these ties of love are imperfect. It is clear that limited material ties are insufficient to adequately express the universal love.

The great unselfish love for humanity is bounded by none of these imperfect, semi-selfish bonds; this is the one perfect love, possible to all mankind, and can only be achieved by the power of the Divine Spirit. No worldly power can accomplish the universal love.

Let all be united in this Divine power of love! Let all strive to grow in the light of the Sun of Truth, and reflecting this luminous love on all men, may their hearts become so united that they may dwell evermore in the radiance of the limitless love.

Remember these words which I speak unto you during the short time I am amongst you in Paris. I earnestly exhort you: let not your hearts be fettered by the material things of this world; I charge you not to lie contentedly on the beds of negligence, prisoners of matter, but to arise and free yourselves from its chains!

The animal creation is captive to matter, God has given freedom to man. The animal cannot escape the law of nature, whereas man may control it, for he, containing nature, can rise above it.

The power of the Holy Spirit, enlightening man's intelligence, has enabled him to discover means of bending many natural laws to his will. He flies through the air, floats on the sea, and even moves under the waters.

All this proves how man's intelligence has been enabled to free him from the limitations of nature, and to solve many of her mysteries. Man, to a certain extent, has broken the chains of matter.

The Holy Spirit will give to man greater powers than these, if only he will strive after the things of the spirit and endeavor to attune his heart to the Divine infinite love.

When you love a member of your family or a compatriot, let it be with a ray of the Infinite Love! Let it be in God, and for God! Wherever you find the attributes of God love that person, whether he be of your family or of another. Shed the light of a boundless love on every human being whom you meet, whether of your country, your race, your political party, or of any other nation, color or shade of political opinion. Heaven will support you while you work in this ingathering of the scattered peoples of the world beneath the shadow of the almighty tent of unity.

You will be servants of God, who are dwelling near to Him, His divine helpers in the service, ministering to all Humanity. *All Humanity! Every human being! Never forget this!*

Do not say, he is an Italian, or a Frenchman, or an American, or an Englishman, remember only that he is a son of God, a servant of the Most High, a man! All are *men*! Forget nationalities; *all are equal in the sight of God!*

Remember not your own limitations; the help of God will come to you. Forget yourself. God's help will surely come!

When you call on the Mercy of God waiting to reinforce you, your strength will be tenfold.

Look at me: I am so feeble, yet I have had the strength given me to come amongst you: a poor servant of God, who has been enabled to give you this message! I shall not be with you long! One must never consider one's own feebleness, it is the strength of the Holy Spirit of Love, which gives the power to teach. The thought of our own weakness could only bring despair. We must look higher than all earthly thoughts; detach ourselves from every material idea, crave for the things of the spirit; fix our eyes on the everlasting bountiful Mercy of the Almighty, who will fill our souls with the gladness of joyful service to His command "Love One Another."

Summary:

In this discourse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responds to an Indian expressing the aim to transmit the message of Krishna to the world. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá acknowledges the message of Krishna as one of love and asserts that all prophets have brought a similar message. He emphasizes that love must manifest in deeds and requires an unselfish instrument and motive. Various expressions of love, such as family, country, and community, are discussed, and their limitations are highlighted. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advocates for a universal, unselfish love for humanity, free from boundaries and prejudices. He urges individuals to rise above material concerns and calls for unity and the cultivation of the divine power of love.

Key Points:

1. The Indian's aim to transmit Krishna's message of love.
2. The universal nature of the message of love brought by all prophets.
3. Love's manifestation requires an object, instrument, and motive.
4. Various expressions of love, including family, country, and community.
5. Limitations and imperfections of material ties of love.
6. Advocacy for a great unselfish love for humanity beyond limited bonds.
7. The power of the Divine Spirit as the source of universal love.
8. A call for unity and reflection of the Sun of Truth's luminous love.
9. Exhortation to overcome material limitations and free oneself from worldly chains.
10. Human freedom in contrast to the captivity of the animal creation.
11. Man's intelligence breaking the chains of matter and solving mysteries.
12. The Holy Spirit granting greater powers to those attuned to Divine love.
13. Loving others with a ray of Infinite Love and seeing attributes of God in them.
14. Shedding the light of boundless love on every human being.
15. Service to humanity beneath the tent of unity as divine helpers.
16. Equality of all human beings in the sight of God, forgetting nationalities.
17. A call to forget personal limitations and rely on the help of God.
18. Focusing on the strength of the Holy Spirit and detaching from material ideas.
19. Craving for spiritual things and fixing eyes on the everlasting Mercy of the Almighty.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the message of Krishna?
- A: The message of Krishna is the message of love.
2. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá assert about the expressions of love such as family, country, and community?
- A: These expressions of love are imperfect and limited.
3. Q: What kind of love does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advocate for?
- A: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advocates for a great unselfish love for humanity free from boundaries.

4. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá urge individuals to rise above?

- A: Individuals are urged to rise above material concerns and free themselves from worldly chains.

5. Q: What is the source of universal love, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

- A: The power of the Divine Spirit is the source of universal love.

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The Imprisonment of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

4 Avenue de Camoëns,

Wednesday, October 25th

I regret much that I have kept you waiting this morning, but I have so much to do in a short time for the Cause of the love of God.

You will not mind having waited a little to see me. I have waited years and years in prison, that I might come to see you now.

Above all, God be praised, our hearts are always in unison, and with one aim are drawn to the love of God. By the Bounty of the Kingdom our desires, our hearts, our spirits, are they not united in one bond? Our prayers, are they not for the gathering together of all men in harmony? Therefore are we not always together?

Yesterday evening when I came home from the house of Monsieur Dreyfus I was very tired—yet I did not sleep, I lay awake thinking.

I said, O God, Here am I in Paris! What is Paris and who am I? Never did I dream that from the darkness of my prison I should ever be able to come to you, though when they read me my sentence I did not believe in it.

They told me that ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd had ordered my everlasting imprisonment, and I said, “This is impossible! I shall not always be a prisoner. If ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd were immortal, such a sentence might possibly be carried out. It is certain that one day I shall be free. My body may be captive for a time, but ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd has no power over my spirit—free it must remain—*that* can no man imprison.”

Released from my prison by the Power of God I meet here the friends of God, and I am thankful unto Him.

Let us spread the Cause of God, for which I suffered persecution.

What a privilege it is for us to meet here in freedom. How happy for us that God has so decided that we may work together for the coming of the Kingdom!

Are you pleased to receive such a guest, freed from his prison to bring the glorious Message to you? He who never could have thought such a meeting possible! Now by the Grace of God, by His wonderful Power, I, who was condemned to perpetual imprisonment in a far off town of the East, am here in Paris talking with you!

Henceforward we shall always be together, heart and soul and spirit, pressing forward in the work till all men are gathered together under the tent of the Kingdom, singing the songs of peace.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses gratitude for the opportunity to meet with friends in Paris after his release from prison. He reflects on the unity of hearts and the shared aim of spreading the love of God. Despite physical captivity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the freedom of the spirit and the inevitability of being released from such imprisonment. He shares the joy of being in Paris, highlighting the privilege of meeting freely with the friends of God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls for the spreading of the Cause of God and expresses thankfulness for the freedom to work together for the coming of the Kingdom.

Key Points:

1. Gratitude for the opportunity to meet with friends in Paris after release from prison.
2. Reflection on the unity of hearts and the shared aim of spreading the love of God.
3. Emphasis on the freedom of the spirit despite physical captivity.
4. Confidence in the eventual release from perpetual imprisonment.
5. Joy and privilege of being in Paris and meeting freely with friends of God.
6. Call for the spreading of the Cause of God and working together for the coming of the Kingdom.
7. Thankfulness for the freedom to collaborate in the service of the divine message.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá express gratitude for in this discourse?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses gratitude for the opportunity to meet with friends in Paris after his release from prison.
2. Q: Despite physical captivity, what does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize about the freedom of the spirit?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd has no power over his spirit, and it must remain free.
3. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá call for in this discourse?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls for the spreading of the Cause of God and working together for the coming of the Kingdom.
4. Q: What privilege does 'Abdu'l-Bahá highlight in being in Paris?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá highlights the privilege of meeting freely with the friends of God in Paris.
5. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is the ultimate aim of working together?
- A: The ultimate aim is to gather all men under the tent of the Kingdom, singing the songs of peace.

God's Greatest Gift to Man

Thursday, October 26th

God's greatest gift to man is that of intellect, or understanding.

The understanding is the power by which man acquires his knowledge of the several kingdoms of creation, and of various stages of existence, as well as of much which is invisible.

Possessing this gift, he is, in himself, the sum of earlier creations—he is able to get into touch with those kingdoms; and by this gift, he can frequently, through his scientific knowledge, reach out with prophetic vision.

Intellect is, in truth, the most precious gift bestowed upon man by the Divine Bounty. Man alone, among created beings, has this wonderful power.

All creation, preceding Man, is bound by the stern law of nature. The great sun, the multitudes of stars, the oceans and seas, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, and all animals, great or small—none is able to evade obedience to nature's law.

Man alone has freedom, and, by his understanding or intellect, has been able to gain control of and adapt some of those natural laws to his own needs. By the power of his intellect he has discovered means by which he not only traverses great continents in express trains and crosses vast oceans in ships, but, like the fish he travels under water in submarines, and, imitating the birds, he flies through the air in airships.

Man has succeeded in using electricity in several ways—for light, for motive power, for sending messages from one end of the earth to the other—and by electricity he can even hear a voice many miles away!

By this gift of understanding or intellect he has also been able to use the rays of the sun to picture people and things, and even to capture the form of distant heavenly bodies.

We perceive in what numerous ways man has been able to bend the powers of nature to his will.

How grievous it is to see how man has used his God-given gift to frame instruments of war, for breaking the Commandment of God "Thou shalt not kill," and for defying Christ's injunction to "Love one another."

God gave this power to man that it might be used for the advancement of civilization, for the good of humanity, to increase love and concord and peace. But man prefers to use this gift to destroy instead of to build, for injustice and oppression, for hatred and discord and devastation, for the destruction of his fellow-creatures, whom Christ has commanded that he should love as himself!

I hope that you will use *your* understanding to promote the unity and tranquillity of mankind, to give enlightenment and civilization to the people, to produce love in all around you, and to bring about the universal peace.

Study the sciences, acquire more and more knowledge. Assuredly one may learn to the end of one's life! Use your knowledge always for the benefit of others; so may war cease on the face of this beautiful earth, and a glorious edifice of peace and concord be raised. Strive that your high ideals may be realized in the Kingdom of God on earth, as they will be in Heaven.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá highlights intellect as God's greatest gift to humanity. Intellect grants humans the ability to understand and connect with various aspects of creation, including unseen realms. While emphasizing the uniqueness of human freedom and intellect, 'Abdu'l-Bahá acknowledges the scientific progress made possible by this gift. However, he laments the misuse of intellect in creating instruments of war, contravening divine commands. 'Abdu'l-Bahá urges the audience to employ their understanding for the advancement of civilization, promoting love, unity, and universal peace. The call is to use knowledge for the benefit of humanity, fostering enlightenment and contributing to the realization of high ideals.

Key Points:

1. Introduction: Intellect as God's greatest gift to humanity.
2. Unique power of understanding possessed by man, connecting him to various realms.
3. Human freedom and control over natural laws through intellect.
4. Scientific progress and technological achievements facilitated by intellect.
5. Lamentation over the misuse of intellect for war and destruction.
6. God's intention for intellect: advancement of civilization, promotion of love, unity, and peace.
7. Call to use knowledge for the benefit of others, contributing to universal peace.
8. Encouragement to study sciences and acquire knowledge throughout life.
9. Vision of a world where high ideals are realized in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá consider as God's greatest gift to man?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá considers intellect or understanding as God's greatest gift to man.
2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the unique power of understanding possessed by humans?
- A: Humans, through understanding, are the sum of earlier creations, able to connect with different realms and exhibit prophetic vision.
3. Q: What achievements of humanity are highlighted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a result of using intellect?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá highlights achievements such as traveling vast distances, harnessing electricity, and using the rays of the sun for various purposes.
4. Q: What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's lamentation in this discourse?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá laments the misuse of intellect to create instruments of war, violating divine commands and Christ's injunction to love one another.
5. Q: What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's call to action regarding the use of intellect?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá urges the audience to use their understanding for the advancement of civilization, promoting love, unity, and universal peace, and to study sciences for the benefit of humanity.

The Clouds That Obscure the Sun of Truth

4 Avenue de Camoëns,

Morning of Friday, October 27th

The day is fine, the air is pure, the sun shines, no mist nor cloud obscures its radiance.

These brilliant rays penetrate into all parts of the city; so may the Sun of Truth illumine the minds of men.

Christ said, “They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven.”¹ Bahá’u’lláh said, “When Christ came for the first time He came upon the clouds.”² Christ said that He had come from the sky, from Heaven—that He came forth from God—while He was born of Mary, His Mother. But when He declared that He had come from Heaven, it is clear that He did not mean the blue firmament but that He spoke of the Heaven of the Kingdom of God, and that from this Heaven He descended upon the clouds. As clouds are obstacles to the shining of the sun, so the clouds of the world of humanity hid from the eyes of men the radiance of the Divinity of Christ.

Men said, “He is of Nazareth, born of Mary, we know Him and we know His brethren. What can He mean? What is He saying? That He came forth from God?”

The Body of Christ was born of Mary of Nazareth, but the Spirit was of God. The capacities of His human body were limited but the strength of His spirit was vast, infinite, immeasurable.

Men asked, “Why does He say He is of God?” If they had understood the reality of Christ, they would have known that the body of His humanity was a cloud that hid His Divinity. The world only saw His human form, and therefore wondered how He could have “come down from Heaven.”

Bahá’u’lláh said, “Even as the clouds hide the sun and the sky from our gaze, even so did the humanity of Christ hide from men His real Divine character.”

I hope that you will turn with unclouded eyes towards the Sun of Truth, beholding not the things of earth, lest your hearts be attracted to the worthless and passing pleasures of the world; let that Sun give you of His strength, then will not the clouds of prejudice veil His illumination from your eyes! Then will the Sun be without clouds for you.

Breathe the air of purity. May you each and all share in the Divine Bounties of the Kingdom of Heaven. May the world be for you no obstacle hiding the truth from your sight, as the human body of Christ hid His Divinity from the people of His day. May you receive the clear vision of the Holy Spirit, so that your hearts may be illumined and able to recognize the Sun of Truth shining through all material clouds, His splendor flooding the universe.

Let not the things of the body obscure the celestial light of the spirit, so that, by the Divine Bounty, you may enter with the children of God into His Eternal Kingdom.

This is my prayer for you all.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá draws a metaphorical connection between the physical clouds that can obscure the sun and the metaphorical clouds that hinder the recognition of the spiritual truths brought by divine messengers like Christ. He explains the symbolism behind Christ's statement about coming in the clouds of Heaven, emphasizing that the clouds were the limitations of human understanding, hindering the recognition of His divine nature. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the audience to turn with unclouded eyes towards the Sun of Truth, seeking the illumination of the Holy Spirit and hoping that worldly concerns will not obstruct their perception of spiritual realities.

Key Points:

1. Introduction: Description of the fine day with the shining sun.
2. Metaphor of Christ coming in the clouds of Heaven.
3. Explanation of the symbolism of clouds obscuring the spiritual truths of divine messengers.
4. Clarification of Christ's declaration of coming from Heaven.
5. Metaphorical meaning of the clouds of prejudice hiding the illumination of the Sun of Truth.
6. Encouragement to turn with unclouded eyes towards the spiritual realities.
7. Warning against being attracted to passing pleasures of the world.
8. Invocation to breathe the air of purity and share in the Divine Bounties.
9. Prayer for the audience to receive clear vision through the Holy Spirit and enter God's Eternal Kingdom.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the metaphorical connection drawn by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in this discourse?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá draws a metaphorical connection between physical clouds obscuring the sun and metaphorical clouds hindering the recognition of spiritual truths brought by divine messengers.
2. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá explain about Christ's statement regarding coming in the clouds of Heaven?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that the clouds were the limitations of human understanding, obstructing the recognition of Christ's divine nature.
3. Q: What does the metaphor of clouds of prejudice represent in this discourse?
- A: The clouds of prejudice symbolize hindrances that can hide the illumination of the Sun of Truth from one's eyes.
4. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourage the audience to do to perceive spiritual realities?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the audience to turn with unclouded eyes towards the Sun of Truth, seeking the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
5. Q: What is the prayer offered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the audience?

- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá prays that the audience may receive clear vision through the Holy Spirit, avoiding the obscuration of spiritual realities by worldly concerns, and enter God's Eternal Kingdom.

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Religious Prejudices

October 27th

The basis of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the *Unity of Mankind*, and His greatest desire was that love and goodwill should live in the heart of men.

As He exhorted the people to do away with strife and discord, so I wish to explain to you the principal reason of the unrest among nations. The chief cause is the misrepresentation of religion by the religious leaders and teachers. They teach their followers to believe that their own form of religion is the only one pleasing to God, and that followers of any other persuasion are condemned by the All-Loving Father and deprived of His Mercy and Grace. Hence arise among the peoples, disapproval, contempt, disputes and hatred. If these religious prejudices could be swept away, the nations would soon enjoy peace and concord.

I was once at Tiberias where the Jews have a Temple. I was staying in a house just opposite the Temple, and there I saw and heard a Rabbi speaking to his congregation of Jews, and he spoke thus:

“O Jews, you are in truth the people of God! All other races and religions are of the devil. God has created you the descendants of Abraham, and He has showered His blessings upon you. Unto you God sent Moses, Jacob and Joseph, and many other great prophets. These prophets, one and all, were of your race.

“It was for you that God broke the power of Pharaoh and caused the Red Sea to dry up; to you also He sent manna from above to be your food, and out of the stony rock did He give you water to quench your thirst. You are indeed the chosen people of God, you are above all the races of the earth! Therefore, all other races are abhorrent to God, and condemned by Him. In truth you will govern and subdue the world, and all men shall become your slaves.

“Do not profane yourselves by consorting with people who are not of your own religion, make not friends of such men.”

When the Rabbi had finished his eloquent discourse, his hearers were filled with joy and satisfaction. It is impossible to describe to you their happiness!

Alas! It is misguided ones like these who are the cause of division and hatred upon earth. Today there are millions of people who still worship idols, and the great religions of the world are at war among themselves. For 1,300 years, Christians and Muslims have been quarreling, when with very little effort their differences and disputes could be overcome and peace and harmony could exist between them and the world could be at rest!

In the Qur'án we read that Muḥammad spoke to His followers, saying:

“Why do you not believe in Christ, and in the Gospel? Why will you not accept Moses and the Prophets, for surely the Bible is the Book of God? In truth, Moses was a sublime Prophet, and Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. He came to the world through the Power of God, born of the Holy Spirit and of the blessed Virgin Mary. Mary, His mother, was a saint from Heaven. She passed her days in the Temple at prayer and food was sent to her from above. Her father,

Zacharias, came to her and asked her from whence the food came, and Mary made answer, 'From on high.' Surely God made Mary to be exalted above all other women."

This is what Muḥammad taught His people concerning Jesus and Moses, and He reproached them for their lack of faith in these great Teachers, and taught them the lessons of truth and tolerance. Muḥammad was sent from God to work among a people as savage and uncivilized as the wild beasts. They were quite devoid of understanding, nor had they any feelings of love, sympathy and pity. Women were so degraded and despised that a man could bury his daughter alive, and he had as many wives to be his slaves as he chose.

Among these half animal people Muḥammad was sent with His divine Message. He taught the people that idol worship was wrong, and that they should reverence Christ, Moses and the Prophets. Under His influence they became a more enlightened and civilized people and arose from the degraded state in which He found them. Was not this a good work, and worthy of all praise, respect and love?

Look at the Gospel of the Lord Christ and see how glorious it is! Yet even today men fail to understand its priceless beauty, and misinterpret its words of wisdom.

Christ forbade war! When the disciple Peter, thinking to defend his Lord, cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest, Christ said to him: "Put up thy sword into the sheath."¹ Yet, in spite of the direct command of the Lord they profess to serve—men still dispute, make war, and kill one another, and His counsels and teaching seem quite forgotten.

But do not therefore attribute to the Masters and Prophets the evil deeds of their followers. If the priests, teachers and people, lead lives which are contrary to the religion they profess to follow, is that the fault of Christ or the other Teachers?

The people of Islám were taught to realize how Jesus came from God and was born of the Spirit, and that He must be glorified of all men. Moses was a prophet of God, and revealed in His day and for the people to whom He was sent, the Book of God.

Muḥammad recognized the sublime grandeur of Christ and the greatness of Moses and the prophets. If only the whole world would acknowledge the greatness of Muḥammad and all the Heaven-sent Teachers, strife and discord would soon vanish from the face of the earth, and God's Kingdom would come among men.

The people of Islám who glorify Christ are not humiliated by so doing.

Christ was the Prophet of the Christians, Moses of the Jews—why should not the followers of each prophet recognize and honor the other prophets also? If men could only learn the lesson of mutual tolerance, understanding, and brotherly love, the unity of the world would soon be an established fact.

Bahá'u'lláh spent His life teaching this lesson of Love and Unity. Let us then put away from us all prejudice and intolerance, and strive with all our hearts and souls to bring about understanding and unity between Christians and Muslims.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses the basis of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, emphasizing the unity of mankind and the need for love and goodwill. He identifies the misrepresentation of religion by religious leaders as a significant cause of unrest among nations, highlighting the religious prejudices that lead to disapproval, contempt, disputes, and hatred. 'Abdu'l-Bahá recounts an incident at Tiberias where a Rabbi's prejudiced sermon fueled division, illustrating the harm caused by such misguided beliefs. He points out the historical conflicts between Christians and Muslims, emphasizing the potential for unity and harmony if religious prejudices are eliminated. 'Abdu'l-Bahá quotes teachings from Muḥammad that promote tolerance and recognition of the greatness of other prophets. The discourse concludes with a call for mutual tolerance, understanding, and brotherly love to establish unity between Christians and Muslims.

Key Points:

1. Introduction: Emphasis on the Unity of Mankind and the importance of love and goodwill.
2. Identification of the chief cause of unrest among nations: Misrepresentation of religion by religious leaders.
3. Religious prejudices as a source of disapproval, contempt, disputes, and hatred among peoples.
4. Illustration of the harm caused by religious prejudices: Incident at Tiberias with the prejudiced Rabbi's sermon.
5. Historical conflicts between Christians and Muslims despite shared spiritual values.
6. Emphasis on the potential for peace and harmony if religious prejudices are eliminated.
7. Quoting Muḥammad's teachings on the importance of recognizing and honoring other prophets.
8. Recognition of the positive impact of Muḥammad's teachings on an uncivilized people.
9. Clarification that the evil deeds of followers do not reflect the teachings of Christ and other prophets.
10. The call for mutual tolerance, understanding, and brotherly love to establish unity between Christians and Muslims.
11. Reference to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings on love and unity.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá identify as the chief cause of unrest among nations?
- A: The chief cause is the misrepresentation of religion by religious leaders, leading to religious prejudices.
2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá illustrate the harm caused by religious prejudices?
- A: He recounts an incident at Tiberias where a Rabbi's prejudiced sermon fueled division among people.
3. Q: What is the historical conflict highlighted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the discourse?

- A: The conflicts between Christians and Muslims over the past 1,300 years, despite shared spiritual values.

4. Q: What teachings of Muḥammad does 'Abdu'l-Bahá quote to promote tolerance?

- A: Muḥammad's teachings encouraging believers to recognize and honor other prophets.

5. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá call for in the conclusion of the discourse?

- A: He calls for mutual tolerance, understanding, and brotherly love to establish unity between Christians and Muslims.

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The Benefits of God to Man

4 Avenue de Camoëns,

October 27th

God alone ordereth all things and is all-powerful. Why then does He send trials to His servants?

The trials of man are of two kinds. (a) The consequences of his own actions. If a man eats too much, he ruins his digestion; if he takes poison he becomes ill or dies. If a person gambles he will lose his money; if he drinks too much he will lose his equilibrium. All these sufferings are caused by the man himself, it is quite clear therefore that certain sorrows are the result of our own deeds.

(b) Other sufferings there are, which come upon the Faithful of God. Consider the great sorrows endured by Christ and by His apostles!

Those who suffer most, attain to the greatest perfection.

Those who declare a wish to suffer much for Christ's sake must prove their sincerity; those who proclaim their longing to make great sacrifices can only prove their truth by their deeds. Job proved the fidelity of his love for God by being faithful through his great adversity, as well as during the prosperity of his life. The apostles of Christ who steadfastly bore all their trials and sufferings—did they not prove their faithfulness? Was not their endurance the best proof?

These griefs are now ended.

Caiaphas lived a comfortable and happy life while Peter's life was full of sorrow and trial; which of these two is the more enviable? Assuredly we should choose the present state of Peter, for he possesses immortal life whilst Caiaphas has won eternal shame. The trials of Peter tested his fidelity. Tests are benefits from God, for which we should thank Him. Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance, they are sent to us by the Divine Mercy for our own perfecting.

While a man is happy he may forget his God; but when grief comes and sorrows overwhelm him, then will he remember his Father who is in Heaven, and who is able to deliver him from his humiliations.

Men who suffer not, attain no perfection. The plant most pruned by the gardeners is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit.

The laborer cuts up the earth with his plough, and from that earth comes the rich and plentiful harvest. The more a man is chastened, the greater is the harvest of spiritual virtues shown forth

by him. A soldier is no good General until he has been in the front of the fiercest battle and has received the deepest wounds.

The prayer of the prophets of God has always been, and still is: Oh God, I long to lay down my life in the path to Thee! I desire to shed my blood for Thee, and to make the supreme sacrifice.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the two kinds of trials faced by humanity. The first kind arises as a consequence of one's own actions, such as overeating, poisoning oneself, gambling, or excessive drinking. The second kind consists of the sufferings endured by the faithful servants of God, exemplified by the tribulations faced by Christ and His apostles. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that those who endure the greatest suffering attain the highest perfection, illustrating this with the example of Job and the steadfastness of Christ's apostles. Trials are considered tests and benefits from God, opportunities for perfecting one's faith and virtues. 'Abdu'l-Bahá concludes by highlighting the transformative power of suffering and the spiritual benefits that arise from enduring trials.

Key Points:

1. Introduction: God orders all things and is all-powerful.
2. Two kinds of trials faced by humanity:
 - a. Consequences of one's actions – self-inflicted sufferings.
 - b. Sufferings endured by the faithful servants of God.
3. The example of the apostles of Christ enduring great sorrows and trials.
4. The proposition that those who suffer most attain the greatest perfection.
5. The testing of fidelity through trials and sacrifices.
6. The story of Job as an illustration of proving love for God through adversity.
7. Comparing the lives of Caiaphas and Peter to illustrate the enviable state of enduring trials for God.
8. Trials as benefits from God for the perfecting of the individual.
9. The role of grief and sorrow in leading individuals to remember and turn to God.
10. The analogy of pruning a plant to emphasize that those who suffer attain spiritual virtues.
11. The analogy of a soldier facing battles to become a good General.
12. The prayer of the prophets expressing a longing to sacrifice and shed blood in the path of God.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What are the two kinds of trials that 'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses?
- A: (a) Consequences of one's own actions, (b) Sufferings endured by the faithful servants of God.
2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá illustrate the concept that those who suffer most attain the greatest perfection?
- A: Examples include the great sorrows endured by Christ and His apostles.
3. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is the purpose of trials and sufferings?
- A: Trials are considered benefits from God, opportunities for perfecting faith and virtues.
4. Q: What analogy does 'Abdu'l-Bahá use to highlight the transformative power of suffering?

- A: The analogy of pruning a plant – the more pruned, the more beautiful the blossoms and abundant the fruit.

5. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá connect suffering with the remembrance of God?

- A: When a man is happy, he may forget God; but when grief comes, he will remember his Father in Heaven and turn to Him for deliverance.

– 15 –

Beauty and Harmony in Diversity

October 28th

The Creator of all is One God.

From this same God all creation sprang into existence, and He is the one goal, towards which everything in nature yearns. This conception was embodied in the words of Christ, when He said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” Man is the sum of Creation, and the Perfect Man is the expression of the complete thought of the Creator—the Word of God.

Consider the world of created beings, how varied and diverse they are in species, yet with one sole origin. All the differences that appear are those of outward form and color. This diversity of type is apparent throughout the whole of nature.

Behold a beautiful garden full of flowers, shrubs, and trees. Each flower has a different charm, a peculiar beauty, its own delicious perfume and beautiful color. The trees too, how varied are they in size, in growth, in foliage—and what different fruits they bear! Yet all these flowers, shrubs and trees spring from the self-same earth, the same sun shines upon them and the same clouds give them rain.

So it is with humanity. It is made up of many races, and its peoples are of different color, white, black, yellow, brown and red—but they all come from the same God, and all are servants to Him. This diversity among the children of men has unhappily not the same effect as it has among the vegetable creation, where the spirit shown is more harmonious. Among men exists the diversity of animosity, and it is this that causes war and hatred among the different nations of the world.

Differences which are only those of blood also cause them to destroy and kill one another. Alas! that this should still be so. Let us look rather at the beauty in diversity, the beauty of harmony, and learn a lesson from the vegetable creation. If you beheld a garden in which all the plants were the same as to form, color and perfume, it would not seem beautiful to you at all, but, rather, monotonous and dull. The garden which is pleasing to the eye and which makes the heart glad, is the garden in which are growing side by side flowers of every hue, form and perfume, and the joyous contrast of color is what makes for charm and beauty. So is it with trees. An orchard full of fruit trees is a delight; so is a plantation planted with many species of shrubs. It is just the diversity and variety that constitutes its charm; each flower, each tree, each fruit, beside being beautiful in itself, brings out by contrast the qualities of the others, and shows to advantage the special loveliness of each and all.

Thus should it be among the children of men! The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. If you meet those of different race and color from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and

show them kindness. Think of them as different colored roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and rejoice to be among them.

Likewise, when you meet those whose opinions differ from your own, do not turn away your face from them. All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading thereto. Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever one.

Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellowmen, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred and strife in your hearts.

Rather, search diligently for the truth and make all men your friends.

Every edifice is made of many different stones, yet each depends on the other to such an extent that if one were displaced the whole building would suffer; if one is faulty the structure is imperfect.

Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity, He has made a design for the uniting of all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of universal unity. This is the work of the Divine Bounty, and we must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us. Leave all thought of self, and strive only to be obedient and submissive to the Will of God. In this way only shall we become citizens of the Kingdom of God, and attain unto life everlasting.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the unity of creation and the diversity within it as a source of beauty and harmony. He likens humanity to a garden where different flowers and trees coexist, each with its unique charm, yet all originating from the same source. The diversity among humans, including various races and colors, is viewed positively and compared to the delightful contrast found in gardens. 'Abdu'l-Bahá contrasts the harmony in nature with the animosity and conflict among humans, stemming from differences in blood, causing wars and hatred. He calls for recognizing the beauty in diversity, drawing inspiration from the diverse yet harmonious qualities of a garden. Analogously, the diversity among the children of men should bring about love and harmony. Instead of mistrusting or withdrawing from those different from oneself, one should rejoice in the diversity, treating others as different colored roses in the garden of humanity. The analogy extends to diverse opinions, advocating for understanding and unity despite differing thoughts. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the search for truth, unity, and friendship among all people, urging the rejection of disputes and strife. He emphasizes the importance of unity and refers to Bahá'u'lláh's vision of uniting all people under the shelter of universal unity, achieved through obedience to the Will of God.

Key Points:

1. Introduction: Unity of creation and diversity within it.
2. The origin of all creation from One God.
3. Humanity as the sum of creation and the Perfect Man as the expression of God's complete thought.
4. Diversity among humans compared to a garden with varied flowers, shrubs, and trees.
5. Unity and diversity in nature contrasted with animosity and conflict among humans.
6. The negative impact of differences in blood leading to destruction and killing.
7. The call to focus on the beauty in diversity and learn from the vegetable creation.
8. The analogy of a garden with diverse flowers and trees to illustrate charm and beauty.
9. The analogy extended to diversity in humanity, illustrating the joyous contrast of color.
10. Encouragement to view diverse races and colors positively and with kindness.
11. The importance of unity and harmony in the human family, akin to music with different notes blending.
12. Encouragement to welcome those with different opinions, recognizing truth as multifaceted.
13. A plea to avoid letting differences of opinion cause separation, dispute, hatred, and strife.
14. A call to search diligently for truth, make all men friends, and strive for unity.
15. The analogy of an edifice made of many stones, emphasizing interdependence for perfection.
16. Reference to Bahá'u'lláh's vision of unity and the need to strive for the reality of unity.
17. The call to leave thoughts of self, be obedient to the Will of God, and become citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What analogy does 'Abdu'l-Bahá use to describe humanity's diversity?
- A: He likens humanity to a garden, where different flowers, shrubs, and trees coexist, each with its unique charm.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá view the diversity among humans in terms of race and color?
- A: He views it positively, comparing it to the delightful contrast found in gardens and encouraging kindness towards those of different races and colors.
3. Q: What negative impact does 'Abdu'l-Bahá attribute to differences in blood among humans?
- A: He states that differences in blood lead to destruction and killing, causing animosity and conflict among different nations.
4. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggest dealing with those who have different opinions?
- A: He encourages understanding and unity despite differing thoughts, urging people not to turn away from those with different opinions.
5. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize as the work of the Divine Bounty and Bahá'u'lláh's vision?
- A: The unity of all peoples and the gathering of humanity under the shelter of universal unity are considered the work of the Divine Bounty and Bahá'u'lláh's vision.
6. Q: What is the analogy of an edifice made of many stones used to illustrate?
- A: It illustrates the interdependence of individuals for the perfection of the whole, emphasizing unity and cooperation.
7. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggest individuals become citizens of the Kingdom of God?
- A: He advises leaving thoughts of self, being obedient to the Will of God, and striving for unity, which leads to citizenship in the Kingdom of God.
8. Q: What is the overall message regarding humanity's diversity and unity in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discourse?
- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the beauty and harmony in humanity's diversity, likening it to a garden, and calls for unity, understanding, and kindness among all people.

– 16 –

The True Meaning of the Prophecies Concerning the Coming of Christ

October 30th

In the Bible there are prophecies of the coming of Christ. The Jews still await the coming of the Messiah, and pray to God day and night to hasten His advent.

When Christ came they denounced and slew Him, saying: “This is not the One for whom we wait. Behold when the Messiah shall come, signs and wonders shall testify that He is in truth the Christ. We know the signs and conditions, and they have not appeared. The Messiah will arise out of an unknown city. He shall sit upon the throne of David, and behold, He shall come with a sword of steel, and with a scepter of iron shall He rule! He shall fulfill the law of the Prophets, He shall conquer the East and the West, and shall glorify His chosen people the Jews. He shall bring with Him a reign of peace, during which even the animals shall cease to be at enmity with

man. For behold the wolf and the lamb shall drink from the same spring, and the lion and the doe shall lie down in the same pasture, the serpent and the mouse shall share the same nest, and all God's creatures shall be at rest."

According to the Jews, Jesus the Christ fulfilled none of these conditions, for their eyes were holden and they could not see.

He came from Nazareth, no unknown place. He carried no sword in His hand, nor even a stick. He did not sit upon the Throne of David, He was a poor man. He reformed the Law of Moses, and broke the Sabbath Day. He did not conquer the East and the West, but was Himself subject to the Roman Law. He did not exalt the Jews, but taught equality and brotherhood, and rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees. He brought in no reign of peace, for during His lifetime injustice and cruelty reached such a height that even He Himself fell a victim to it, and died a shameful death upon the cross.

Thus the Jews thought and spoke, for they did not understand the Scriptures nor the glorious truths that were contained in them. The letter they knew by heart, but of the life-giving spirit they understood not a word.

Hearken, and I will show you the meaning thereof. Although He came from Nazareth, which was a known place, He also came from Heaven. His body was born of Mary, but His Spirit came from Heaven. The sword He carried was the sword of His tongue, with which He divided the good from the evil, the true from the false, the faithful from the unfaithful, and the light from the darkness. His Word was indeed a sharp sword! The Throne upon which He sat is the Eternal Throne from which Christ reigns forever, a heavenly throne, not an earthly one, for the things of earth pass away but heavenly things pass not away. He reinterpreted and completed the Law of Moses and fulfilled the Law of the Prophets. His word conquered the East and the West. His Kingdom is everlasting. He exalted those Jews who recognized Him. They were men and women of humble birth, but contact with Him made them great and gave them everlasting dignity. The animals who were to live with one another signified the different sects and races, who, once having been at war, were now to dwell in love and charity, drinking together the water of life from Christ the Eternal Spring.

Thus, all the spiritual prophecies concerning the coming of Christ were fulfilled, but the Jews shut their eyes that they should not see, and their ears that they should not hear, and the Divine Reality of Christ passed through their midst unheard, unloved and unrecognized.

It is easy to read the Holy Scriptures, but it is only with a clean heart and a pure mind that one may understand their true meaning. Let us ask God's help to enable us to understand the Holy Books. Let us pray for eyes to see and ears to hear, and for hearts that long for peace.

God's eternal Mercy is immeasurable. He has always chosen certain souls upon whom He has shed the Divine Bounty of His heart, whose minds He has illumined with celestial light, to whom He has revealed the sacred mysteries, and kept clear before their sight the Mirror of Truth. These are the disciples of God, and His goodness has no bounds. You who are servants of the Most High may be disciples also. The treasures of God are limitless.

The Spirit breathing through the Holy Scriptures is food for all who hunger. God Who has given the revelation to His Prophets will surely give of His abundance daily bread to all those who ask Him faithfully.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses the prophecies about the coming of Christ in the Bible and the misunderstandings surrounding His arrival. He contrasts the expectations of the Jews with the reality of Christ's life, teachings, and the spiritual fulfillment of prophecies. The emphasis is on perceiving the deeper spiritual truths in the Scriptures and seeking God's help for understanding.

Key Points:

1. Jewish Expectations:

- Jews expected the Messiah to come from an unknown city, wield a sword, sit on David's throne, and bring about a reign of peace.
- Jesus did not meet these expectations, and the Jews failed to recognize the spiritual fulfillment.

2. Spiritual Fulfillment:

- Christ's true origin was heavenly, though born in Nazareth.
- The sword He carried was the power of His words that distinguished between good and evil.
- His throne was eternal, not earthly, and His kingdom everlasting.
- He reinterpreted and fulfilled the Law, conquering spiritually.

3. Symbolic Meaning:

- Animals living in peace symbolized different sects and races dwelling in love through Christ's teachings.

4. Jews' Failure to Recognize:

- Jews misunderstood due to literal interpretation, failing to see the spiritual reality of Christ.
- Christ's divine reality passed unrecognized amidst the Jews' ignorance.

5. Need for Purity of Heart and Mind:

- Understanding Holy Scriptures requires a clean heart and pure mind.
- Seeking God's help, praying for insight, and longing for peace are crucial.

6. God's Eternal Mercy:

- God chooses souls to receive divine bounty and illumination.
- Discipleship is open to all servants of the Most High.
- God's mercy is boundless, providing spiritual nourishment to the hungry.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How did Christ fulfill the expectations of the Jews according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: Christ fulfilled expectations spiritually rather than in the literal sense, embodying a heavenly origin and eternal kingship.

2. Q: What does the symbolic meaning of animals living together represent in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discourse?

- A: It symbolizes different sects and races dwelling in love and harmony through Christ's teachings.

3. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, why did the Jews fail to recognize the divine reality of Christ?

- A: They misunderstood the prophecies, clinging to literal interpretations and failing to perceive the spiritual truths.

4. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize regarding the understanding of Holy Scriptures?

- A: Understanding requires a clean heart, a pure mind, seeking God's help, and a genuine longing for peace.

5. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá say about God's mercy in the discourse?

- A: God's mercy is immeasurable, and He chooses souls to receive divine bounty and illumination. Discipleship is available to all servants of the Most High.

– 17 –

The Holy Spirit, the Intermediary Power between God and Man

4 Avenue de Camoëns,

October 31st

The Divine Reality is Unthinkable, Limitless, Eternal, Immortal and Invisible.

The world of creation is bound by natural law, finite and mortal.

The Infinite Reality cannot be said to ascend or descend. It is beyond the understanding of man, and cannot be described in terms which apply to the phenomenal sphere of the created world.

Man, then, is in extreme need of the only Power by which he is able to receive help from the Divine Reality, that Power alone bringing him into contact with the Source of all life.

An intermediary is needed to bring two extremes into relation with each other. Riches and poverty, plenty and need: without an intermediary power there could be no relation between these pairs of opposites.

So we can say there must be a Mediator between God and Man, and this is none other than the Holy Spirit, which brings the created earth into relation with the “Unthinkable One,” the Divine Reality.

The Divine Reality may be likened to the sun and the Holy Spirit to the rays of the sun. As the rays of the sun bring the light and warmth of the sun to the earth, giving life to all created beings, so do the “Manifestations”¹ bring the power of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Sun of Reality to give light and life to the souls of men.

Behold, there is an intermediary necessary between the sun and the earth; the sun does not descend to the earth, neither does the earth ascend to the sun. This contact is made by the rays of the sun which bring light and warmth and heat.

The Holy Spirit is the Light from the Sun of Truth bringing, by its infinite power, life and illumination to all mankind, flooding all souls with Divine Radiance, conveying the blessings of God's Mercy to the whole world. The earth, without the medium of the warmth and light of the rays of the sun, could receive no benefits from the sun.

Likewise the Holy Spirit is the very cause of the life of man; without the Holy Spirit he would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge by which his great influence over the rest of creation is gained. The illumination of the Holy Spirit gives to man the power of thought, and enables him to make discoveries by which he bends the laws of nature to his will.

The Holy Spirit it is which, through the mediation of the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual virtues to man and enables him to attain Eternal Life.

All these blessings are brought to man by the Holy Spirit; therefore we can understand that the Holy Spirit is the Intermediary between the Creator and the created. The light and heat of the sun cause the earth to be fruitful, and create life in all things that grow; and the Holy Spirit quickens the souls of men.

The two great apostles, St. Peter and St. John the Evangelist, were once simple, humble workmen, toiling for their daily bread. By the Power of the Holy Spirit their souls were illumined, and they received the eternal blessings of the Lord Christ.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá elucidates the nature of the Divine Reality, emphasizing its attributes as unthinkable, limitless, eternal, immortal, and invisible. He introduces the concept of the Holy Spirit as the intermediary power between God and man, drawing a parallel between the Divine Reality and the sun, and the Holy Spirit as its illuminating rays. The discourse highlights the necessity of an intermediary for understanding the Infinite Reality and underscores the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing divine blessings, life, and illumination to humanity.

Key Points:

1. Attributes of Divine Reality:

- Unthinkable, limitless, eternal, immortal, and invisible.

2. Man's Need for an Intermediary:

- The finite, mortal world of creation requires an intermediary to connect with the Infinite Reality.
- An intermediary is crucial to establish relations between opposing elements like riches and poverty.

3. Role of the Holy Spirit:

- Serves as the intermediary between God and man.
- Likened to the rays of the sun, bringing the Light from the Sun of Truth to illuminate and give life to souls.
- Essential for contact between the Divine Reality and the created earth.

4. Analogy with Sun and Earth:

- The sun does not descend to the earth, and the earth does not ascend to the sun; rays act as the intermediary.
- Holy Spirit serves a similar purpose, connecting the Divine Reality with humanity.

5. Function of the Holy Spirit:

- Conveys Divine Radiance and the blessings of God's Mercy to the whole world.
- Without the Holy Spirit, man would lack intellect and the ability to acquire scientific knowledge.
- Illumination of the Holy Spirit enables thought, discoveries, and mastery over the laws of nature.

6. Teaching Spiritual Virtues:

- Holy Spirit, through the mediation of Prophets, teaches spiritual virtues and enables the attainment of Eternal Life.

7. Intermediary between Creator and Created:

- Holy Spirit acts as the intermediary, bestowing blessings and quickening the souls of men.

8. Example of St. Peter and St. John:

- St. Peter and St. John, once humble workmen, had their souls illumined by the Power of the Holy Spirit, receiving eternal blessings from Christ.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What attributes does 'Abdu'l-Bahá ascribe to the Divine Reality?

- A: The Divine Reality is described as unthinkable, limitless, eternal, immortal, and invisible.

2. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize the need for an intermediary between God and man?

- A: An intermediary is required to establish connections between the finite, mortal world of creation and the Infinite Reality.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá explain the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the sun and earth?

- A: The Holy Spirit, like the rays of the sun, acts as the intermediary between the Divine Reality (sun) and humanity (earth).

4. Q: What functions and benefits does 'Abdu'l-Bahá attribute to the Holy Spirit?

- A: The Holy Spirit conveys Divine Radiance, brings blessings, illuminates souls, enables intellectual capabilities, and teaches spiritual virtues.

- 18 -

The Two Natures in Man

November 1st

Today is a day of rejoicing in Paris! They are celebrating the Festival of "All Saints." Why do you think that these people were called "Saints?" The word has a very real meaning. A saint is one who leads a life of purity, one who has freed himself from all human weaknesses and imperfections.

In man there are two natures; his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his Divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature. Every good habit, every noble quality belongs to man's spiritual nature, whereas all his imperfections and sinful actions are born of his material nature. If a man's Divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint.

Man has the power both to do good and to do evil; if his power for good predominates and his inclinations to do wrong are conquered, then man in truth may be called a saint. But if, on the contrary, he rejects the things of God and allows his evil passions to conquer him, then he is no better than a mere animal.

Saints are men who have freed themselves from the world of matter and who have overcome sin. They live in the world but are not of it, their thoughts being continually in the world of the spirit. Their lives are spent in holiness, and their deeds show forth love, justice and godliness. They are illumined from on high; they are as bright and shining lamps in the dark places of the

earth. These are the saints of God. The apostles, who were the disciples of Jesus Christ, were just as other men are; they, like their fellows, were attracted by the things of the world, and each thought only of his own advantage. They knew little of justice, nor were the Divine perfections found in their midst. But when they followed Christ and believed in Him, their ignorance gave place to understanding, cruelty was changed to justice, falsehood to truth, darkness into light. They had been worldly, they became spiritual and divine. They had been children of darkness, they became sons of God, they became saints! Strive therefore to follow in their steps, leaving all worldly things behind, and striving to attain to the Spiritual Kingdom.

Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world, and beacons of light to disclose the mysteries of the Kingdom to those with understanding hearts.

God sent His Prophets into the world to teach and enlighten man, to explain to him the mystery of the Power of the Holy Spirit, to enable him to reflect the light, and so in his turn, to be the source of guidance to others. The Heavenly Books, the Bible, the Qur'án, and the other Holy Writings have been given by God as guides into the paths of Divine virtue, love, justice and peace.

Therefore I say unto you that ye should strive to follow the counsels of these Blessed Books, and so order your lives that ye may, following the examples set before you, become yourselves the saints of the Most High!

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the concept of saints, individuals who have transcended their lower nature, expressing attributes of their spiritual higher nature. He identifies the duality in human nature—spiritual and material—and explains that good habits and noble qualities arise from the spiritual nature, while imperfections result from the material nature. Saints are those who dominate their lower nature, manifesting love, justice, and godliness. The apostles, initially worldly, transformed into spiritual beings through their association with Christ. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages striving to become like the apostles, leaving worldly concerns behind and attaining to the Spiritual Kingdom.

Key Points:

1. Festival of All Saints:
 - Celebration in Paris prompts 'Abdu'l-Bahá to discuss the concept of saints.
 - Saints are those who lead a life of purity, freed from human weaknesses.
2. Two Natures in Man:
 - Spiritual or higher nature and material or lower nature coexist in man.
 - Attributes of Divine nature: love, mercy, kindness, truth, and justice.
 - Material nature expresses untruth, cruelty, and injustice.
3. Saints Defined:
 - Saints dominate their lower nature, living in holiness, with deeds reflecting love, justice, and godliness.
 - They are illumined, like bright lamps in dark places, having overcome sin.
4. Transformation of the Apostles:
 - Apostles were initially attracted to worldly things, but their association with Christ led to spiritual transformation.
 - From worldly to spiritual and divine, becoming sons of God.
5. Call to Follow Their Example:
 - Strive to leave worldly things behind and attain the Spiritual Kingdom.
 - Prayer for divine virtue to become beacons of light and guides to others.
6. Divine Guidance through Holy Writings:
 - God sent Prophets to teach and enlighten humanity.
 - Holy Books—Bible, Qur'án, etc.—offer guidance on divine virtue, love, justice, and peace.
7. Striving to Become Saints:
 - Encouragement to follow the counsels of Blessed Books.
 - Order lives to become saints of the Most High by emulating examples set by the prophets.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What characterizes saints according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: Saints lead lives of purity, freed from human weaknesses, and manifest attributes of their spiritual higher nature.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the transformation of the apostles?

- A: Initially attracted to worldly things, the apostles underwent a spiritual transformation through their association with Christ, becoming sons of God.

3. Q: What encouragement does 'Abdu'l-Bahá give regarding the Holy Writings?

- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages striving to follow the counsels of the Blessed Books and ordering lives to become saints of the Most High.

– 19 –

Material and Spiritual Progress

November 2nd

'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

How beautiful the weather is today, the sky is clear, the sun shines, and the heart of man is made glad thereby!

Such bright and beautiful weather gives new life and strength to man, and if he has been sick, he feels once more in his heart the joyous hope of health renewed. All these gifts of nature concern the physical side of man, for it is only his body that can receive material benefits.

If a man is successful in his business, art, or profession he is thereby enabled to increase his physical wellbeing and to give his body the amount of ease and comfort in which it delights. All around us today we see how man surrounds himself with every modern convenience and luxury, and denies nothing to the physical and material side of his nature. But, take heed, lest in thinking too earnestly of the things of the body you forget the things of the soul: for material advantages do not elevate the spirit of a man. Perfection in worldly things is a joy to the body of a man but in no wise does it glorify his soul.

It may be that a man who has every material benefit, and who lives surrounded by all the greatest comfort modern civilization can give him, is denied the all important gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is indeed a good and praiseworthy thing to progress materially, but in so doing, let us not neglect the more important spiritual progress, and close our eyes to the Divine light shining in our midst.

Only by improving spiritually as well as materially can we make any real progress, and become perfect beings. It was in order to bring this spiritual life and light into the world that all the great Teachers have appeared. They came so that the Sun of Truth might be manifested, and shine in the hearts of men, and that through its wondrous power men might attain unto Everlasting Light.

When the Lord Christ came He spread the light of the Holy Spirit on all around Him, and His disciples and all who received His illumination became enlightened, spiritual beings.

It was to manifest this light that Bahá'u'lláh was born, and came into the world. He taught Eternal Truth to men, and shed the rays of Divine Light in all lands.

Alas! behold how man disregards this Light. He still goes on his way of darkness, and disunity, and quarrels and fierce war are still rife.

He uses material progress to gratify his lust for war, and he makes destructive implements and appliances to destroy his brother man.

But let us rather exert ourselves for the attainment of spiritual advantages, for this is the only way of true progress, that which cometh from God and is alone Godly.

I pray for you one and all that you may receive the Bounties of the Holy Spirit; so will you become in truth enlightened, and progress ever onward and upward to the Kingdom of God. Then shall your hearts be prepared to receive the glad tidings, your eyes shall be opened and you will see the Glory of God; your ears shall be unstopped and you will hear the call of the Kingdom, and with tongue made eloquent shall you call men to the realization of the Divine Power and Love of God!

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the importance of balancing material and spiritual progress. While acknowledging the benefits of material success, he warns against neglecting spiritual development. Material advantages, though beneficial for the body, do not elevate the spirit. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stresses that true progress involves both spiritual and material improvement, as demonstrated by the teachings of great religious leaders like Christ and Bahá'u'lláh. He laments humanity's inclination to misuse material progress for war and destruction, urging a focus on spiritual advancements. The ultimate goal is to receive the Bounties of the Holy Spirit, attain enlightenment, and progress towards the Kingdom of God.

Key Points:

1. Appreciation of Beautiful Weather:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá starts by expressing joy in the beautiful weather and its positive impact on physical wellbeing.

2. Material and Spiritual Progress:

- Material progress surrounds man with modern comforts, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá warns against neglecting spiritual development.
- Material advantages gratify the body but do not glorify the soul.
- Perfection requires both spiritual and material progress.

3. Role of Great Teachers:

- The great Teachers, such as Christ and Bahá'u'lláh, appeared to bring spiritual life and light to the world.
- The Sun of Truth manifested through these Teachers enlightens hearts and leads to Everlasting Light.

4. Misuse of Material Progress:

- Humanity tends to misuse material progress for war and destructive purposes.
- 'Abdu'l-Bahá urges a shift toward spiritual advantages, emphasizing true progress comes from God.

5. Prayer for Spiritual Advancement:

- A prayer for everyone to receive the Bounties of the Holy Spirit.
- Spiritual enlightenment leads to onward and upward progress toward the Kingdom of God.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what are the risks of focusing too much on material progress?

- A: Focusing excessively on material progress may lead to neglecting spiritual development, with material advantages gratifying the body but not elevating the spirit.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the role of great Teachers like Christ and Bahá'u'lláh?

- A: Great Teachers appeared to bring spiritual life and light into the world, manifesting the Sun of Truth and leading humanity to Everlasting Light.

3. Q: What prayer does 'Abdu'l-Bahá offer for the listeners?

- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá prays for everyone to receive the Bounties of the Holy Spirit, leading to spiritual enlightenment and progress toward the Kingdom of God.

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The Evolution of Matter and Development of the Soul

November 3rd

Paris is becoming very cold, so cold that I shall soon be obliged to go away, but the warmth of your love still keeps me here. God willing, I hope to stay among you yet a little while; bodily cold and heat cannot affect the spirit, for it is warmed by the fire of the Love of God. When we understand this, we begin to understand something of our life in the world to come.

God, in His Bounty, has given us a foretaste here, has given us certain proofs of the difference that exists between body, soul and spirit.

We see that cold, heat, suffering, etc., only concern the *body*, they do not touch the spirit.

How often do we see a man, poor, sick, miserably clad, and with no means of support, yet spiritually strong. Whatever his body has to suffer, his spirit is free and well! Again, how often do we see a rich man, physically strong and healthy, but with a soul sick unto death.

It is quite apparent to the seeing mind that a man's spirit is something very different from his physical body.

The spirit is changeless, indestructible. The progress and development of the soul, the joy and sorrow of the soul, are independent of the physical body.

If we are caused joy or pain by a friend, if a love prove true or false, it is the soul that is affected. If our dear ones are far from us—it is the soul that grieves, and the grief or trouble of the soul may react on the body.

Thus, when the spirit is fed with holy virtues, then is the body joyous; if the soul falls into sin, the body is in torment!

When we find truth, constancy, fidelity, and love, we are happy; but if we meet with lying, faithlessness, and deceit, we are miserable.

These are all things pertaining to the soul, and are not *bodily* ills. Thus, it is apparent that the soul, even as the body, has its own individuality. But if the body undergoes a change, the spirit need not be touched. When you break a glass on which the sun shines, the glass is broken, but the sun still shines! If a cage containing a bird is destroyed, the bird is unharmed! If a lamp is broken, the flame can still burn bright!

The same thing applies to the spirit of man. Though death destroy his body, it has no power over his spirit—this is eternal, everlasting, both birthless and deathless.

As to the soul of man after death, it remains in the degree of purity to which it has evolved during life in the physical body, and after it is freed from the body it remains plunged in the ocean of God's Mercy.

From the moment the soul leaves the body and arrives in the Heavenly World, its evolution is spiritual, and that evolution is: *The approaching unto God.*

In the physical creation, evolution is from one degree of perfection to another. The mineral passes with its mineral perfections to the vegetable; the vegetable, with its perfections, passes to the animal world, and so on to that of humanity. This world is full of seeming contradictions; in each of these kingdoms (mineral, vegetable and animal) life exists in its degree; though when compared to the life in a man, the earth appears to be dead, yet she, too, lives and has a life of her own. In this world things live and die, and live again in other forms of life, but in the world of the spirit it is quite otherwise.

The soul does not evolve from degree to degree as a law—it only evolves nearer to God, by the Mercy and Bounty of God.

It is my earnest prayer that we may all be in the Kingdom of God, and near Him.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the distinction between the physical body and the eternal soul. He notes that external factors like cold, heat, and suffering affect the body, not the spirit. Spiritual strength or weakness is independent of physical well-being. The soul's joy, sorrow, and evolution are not bound by the body's conditions. The spirit, changeless and indestructible, experiences its own individuality. Even in death, the soul remains untouched, evolving spiritually in the afterlife. While physical evolution progresses through different kingdoms, the soul's evolution is a journey toward God's proximity, guided by divine mercy. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the soul's purity after death and expresses a prayer for everyone to be in the Kingdom of God, near Him.

Key Points:

1. Warmth of Love Transcends Physical Conditions:
 - Despite physical cold, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses gratitude for the warmth of love, unaffected by bodily conditions.
2. Body and Soul Distinction:
 - External factors like cold, heat, and suffering impact the body, not the eternal soul.
 - Spiritual strength remains unaffected by physical hardships.
3. Soul's Independence and Individuality:
 - The soul's joy, sorrow, and evolution are independent of the body's conditions.
 - The spirit, changeless and indestructible, has its own individuality.
4. Eternal Nature of the Soul:
 - The soul's evolution continues in the afterlife, approaching God through divine mercy.
 - Death only affects the body; the eternal soul remains untouched.
5. Spiritual Evolution vs. Physical Evolution:
 - Physical evolution progresses through different kingdoms (mineral, vegetable, animal), while spiritual evolution is the soul's journey toward God.
 - The soul doesn't evolve through degrees but approaches God's proximity through divine mercy.
6. Purity and Evolution in the Afterlife:
 - After death, the soul remains in the degree of purity attained during life.
 - The soul's evolution in the afterlife is a spiritual journey toward God's presence.
7. Prayer for Proximity to God:
 - 'Abdu'l-Bahá concludes with a prayer for everyone to be in the Kingdom of God, near Him.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the impact of external factors on the soul and body?

- A: External factors like cold, heat, and suffering impact the body, but spiritual strength remains unaffected by physical conditions.

2. Q: What is the distinction between physical and spiritual evolution according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: Physical evolution progresses through different kingdoms, while spiritual evolution is the soul's journey toward God's proximity, guided by divine mercy.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá characterize the eternal nature of the soul?

- A: The soul is changeless, indestructible, and its evolution in the afterlife is a spiritual journey approaching God's presence through divine mercy.

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The Spiritual Meetings in Paris

November 4th

All over Europe today one hears of meetings and assemblies, and societies of all kinds are formed. There are those interested in commerce, science, and politics, and many others. All these are for *material* service, their desire being for the progress and enlightenment of the world of matter. But rarely does a breath from the spirit world breathe upon them. They seem unconscious of the Divine Voice, careless concerning the things of God. But this meeting in Paris is a truly spiritual one. The Divine Breath is poured forth in your midst, the light of the Kingdom is shining in all hearts. The Divine love of God is a power among you, and with souls athirst, ye receive the glad tidings of great joy.

You are all met here with one accord, heart drawn to heart, souls overflowing with Divine love, working and longing for the unity of the world.

Verily this assembly is a spiritual one! It is like unto a beautiful perfumed garden! On it the Heavenly Sun sheds the golden rays, and the warmth thereof penetrates and gladdens each waiting heart. The love of Christ, which passeth all knowledge, is among you, the Holy Spirit is your help.

Day by day this meeting will grow and become more powerful until gradually its spirit will conquer the whole world!

Try with all your hearts to be willing channels for God's Bounty. For I say unto you that He has chosen you to be His messengers of love throughout the world, to be His bearers of spiritual gifts to man, to be the means of spreading unity and concord on the earth. Thank God with all your hearts that such a privilege has been given unto you. For a life devoted to praise is not too long in which to thank God for such a favor.

Lift up your hearts above the present and look with eyes of faith into the future! Today the seed is sown, the grain falls upon the earth, but behold the day will come when it shall rise a glorious tree and the branches thereof shall be laden with fruit. Rejoice and be glad that this day has dawned, try to realize its power, for it is indeed wonderful! God has crowned you with honor and in your hearts has He set a radiant star; verily the light thereof shall brighten the whole world!

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá acknowledges various material meetings and societies across Europe, focused on commerce, science, and politics. However, he contrasts these with the spiritual nature of the gathering in Paris. Describing it as a perfumed garden, he emphasizes the presence of the Divine Breath, the light of the Kingdom, and the love of Christ among the attendees. The assembly is seen as a channel for spreading unity, concord, and spiritual gifts globally. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages gratitude for the privilege of being messengers of God's love, foreseeing a future where the seeds sown today will grow into a glorious tree bearing abundant fruit.

Key Points:

1. Material vs. Spiritual Meetings:

- Many meetings across Europe focus on material aspects like commerce, science, and politics.
- The Paris gathering stands out as a truly spiritual assembly with the presence of the Divine Breath and love of Christ.

2. Description of the Spiritual Gathering:

- The assembly is likened to a beautiful, perfumed garden.
- The Heavenly Sun sheds golden rays, and the warmth penetrates each waiting heart.
- Participants are described as hearts drawn together, overflowing with Divine love.

3. Spiritual Gifts and Unity:

- Participants are urged to be willing channels for God's Bounty.
- The gathering is seen as a means to spread unity and concord globally.
- The assembly is chosen to be messengers of love throughout the world.

4. Gratitude and Privilege:

- Thankfulness is encouraged for the privilege of being messengers of God's love.
- A life devoted to praise for this favor is considered insufficient.

5. Future Vision and Growth:

- Attendees are advised to lift their hearts above the present and envision the future with eyes of faith.
- The present day is seen as sowing seeds that will grow into a glorious tree bearing abundant fruit.

6. Radiant Star and Global Impact:

- Each participant is described as having a radiant star set in their hearts by God.
- The light of this star is expected to brighten the whole world, signifying a global impact.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What distinguishes the Paris gathering from other meetings across Europe?

- A: The Paris gathering is characterized as a truly spiritual assembly with the presence of the Divine Breath, the light of the Kingdom, and the love of Christ among the attendees.

2. Q: What is the participants' role in the spiritual assembly according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: Participants are encouraged to be willing channels for God's Bounty, messengers of love spreading unity and concord globally.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá envision the future impact of the gathering?

- A: The present day is seen as sowing seeds that will grow into a glorious tree bearing abundant fruit, with the light of participants' radiant stars brightening the whole world.

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The Two Kinds of Light

November 5th

Today the weather is gloomy and dull! In the East there is continual sunshine, the stars are never veiled, and there are very few clouds. Light always rises in the East and sends forth its radiance into the West.

There are two kinds of light. There is the visible light of the sun, by whose aid we can discern the beauties of the world around us—without this we could see nothing.

Nevertheless, though it is the function of this light to make things visible to us, it cannot give us the *power* to see them or to understand what their various charms may be, for this light has no intelligence, no consciousness. It is the light of the *intellect* which gives us knowledge and understanding, and without this light the physical eyes would be useless.

This light of the intellect is the highest light that exists, for it is born of the *Light Divine*.

The light of the intellect enables us to understand and realize all that exists, but it is only the Divine Light that can give us sight for the invisible things, and which enables us to see truths that will only be visible to the world thousands of years hence.

It was the Divine Light which enabled the prophets to see two thousand years in advance what was going to take place and today we see the realization of their vision. Thus it is this Light which we must strive to seek, for it is greater than any other.

It was by this Light that Moses was enabled to see and comprehend the Divine Appearance, and to hear the Heavenly Voice which spoke to Him from the Burning Bush.¹

It is of this Light Muḥammad is speaking when He says, “Alláh is the light of the Heavens, and of the Earth.”

Seek with all your hearts this Heavenly Light, so that you may be enabled to understand the realities, that you may know the secret things of God, that the hidden ways may be made plain before your eyes.

This light may be likened unto a mirror, and as a mirror reflects all that is before it, so this Light shows to the eyes of our spirits all that exists in God's Kingdom and causes the realities of things to be made visible. By the help of this effulgent Light all the spiritual interpretation of the Holy Writings has been made plain, the hidden things of God's Universe have become manifest, and we have been enabled to comprehend the Divine purposes for man.

I pray that God in His mercy may illumine your hearts and souls with His glorious Light, then shall each one of you shine as a radiant star in the dark places of the world.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the two kinds of light - the visible light of the sun that enables us to see the physical world and the light of the intellect, born of the Light Divine, that grants understanding and knowledge. He emphasizes the superiority of the Divine Light, enabling prophets to foresee future events. Moses and Muḥammad are cited as examples of individuals who experienced this Heavenly Light. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the earnest search for this light, which acts as a mirror reflecting the realities of God's Kingdom, unveiling spiritual interpretations, and making hidden truths visible.

Key Points:

1. Visible and Intellectual Light:

- The visible light of the sun allows us to see the physical world.
- Intellectual light, born of the Light Divine, provides understanding and knowledge.
- The Divine Light grants the power to see invisible things and comprehend truths beyond the present.

2. Superiority of Divine Light:

- The Divine Light surpasses all other lights.
- Prophets, illuminated by this Light, could foresee future events, realizing their visions thousands of years later.

3. Examples of Divine Light:

- Moses comprehended the Divine Appearance and heard the Heavenly Voice through the Divine Light.
- Muḥammad spoke of Allah as the light of the heavens and earth, referring to the Divine Light.

4. The Light as a Mirror:

- The Divine Light is likened to a mirror reflecting all that is before it.
- It reveals the realities of God's Kingdom, making hidden things visible to spiritual eyes.

5. Role of Divine Light in Spiritual Interpretation:

- The Divine Light assists in understanding the spiritual interpretation of Holy Writings.
- It reveals the hidden purposes of God's Universe and allows comprehension of divine intentions for humanity.

6. Prayer for Divine Illumination:

- A prayer is expressed, seeking God's mercy to illuminate hearts and souls with the glorious Divine Light.
- The desired outcome is that each individual shines as a radiant star in the dark places of the world.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What are the two kinds of light discussed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: The visible light of the sun and the light of the intellect, born of the Light Divine.

2. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize the importance of the Divine Light?

- A: The Divine Light surpasses other lights, enabling prophets to foresee future events, providing understanding of invisible things, and revealing hidden truths.

3. Q: How is the Divine Light likened to a mirror?

- A: Similar to a mirror reflecting all that is before it, the Divine Light reveals the realities of God's Kingdom, making hidden things visible to spiritual eyes.

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Spiritual Aspiration in the West

'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

You are very welcome! From Eastern lands I have come to the West to sojourn awhile among you. In the East it is often said that the people of the West are without spirituality, but I have not found it thus. Thank God, I see and feel that there is much spiritual aspiration among the Western peoples, and that in some cases their spiritual perception is even keener than among their Eastern brothers. If the teaching given in the East had been conscientiously spread in the West the world today would be a more enlightened place.

Although in the past all the great Spiritual Teachers have arisen in the East, there are still many men there who are quite devoid of spirituality. With regard to the things of the spirit they are as lifeless as a stone; nor do they wish to be otherwise, for they consider that man is only a higher form of animal and that the things of God concern him not.

But man's ambition should soar above this—he should ever look higher than himself, ever upward and onward, until through the Mercy of God he may come to the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, there are men whose eyes are only open to physical progress and to the evolution in the world of matter. These men prefer to study the resemblance between their own physical body and that of the ape, rather than to contemplate the glorious affiliation between their spirit and that of God. This is indeed strange, for it is only physically that man resembles the lower creation, with regard to his intellect he is totally unlike it.

Man is always progressing. His circle of knowledge is ever widening, and his mental activity flows through many and varied channels. Look what man has accomplished in the field of science, consider his many discoveries and countless inventions and his profound understanding of natural law.

In the world of art it is just the same, and this wonderful development of man's faculties becomes more and more rapid as time goes on. If the discoveries, inventions and material accomplishments of the last fifteen hundred years could be put together, you would see that there has been greater advancement during the last hundred years than in the previous fourteen centuries. For the rapidity with which man is progressing increases century by century.

The power of the intellect is one of God's greatest gifts to men, it is the power that makes him a higher creature than the animal. For whereas, century by century and age by age man's

intelligence grows and becomes keener, that of the animal remains the same. They are no more intelligent today than they were a thousand years ago! Is there a greater proof than this needed to show man's dissimilarity to the animal creation? It is surely as clear as day.

As for the spiritual perfections they are man's birthright and belong to him alone of all creation. Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy. This spiritual longing and perception belongs to all men alike, and it is my firm conviction that the Western people possess great spiritual aspiration.

It is my fervent prayer that the star of the East will shed its brilliant rays on the Western world, and that the people of the West may arise in strength, earnestness, and courage, to help their brethren in the East.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá acknowledges the spiritual aspiration in the West, refuting the notion that Westerners lack spirituality. He compares Westerners' spiritual perception favorably to their Eastern counterparts. Encouraging a higher ambition beyond the material, he notes the contrast between intellectual progress and stagnant spiritual understanding in certain Eastern minds. Emphasizing human progress, he highlights the accelerating pace of knowledge expansion and technological advancements in recent centuries. Despite intellectual evolution, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts the distinction between man and animals lies in spiritual perfections, declaring man's true happiness in living a spiritual life. He expresses hope for the Western world's spiritual enlightenment to assist the East.

Key Points:

1. Spiritual Aspiration in the West:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá appreciates the spiritual aspiration found in the West.
- Challenges the misconception that Westerners lack spirituality.

2. Comparison with the East:

- Acknowledges keen spiritual perception in the Western peoples compared to some in the East.
- Urges conscientious spread of Eastern teachings to enlighten the world.

3. Higher Ambition Beyond the Material:

- Encourages rising above a purely materialistic perspective.
- Criticizes those focused solely on physical progress and disregard for spiritual matters.

4. Intellectual Progress and Human Advancements:

- Highlights the dynamic nature of human progress in science, art, and intellectual pursuits.
- Contrasts the rapid advancements in the last century with the previous fourteen.

5. Spiritual Longing and Perceptions:

- Asserts spiritual longing is inherent in all humans.
- Declares spiritual perfections as man's birthright and source of true happiness.

6. Hope for Spiritual Enlightenment:

- Expresses fervent prayer for the Western world to receive the brilliance of the East's spiritual influence.
- Calls for the Western people to arise in strength, earnestness, and courage to assist their Eastern brethren.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what misconception does he refute regarding the Westerners?
- A: The misconception that Westerners lack spirituality.

2. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá urge in relation to Eastern teachings in the West?
- A: He urges the conscientious spread of Eastern teachings to enlighten the world.
3. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá criticize regarding certain individuals in the East?
- A: He criticizes those who focus solely on physical progress and disregard spiritual matters.
4. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá characterize the distinction between man and animals?
- A: The distinction lies in spiritual perfections, with man's true happiness found in living a spiritual life.
5. Q: What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's hope for the Western world in terms of spirituality?
- A: He hopes for the Western world to receive the brilliance of the East's spiritual influence, with Westerners arising in strength to assist their Eastern brethren.

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Lecture Given at a Studio in Paris

November 6th

This is in truth a Bahá'í house. Every time such a house or meeting place is founded it becomes one of the greatest aids to the general development of the town and country to which it belongs. It encourages the growth of learning and science and is known for its intense spirituality and for the love it spreads among the peoples.

The foundation of such a meeting-place is always followed by the greatest prosperity. The first Bahá'í Assembly that existed in Tīhrán was singularly blessed! In one year it had grown so rapidly that its members had increased to nine times their original number. Today, in far-away Persia, there are many such assemblies where the friends of God meet together in the fullness of joy, love and unity. They teach the Cause of God, educate the ignorant, and draw heart to heart in brotherly kindness. It is they who help the poor and needy and give to them their daily bread. They love and care for the sick and are messengers of hope and consolation to the desolate and oppressed.

Oh, ye in Paris, strive that your assemblies may be like unto this, and may bear even greater fruits!

Oh, friends of God! If ye will trust in the Word of God and be strong; if ye will follow the precepts of Bahá'u'lláh to tend the sick, raise the fallen, care for the poor and needy, give shelter to the destitute, protect the oppressed, comfort the sorrowful and love the world of humanity with all your hearts, then I say unto you that ere long this meeting-place will see a wonderful harvest. Day by day each member will advance and become more and more spiritual. But ye must have a firm foundation and your aims and ambitions must be clearly understood by each member. They shall be as follows:

1. To show compassion and goodwill to all mankind.
2. To render service to humanity.
3. To endeavor to guide and enlighten those in darkness.

4. To be kind to everyone, and show forth affection to every living soul.
5. To be humble in your attitude towards God, to be constant in prayer to Him, so as to grow daily nearer to God.
6. To be so faithful and sincere in all your actions that every member may be known as embodying the qualities of honesty, love, faith, kindness, generosity, and courage. To be detached from all that is not God, attracted by the Heavenly Breath—a divine soul; so that the world may know that a Bahá'í is a perfect being.

Strive to attain this at these meetings. Then, indeed and in truth will ye, the friends of God, come together with great joy! Render help one to the other, become as one man, having reached perfect unity.

I pray to God that daily ye may advance in spirituality, that God's love may be more and more manifested in you, that the thoughts of your hearts may be purified, and that your faces may be ever turned towards Him. May you one and all approach to the threshold of unity, and enter into the Kingdom. May each of you be like unto a flaming torch, lighted and burning bright with the fire of the Love of God.

Summary:

In a Bahá'í house in Paris, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes its spiritual significance and the transformative impact such meeting places have on towns and countries. Drawing inspiration from the prosperity of the first Bahá'í Assembly in Tīhrán, he encourages the Parisian community to emulate this success. 'Abdu'l-Bahá outlines the principles each member must uphold: compassion, service to humanity, guidance for the ignorant, kindness to all, humility towards God, and embodiment of virtues. He envisions a united assembly where members help each other advance spiritually, fostering perfect unity and manifesting the love of God.

Key Points:

1. Bahá'í House Significance:

- Emphasizes the transformative impact of a Bahá'í house on town and country development.
- Describes it as a center for spirituality, love, and unity.

2. Success of Tīhrán Assembly:

- Cites the rapid growth and prosperity of the first Bahá'í Assembly in Tīhrán.
- Highlights the positive influence of Bahá'í assemblies in Persia.

3. Guidance for the Parisian Community:

- Encourages emulation of successful assemblies.
- Outlines foundational principles each member must uphold.

4. Principles for Bahá'í Assembly Members:

- Compassion and goodwill to all mankind.
- Service to humanity.
- Endeavor to guide and enlighten those in darkness.
- Kindness to everyone, showing affection to every living soul.
- Humility towards God, constant prayer, growing daily nearer to Him.
- Faithfulness, sincerity, embodying qualities of honesty, love, faith, kindness, generosity, and courage.

5. Unity and Advancement in Spirituality:

- Encourages members to strive for perfect unity.
- Asks for mutual help among members.
- Expresses a prayer for the daily advancement of spirituality and manifestation of God's love.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the impact of a Bahá'í house on towns and countries, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: It encourages the growth of learning, science, intense spirituality, and love among the people.

2. Q: What success does 'Abdu'l-Bahá cite to inspire the Parisian community?

- A: The rapid growth and prosperity of the first Bahá'í Assembly in Tíhrán.

3. Q: What foundational principles does 'Abdu'l-Bahá outline for Bahá'í Assembly members in Paris?

- A: Compassion, service to humanity, guidance for the ignorant, kindness to all, humility towards God, and embodiment of virtues.

4. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá envision for the Parisian community in terms of unity?

- A: A united assembly where members help each other advance spiritually, fostering perfect unity and manifesting the love of God.

5. Q: What prayer does 'Abdu'l-Bahá express for the Parisian community?

- A: A prayer for their daily advancement in spirituality, manifestation of God's love, purification of thoughts, and approaching the threshold of unity.

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Bahá'u'lláh

November 7th

'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

I will speak to you today of Bahá'u'lláh. In the third year after the Báb had declared His Mission, Bahá'u'lláh, being accused by fanatical Mullás of believing in the new doctrine, was arrested and thrown into prison. The next day, however, several ministers of the Government and other influential men caused Him to be set free. Later on He was again arrested, and the priests condemned Him to death! The Governor hesitated to have this sentence carried out for fear of a revolution. The priests met together in the Mosque, before which was the place of execution. All the people of the town gathered in crowds outside the Mosque. The carpenters brought their saws and hammers, the butchers came with their knives, the bricklayers and builders shouldered their spades, all these men, incited by the frenzied Mullás, were eager to share in the honor of killing Him. Inside the Mosque were assembled the doctors of religion. Bahá'u'lláh stood before them, and answered all their questions with great wisdom. The chief sage in particular, was completely silenced by Bahá'u'lláh, who refuted all his arguments.

A discussion arose between two of these priests as to the meaning of some words in the writings of the Báb; accusing Him of inaccuracy, they challenged Bahá'u'lláh to defend Him if He were able. These priests were entirely humiliated, for Bahá'u'lláh proved before the whole assembly that the Báb was absolutely right, and that the accusation was made in ignorance.

The defeated ones now put Him to the torture of the bastinado, and more infuriated than before brought Him out before the walls of the Mosque unto the place of execution, where the misguided people were awaiting His coming.

Still the Governor feared to comply with the demand of the priests for His execution. Realizing the danger in which the dignified prisoner was placed, some men were sent to rescue Him. In this they succeeded by breaking through the wall of the Mosque and leading Bahá'u'lláh through the opening into a place of safety, but not of freedom; for the Governor shifted the responsibility from off his own shoulders by sending Him to Tíhrán. Here He was imprisoned in

an underground dungeon, where the light of day was never seen. A heavy chain was placed about His neck by which He was chained to five other Bábís; these fetters were locked together by strong, very heavy bolts, and screws. His clothes were torn to pieces, also His fez. In this terrible condition He was kept for four months.

During this time none of His friends were able to get access to Him.

A prison official made an attempt to poison Him but, beyond causing Him great suffering, this poison had no effect.

After a time the Government liberated Him and exiled Him and His family to Baghdád, where He remained for eleven years. During this time He underwent severe persecutions, being surrounded by the watchful hatred of His enemies.

He bore all evils and torments with the greatest courage and fortitude. Often when He arose in the morning, He knew not whether He would live until the sun should set. Meanwhile, each day, the priests came and questioned Him on religion and metaphysics.

At length the Turkish Governor exiled Him to Constantinople, whence He was sent to Adrianople; here He stayed for five years. Eventually, He was sent to the far off prison fortress of St. Jean d'Acre. Here He was imprisoned in the military portion of the fortress and kept under the strictest surveillance. Words would fail me to tell you of the many trials He had to suffer, and all the misery He endured in that prison. Notwithstanding, it was from this prison that Bahá'u'lláh wrote to all the Monarchs of Europe, and these letters with one exception were sent through the post.

The Epistle of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh was confided to a Persian Bahá'í, Mírzá Badí' Khurásání, who undertook to deliver it into the Sháh's own hands. This brave man waited in the neighborhood of Tíhrán for the passing of the Sháh, who had the intention to journey by that way to his Summer Palace. The courageous messenger followed the Sháh to his Palace, and waited on the road near the entrance for several days. Always in the same place was he seen waiting on the road, until the people began to wonder why he should be there. At last the Sháh heard of him, and commanded his servants that the man should be brought before him.

“Oh! servants of the Sháh, I bring a letter, which I must deliver into his own hands,” Badí' said, and then Badí' said to the Sháh, “I bring you a letter from Bahá'u'lláh!”

He was immediately seized and questioned by those who wished to elicit information which would help them in the further persecutions of Bahá'u'lláh. Badí' would not answer a word; then they tortured him, still he held his peace! After three days they killed him, having failed to force him to speak! These cruel men photographed him whilst he was under torture.¹

The Sháh gave the letter from Bahá'u'lláh to the priests that they might explain it to him. After some days these priests told the Sháh that the letter was from a political enemy. The Sháh grew angry and said, “This is no explanation. I pay you to read and answer my letters, therefore obey!”

The spirit and meaning of the Tablet to Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh was, in short, this: “Now that the time has come, when the Cause of the Glory of God has appeared, I ask that I may be allowed to come to Tíhrán and answer any questions the priests may put to Me.

“I exhort you to detach yourself from the worldly magnificence of your Empire. Remember all those great kings who have lived before you—their glories have passed away!”

The letter was written in a most beautiful manner, and continued warning the King and telling him of the future triumph of the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh, both in the Eastern and in the Western World.

The Sháh paid no attention to the warning of this letter and continued to live in the same fashion until the end.

Although Bahá'u'lláh was in prison the great Power of the Holy Spirit was with Him!

None other in prison could have been like unto Him. In spite of all the hardships He suffered, He never complained.

In the dignity of His Majesty, He always refused to see the Governor, or the influential people of the town.

Although the surveillance was unremittingly strict He came and went as He wished! He died in a house situated about three kilometers from St. Jean d'Acre.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá narrates the sufferings and persecutions endured by Bahá'u'lláh. Initially accused by fanatical Mullás, Bahá'u'lláh faced imprisonment, death sentences, and torture. He refuted religious leaders' arguments, withstood bastinado, and was brought to the brink of execution, only to be rescued. Subsequently exiled to Tīhrán, imprisoned in abhorrent conditions, and subjected to daily questioning, Bahá'u'lláh faced further persecution in Baghdád, Adrianople, and the fortress of St. Jean d'Acre. Despite hardships, He wrote letters to the monarchs of Europe, risking His life. One letter, delivered by a brave messenger, was taken to Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh, leading to the messenger's torture and death. The spirit of the letter urged the Sháh to detach from worldly magnificence, heed warnings of past kings' fates, and recognize the advent of Bahá'u'lláh's Cause. Bahá'u'lláh, although in prison, bore His sufferings with dignity, never complaining, and passed away in a house near St. Jean d'Acre.

Key Points:

1. Bahá'u'lláh's Initial Accusation:

- Accused by fanatical Mullás of believing in a new doctrine.
- First imprisoned, then rescued by influential men in the government.

2. Persecution, Imprisonment, and Torture:

- Facing death sentences and torture after re-arrest.
- Silence of Bahá'u'lláh in the face of the priests' challenges.
- Humiliation of priests in a discussion regarding the Báb's writings.
- Bastinado torture and threat of execution by misled people.

3. Exile and Imprisonment in Tīhrán:

- Government sends Bahá'u'lláh to Tīhrán, where He is imprisoned in an underground dungeon.
- Harsh conditions, chains, and four months without access to friends.

4. Further Exile and Persecution:**

- Exiled to Baghdád for eleven years, facing severe persecutions.
- Sent to Constantinople, then Adrianople, enduring five years of hardship.
- Imprisoned in St. Jean d'Acre, suffering trials and misery.

5. Letters to Monarchs and Tragic Messenger's Fate:

- Bahá'u'lláh writes letters to European monarchs despite prison conditions.
- A courageous messenger, Mírzá Badí', delivers a letter to Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh.
- Badí' tortured, refuses to speak, and is killed by those seeking information.

6. Letter to Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh and Its Spirit:

- The letter urges the Sháh to detach from worldly magnificence.
- Warns about the fate of past kings and foretells the triumph of Bahá'u'lláh's Kingdom.
- Sháh disregards the warning and maintains his lifestyle.

7. Bahá'u'lláh's Dignity and Passing:

- Despite hardships, Bahá'u'lláh never complains.
- Refuses to see the Governor or influential people of the town.
- Maintains His dignity and comes and goes as He wishes.
- Passes away in a house near St. Jean d'Acre.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What was Bahá'u'lláh accused of by fanatical Mullás?
- A: He was accused of believing in a new doctrine.
2. Q: How did Bahá'u'lláh respond when challenged by priests regarding the Báb's writings?
- A: Bahá'u'lláh refuted all their arguments and silenced the chief sage.
3. Q: What was the spirit and content of the letter Bahá'u'lláh wrote to Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh?***
- A: It urged the Sháh to detach from worldly magnificence, warned about past kings' fates, and foretold the triumph of Bahá'u'lláh's Kingdom.
4. Q: What happened to the messenger, Mírzá Badí', who delivered the letter to Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh?
- A: Badí' was tortured, refused to speak, and was eventually killed.
5. Q: How did Bahá'u'lláh face his imprisonment and hardships?
- A: He bore his sufferings with dignity, never complained, and maintained His spiritual strength.

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Good Ideas Must Be Carried into Action

November 8th

All over the world one hears beautiful sayings extolled and noble precepts admired. All men say they love what is good, and hate everything that is evil! Sincerity is to be admired, whilst lying is despicable. Faith is a virtue, and treachery is a disgrace to humanity. It is a blessed thing to gladden the hearts of men, and wrong to be the cause of pain. To be kind and merciful is right, while to hate is sinful. Justice is a noble quality and injustice an iniquity. That it is one's duty to be pitiful and harm no one, and to avoid jealousy and malice at all costs. Wisdom is the glory of man, not ignorance; light, not darkness! It is a good thing to turn one's face toward God, and foolishness to ignore Him. That it is our duty to guide man upward, and not to mislead him and be the cause of his downfall. There are many more examples like unto these.

But all these sayings are but words and we see very few of them carried into the world of action. On the contrary, we perceive that men are carried away by passion and selfishness, each man thinking only of what will benefit himself even if it means the ruin of his brother. They are all anxious to make their fortune and care little or nothing for the welfare of others. They are

concerned about their *own* peace and comfort, while the condition of their fellows troubles them not at all.

Unhappily this is the road most men tread.

But Bahá'ís must not be thus; they must rise above this condition. Actions must be more to them than words. By their actions they must be merciful and not merely by their words. They must on all occasions confirm by their actions what they proclaim in words. Their deeds must prove their fidelity, and their actions must show forth Divine light.

Let your actions cry aloud to the world that you are indeed Bahá'ís, for it is *actions* that speak to the world and are the cause of the progress of humanity.

If we are true Bahá'ís speech is not needed. Our actions will help on the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause the arts to develop. Without action nothing in the material world can be accomplished, neither can words unaided advance a man in the spiritual Kingdom. It is not through lip-service only that the elect of God have attained to holiness, but by patient lives of active service they have brought light into the world.

Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble. Enrich the poor, raise the fallen, comfort the sorrowful, bring healing to the sick, reassure the fearful, rescue the oppressed, bring hope to the hopeless, shelter the destitute!

This is the work of a true Bahá'í, and this is what is expected of him. If we strive to do all this, then are we true Bahá'ís, but if we neglect it, we are not followers of the Light, and we have no right to the name.

God, who sees all hearts, knows how far our lives are the fulfillment of our words.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the importance of translating noble sayings into action. While people generally express love for what is good and hatred for evil, Bahá'ís are urged to move beyond words. Actions should reflect virtues such as sincerity, faith, kindness, and justice. 'Abdu'l-Bahá criticizes the prevalent selfishness and calls for Bahá'ís to rise above this condition. Actions, not just words, should demonstrate mercy and Divine light. True Bahá'ís are those whose deeds confirm their words, promoting civilization, scientific progress, and the arts. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages actions that enrich, uplift, comfort, heal, and bring hope to humanity, stressing that this is the work expected of true Bahá'ís.

Key Points:

1. Gap Between Words and Actions:

- Beautiful sayings and noble precepts are admired worldwide.
- Sincerity, faith, kindness, and justice are virtues while lying, treachery, hatred, and injustice are despised.
- People express love for good and hatred for evil, but there's a gap between words and actions.

2. Call for Action:

- Bahá'ís are urged to move beyond words and translate virtues into action.
- Rise above selfishness prevalent in the world.
- Emphasizes that Bahá'ís should not merely proclaim virtues but demonstrate them through actions.

3. Actions as Manifestations of Faith:

- Actions must speak louder than words.
- Bahá'ís must confirm by actions what they proclaim in words.
- Actions are the cause of humanity's progress.

4. Spiritual and Material Progress:

- Spiritual progress requires more than lip-service.
- Material progress, science, and the arts advance through actions.
- True Bahá'ís contribute actively to both spiritual and material realms.

5. Expectations of a True Bahá'í:

- Strive for actions that are beautiful prayers.
- Turn towards God and seek to do what is right and noble.
- The work of a true Bahá'í includes enriching the poor, uplifting the fallen, comforting the sorrowful, and bringing hope to the hopeless.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is expected of Bahá’ís in addition to expressing noble virtues in words?

- A: Bahá’ís are expected to translate virtues into actions, demonstrating them in daily life.

2. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá criticize prevalent selfishness, and what is the call to Bahá’ís in this regard?

- A: He criticizes it as the road most people tread, urging Bahá’ís to rise above this condition.

3. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, how should true Bahá’ís contribute to spiritual and material progress?

- A: True Bahá’ís should actively contribute to spiritual progress through their faith and to material progress, science, and the arts through their actions.

4. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasize about the relationship between words and actions in the context of being a Bahá’í?

- A: He emphasizes that actions should confirm what is proclaimed in words, and it is through actions that Bahá’ís contribute to the progress of humanity.

5. Q: What is the work expected of a true Bahá’í, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?***

- A: The work of a true Bahá’í involves enriching the poor, uplifting the fallen, comforting the sorrowful, bringing hope to the hopeless, and contributing to the welfare of humanity through active service.

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The True Meaning of Baptism by Water and Fire

November 9th

In the Gospel according to St. John, Christ has said: “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”¹ The priests have interpreted this into meaning that baptism is necessary for salvation. In another Gospel it is said: “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”²

Thus the water of baptism and the fire are one! It cannot mean that the “water” spoken of is *physical* water, for it is the direct opposite of “fire,” and one destroys the other. When in the Gospels, Christ speaks of “water,” He means *that which causes life*, for without water no worldly creature can live—mineral, vegetable, animal and man, one and all, depend upon water for their very being. Yes, the latest scientific discoveries prove to us that even mineral has some form of life, and that it also needs water for its existence.

Water is the cause of life, and when Christ speaks of water, He is symbolizing that which is the cause of *Everlasting Life*.

This life-giving water of which He speaks is like unto fire, for it is none other than the Love of God, and this love means life to our souls.

By the fire of the Love of God the veil is burnt which separates us from the Heavenly Realities, and with clear vision we are enabled to struggle onward and upward, ever progressing in the paths of virtue and holiness, and becoming the means of light to the world.

There is nothing greater or more blessed than the Love of God! It gives healing to the sick, balm to the wounded, joy and consolation to the whole world, and through it alone can man attain Life Everlasting. The *essence* of all religions is the Love of God, and it is the foundation of all the sacred teachings.

It was the Love of God that led Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that strengthened Joseph in Egypt and gave to Moses courage and patience.

Through the Love of God, Christ was sent into the world with His inspiring example of a perfect life of self-sacrifice and devotion, bringing to men the message of Eternal Life. It was the Love of God that gave Muḥammad power to bring the Arabs from a state of animal degradation to a loftier state of existence.

God's Love it was that sustained the Báb and brought Him to His supreme sacrifice, and made His bosom the willing target for a thousand bullets.

Finally, it was the Love of God that gave to the East Bahá'u'lláh, and is now sending the light of His teaching far into the West, and from Pole to Pole.

Thus I exhort each of you, realizing its power and beauty, to sacrifice all your thoughts, words and actions to bring the knowledge of the Love of God into every heart.

Summary:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá interprets the biblical concept of being born of water and spirit, stating that it symbolizes the life-giving water of Everlasting Life, representing the Love of God. This Love, akin to fire, burns the veil separating humanity from spiritual realities. Love of God is described as the essence of all religions, providing healing, joy, and the means to attain Life Everlasting. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cites historical figures like Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Muḥammad, attributing their strength and achievements to the Love of God. He calls on individuals to dedicate their thoughts, words, and actions to spreading the knowledge of God's Love.

Key Points:

1. Interpretation of Baptism:

- Christ's words about being born of water and spirit are symbolic.
- Water symbolizes the cause of Everlasting Life.
- Fire, associated with water, represents the Love of God.
- Love of God burns the veil separating humanity from spiritual realities.

2. The Essence of Life-Giving Water:

- Water, as a cause of life, is essential for all living beings.
- Even minerals, the most basic forms of life, need water.
- Life-giving water symbolizes the Love of God, giving life to the soul.

3. Love of God as the Foundation:

- The Love of God is the foundation of all sacred teachings.
- Historical figures were sustained by the Love of God.
- It was the motivating force behind Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Muḥammad.

4. The Power and Beauty of God's Love:

- The Love of God led to Christ's example of self-sacrifice.
- It gave Muḥammad the power to uplift the Arabs.
- It sustained the Báb through sacrifice and Bahá’u’lláh in bringing His teachings to the world.

5. Exhortation to Spread God's Love:

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encourages individuals to sacrifice thoughts, words, and actions.
- The goal is to bring the knowledge of the Love of God into every heart.
- Spreading God's Love is presented as a powerful and beautiful mission.

Questions with Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what does the water symbolize in Christ's statement about being born of water and spirit?

- A: The water symbolizes the cause of Everlasting Life, representing the Love of God.

2. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá characterize the Love of God and its impact on humanity?

- A: The Love of God is described as the essence of all religions, providing healing, joy, and the means to attain Life Everlasting.

3. Q: What historical figures are mentioned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as being sustained by the Love of God, and what impact did it have on them?

- A: Figures like Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Muḥammad are mentioned; their strength and achievements are attributed to the Love of God.

4. Q: What is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s exhortation regarding the Love of God and its role in individuals’ lives?

- A: He encourages individuals to dedicate their thoughts, words, and actions to spreading the knowledge of the Love of God into every heart.

5. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describe the Love of God’s impact on the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and its global reach?

- A: The Love of God is described as giving Bahá’u’lláh the mission to bring His teachings to the West and from Pole to Pole.

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Discourse at “l’Alliance Spiritualiste”

Salle de l’Athénée, St. Germain, Paris,

November 9th

I wish to express my gratitude for your hospitality, and my joy that you are spiritually minded. I am happy to be present at a gathering such as this, assembled together to listen to a Divine Message. If you could see with the eye of truth, great waves of spirituality would be visible to you in this place. The power of the Holy Spirit is here for all. Praise be to God that your hearts are inspired with Divine fervor! Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God.

Every heart should radiate unity, so that the Light of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous. We must not consider the separate waves alone, but the entire sea. We should rise from the individual to the whole. The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men.

We are told in the Holy Scripture that the New Jerusalem shall appear on earth. Now it is evident that this celestial city is not built of material stones and mortar, but that it is a city not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.

This is a prophetic symbol, meaning the coming again of the Divine Teaching to enlighten the hearts of men. It is long since this Holy Guidance has governed the lives of humanity. But now, at last, the Holy City of the New Jerusalem has come again to the world, it has appeared anew under an Eastern sky; from the horizon of Persia has its effulgence arisen to be a light to lighten the whole world. We see in these days the fulfillment of the Divine Prophecy. Jerusalem had disappeared. The heavenly city was destroyed, now it is rebuilt; it was razed to the ground, but

now its walls and pinnacles have been restored, and are towering aloft in their renewed and glorious beauty.

In the Western world material prosperity has triumphed, whilst in the East the spiritual sun has shone forth. I am very glad to see such an assembly as this in Paris, where spiritual and material progress are met together in unity.

Man—the true man—is soul, not body; though physically man belongs to the animal kingdom, yet his soul lifts him above the rest of creation. Behold how the light of the sun illuminates the world of matter: even so doth the Divine Light shed its rays in the kingdom of the soul. The soul it is which makes the human creature a celestial entity!

By the power of the Holy Spirit, working through his soul, man is able to perceive the Divine reality of things. All great works of art and science are witnesses to this power of the Spirit.

The same Spirit gives Eternal Life.

Those alone who are baptized by the Divine Spirit will be enabled to bring all peoples into the bond of unity. It is by the power of the Spirit that the Eastern World of spiritual thought can intermingle with the Western realm of action, so that the world of matter may become Divine.

It follows that all who work for the Supreme Design are soldiers in the army of the Spirit.

The light of the celestial world makes war against the world of shadow and illusion. The rays of the Sun of Truth dispel the darkness of superstition and misunderstanding.

You are of the Spirit! To you who seek the truth, the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh will come as a great joy! This teaching is of the Spirit, in it is no precept which is not of the Divine Spirit.

Spirit cannot be perceived by the material senses of the physical body, excepting as it is expressed in outward signs and works. The human body is visible, the soul is invisible. It is the soul nevertheless that directs a man's faculties, that governs his humanity.

The soul has two main faculties. (a) As outer circumstances are communicated to the soul by the eyes, ears, and brain of a man, so does the soul communicate its desires and purposes through the brain to the hands and tongue of the physical body, thereby expressing itself. The spirit in the soul is the very essence of life. (b) The second faculty of the soul expresses itself in the world of vision, where the soul inhabited by the spirit has its being, and functions without the help of the material bodily senses. There, in the realm of vision, the soul sees without the help of the physical eye, hears without the aid of the physical ear, and travels without dependence upon physical motion. It is, therefore, clear that the spirit in the soul of man can function through the physical body by using the organs of the ordinary senses, and that it is able also to live and act without their aid in the world of vision. This proves without a doubt the superiority of the soul of man over his body, the superiority of spirit over matter.

For example, look at this lamp: is not the light within it superior to the lamp which holds it? However beautiful the form of the lamp may be, if the light is not there its purpose is unfulfilled, it is without life—a dead thing. The lamp needs the light, but the light does not need the lamp.

The spirit does not need a body, but the body needs spirit, or it cannot live. The soul can live without a body, but the body without a soul dies.

If a man lose his sight, his hearing, his hand or his foot, should his soul still inhabit the body he lives, and is able to manifest divine virtues. On the other hand, without the spirit it would be impossible for a perfect body to exist.

The greatest power of the Holy Spirit exists in the Divine Manifestations of the Truth. Through the power of the Spirit the Heavenly Teaching has been brought into the World of Humanity. Through the power of the Spirit life everlasting has come to the children of men.

Through the power of the Spirit the Divine Glory has shone from East to West, and through the power of the same Spirit will the divine virtues of humanity become manifest.

Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world; we must strive to become more spiritual, more luminous, to follow the counsel of the Divine Teaching, to serve the cause of unity and true equality, to be merciful, to reflect the love of the Highest on all men, so that the light of the Spirit shall be apparent in all our deeds, to the end that all humanity shall be united, the stormy sea thereof calmed, and all rough waves disappear from off the surface of life's ocean henceforth unruffled and peaceful. Then will the New Jerusalem be seen by mankind, who will enter through its gates and receive the Divine Bounty.

I thank God that I have been present amongst you this afternoon, and I thank you for your spiritual feeling.

I pray that you may grow in Divine fervor, and that the power of unity in the Spirit will augment, so that the prophecies may be fulfilled, and that in this great century of the Light of God all the glad tidings written in the Sacred Books may come to pass. This is the glorious time of which the Lord Jesus Christ spoke when He told us to pray "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." I hope that this is also your expectation and great desire.

We are united in the one aim and hope that all shall be as one and every heart illumined by the Love of our Divine Father, God!

May all our actions be spiritual, and all our interests and affections be centered in the Kingdom of Glory!

Summary:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses gratitude for the spiritual gathering, emphasizing the unity of all souls in the Divine Source. He discusses the symbolic meaning of the New Jerusalem, highlighting the renewal of Divine Teaching under an Eastern sky. The discourse underscores the superiority of the soul over the body, the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of spiritual virtues. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encourages detachment from worldly things, spiritual growth, and the manifestation of divine virtues for the unity and peace of humanity.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- Expression of gratitude for spiritual-minded gathering.
- Noting the waves of spirituality present and the unity of souls in God.

2. Symbolism of the New Jerusalem:

- Discussion of the New Jerusalem as a prophetic symbol.
- Its appearance under an Eastern sky as the renewal of Divine Teaching.

3. Spirit and Matter:

- Man's true essence is soul, elevating him above the animal kingdom.
- The body is visible, the soul invisible, directing human faculties.
- The soul has two main faculties: physical expression and the world of vision.
- Superiority of the soul over the body and spirit over matter.

4. Power of the Holy Spirit:

- The Holy Spirit enables perception of Divine reality and gives Eternal Life.
- Baptism by the Divine Spirit is essential for unity among peoples.

5. Detachment and Spiritual Growth:

- Emphasis on detachment from worldly things.
- Striving for spirituality, luminosity, and reflection of Divine love.
- Serving the cause of unity, true equality, and mercy.
- Hope for humanity's unity and the fulfillment of prophecies in the Light of God.

6. Conclusion and Prayer:

- Expressing gratitude for the spiritual gathering.
- Prayer for the growth of Divine fervor and unity in the Spirit.
- A shared aim of witnessing the fulfillment of prophecies and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the New Jerusalem, and what does its appearance signify?

- A: The New Jerusalem is a prophetic symbol, signifying the renewal of Divine Teaching. Its appearance under an Eastern sky represents the resurgence of spiritual guidance.

2. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describe the relationship between the soul and the body?

- A: The soul is described as superior to the body, and the body needs the spirit for life. The soul can live without the body, but the body cannot live without the soul.

3. Q: What role does the Holy Spirit play, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

- A: The Holy Spirit enables the perception of Divine reality, gives Eternal Life, and is essential for unity among peoples through baptism.

4. Q: What virtues does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasize for individuals striving for spiritual growth?

- A: Emphasis is placed on detachment, spiritual growth, and the manifestation of virtues such as unity, true equality, and mercy.

5. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá characterize the ideal actions of individuals for the betterment of humanity?

- A: He encourages actions centered in the Kingdom of Glory, expressing the love of God, and contributing to the calm and peaceful unity of humanity.

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The Evolution of the Spirit

15 Rue Greuze, Paris,

November 10th

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

Tonight I will speak of the evolution or progress of the spirit.

Absolute repose does not exist in nature. All things either make progress or lose ground. Everything moves forward or backward, nothing is without motion. From his birth, a man progresses physically until he reaches maturity, then, having arrived at the prime of his life, he begins to decline, the strength and powers of his body decrease, and he gradually arrives at the hour of death. Likewise a plant progresses from the seed to maturity, then its life begins to lessen until it fades and dies. A bird soars to a certain height and having reached the highest possible point in its flight, begins its descent to earth.

Thus it is evident that movement is essential to all existence. All material things progress to a certain point, then begin to decline. This is the law which governs the whole physical creation.

Now let us consider the soul. We have seen that movement is essential to existence; nothing that has life is without motion. All creation, whether of the mineral, vegetable or animal kingdom, is compelled to obey the law of motion; it must either ascend or descend. But with the human soul, there is no decline. Its only movement is towards perfection; growth and progress alone constitute the motion of the soul.

Divine perfection is infinite, therefore the progress of the soul is also infinite. From the very birth of a human being the soul progresses, the intellect grows and knowledge increases. When

the body dies the soul lives on. All the differing degrees of created physical beings are limited, but the soul is limitless!

In all religions the belief exists that the soul survives the death of the body. Intercessions are sent up for the beloved dead, prayers are said for their progress and for the forgiveness of their sins. If the soul perished with the body all this would have no meaning. Further, if it were not possible for the soul to advance towards perfection after it had been released from the body, of what avail are all these loving prayers, of devotion?

We read in the sacred writings that “all good works are found again.”¹ Now, if the soul did not survive, this also would mean nothing!

The very fact that our spiritual instinct, surely never given in vain, prompts us to pray for the welfare of those, our loved ones, who have passed out of the material world: does it not bear witness to the continuance of their existence?

In the world of spirit there is no retrogression. The world of mortality is a world of contradictions, of opposites; motion being compulsory everything must either go forward or retreat. In the realm of spirit there is no retreat possible, all movement is bound to be towards a perfect state. “Progress” is the expression of spirit in the world of matter. The intelligence of man, his reasoning powers, his knowledge, his scientific achievements, all these being manifestations of the spirit, partake of the inevitable law of spiritual progress and are, therefore, of necessity, immortal.

My hope for you is that you will progress in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of matter; that your intelligence will develop, your knowledge will augment, and your understanding be widened.

You must ever press forward, never standing still; avoid stagnation, the first step to a backward movement, to decay.

The whole physical creation is perishable. These material bodies are composed of atoms; when these atoms begin to separate decomposition sets in, then comes what we call death. This composition of atoms, which constitutes the body or mortal element of any created being, is temporary. When the power of attraction, which holds these atoms together, is withdrawn, the body, as such, ceases to exist.

With the soul it is different. The soul is not a combination of elements, it is not composed of many atoms, it is of one indivisible substance and therefore eternal. It is entirely out of the order of the physical creation; it is immortal!

Scientific philosophy has demonstrated that a *simple* element (“simple” meaning “not composed”) is indestructible, eternal. The soul, not being a composition of elements, is, in character, as a simple element, and therefore cannot cease to exist.

The soul, being of that one indivisible substance, can suffer neither disintegration nor destruction, therefore there is no reason for its coming to an end. All things living show signs of their existence, and it follows that these signs could not of themselves exist if that which they express or to which they testify had no being. A thing which does not exist, can, of course, give no sign of its existence. The manifold signs of the existence of the spirit are forever before us.

The traces of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the influence of His Divine Teaching, are present with us today, and are everlasting.

A nonexistent thing, it is agreed, cannot be seen by signs. In order to write a man must exist—one who does not exist cannot write. Writing is, in itself, a sign of the writer’s soul and intelligence. The Sacred Writings (with ever the same Teaching) prove the continuity of the spirit.

Consider the aim of creation: is it possible that all is created to evolve and develop through countless ages with this small goal in view—a few years of a man's life on earth? Is it not unthinkable that this should be the final aim of existence?

The mineral evolves till it is absorbed in the life of the plant, the plant progresses till finally it loses its life in that of the animal; the animal, in its turn, forming part of the food of man, is absorbed into human life.

Thus, man is shown to be the sum of all creation, the superior of all created beings, the goal to which countless ages of existence have progressed.

At the best, man spends four-score years and ten in this world—a short time indeed!

Does a man cease to exist when he leaves the body? If his life comes to an end, then all the previous evolution is useless, all has been for nothing! Can one imagine that Creation has no greater aim than this?

The soul is eternal, immortal.

Materialists say, "Where is the soul? What is it? We cannot see it, neither can we touch it."

This is how we must answer them: However much the mineral may progress, it cannot comprehend the vegetable world. Now, that lack of comprehension does not prove the nonexistence of the plant!

To however great a degree the plant may have evolved, it is unable to understand the animal world; this ignorance is no proof that the animal does not exist!

The animal, be he never so highly developed, cannot imagine the intelligence of man, neither can he realize the nature of his soul. But, again, this does not prove that man is without intellect, or without soul. It only demonstrates this, that one form of existence is incapable of comprehending a form superior to itself.

This flower may be unconscious of such a being as man, but the fact of its ignorance does not prevent the existence of humanity.

In the same way, if materialists do not believe in the existence of the soul, their unbelief does not prove that there is no such realm as the world of spirit. The very existence of man's intelligence proves his immortality; moreover, darkness proves the presence of light, for without light there would be no shadow. Poverty proves the existence of riches, for, without riches, how could we measure poverty? Ignorance proves that knowledge exists, for without knowledge how could there be ignorance?

Therefore the idea of mortality presupposes the existence of immortality—for if there were no Life Eternal, there would be no way of measuring the life of this world!

If the spirit were not immortal, how could the Manifestations of God endure such terrible trials?

Why did Christ Jesus suffer the fearful death on the cross?

Why did Muḥammad bear persecutions?

Why did the Báb make the supreme sacrifice and why did Bahá'u'lláh pass the years of His life in prison?

Why should all this suffering have been, if not to prove the everlasting life of the spirit?

Christ suffered, He accepted all His trials because of the immortality of His spirit. If a man reflects he will understand the spiritual significance of the law of progress; how all moves from the inferior to the superior degree.

It is only a man without intelligence who, after considering these things, can imagine that the great scheme of creation should suddenly cease to progress, that evolution should come to such an inadequate end!

Materialists who reason in this way, and contend that we are unable to see the world of spirit, or to perceive the blessings of God, are surely like the animals who have no understanding; having eyes they see not, ears they have, but do not hear. And this lack of sight and hearing is a proof of nothing but their own inferiority; of whom we read in the Qur'án, "They are men who are blind and deaf to the Spirit." They do not use that great gift of God, the power of the understanding, by which they might see with the eyes of the spirit, hear with spiritual ears and also comprehend with a Divinely enlightened heart.

The inability of the materialistic mind to grasp the idea of the Life Eternal is no proof of the nonexistence of that life.

The comprehension of that other life depends on our spiritual birth!

My prayer for you is that your spiritual faculties and aspirations may daily increase, and that you will never allow the material senses to veil from your eyes the glories of the Heavenly Illumination.

Summary:

In this discourse, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá discusses the evolution or progress of the spirit, emphasizing the eternal nature of the soul and its continuous journey towards perfection. He contrasts the perishable nature of the physical body with the immortal essence of the soul, refuting materialist arguments against the existence of the spirit. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asserts that the soul's journey is one of eternal progress, and the signs of its existence are ever-present. He urges spiritual growth and the development of intelligence, knowledge, and understanding. The discourse concludes with a prayer for increased spiritual faculties.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- Absolute repose doesn't exist; everything progresses or declines.
- Physical and spiritual aspects of existence involve movement.

2. The Progress of the Soul:

- Movement towards perfection is the sole motion of the soul.
- Divine perfection being infinite, the soul's progress is also infinite.
- Intellectual growth, knowledge increase, and understanding constitute the soul's evolution.

3. Immortality of the Soul:

- The soul is not composed of elements; it is eternal and immortal.
- Signs of the existence of the soul are ever-present in spiritual teachings and influences.

4. Materialists' Argument and Response:

- Materialists question the soul's existence due to its invisibility.
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá argues against materialist skepticism, asserting that the existence of the soul is proven by its signs.

5. The Spiritual Significance of Trials:

- The sufferings of Divine Manifestations demonstrate the immortality of the spirit.
- Reflection on the law of progress reveals the continuity of evolution and the inadequacy of materialist views.

6. Conclusion and Prayer:

- Lack of spiritual comprehension is a result of materialistic thinking.
- Spiritual birth is necessary for the understanding of eternal life.
- Prayer for increased spiritual faculties, aspirations, and the avoidance of material sense veils.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what constitutes the movement of the soul?

- A: The only movement of the soul is towards perfection, involving intellectual growth, increased knowledge, and spiritual progress.

2. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refute materialist arguments against the soul's existence?
- A: He argues that signs of the soul's existence, such as spiritual teachings and influences, are ever-present and should not be dismissed.
3. **Q: What does the suffering of Divine Manifestations, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, demonstrate?***
- A: The suffering of Divine Manifestations demonstrates the immortality of the spirit.
4. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá characterize the comprehension of eternal life?
- A: Comprehension of eternal life depends on spiritual birth, and the inability of the materialistic mind to grasp it is not proof of its nonexistence.
5. Q: What is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prayer for the listeners?
- A: He prays for increased spiritual faculties and aspirations, urging the avoidance of material sense veils to perceive the glories of the Heavenly Illumination.

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The Desires and Prayers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

November 15th

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

You are all very welcome, and I love you all most dearly.

Day and night I pray to Heaven for you that strength may be yours, and that, one and all, you may participate in the blessings of Bahá’u’lláh, and enter into the Kingdom.

I supplicate that you may become as new beings, illumined with the Divine Light, like unto shining lamps, and that from one end of Europe to the other the knowledge of the Love of God may spread.

May this boundless love so fill your hearts and minds that sadness may find no room to enter and may you with joyful hearts soar like birds into the Divine Radiance.

May your hearts become clear and pure like unto polished mirrors in which may be reflected the full glory of the Sun of Truth.

May your eyes be opened to see the signs of the Kingdom of God, and may your ears be unstopped so that you may hear with a perfect understanding the Heavenly Proclamation sounding in your midst.

May your souls receive help and comfort, and, being so strengthened, may they be enabled to live in accordance with the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

I pray for each and all that you may be as flames of love in the world, and that the brightness of your light and the warmth of your affection may reach the heart of every sad and sorrowing child of God.

May you be as shining stars, bright and luminous forever in the Kingdom.

I counsel you that you study earnestly the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, so that, God helping you, you may in deed and truth become Bahá’ís.

Summary:

In this talk, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses deep love and welcomes the audience. He shares his constant prayers for their strength and participation in Bahá’í blessings. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá supplicates for the transformation of individuals into new beings illuminated with divine light, spreading the knowledge of God's love across Europe. His desires include hearts filled with boundless love, minds free from sadness, and joyful souls soaring into divine radiance. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá prays for clear and pure hearts, open eyes to see divine signs, and unstopped ears to hear the heavenly proclamation. His ultimate wish is for souls to receive help and live in accordance with Bahá’u’lláh's teachings, becoming flames of love, shining stars, and dedicated Bahá’ís.

Key Points:

1. Warm Welcome and Love:

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá warmly welcomes the audience, expressing deep love for them.

2. Constant Prayers for Strength:

- He shares that day and night, he prays for Heaven's strength to be bestowed upon the audience.

3. Desires for Transformation:

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá supplicates for the transformation of individuals into new beings illuminated with divine light.

4. Spreading Divine Knowledge:

- His prayer extends to spreading the knowledge of God's love from one end of Europe to the other.

5. Joyful Hearts and Divine Radiance:

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wishes for hearts filled with boundless love, joyful souls soaring into divine radiance, and minds free from sadness.

6. Clear and Pure Hearts:

- Prayers include clear and pure hearts resembling polished mirrors reflecting the full glory of the Sun of Truth.

7. Open Eyes and Unstopped Ears:

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá prays for open eyes to see the signs of the Kingdom of God and unstopped ears to hear the heavenly proclamation.

8. Living in Accordance with Teachings:

- His ultimate desire is for strengthened souls to live in accordance with the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

9. Becoming Flames of Love and Shining Stars:

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wishes that the audience becomes flames of love in the world and shining stars forever in the Kingdom.

10. Counsel to Study Bahá’í Teachings:

- He counsels the audience to earnestly study the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, encouraging them to become Bahá’ís in deed and truth.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pray for day and night?

- A: He prays day and night for Heaven's strength to be bestowed upon the audience.

2. Q: What transformation does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá supplicate for?

- A: He supplicates for individuals to become new beings illuminated with divine light.

3. Q: What is the extent of the knowledge ‘Abdu’l-Bahá prays to spread?

- A: He prays for the knowledge of God's love to spread from one end of Europe to the other.

4. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wish for the hearts and minds of the audience?

- A: He wishes for hearts filled with boundless love, minds free from sadness, and joyful souls soaring into divine radiance.

5. Q: What counsel does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá give to the audience?

- A: He counsels them to study earnestly the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, aiming to become Bahá’ís in deed and truth.

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Concerning Body, Soul and Spirit

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

Friday morning, November 17th

There are in the world of humanity three degrees; those of the body, the soul, and spirit.

The body is the physical or animal degree of man. From the bodily point of view man is a sharer of the animal kingdom. The bodies alike of men and animals are composed of elements held together by the law of attraction.

Like the animal, man possesses the faculties of the senses, is subject to heat, cold, hunger, thirst, etc.; unlike the animal, man has a rational soul, the human intelligence.

This intelligence of man is the intermediary between his body and his spirit.

When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all Creation; because man, being the culmination of all that went before and thus superior to all previous evolutions, contains all the lower world within himself. Illumined by the spirit through the instrumentality of the soul, man’s radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-point of Creation.

But on the other hand, when man does not open his mind and heart to the blessing of the spirit, but turns his soul towards the material side, towards the bodily part of his nature, then is he fallen from his high place and he becomes inferior to the inhabitants of the lower animal kingdom. In this case the man is in a sorry plight! For if the spiritual qualities of the soul, open to the breath of the Divine Spirit, are never used, they become atrophied, enfeebled, and at last incapable; whilst the soul's material qualities alone being exercised, they become terribly powerful—and the unhappy, misguided man, becomes more savage, more unjust, more vile, more cruel, more malevolent than the lower animals themselves. All his aspirations and desires being strengthened by the lower side of the soul's nature, he becomes more and more brutal, until his whole being is in no way superior to that of the beasts that perish. Men such as this plan to work evil, to hurt and to destroy; they are entirely without the spirit of Divine compassion, for the celestial quality of the soul has been dominated by that of the material. If, on the contrary, the spiritual nature of the soul has been so strengthened that it holds the material side in subjection, then does the man approach the Divine; his humanity becomes so glorified that the virtues of the Celestial Assembly are manifested in him; he radiates the Mercy of God, he stimulates the spiritual progress of mankind, for he becomes a lamp to show light on their path.

You perceive how the soul is the intermediary between the body and the spirit. In like manner is this tree¹ the intermediary between the seed and the fruit. When the fruit of the tree appears and becomes ripe, then we know that the tree is perfect; if the tree bore no fruit it would be merely a useless growth, serving no purpose!

When a soul has in it the life of the spirit, then does it bring forth good fruit and become a Divine tree. I wish you to try to understand this example. I hope that the unspeakable goodness of God will so strengthen you that the celestial quality of your soul, which relates it to the spirit, will forever dominate the material side, so entirely ruling the senses that your soul will approach the perfections of the Heavenly Kingdom. May your faces, being steadfastly set towards the Divine Light, become so luminous that all your thoughts, words and actions will shine with the Spiritual Radiance dominating your souls, so that in the gatherings of the world you will show perfection in your life.

Some men's lives are solely occupied with the things of this world; their minds are so circumscribed by exterior manners and traditional interests that they are blind to any other realm of existence, to the spiritual significance of all things! They think and dream of earthly fame, of material progress. Sensuous delights and comfortable surroundings bound their horizon, their highest ambitions center in successes of worldly conditions and circumstances! They curb not their lower propensities; they eat, drink, and sleep! Like the animal, they have no thought beyond their own physical well-being. It is true that these necessities must be dispatched. Life is a load which must be carried on while we are on earth, but the cares of the lower things of life should not be allowed to monopolize all the thoughts and aspirations of a human being. The heart's ambitions should ascend to a more glorious goal, mental activity should rise to higher levels! Men should hold in their souls the vision of celestial perfection, and there prepare a dwelling-place for the inexhaustible bounty of the Divine Spirit.

Let your ambition be the achievement on earth of a Heavenly civilization! I ask for you the supreme blessing, that you may be so filled with the vitality of the Heavenly Spirit that you may be the cause of life to the world.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the three degrees in the world of humanity: the body, soul, and spirit. The body is the physical aspect shared with the animal kingdom, while the soul acts as an intermediary between the body and spirit. When the spirit enlightens the soul, man becomes the culmination of creation. However, if the soul turns toward the material side, neglecting the spirit, man falls below the animal kingdom, becoming savage and cruel. The soul's qualities determine whether a person radiates Divine compassion or becomes malevolent. The soul, like a tree bearing fruit, should manifest the virtues of the Celestial Assembly. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages individuals to strengthen the celestial quality of their souls, allowing the spirit to dominate and reaching for a heavenly civilization.

Key Points:

1. Degrees of Humanity:
 - Body, soul, and spirit are three degrees in the world of humanity.
2. Body as Animal Degree:
 - The body represents the physical or animal degree of man, sharing characteristics with the animal kingdom.
3. Soul as Intermediary:
 - The soul acts as an intermediary between the body and spirit.
4. Spiritual Enlightenment:
 - When the spirit enlightens the soul, man becomes the culmination of creation.
5. Consequences of Neglecting the Spirit:
 - Neglecting the spirit and turning solely toward the material side results in a fall below the animal kingdom.
6. Atrophied Spiritual Qualities:
 - Unused spiritual qualities become atrophied, and material qualities dominate, leading to brutality and malevolence.
7. Soul as Divine Tree:
 - A soul with the life of the spirit becomes a Divine tree, bringing forth good fruit.
8. Dominance of Celestial Quality:
 - 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the dominance of the celestial quality of the soul over the material side.
9. Facing Divine Light:
 - Souls should be steadfastly set towards the Divine Light, shining with spiritual radiance.

10. Life Beyond Material Well-being:

- Lives focused solely on material well-being resemble animal existence; higher ambitions should be sought.

11. Vision of Celestial Perfection:

- The heart's ambitions should ascend to a more glorious goal, preparing a dwelling-place for the bounty of the Divine Spirit.

12. Achieving a Heavenly Civilization:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá urges ambition toward achieving a Heavenly civilization and becoming a cause of life to the world.

Questions with Answers:

1. Q: What are the three degrees in the world of humanity according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: The three degrees are those of the body, soul, and spirit.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the body in relation to the animal kingdom?

- A: The body is the physical or animal degree of man, sharing characteristics with the animal kingdom.

3. Q: What happens when the spirit enlightens the soul according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: When the spirit enlightens the soul, man becomes the culmination of all creation.

4. Q: What consequences does 'Abdu'l-Bahá mention for neglecting the spirit and turning toward the material side?

- A: Neglecting the spirit and turning toward the material side results in a fall below the animal kingdom, leading to brutality and malevolence.

5. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourage in relation to the celestial quality of the soul?

- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the dominance of the celestial quality of the soul over the material side.

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The Bahá'ís Must Work with Heart and Soul to Bring About a Better Condition in the World

November 19th

How joyful it is to see such a meeting as this, for it is in truth a gathering together of "heavenly men."

We are all united in one Divine purpose, no material motive is ours, and our dearest wish is to spread the Love of God throughout the world!

We work and pray for the unity of mankind, that all the races of the earth may become one race, all the countries one country, and that all hearts may beat as one heart, working together for perfect unity and brotherhood.

Praise be to God that our efforts are sincere and that our hearts are turned to the Kingdom. Our greatest longing is that truth may be established in the world, and in this hope we draw near to one another in love and affection. Each and all are wholehearted and selfless, willing to sacrifice all personal ambition to the grand ideal towards which they strive: Brotherly love and peace and union among men!

Doubt not that God is with us, on our right hand and on our left, that day by day He will cause our numbers to increase, and that our meetings will grow in strength and usefulness.

It is my dearest hope that you may all become a blessing to others, that you may give sight to the spiritually blind, hearing to the spiritually deaf and life to those who are dead in sin.

May you help those sunk in materiality to realize their Divine son-ship, and encourage them to arise and be worthy of their birthright; so that by your endeavor the world of humanity may become the Kingdom of God and of His elect.

I thank God that we are at one in this grand ideal, that my longings are also yours and that we work together in perfect unity.

Today, upon the earth, one sees the sad spectacle of cruel war! Man slays his brother man for selfish gain, and to enlarge his territories! For this ignoble ambition hate has taken possession of his heart, and more and more blood is shed!

Fresh battles are fought, the armies are increased, more cannon, more guns, more explosives of all kinds are sent out—so does bitterness and hate augment from day to day!

But this assembly, thank God, longs only for peace and unity, and must work with heart and soul to bring about a better condition in the world.

You who are the servants of God fight against oppression, hate and discord, so that wars may cease and God's laws of peace and love may be established among men.

Work! Work with all your strength, spread the Cause of the Kingdom among men; teach the self-sufficient to turn humbly towards God, the sinful to sin no more, and await with glad expectation the coming of the Kingdom.

Love and obey your Heavenly Father, and rest assured that Divine help is yours. Verily I say unto you that you shall indeed conquer the world!

Only have faith, patience and courage—this is but the beginning, but surely you will succeed, for God is with you!

Summary:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá addresses a joyous gathering with a shared Divine purpose. The Bahá’ís strive for unity, desiring all races to become one, all countries to unite, and all hearts to beat as one in brotherhood. The efforts are sincere, selfless, and devoted to spreading the Love of God throughout the world. The goal is the establishment of truth and the realization of brotherly love, peace, and union among humanity. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses confidence in God’s support, anticipating the growth of their community. He urges them to become a blessing to others, helping spiritually blind, deaf, and those dead in sin. Despite the prevailing war and hatred in the world, this assembly focuses on peace, unity, and the betterment of conditions, working with heart and soul to spread the Cause of the Kingdom.

Key Points:

1. Divine Purpose:

- The gathering represents “heavenly men” united in a Divine purpose.

2. Unity of Mankind:

- Working and praying for the unity of mankind, aspiring for one race, one country, and hearts beating as one for perfect unity and brotherhood.

3. Sincere Efforts:

- Efforts are sincere and selfless, directed toward spreading the Love of God throughout the world.

4. Ideal of Brotherhood:

- Striving for brotherly love, peace, and union among men.

5. God’s Support:

- Confidence in God's support, expecting the increase in numbers and the strengthening of meetings.

6. Blessing to Others:

- Encouragement to become a blessing to others, giving spiritual sight, hearing, and life to those in need.

7. Fight Against Oppression:

- As servants of God, fighting against oppression, hate, and discord to bring about peace and establish God’s laws of love.

8. Spread the Cause:

- Urging to work with heart and soul to spread the Cause of the Kingdom, teaching self-sufficiency, repentance, and awaiting the coming of the Kingdom.

9. Divine Help:

- Assuring Divine help for those who love and obey their Heavenly Father.

10. Victory and Success:

- Promising that with faith, patience, and courage, they will conquer the world, as God is with them.

Questions with Answers:

1. Q: What is the shared goal of the Bahá'ís according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: The goal is the unity of mankind, desiring all races to become one, all countries to unite, and all hearts to beat as one in brotherhood.

2. Q: What qualities characterize the efforts of the Bahá'ís, as mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

- A: The efforts are described as sincere, selfless, and devoted to spreading the Love of God throughout the world.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá express confidence in the Bahá'í community's future?

- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses confidence in God's support, anticipating the increase in numbers and the strengthening of meetings.

4. Q: What encouragement does 'Abdu'l-Bahá give regarding the spiritual efforts of the Bahá'ís?

- A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages them to become a blessing to others, helping spiritually blind, deaf, and those dead in sin.

5. Q: What is the focus of the Bahá'í community amidst the prevailing war and hatred in the world?

- A: Despite the prevailing war and hatred, the Bahá'í community focuses on peace, unity, and working with heart and soul to bring about a better condition in the world.

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On Calumny

Monday, November 20th

From the beginning of the world until the present time each "Manifestation"¹ sent from God has been opposed by an embodiment of the "Powers of Darkness."

This dark power has always endeavored to extinguish the light. Tyranny has ever sought to overcome justice. Ignorance has persistently tried to trample knowledge underfoot. This has, from the earliest ages, been the method of the material world.

In the time of Moses, Pharaoh set himself to prevent the Mosaic Light being spread abroad.

In the day of Christ, Annas and Caiaphas inflamed the Jewish people against Him and the learned doctors of Israel joined together to resist His Power. All sorts of calumnies were circulated against Him. The Scribes and Pharisees conspired to make the people believe Him to be a liar, an apostate, and a blasphemer. They spread these slanders throughout the whole Eastern world against Christ, and caused Him to be condemned to a shameful death!

In the case of Muḥammad also, the learned doctors of His day determined to extinguish the light of His influence. They tried by the power of the sword to prevent the spread of His teaching.

In spite of all their efforts the Sun of Truth shone forth from the horizon. In every case the army of light vanquished the powers of darkness on the battlefield of the world, and the radiance of the Divine Teaching illumined the earth. Those who accepted the Teaching and worked for the Cause of God became luminous stars in the sky of humanity.

Now, in our own day, history repeats itself.

Those who would have men believe that religion is their own private property once more bring their efforts to bear against the Sun of Truth: they resist the Command of God; they invent calumnies, not having arguments against it, neither proofs. They attack with masked faces, not daring to come forth into the light of day.

Our methods are different, we do not attack, neither calumniate; we do not wish to dispute with them; we bring forth proofs and arguments; we invite them to confute our statements. They cannot answer us, but instead, they write all they can think of against the Divine Messenger, Bahá'u'lláh.

Do not let your hearts be troubled by these defamatory writings! Obey the words of Bahá'u'lláh and answer them not. Rejoice, rather, that even these falsehoods will result in the spread of the truth. When these slanders appear inquiries are made, and those who inquire are led into a knowledge of the Faith.

If a man were to declare, "There is a lamp in the next room which gives no light," one hearer might be satisfied with his report, but a wiser man goes into the room to judge for himself, and behold, when he finds the light shining brilliantly in the lamp, he knows the truth!

Again, a man proclaims: "There lies a garden in which there are trees with broken branches bearing no fruit, and the leaves thereof are faded and yellow! In that garden, also, there are flowering plants with no blooms, and rose bushes withered and dying—go not into that garden!" A just man, hearing this account of the garden, would not be content without seeing for himself whether it be true or not. He, therefore, enters the garden, and behold, he finds it well tilled; the branches of the trees are sturdy and strong, being also loaded with the sweetest of ripe fruits amongst the luxuriance of beautiful green leaves. The flowering plants are bright with many-hued blossoms; the rose bushes are covered with fragrant and lovely roses and all is verdant and well tended. When the glory of the garden is spread out before the eyes of the just man, he praises God that, through unworthy calumny, he has been led into a place of such wondrous beauty!

This is the result of the slanderer's work: to be the cause of guiding men to a discovery of the truth.

We know that all the falsehoods spread about Christ and His apostles and all the books written against Him, only led the people to inquire into His doctrine; then, having seen the beauty and inhaled the fragrance, they walked evermore amidst the roses and the fruits of that celestial garden.

Therefore, I say unto you, spread the Divine Truth with all your might that men's intelligence may become enlightened; this is the best answer to those who slander. I do not wish to speak of those people nor to say anything ill of them—only to tell you that slander is of no importance!

Clouds may veil the sun, but, be they never so dense, his rays will penetrate! Nothing can prevent the radiance of the sun descending to warm and vivify the Divine Garden.

Nothing can prevent the fall of the rain from Heaven.

Nothing can prevent the fulfillment of the Word of God!

Therefore when you see books and papers written against the Revelation, be not distressed, but take comfort in the assurance that the cause will thereby gain strength.

No one casts stones at a tree without fruit. No one tries to extinguish a lamp without light!

Regard the former times. Had the calumnies of Pharaoh any effect? He affirmed that Moses was a murderer, that he had slain a man and deserved to be executed! He also declared that Moses and Aaron were fomenters of discord, that they tried to destroy the religion of Egypt and therefore must be put to death. These words of Pharaoh were vainly spoken. The light of Moses shone. The radiance of the Law of God has encircled the world!

When the Pharisees said of Christ that He had broken the Sabbath Day, that He had defied the Law of Moses, that He had threatened to destroy the Temple and the Holy City of Jerusalem, and that He deserved to be crucified—We know that all these slanderous attacks had no result in hindering the spread of the Gospel!

The Sun of Christ shone brilliantly in the sky, and the breath of the Holy Spirit wafted over the whole earth!

And I say unto you that no calumny is able to prevail against the Light of God; it can only result in causing it to be more universally recognized. If a cause were of no significance, who would take the trouble to work against it!

But always the greater the cause the more do enemies arise in larger and larger numbers to attempt its overthrow! The brighter the light the darker the shadow! Our part it is to act in accordance with the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh in humility and firm steadfastness.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses the historical opposition faced by every Divine Manifestation, emphasizing that calumny and attacks have always been futile against the light of truth. He illustrates this by citing instances from the lives of Moses, Christ, and Muḥammad. 'Abdu'l-Bahá advises followers not to be troubled by defamatory writings, as they can lead to inquiries and ultimately contribute to the spread of the truth. He compares calumny to clouds that may temporarily obscure the sun but cannot prevent its rays from penetrating. The central message is to spread the Divine Truth with vigor, as it is the best response to slander, and the light of God cannot be extinguished.

Key Points:

1. Opening:

- Mention of historical opposition faced by Divine Manifestations.

2. Examples from History:

- Moses facing Pharaoh's resistance.
- Christ enduring slander from Pharisees.
- Muḥammad encountering opposition from learned doctors.

3. Current Day Opposition:

- Parallel to historical patterns of resistance against the Bahá'í Faith.

4. Response to Calumny:

- Advises not to be distressed by slander.
- Encourages spreading the Divine Truth.

5. Analogy of Clouds and Sun:

- Illustration of clouds temporarily veiling the sun but not preventing its rays.

6. Outcome of Calumny:

- Calumny leads to inquiries and discovery of the truth.

7. Historical Examples of Slander:

- Pharaoh's accusations against Moses.
- Pharisees' slander against Christ.

8. Inevitability of Opposition:

- Larger causes attract more significant opposition.

9. The Role of Followers:

- Followers should act with humility and steadfastness.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what has been the consistent method of the material world towards Divine Manifestations?

A: The dark power has always tried to extinguish the light, tyranny sought to overcome justice, and ignorance persistently tried to trample knowledge underfoot.

2. Q: What is the historical pattern highlighted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding the opposition faced by Divine Manifestations?

A: Every Manifestation sent from God has been opposed by an embodiment of the Powers of Darkness.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá advise followers to respond to defamatory writings against the Bahá'í Faith?

A: Followers are advised not to be distressed, but instead, to take comfort in the assurance that the cause will gain strength through such attacks.

4. Q: What analogy does 'Abdu'l-Bahá use to explain the impact of calumny?

A: Calumny is likened to clouds that may temporarily veil the sun, but the rays of the sun will penetrate and shine through.

5. Q: What is the central message regarding the role of followers in the face of opposition?

A: Followers are encouraged to spread the Divine Truth with humility and firm steadfastness, as this is the best response to slander, and the Light of God cannot be extinguished.

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There Can Be No True Happiness and Progress without Spirituality

November 21st

Ferocity and savagery are natural to animals, but men should show forth the qualities of love and affection. God sent all His Prophets into the world with one aim, to sow in the hearts of men love and goodwill, and for this great purpose they were willing to suffer and to die. All the sacred Books were written to lead and direct man into the ways of love and unity; and yet, in spite of all this, we have the sad spectacle of war and bloodshed in our midst.

When we look into the pages of history, past and present, we see the black earth reddened by human blood. Men kill each other like the savage wolves, and forget the laws of love and tolerance.

Now this luminous age has come, bringing with it wonderful civilization and material progress. Men's intellects have widened, their perceptions grown, but alas, in spite of all this, fresh blood is being spilt day by day. Look at the present Turco-Italian war; consider for a moment the fate of these unhappy people! How many have been killed during this sad time? How many homes are ruined, wives desolate, and children orphans! And what is to be gained in exchange for all this anguish and heartache? Only a corner of the earth!

This all shows that material progress alone does not tend to uplift man. On the contrary, the more he becomes immersed in material progress, the more does his spirituality become obscured.

In times gone by progress on the material plane was not so rapid, neither was there bloodshed in such profusion. In ancient warfare there were no cannons, no guns, no dynamite, no shells, no torpedo boats, no battleships, no submarines. Now, owing to material civilization, we have all these inventions, and war goes from bad to worse! Europe itself has become like one immense arsenal, full of explosives, and may God prevent its ignition—for, should this happen, the whole world would be involved.

I want to make you understand that *material* progress and spiritual progress are two very different things, and that only if material progress goes hand in hand with spirituality can any real progress come about, and the Most Great Peace reign in the world. If men followed the Holy Counsels and the Teachings of the Prophets, if Divine Light shone in all hearts and men were really religious, we should soon see peace on earth and the Kingdom of God among men. The laws of God may be likened unto the soul and material progress unto the body. If the body were not animated by the soul, it would cease to exist. It is my earnest prayer that spirituality may ever grow and increase in the world, so that customs may become enlightened and peace and concord may be established.

War and rapine with their attendant cruelties are an abomination to God, and bring their own punishment, for the God of love is also a God of justice and each man must inevitably reap what he sows. Let us try to understand the commands of the Most High and to order our lives as He directs. True happiness depends on spiritual good and having the heart ever open to receive the Divine Bounty.

If the heart turns away from the blessings God offers how can it hope for happiness? If it does not put its hope and trust in God's Mercy, where can it find rest? Oh, trust in God! for His Bounty is everlasting, and in His Blessings, for they are superb. Oh! put your faith in the Almighty, for He faileth not and His goodness endureth forever! His Sun giveth Light continually, and the Clouds of His Mercy are full of the Waters of Compassion with which He waters the hearts of all who trust in Him. His refreshing Breeze ever carries healing in its wings to the parched souls of men! Is it wise to turn away from such a loving Father, Who showers His blessings upon us, and to choose rather to be slaves of matter?

God in His infinite goodness has exalted us to so much honor, and has made us masters over the material world. Shall we then become her slaves? Nay, rather let us claim our birthright, and strive to live the life of the spiritual sons of God. The glorious Sun of Truth has once again risen in the East. From the far horizon of Persia its radiance is spreading far and wide, dispersing the dense clouds of superstition. The light of the unity of mankind is beginning to illumine the world, and soon the banner of Divine harmony and the solidarity of nations will be flying high in the Heavens. Yea, the breezes of the Holy Spirit will inspire the whole world!

Oh, peoples and nations! Arise and work and be happy! Gather together under the tent of the unity of mankind!

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the need for spirituality alongside material progress for true happiness and progress. He contrasts the innate ferocity of animals with the divine purpose of prophets, who aimed to sow love and goodwill. Despite advancements in material civilization, wars persist, highlighting the disconnect between material progress and spiritual upliftment. 'Abdu'l-Bahá warns against the consequences of unbridled materialism, pointing out the dangers of modern weaponry. He stresses the importance of spiritual progress for achieving real peace on Earth. The analogy of the body and soul is used to emphasize the necessity of combining material and spiritual progress. 'Abdu'l-Bahá concludes with an earnest prayer for the growth of spirituality and a call for unity among nations.

Key Points:

1. Opening:

- Emphasis on love and affection as qualities inherent to humanity.
- The divine purpose of prophets in promoting love and unity.

2. Material Progress and Bloodshed:

- Observation of bloodshed despite material progress.
- Reflection on the Turco-Italian war as a contemporary example.

3. Material Progress vs. Spiritual Progress:

- Distinction between material and spiritual progress.
- Warning about the dangers of unbridled materialism.

4. The Consequences of Modern Warfare:

- Acknowledgment of advancements in weaponry.
- Fear of a global conflict due to Europe's vast arsenal.

5. The Harmony of Material and Spiritual Progress:

- Explanation of the relationship between material and spiritual progress.
- The necessity of spirituality for real progress and the establishment of peace.

6. The Analogy of Body and Soul:

- Likening material progress to the body and spirituality to the soul.
- Importance of spirituality animating material progress.

7. War and Divine Justice:

- Denunciation of war and its consequences.
- Emphasis on divine justice and the law of reaping what is sown.

8. The Path to True Happiness:

- The dependence of true happiness on spiritual goodness.
- The role of trust in God's mercy for finding rest and happiness.

9. Claiming Our Birthright:

- Acknowledgment of God's exaltation of humanity.
- Encouragement to claim the birthright as spiritual sons of God.

10. The Glorious Sun of Truth:

- Announcement of the rise of the Sun of Truth in the East.
- Prophecy of the spread of unity and harmony worldwide.

11. A Call to Peoples and Nations:

- Urgent call for unity and happiness among peoples and nations.
- Vision of a world inspired by the breezes of the Holy Spirit.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what are the qualities that animals and men should manifest?

A: Animals may display ferocity and savagery, but men should exhibit love and affection.

2. Q: What is the consequence of unbridled material progress without spirituality, as emphasized by 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: It obscures spirituality and can lead to more bloodshed and war.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the relationship between material and spiritual progress using the analogy of body and soul?

A: He likens material progress to the body and spirituality to the soul, emphasizing the necessity of spirituality animating material progress.

4. Q: What is the role of trust in God's mercy in achieving true happiness, as mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: Trust in God's mercy is crucial for finding rest and happiness.

5. Q: What vision does 'Abdu'l-Bahá offer for the future, and what is the role of the Sun of Truth in this vision?

A: He envisions a world illuminated by the Sun of Truth, spreading unity, harmony, and inspiration from the Holy Spirit worldwide.

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Pain and Sorrow

November 22nd

In this world we are influenced by two sentiments, *Joy* and *Pain*.

Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. But when sadness visits us we become weak, our strength leaves us, our

comprehension is dim and our intelligence veiled. The actualities of life seem to elude our grasp, the eyes of our spirits fail to discover the sacred mysteries, and we become even as dead beings.

There is no human being untouched by these two influences; but all the sorrow and the grief that exist come from the world of matter—the spiritual world bestows only the joy!

If we suffer it is the outcome of material things, and all the trials and troubles come from this world of illusion.

For instance, a merchant may lose his trade and depression ensues. A workman is dismissed and starvation stares him in the face. A farmer has a bad harvest, anxiety fills his mind. A man builds a house which is burnt to the ground and he is straightway homeless, ruined, and in despair.

All these examples are to show you that the trials which beset our every step, all our sorrow, pain, shame and grief, are born in the world of matter; whereas the spiritual Kingdom never causes sadness. A man living with his thoughts in this Kingdom knows perpetual joy. The ills all flesh is heir to do not pass him by, but they only touch the surface of his life, the depths are calm and serene.

Today, humanity is bowed down with trouble, sorrow and grief, no one escapes; the world is wet with tears; but, thank God, the remedy is at our doors. Let us turn our hearts away from the world of matter and live in the spiritual world! It alone can give us freedom! If we are hemmed in by difficulties we have only to call upon God, and by His great Mercy we shall be helped.

If sorrow and adversity visit us, let us turn our faces to the Kingdom and heavenly consolation will be outpoured.

If we are sick and in distress let us implore God's healing, and He will answer our prayer.

When our thoughts are filled with the bitterness of this world, let us turn our eyes to the sweetness of God's compassion and He will send us heavenly calm! If we are imprisoned in the material world, our spirit can soar into the Heavens and we shall be free indeed!

When our days are drawing to a close let us think of the eternal worlds, and we shall be full of joy!

You see all round you proofs of the inadequacy of material things—how joy, comfort, peace and consolation are not to be found in the transitory things of the world. Is it not then foolishness to refuse to seek these treasures where they may be found? The doors of the spiritual Kingdom are open to all, and without is absolute darkness.

Thank God that you in this assembly have this knowledge, for in all the sorrows of life you can obtain supreme consolation. If your days on earth are numbered, you know that everlasting life awaits you. If material anxiety envelops you in a dark cloud, spiritual radiance lightens your path. Verily, those whose minds are illumined by the Spirit of the Most High have supreme consolation.

I myself was in prison forty years—one year alone would have been impossible to bear—nobody survived that imprisonment more than a year! But, thank God, during all those forty years I was supremely happy! Every day, on waking, it was like hearing good tidings, and every night infinite joy was mine. Spirituality was my comfort, and turning to God was my greatest joy. If this had not been so, do you think it possible that I could have lived through those forty years in prison?

Thus, spirituality is the greatest of God's gifts, and "Life Everlasting" means "Turning to God." May you, one and all, increase daily in spirituality, may you be strengthened in all goodness, may you be helped more and more by the Divine consolation, be made free by the Holy Spirit of God, and may the power of the Heavenly Kingdom live and work among you.

This is my earnest desire, and I pray to God to grant you this favor.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the dual influences of joy and pain in human life, emphasizing that joy originates from the spiritual realm, while sorrow is connected to the material world. He illustrates the impact of material troubles, such as loss of trade, unemployment, and disasters, on human suffering. 'Abdu'l-Bahá presents the spiritual kingdom as a source of perpetual joy, unaffected by the trials of the material world. He encourages turning to the spiritual realm for solace and guidance, highlighting the availability of divine help in times of difficulty. By shifting focus from the material to the spiritual, humanity can find freedom, healing, and eternal joy.

Key Points:

1. Opening:

- Distinction between joy and pain as dual influences in human life.
- The spiritual realm as the source of perpetual joy.

2. Origin of Sorrow and Trials:

- Linking sorrow and trials to the material world.
- Examples of material troubles causing suffering.

3. Spiritual Kingdom and Joy:

- Spiritual Kingdom as the realm of everlasting joy.
- The serenity of the spiritual depths amidst material trials.

4. Remedy in the Spiritual World:

- Encouragement to turn hearts away from the material world.
- Seeking freedom in the spiritual realm.

5. Supreme Consolation through Spirituality:

- Assurance of help through prayer and turning to God.
- Finding heavenly consolation in times of distress.

6. Freedom in the Heavenly Kingdom:

- Liberation from material constraints through spiritual ascent.
- Overcoming imprisonment in the material world.

7. Thoughts on Eternal Life:

- Reflection on the eternal worlds in times of adversity.
- Finding joy in the anticipation of eternal life.

8. Inadequacy of Material Things:

- Acknowledgment of the inadequacy of material comforts.
- The folly of refusing spiritual treasures.

9. Open Doors to the Spiritual Kingdom:

- Accessibility of the spiritual Kingdom to all.
- Contrasting spiritual radiance with worldly darkness.

10. ****Supreme Consolation through Spirituality:**

- Recognition of the inadequacy of material comforts.
- Finding supreme consolation in spiritual knowledge.

11. **Personal Experience in Prison:**

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá's personal experience of forty years in prison.
- Spiritual comfort and turning to God as sources of joy.

12. **Blessings of Spirituality:**

- Spirituality as the greatest gift from God.
- Interpretation of "Life Everlasting" as "Turning to God."

13. **Final Prayer and Blessings:**

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá's earnest desire for spiritual growth.
- Prayers for increased spirituality, goodness, and divine consolation.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What are the two sentiments that influence human life, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: Joy and Pain.

2. Q: From where does joy originate, and what is the source of sorrow and grief?

A: Joy originates from the spiritual realm, while sorrow and grief come from the material world.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the impact of material troubles on human suffering?

A: Material troubles, such as loss of trade, unemployment, and disasters, are the causes of human suffering.

4. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá consider as the greatest of God's gifts, and how does he define "Life Everlasting"?

A: Spirituality is considered the greatest of God's gifts, and "Life Everlasting" is equated with "Turning to God."

5. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, how can humanity find freedom, healing, and eternal joy?

A: By turning hearts away from the material world and seeking solace, guidance, and divine help in the spiritual realm.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

You should all be very happy and thankful to God for the great privilege that is yours.

This is purely a spiritual meeting! Praise be to God, your hearts are turned to Him, your souls are attracted to the Kingdom, you have spiritual aspirations, and your thoughts soar above the world of dust.

You belong to the world of purity, and are not content to live the life of the animal, spending your days in eating, drinking, and sleeping. You are indeed men! Your thoughts and ambitions are set to acquire human perfection. You live to do good and to bring happiness to others. Your greatest longing is to comfort those who mourn, to strengthen the weak, and to be the cause of hope to the despairing soul. Day and night your thoughts are turned to the Kingdom, and your hearts are full of the Love of God.

Thus you know neither opposition, dislike, nor hatred, for every living creature is dear to you and the good of each is sought.

These are perfect human sentiments and virtues. If a man has none of these, he had better cease to exist. If a lamp has ceased to give light, it had better be destroyed. If a tree bear no fruit, it had better be cut down, for it only cumbereth the ground.

Verily, it is better a thousand times for a man to die than to continue living without virtue.

We have eyes wherewith to see, but if we do not use them how do they profit us? We have ears wherewith to hear, but if we are deaf of what use are they?

We have a tongue wherewith to praise God and proclaim the good tidings, but if we are dumb how useless it is!

The All-Loving God created man to radiate the Divine light and to illumine the world by his words, action and life. If he is without virtue he becomes no better than a mere animal, and an animal devoid of intelligence is a vile thing.

The Heavenly Father gave the priceless gift of intelligence to man so that he might become a spiritual light, piercing the darkness of materiality, and bringing goodness and truth into the world. If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe. Strive therefore, with heart and soul, to follow the precepts of the Blessed Perfection, and rest assured that if ye succeed in living the life he marks out for you, Eternal Life and everlasting joy in the Heavenly Kingdom will be yours, and celestial sustenance will be sent to strengthen you all your days.

It is my heartfelt prayer that each one of you may attain to this perfect joy!

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses gratitude for the spiritual focus of the gathering, commending the attendees for their elevated aspirations and commitment to spiritual values. He emphasizes the importance of possessing perfect human sentiments and virtues, highlighting qualities such as compassion, the desire to do good, and the pursuit of human perfection. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts that without such virtues, life lacks purpose and meaning. He underscores the purpose of human existence as radiating divine light, bringing goodness and truth into the world. The ultimate goal is to follow the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh earnestly, becoming lights of the world and sources of salvation for the entire universe. The promise of eternal life and everlasting joy is extended to those who sincerely strive to live according to the precepts of Bahá'u'lláh.

Key Points:

1. Gratitude and Recognition:
 - Expression of gratitude for the spiritual nature of the gathering.
 - Recognition of attendees' elevated aspirations and spiritual focus.
2. Perfect Human Sentiments and Virtues:
 - Description of perfect human sentiments and virtues.
 - Rejection of a life devoid of virtue as equivalent to non-existence.
3. Purpose of Human Existence:
 - Assertion of the purpose of human existence.
 - Importance of radiating divine light and bringing goodness into the world.
4. The Gift of Intelligence:
 - Acknowledgment of the gift of intelligence from the Heavenly Father.
 - The responsibility to use intelligence to become a spiritual light.
5. Following the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh:
 - Encouragement to earnestly follow the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.
 - Promised outcomes of becoming lights of the world and sources of salvation.
6. Striving for Eternal Life and Joy:
 - The promise of eternal life and everlasting joy.
 - Assurance of celestial sustenance for those living according to Bahá'u'lláh's precepts.
7. Heartfelt Prayer:
 - 'Abdu'l-Bahá's heartfelt prayer for attendees.
 - Wishes for each individual to attain perfect joy through sincere efforts.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what distinguishes human existence from that of an animal?

A: The possession and utilization of perfect human sentiments and virtues distinguish human existence.

2. Q: What purpose does 'Abdu'l-Bahá ascribe to human existence?

A: The purpose is to radiate divine light, bring goodness and truth into the world, and become a spiritual light.

3. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize the gift of intelligence given by the Heavenly Father?

A: Intelligence is given to humanity to become a spiritual light, piercing the darkness of materiality, and bringing goodness into the world.

4. Q: What are the promised outcomes for those who earnestly follow the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?

A: They will become lights of the world, sources of salvation for the universe, and will attain eternal life and everlasting joy.

5. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá wish for each individual in his heartfelt prayer?

A: His heartfelt prayer is for each individual to attain perfect joy through earnestly following the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

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The Cruel Indifference of People towards the Suffering of Foreign Races

November 24th

'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

I have just been told that there has been a terrible accident in this country. A train has fallen into the river and at least twenty people have been killed. This is going to be a matter for discussion in the French Parliament today, and the Director of the State Railway will be called upon to speak. He will be cross-examined as to the condition of the railroad and as to what caused the accident, and there will be a heated argument. I am filled with wonder and surprise to notice what interest and excitement has been aroused throughout the whole country on account of the death of twenty people, while they remain cold and indifferent to the fact that thousands of Italians, Turks, and Arabs are killed in Tripoli! The horror of this wholesale slaughter has not disturbed the Government at all! Yet these unfortunate people are human beings too.

Why is there so much interest and eager sympathy shown towards these twenty individuals, while for five thousand persons there is none? They are all men, they all belong to the family of mankind, but they are of other lands and races. It is no concern of the disinterested countries if these men are cut to pieces, this wholesale slaughter does not affect them! How unjust, how cruel is this, how utterly devoid of any good and true feeling! The people of these other lands have children and wives, mothers, daughters, and little sons! In these countries today there is hardly a house free from the sound of bitter weeping, scarcely can one find a home untouched by the cruel hand of war.

Alas! we see on all sides how cruel, prejudiced and unjust is man, and how slow he is to believe in God and follow His commandments.

If these people would love and help one another instead of being so eager to destroy with sword and cannon, how much nobler would it be! How much better if they would live like a flock of doves in peace and harmony, instead of being like wolves and tearing each other to pieces.

Why is man so hard of heart? It is because he does not yet know God. If he had knowledge of God he could not act in direct opposition to His laws; if he were spiritually minded such a line of conduct would be impossible to him. If only the laws and precepts of the prophets of God had been believed, understood and followed, wars would no longer darken the face of the earth.

If man had even the rudiments of justice, such a state of things would be impossible.

Therefore, I say unto you pray—pray and turn your faces to God, that He, in His infinite compassion and mercy, may help and succor these misguided ones. Pray that He will grant them spiritual understanding and teach them tolerance and mercy, that the eyes of their minds may be opened and that they may be endued with the gift of the spirit. Then would peace and love walk hand in hand through the lands, and these poor unhappy people might have rest.

Let us all strive night and day to help in the bringing about of better conditions. My heart is broken by these terrible things and cries aloud—may this cry reach other hearts!

Then will the blind see, the dead will be raised, and Justice will come and reign upon the earth.

I beseech you all to pray with heart and soul that this may be accomplished.

Summary:

'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses astonishment at the widespread concern over a train accident causing the death of twenty individuals in contrast to the cruel indifference toward the thousands killed in Tripoli. He highlights the injustice and lack of empathy for fellow human beings based on nationality and race. 'Abdu'l-Bahá laments the prevailing cruelty, prejudice, and injustice in humanity, emphasizing that knowledge of God and adherence to His laws would prevent such atrocities. He urges people to pray for spiritual understanding, tolerance, and mercy, envisioning a world where peace and love prevail.

Key Points:

1. Opening:

- Reference to a recent train accident causing twenty deaths.
- Contrast with the indifferent response to thousands killed in Tripoli.

2. Injustice and Indifference:

- Astonishment at the unequal attention and sympathy for different human lives.
- Condemnation of the indifference toward thousands of Italian, Turkish, and Arab deaths.

3. Human Cruelty and Prejudice:

- Observations on the cruel, prejudiced, and unjust nature of humanity.
- Reflection on the slow acceptance of belief in God and adherence to His commandments.

4. The Role of Spirituality:

- Assertion that knowledge of God prevents actions contrary to His laws.
- Need for spiritual-mindedness to eliminate destructive behavior.

5. Call to Prayer and Action:

- Urgent plea for prayer to seek God's compassion and mercy for the misguided.
- Encouragement to pray for spiritual understanding, tolerance, and mercy.
- Striving collectively for better conditions and fostering peace and love.

6. Appeal for Change:

- Emotional expression of a broken heart witnessing terrible events.
- Call for collective efforts to bring about positive change.
- Hope for a transformation where the blind see, the dead are raised, and justice prevails.

7. Final Call to Prayer:

- Beseeking everyone to pray with heart and soul for the accomplishment of these goals.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, why is there a stark contrast in public response to the train accident and the killings in Tripoli?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá attributes the indifference to differing nationalities and races involved, emphasizing the lack of empathy for those from other lands.

2. Q: What, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is the root cause of human cruelty and prejudice?

A: The lack of knowledge of God and the failure to follow His laws are considered the root causes of human cruelty and prejudice.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá envision a world without wars and atrocities?

A: He envisions a world where spirituality prevails, people live in peace and harmony, and justice reigns, preventing the darkness of war.

4. Q: What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's plea to individuals regarding the current state of the world?

A: He calls on individuals to pray fervently for spiritual understanding, tolerance, and mercy, envisioning a world where peace and love walk hand in hand.

5. Q: What transformation does 'Abdu'l-Bahá hope for if hearts respond to the plea for prayer?

A: He hopes for a world where the blind see, the dead are raised, and justice prevails upon the earth as a result of heartfelt prayers and collective efforts.

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We Must Not Be Discouraged by the Smallness of Our Numbers

November 25th

When Christ appeared He manifested Himself at Jerusalem. He called men to the Kingdom of God, He invited them to Eternal Life and He told them to acquire human perfections. The Light of Guidance was shed forth by that radiant Star, and He at length gave His life in sacrifice for humanity.

All through His blessed life He suffered oppression and hardship, and in spite of all this humanity was His enemy!

They denied Him, scorned Him, ill-treated Him and cursed Him. He was not treated like a man—and yet in spite of all this He was the embodiment of pity and of supreme goodness and love.

He loved all humanity, but they treated Him as an enemy and were incapable of appreciating Him. They set no value on His words and were not illumined by the flame of His love.

Later they realized who He was; that He was the Sacred and Divine Light, and that His words held Eternal Life.

His heart was full of love for all the world, His goodness was destined to reach each one—and as they began to realize these things, they repented—but He had been crucified!

It was not until many years after His ascension that they knew who He was, and at the time of His ascension He had only a very few disciples; only a comparatively small following believed His precepts and followed His laws. The ignorant said, “Who is this individual; He has only a few disciples!” But those who knew said: “He is the Sun who will shine in the East and in the West, He is the Manifestation who shall give life to the world.”

What the first disciples had seen the world realized later.

Therefore, you who are in Europe, do not be discouraged because you are few or because people think that your Cause is of no importance. If few people come to your gatherings do not lose heart, and if you are ridiculed and contradicted be not distressed, for the apostles of Christ had the same to bear. They were reviled and persecuted, cursed and ill-treated, but in the end they were victorious and their enemies were found to be wrong.

If history should repeat itself and all these same things should happen to you, do not be saddened but be full of joy, and thank God that you are called upon to suffer as holy men of old suffered. If they oppose you be gentle with them, if they contradict be firm in your faith, if they desert you and flee from before you, seek them out and treat them kindly. Do harm to nobody; pray for all; try to make your light shine in the world and let your banner fly high in the Heavens. The beautiful perfume of your noble lives will permeate everywhere. The light of truth kindled in your hearts will shine out to the distant horizon!

The indifference and scorn of the world matters not at all, whereas your lives will be of the greatest importance.

All those who seek truth in the Heavenly Kingdom shine like the stars; they are like fruit trees laden with choice fruit, like seas full of precious pearls.

Only have faith in the Mercy of God, and spread the Divine Truth.

Summary:

The talk on November 25th emphasizes that Christ faced opposition despite embodying supreme goodness. Despite having a small following during His life, His significance became evident later. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the believers in Europe not to be discouraged by their small numbers, opposition, or ridicule. Drawing parallels with the early followers of Christ, he advises maintaining faith, gentleness, and kindness in the face of adversity. The believers' lives and adherence to Divine Truth are deemed more important than worldly indifference. Faith in God's mercy and spreading Divine Truth are emphasized.

Key Points:

1. Christ's Manifestation:

- Christ appeared in Jerusalem, calling humanity to the Kingdom of God and Eternal Life.
- Despite supreme goodness, He faced oppression, scorn, and ill-treatment from humanity.
- His sacrificial life was not immediately appreciated; humanity treated Him as an enemy.

2. Christ's Love for Humanity:

- Christ loved all humanity, displaying pity and love even in the face of hostility.
- Humanity failed to recognize His Divine nature, treating Him with enmity.

3. Recognition After Ascension:

- Only a few disciples were present at the time of Christ's ascension.
- Humanity later realized His sacred and Divine nature, acknowledging the truth.

4. Encouragement for Believers in Europe:

- Believers in Europe are encouraged not to be discouraged by their small numbers.
- Opposition, ridicule, or indifference should not dismay them; similar challenges were faced by the early followers of Christ.

5. Parallel with Early Disciples:

- Drawing parallels with the apostles of Christ, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advises believers to remain firm in faith.
- If faced with opposition, they should be gentle, seek out those who desert them, and maintain kindness.

6. Importance of Noble Lives:

- Believers are told that their lives are of great importance despite worldly indifference.
- The light of truth kindled in their hearts will shine and their banner will fly high.

7. Faith in God's Mercy:

- The indifference and scorn of the world are deemed insignificant.
- Believers are advised to have faith in the mercy of God and to spread the Divine Truth.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What challenges did Christ face during His earthly life according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: Christ faced oppression, scorn, ill-treatment, and enmity from humanity despite embodying supreme goodness.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourage the believers in Europe to respond to opposition and ridicule?

A: Believers are encouraged to maintain faith, be gentle, seek out those who desert them, and treat them kindly.

3. Q: What significance does 'Abdu'l-Bahá attribute to the lives of believers despite their small numbers?

A: Despite small numbers, believers' lives are deemed of great importance, with the light of truth shining and their banner flying high.

4. Q: What parallel does 'Abdu'l-Bahá draw between the early followers of Christ and the believers in Europe?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá draws a parallel in terms of facing opposition, ridicule, and challenges while maintaining faith and kindness.

5. Q: What advice does 'Abdu'l-Bahá give to believers regarding their response to the world's indifference and scorn?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá advises believers to have faith in the mercy of God and to continue spreading the Divine Truth despite worldly indifference and scorn.

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Words Spoken by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Pastor Wagner's Church (Foyer de l'Ame) in Paris

November 26th

I am deeply touched by the sympathetic words which have been addressed to me, and I hope that day by day true love and affection may grow among us. God has willed that love should be a vital force in the world, and you all know how I rejoice to speak of love.

All down the ages the prophets of God have been sent into the world to serve the cause of truth—Moses brought the law of truth, and all the prophets of Israel after him sought to spread it.

When Jesus came He lighted the flaming torch of truth, and carried it aloft so that the whole world might be illumined thereby. After Him came His chosen apostles, and they went far and wide, carrying the light of their Master's teaching into a dark world—and, in their turn, passed on.

Then came Muḥammad, who in His time and way spread the knowledge of truth among a savage people; for this has always been the mission of God's elect.

So, at last, when Bahá'u'lláh arose in Persia, this was His most ardent desire, to rekindle the waning light of truth in all lands. All the holy ones of God have tried with heart and soul to

spread the light of love and unity throughout the world, so that the darkness of materiality might disappear and the light of spirituality might shine forth among the children of men. Then would hate, slander and murder disappear, and in their stead love, unity and peace would reign.

All the Manifestations of God came with the same purpose, and they have all sought to lead men into the paths of virtue. Yet we, their servants, still dispute among ourselves! Why is it thus? Why do we not love one another and live in unity?

It is because we have shut our eyes to the underlying principle of all religions, that God is one, that He is the Father of us all, that we are all immersed in the ocean of His mercy and sheltered and protected by His loving care.

The glorious Sun of Truth shines for all alike, the waters of Divine Mercy immerse each one, and His Divine favor is bestowed on all His children.

This loving God desires peace for all His creatures—why, then, do they spend their time in war?

He loves and protects all His children—why do they forget Him?

He bestows His Fatherly care on us all—why do we neglect our brothers?

Surely, when we realize how God loves and cares for us, we should so order our lives that we may become more like Him.

God has created us, one and all—why do we act in opposition to His wishes, when we are all His children, and love the same Father? All these divisions we see on all sides, all these disputes and opposition, are caused because men cling to *ritual* and outward observances, and forget the simple, underlying truth. It is the *outward practices* of religion that are so different, and it is they that cause disputes and enmity—while the *reality* is always the same, and one. The Reality is the Truth, and truth has no division. Truth is God's guidance, it is the light of the world, it is love, it is mercy. These attributes of truth are also human virtues inspired by the Holy Spirit.

So let us one and all hold fast to truth, and we shall be free indeed!

The day is coming when all the religions of the world will unite, for in principle they are one already. There is no need for division, seeing that it is only the outward forms that separate them. Among the sons of men some souls are suffering through ignorance, let us hasten to teach them; others are like children needing care and education until they are grown, and some are sick—to these we must carry Divine healing.

Whether ignorant, childish or sick, they must be loved and helped, and not disliked because of their imperfection.

Doctors of religion were instituted to bring spiritual healing to the peoples and to be the cause of unity among the nations. If they become the cause of division they had better not exist! A remedy is given to cure a disease, but if it only succeeds in aggravating the complaint, it is better to leave it alone. If religion is only to be a cause of disunion it had better not exist.

All the Divine Manifestations sent by God into the world would have gone through their terrible hardships and sufferings for the single hope of spreading Truth, unity and concord among men. Christ endured a life of sorrow, pain and grief, to bring a perfect example of love into the world—and in spite of this we continue to act in a contrary spirit one towards the other!

Love is the fundamental principle of God's purpose for man, and He has commanded us to love each other even as He loves us. All these discords and disputes which we hear on all sides only tend to increase materiality.

The world for the most part is sunk in materialism, and the blessings of the Holy Spirit are ignored. There is so little real spiritual feeling, and the progress of the world is for the most part merely material. Men are becoming like unto beasts that perish, for we know that they have no

spiritual feeling—they do not turn to God, they have no religion! These things belong to man alone, and if he is without them he is a prisoner of nature, and no whit better than an animal.

How can man be content to lead only an animal existence when God has made him so high a creature? All creation is made subject to the laws of nature, but man has been able to conquer these laws. The sun, in spite of its power and glory, is bound by the laws of nature, and cannot change its course by so much as a hair's breadth. The great and mighty ocean is powerless to change the ebb and flow of its tides—nothing can stand against nature's laws but man!

But to man God has given such wonderful power that he can guide, control and overcome nature.

The natural law for man is to walk on the earth, but he makes ships and flies in the air! He is created to live on dry land, but he rides on the sea and even travels under it!

He has learnt to control the power of electricity, and he takes it at his will and imprisons it in a lamp! The human voice is made to speak across short distances, but man's power is such that he has made instruments and can speak from East to West! All these examples show you how man can govern nature, and how, as it were, he wrests a sword from the hand of nature and uses it against herself. Seeing that man has been created master of nature, how foolish it is of him to become her slave! What ignorance and stupidity it is to worship and adore nature, when God in His goodness has made us masters thereof. God's power is visible to all, yet men shut their eyes and see it not. The Sun of Truth is shining in all His splendor, but man with fast shut eyes cannot behold His glory! It is my earnest prayer to God that by His Mercy and Loving Kindness you may all be united, and filled with the utmost joy.

I beseech you, one and all, to add your prayers to mine to the end that war and bloodshed may cease, and that love, friendship, peace and unity may reign in the world.

All down the ages we see how blood has stained the surface of the earth; but now a ray of greater light has come, man's intelligence is greater, spirituality is beginning to grow, and a time is surely coming when the religions of the world will be at peace. Let us leave the discordant arguments concerning outward forms, and let us join together to hasten forward the Divine Cause of unity, until all humanity knows itself to be one family, joined together in love.

Summary:

In the speech on November 26th, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the unifying principles of love and truth present in all religions. He discusses the purpose of Divine Manifestations throughout history, underlining their shared mission to spread truth, unity, and concord. 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses concern about the divisions caused by ritualistic practices rather than recognizing the underlying truth shared by all religions. He encourages the unity of all religions and emphasizes the importance of love, care, and education in assisting those suffering from ignorance, spiritual immaturity, or sickness. 'Abdu'l-Bahá urges believers to embody the fundamental principle of God's purpose—love. The speech addresses the materialism dominating the world, stressing the need for spiritual feeling and progression. 'Abdu'l-Bahá concludes by praying for unity, peace, and the cessation of war and bloodshed.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses gratitude for the sympathetic words received.
- Highlights the vital force of love willed by God for humanity.

2. Mission of Divine Manifestations:

- Prophets and Manifestations brought truth, seeking to dispel darkness and ignorance.
- Emphasizes the shared purpose of all Divine Manifestations to spread love and unity.

3. Unity of Religions:

- All religions unite in principle; division arises from differing outward forms.
- Disputes and enmity stem from neglecting the simple truth that God is one.

4. Purpose of Religion and Doctors of Religion:

- Doctors of religion should bring spiritual healing and unity.
- If religion causes division, it's better not to exist.

5. Love as Fundamental Principle:

- Love is the fundamental principle of God's purpose for humanity.
- Believers must love one another, resembling God's love for all.

6. Worldly Materialism and Lack of Spiritual Feeling:

- Much of the world is immersed in materialism, neglecting the blessings of the Holy Spirit.
- Lack of spiritual feeling leads to an existence similar to animals.

7. Man's Power Over Nature:

- Man has the power to govern and overcome nature.
- Despite natural laws, man has achieved great feats, demonstrating mastery over nature.

8. Call to Unity and Prayer for Peace:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá prays for unity, joy, and the cessation of war and bloodshed.

- Urges leaving discordant arguments and advancing the Divine Cause of unity.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What common mission do Divine Manifestations share according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: Divine Manifestations share the mission of spreading truth, unity, and concord.

2. Q: What concerns does 'Abdu'l-Bahá express regarding religion?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá is concerned about divisions caused by ritualistic practices, which lead to disputes and enmity.

3. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá consider as the fundamental principle of God's purpose for humanity?

A: Love is considered the fundamental principle of God's purpose for humanity.

4. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize the need for spiritual feeling and progression?

A: The dominance of materialism and lack of spiritual feeling lead to an existence similar to animals, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the importance of spiritual progression.

5. Q: What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prayer and hope for humanity?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá prays for unity, joy, the cessation of war and bloodshed, and hopes for the religions of the world to be at peace, joined together in love.

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Part Two

The Eleven Principles out of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, Explained by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris.

The Search after Truth.

The Unity of Mankind.

Religion ought to be the Cause of Love and Affection

(Not given separately).

The Unity of Religion and Science.

Abolition of Prejudices.

Equalization of Means of Existence.

Equality of Men before the Law.

Universal Peace.

Noninterference of Religion and Politics.

Equality of Sex—Education of Women.

The Power of the Holy Spirit.

Summary:

In a talk given in Paris, 'Abdu'l-Bahá elucidates eleven principles derived from the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. These principles encompass the pursuit of truth, the unity of mankind, the harmonious relationship between religion and science, the eradication of prejudices, equalization of means of existence, equality before the law, the aspiration for universal peace, the noninterference of religion in politics, the equality of sexes with a focus on the education of women, and the recognition of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key Points:

1. Search after Truth:

- Emphasizes the importance of seeking truth as a fundamental principle.
- Encourages individuals to engage in a continual quest for knowledge and understanding.

2. Unity of Mankind:

- Advocates the oneness of humanity, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all people.
- Rejects divisions based on race, nationality, or any other artificial barriers.

3. Religion as the Cause of Love and Affection:

- Religion should be a source of love and affection among individuals.
- The transformative power of genuine religious teachings in fostering goodwill and unity.

4. Unity of Religion and Science:

- Promotes the harmony between religious principles and scientific advancements.
- Rejects any notion of conflict between faith and reason, encouraging their mutual support.

5. Abolition of Prejudices:

- Calls for the elimination of prejudices, be they racial, religious, or social.
- Stresses the detrimental impact of biases on individual and collective progress.

6. Equalization of Means of Existence:

- Advocates for social justice, seeking to balance economic disparities.
- Proposes the equitable distribution of resources for the well-being of all.

7. Equality of Men before the Law:

- Emphasizes the equal rights and responsibilities of individuals within a legal framework.
- Rejects discrimination and advocates for justice as the cornerstone of a just society.

8. Universal Peace:

- Calls for the establishment of universal peace as a collective goal.
- Outlines the detrimental consequences of war and the need for global cooperation.

9. Noninterference of Religion and Politics:

- Advocates for the separation of religious and political spheres.
- Emphasizes the importance of each domain fulfilling its unique purpose.

10. Equality of Sex—Education of Women:

- Promotes gender equality with a focus on the education of women.
- Acknowledges the transformative impact of educating women on societal progress.

11. The Power of the Holy Spirit:

- Recognizes the spiritual dimension and influence of the Holy Spirit.
- Emphasizes the transformative power of divine guidance in individual and collective life.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the fundamental principle emphasized in the search after truth?

A: The pursuit of truth is highlighted as a fundamental principle, encouraging a continual quest for knowledge and understanding.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá advocate for unity of mankind?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá advocates for the oneness of humanity, rejecting divisions based on race, nationality, or any artificial barriers.

3. Q: What is the role of religion according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in fostering love and affection?

A: Religion should be a source of love and affection among individuals, fostering goodwill and unity.

4. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá propose regarding the equalization of means of existence?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá proposes the equitable distribution of resources for the well-being of all, seeking to balance economic disparities.

5. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize the noninterference of religion and politics?

A: 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the separation of religious and political spheres, with each fulfilling its unique purpose.

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Theosophical Society, Paris

Since my arrival in Paris, I have been told of the Theosophical Society, and I know that it is composed of honored and respected men. You are men of intellect and thought, men with spiritual ideals, and it is a great pleasure for me to be among you.

Let us thank God who has drawn us together this evening. It gives me great joy, for I see that you are seekers after truth. You are not held in bondage by the chains of prejudice, and your greatest longing is to know the truth. Truth may be likened to the sun! The sun is the luminous body that disperses all shadows; in the same way does truth scatter the shadows of our imagination. As the sun gives life to the body of humanity so does truth give life to their souls. Truth is a sun that rises from different points on the horizon.

Sometimes the sun rises from the center of the horizon, then in summer it rises farther north, in winter farther south—but it is always the self-same sun, however different are the points of its rising.

In like manner truth is one, although its manifestations may be very different. Some men have eyes and see. These worship the sun, no matter from which point on the horizon it may dawn; and when the sun has left the winter sky to appear in the summer one, they know how to find it again. Others there are who worship only the spot from which the sun arose, and when it arises in its glory from another place they remain in contemplation before the spot of its former rising. Alas! these men are deprived of the blessings of the sun. Those who in truth adore the sun itself will recognize it from whatsoever dawning-place it may appear, and will straightway turn their faces towards its radiance.

We must adore the sun itself and not merely the place of its appearance. In the same way men of enlightened heart worship truth on whatever horizon it appears. They are not bound by personality, but they follow the truth, and are able to recognize it no matter from whence it may come. It is this same truth which helps humanity to progress, which gives life to all created beings, for it is the Tree of Life!

In His teaching Bahá'u'lláh gives us the explanation of truth, and I wish to speak to you briefly about this, for I see that you are capable of understanding.

The first principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

The Search for Truth

Man must cut himself free from all prejudice and from the result of his own imagination, so that he may be able to search for truth unhindered. Truth is one in all religions, and by means of it the unity of the world can be realized.

All the peoples have a fundamental belief in common. Being one, truth cannot be divided, and the differences that appear to exist among the nations only result from their attachment to prejudice. If only men would search out truth, they would find themselves united.

The second principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

The Unity of Mankind

The one all-loving God bestows His divine Grace and Favor on all mankind; one and all are servants of the Most High, and His Goodness, Mercy and loving Kindness are showered upon all His creatures. The glory of humanity is the heritage of each one.

All men are the leaves and fruit of one same tree, they are all branches of the tree of Adam, they all have the same origin. The same rain has fallen upon them all, the same warm sun makes them grow, they are all refreshed by the same breeze. The only differences that exist and that keep them apart are these: there are the children who need guidance, the ignorant to be instructed, the sick to be tended and healed; thus, I say that the whole of humanity is enveloped by the Mercy and Grace of God. As the Holy Writings tell us: All men are equal before God. He is no respecter of persons.

The third principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

Religion should be the Cause of Love and Affection

Religion should unite all hearts and cause wars and disputes to vanish from the face of the earth, give birth to spirituality, and bring life and light to each heart. If religion becomes a cause of dislike, hatred and division, it were better to be without it, and to withdraw from such a religion would be a truly religious act. For it is clear that the purpose of a remedy is to cure; but if the remedy should only aggravate the complaint it had better be left alone. Any religion which is not a cause of love and unity is no religion. All the holy prophets were as doctors to the soul; they gave prescriptions for the healing of mankind; thus any remedy that causes disease does not come from the great and supreme Physician.

The fourth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

The Unity of Religion and Science

We may think of science as one wing and religion as the other; a bird needs two wings for flight, one alone would be useless. Any religion that contradicts science or that is opposed to it, is only ignorance—for ignorance is the opposite of knowledge.

Religion which consists only of rites and ceremonies of prejudice is not the truth. Let us earnestly endeavor to be the means of uniting religion and science.

‘Alí, the son-in-law of Muḥammad, said: “That which is in conformity with science is also in conformity with religion.” Whatever the intelligence of man cannot understand, religion ought not to accept. Religion and science walk hand in hand, and any religion contrary to science is not the truth.

The fifth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

Prejudices of Religion, Race or Sect destroy the foundation of Humanity

All the divisions in the world, hatred, war and bloodshed, are caused by one or other of these prejudices.

The whole world must be looked upon as one single country, all the nations as one nation, all men as belonging to one race. Religions, races, and nations are all divisions of man's making only, and are necessary only in his thought; before God there are neither Persians, Arabs, French nor English; God is God for all, and to Him all creation is one. We must obey God, and strive to follow Him by leaving all our prejudices and bringing about peace on earth.

The sixth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

Equal opportunity of the means of Existence

Every human being has the right to live; they have a right to rest, and to a certain amount of well-being. As a rich man is able to live in his palace surrounded by luxury and the greatest comfort, so should a poor man be able to have the necessaries of life. Nobody should die of hunger; everybody should have sufficient clothing; one man should not live in excess while another has no possible means of existence.

Let us try with all the strength we have to bring about happier conditions, so that no single soul may be destitute.

The seventh principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

The Equality of Men—equality before the Law

The *Law* must reign, and not the individual; thus will the world become a place of beauty and true brotherhood will be realized. Having attained solidarity, men will have found truth.

The eighth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

Universal Peace

A Supreme Tribunal shall be elected by the peoples and governments of every nation, where members from each country and government shall assemble in unity. All disputes shall be brought before this Court, its mission being to prevent war.

The ninth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

That Religion should not concern itself with Political Questions

Religion is concerned with things of the spirit, politics with things of the world. Religion has to work with the world of thought, whilst the field of politics lies with the world of external conditions.

It is the work of the clergy to educate the people, to instruct them, to give them good advice and teaching so that they may progress spiritually. With political questions they have nothing to do.

The tenth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

Education and Instruction of Women

Women have equal rights with men upon earth; in religion and society they are a very important element. As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs.

The eleventh principle of Bahá'u'lláh is:

The Power of the Holy Spirit, by which alone Spiritual Development is achieved

It is only by the breath of the Holy Spirit that spiritual development can come about. No matter how the material world may progress, no matter how splendidly it may adorn itself, it can never be anything but a lifeless body unless the soul is within, for it is the soul that animates the body; the body alone has no real significance. Deprived of the blessings of the Holy Spirit the material body would be inert.

Here are, very briefly explained, some of the principles of Bahá'u'lláh.

In short, it behooves us all to be lovers of truth. Let us seek her in every season and in every country, being careful never to attach ourselves to personalities. Let us see the light wherever it shines, and may we be enabled to recognize the light of truth no matter where it may arise. Let us inhale the perfume of the rose from the midst of thorns which surround it; let us drink the running water from every pure spring.

Since I arrived in Paris, it has given me much pleasure to meet such Parisians as you are, for praise be to God, you are intelligent, unprejudiced, and you long to know the truth. You have in

your hearts the love of humanity, and as far as you are able, you exert yourselves in the cause of charitable work and in the bringing about of unity; this is especially what Bahá'u'lláh desired.

It is for this reason that I am so happy to be among you, and I pray for you, that you may be receptacles for the Blessings of God, and that you may be the means of spreading spirituality throughout this country.

You already have a wonderful material civilization and in like manner shall spiritual civilization be yours.

Monsieur Bleck thanked 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and He replied:

“I am very grateful to you for the kind sentiments which you have just uttered. I hope that these two movements will ere long be spread all over the earth. Then will the unity of humanity have pitched its tent in the center of the world.”

Summary:

In a gathering of the Theosophical Society in Paris, 'Abdu'l-Bahá shares Bahá'u'lláh's principles, emphasizing the pursuit of truth, the unity of mankind, the harmonious relationship between religion and science, the eradication of prejudices, equalization of means of existence, equality before the law, the aspiration for universal peace, the noninterference of religion in politics, the equality of sexes with a focus on the education of women, and the recognition of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to Theosophical Society:

- Acknowledgment of the respected members' intellect, spiritual ideals, and shared interest in truth.
- Gratitude for the gathering under God's guidance.

2. The Nature of Truth:

- Truth is compared to the sun, dispelling shadows and giving life to humanity's souls.
- The universality of truth, rising from different horizons but remaining one.

3. Principles of Bahá'u'lláh:

- Search for Truth:

- Emphasis on freeing oneself from prejudice to seek truth.
- Truth unifies the world when sincerely pursued.

- Unity of Mankind:

- Recognition of all humanity as one family.
- Common origin, shared blessings, and equality before God.

- Religion as the Cause of Love and Affection:

- Religion should unite hearts, bring about spirituality, and eliminate divisions.
- The purpose of religion is to cure, not to cause dislike or hatred.

- Unity of Religion and Science:

- Religion and science are complementary, like two wings of a bird.
- Religion not in conflict with science; they should unite for the betterment of humanity.

- Prejudices of Religion, Race, or Sect:

- These prejudices are the source of divisions, hatred, war, and bloodshed.
- Emphasis on seeing the world as one country and promoting peace.

- Equal Opportunity of Means of Existence:

- The right of every human being to live with basic necessities.
- Call for eliminating destitution and ensuring a better life for all.

- Equality of Men—Equality Before the Law:
 - Advocacy for the reign of law over individual interests.
 - Solidarity and equality lead to truth.
- Universal Peace:
 - Proposal for a Supreme Tribunal to prevent war.
 - Global cooperation for peace.
- Noninterference of Religion and Politics:
 - Clarification of the distinct roles of religion and politics.
 - Focus of religion on spiritual matters.
- Education and Instruction of Women:
 - Recognition of women's equal rights and importance.
 - The impact of empowering women on societal progress.
- The Power of the Holy Spirit:
 - Spiritual development through the breath of the Holy Spirit.
 - Material progress without spiritual development lacks significance.

4. Encouragement to Seek Truth:

- Plea to be lovers of truth, detached from personalities.
- Acknowledgment of intelligent, unprejudiced, and truth-seeking individuals present in Paris.
- Hope for receptivity to the Blessings of God and the spread of spirituality.

5. Closing Remarks:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses gratitude for the sentiments shared and prays for the global spread of spiritual and material civilization.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize the universality of truth in His analogy with the sun?

A: Truth, like the sun, rises from different points on the horizon, emphasizing its oneness despite diverse manifestations.

2. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá propose regarding the pursuit of truth?

A: Man must cut himself free from prejudice to search for truth unhindered. Truth is one in all religions, and unity can be realized through its pursuit.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the relationship between religion and science?

A: Religion and science are likened to the two wings of a bird, both essential for flight. Any religion contradicting or opposing science is considered ignorance.

4. Q: What is the significance of the principle related to the equality of men—equality before the law?

A: The law must reign over individual interests, leading to solidarity and the realization of truth.

5. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourage the Theosophical Society to approach the pursuit of truth?

A: The members are urged to be lovers of truth, recognizing it wherever it shines, detached from personalities, and inhaling the fragrance of truth from every source.

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The First Principle—Search after Truth

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

November 10th

The first principle of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is:

The Search after Truth

If a man would succeed in his search after truth, he must, in the first place, shut his eyes to all the traditional superstitions of the past.

The Jews have traditional superstitions, the Buddhists and the Zoroastrians are not free from them, neither are the Christians! All religions have gradually become bound by tradition and dogma.

All consider themselves, respectively, the only guardians of the truth, and that every other religion is composed of errors. They themselves are right, all others are wrong! The Jews believe that they are the only possessors of the truth and condemn all other religions. The Christians affirm that their religion is the only true one, that all others are false. Likewise the Buddhists and Muḥammadans; all limit themselves. If all condemn one another, where shall we search for truth? All contradicting one another, all cannot be true. If each believe his particular religion to be the only true one, he blinds his eyes to the truth in the others. If, for instance, a Jew is bound by the external practice of the religion of Israel, he does not permit himself to perceive that truth *can* exist in any other religion; it must be *all* contained in his own!

We should, therefore, detach ourselves from the external forms and practices of religion. We must realize that these forms and practices, however beautiful, are but garments clothing the warm heart and the living limbs of Divine truth. We must abandon the prejudices of tradition if we would succeed in finding the truth at the core of all religions. If a Zoroastrian believes that the Sun is God, how can he be united to other religions? While idolaters believe in their various idols, how can they understand the oneness of God?

It is, therefore, clear that in order to make any progress in the search after truth we must relinquish superstition. If all seekers would follow this principle they would obtain a clear vision of the truth.

If five people meet together to seek for truth, they must begin by cutting themselves free from all their own special conditions and renouncing all preconceived ideas. In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. The fact that we imagine

ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is necessary if we would reach truth, for truth is *one*.

Therefore it is imperative that we should renounce our own particular prejudices and superstitions if we earnestly desire to seek the truth. Unless we make a distinction in our minds between dogma, superstition and prejudice on the one hand, and truth on the other, we cannot succeed. When we are in earnest in our search for anything we look for it everywhere. This principle we must carry out in our search for truth.

Science must be accepted. No one truth can contradict another truth. Light is good in whatsoever lamp it is burning! A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom! A star has the same radiance if it shines from the East or from the West. Be free from prejudice, so will you love the Sun of Truth from whatsoever point in the horizon it may arise! You will realize that if the Divine light of truth shone in Jesus Christ it also shone in Moses and in Buddha. The earnest seeker will arrive at this truth. This is what is meant by the "Search after Truth."

It means, also, that we must be willing to clear away all that we have previously learned, all that would clog our steps on the way to truth; we must not shrink if necessary from beginning our education all over again. We must not allow our love for any one religion or any one personality to so blind our eyes that we become fettered by superstition! When we are freed from all these bonds, seeking with liberated minds, then shall we be able to arrive at our goal.

"Seek the truth, the truth shall make you free." So shall we see the truth in all religions, for truth is in all and truth is one!

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expounds on the first principle of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings – "The Search after Truth." He emphasizes the need to transcend religious prejudices, superstitions, and preconceived ideas to genuinely seek the truth. 'Abdu'l-Bahá urges the abandonment of traditional dogmas and advocates for an open, receptive mind in the quest for truth. He highlights the unity of truth across religions, encouraging seekers to be free from prejudice and to recognize divine light in various manifestations. The search for truth requires a willingness to reevaluate previous beliefs and liberate the mind from bonds that hinder progress.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the First Principle:
 - Identifying the primary principle as "The Search after Truth."
 - Emphasizing the significance of detaching from religious prejudices and superstitions.
2. Religious Superstitions and Traditions:
 - Illustrating how religions have become bound by tradition and dogma.
 - All religions claim exclusive possession of truth, hindering a unified search for truth.
3. Detachment from External Forms:
 - Advocating the detachment from external forms and practices of religion.
 - Encouraging the realization that these forms are garments for the core of divine truth.
4. Prejudices and Obstacles to Unity:
 - Critiquing the obstacles to unity arising from the belief that one's religion is the only true one.
 - Stressing the need to relinquish personal prejudices for the sake of unity.
5. Open-mindedness and the Search for Truth:
 - Emphasizing the necessity of an open, receptive mind in seeking truth.
 - Describing the hindrance caused by a chalice full of self, devoid of receptivity.
6. Unity and Universality of Truth:
 - Asserting the universality of truth, which cannot contradict itself.
 - Illustrating the idea that divine light shines in various religious figures and teachings.
7. Freedom from Prejudice:
 - Encouraging freedom from prejudice to love the truth regardless of its origin.
 - Emphasizing that the earnest seeker will recognize truth in various manifestations.
8. Clearing Away Previous Learnings:
 - Advocating the willingness to clear away previous knowledge for a renewed education.
 - Discouraging the attachment to any religion or personality that might hinder the search for truth.

9. Arriving at the Goal:

- Quoting the principle, “Seek the truth, the truth shall make you free.”
- Asserting that seekers, freed from bonds and liberated minds, will arrive at the truth.

10. Universal Nature of Truth:

- Stating that truth is found in all religions, emphasizing the oneness of truth.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the role of prejudices in hindering the path to truth?

A: He points out that the belief in one's religion as the only true one is a significant obstacle to unity and the search for truth.

2. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggest regarding the relationship between science and truth?

A: He emphasizes that science must be accepted, and no one truth can contradict another truth.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourage seekers to approach the search for truth?

A: Seekers are encouraged to clear away previous learning, be free from prejudices, and have an open, receptive mind in their quest for truth.

4. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá stress the importance of relinquishing superstitions and traditions?

A: He believes that these hinder the search for truth and advocates for the detachment from external forms and practices.

5. Q: What is the significance of the phrase "Seek the truth, the truth shall make you free" in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discourse?

A: It conveys the idea that a genuine search for truth leads to freedom and liberation, emphasizing the transformative power of truth-seeking.

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The Second Principle—The Unity of Mankind

November 11th

I spoke yesterday of the first principle of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, “The Search for Truth”; how it is necessary for a man to put aside all in the nature of superstition, and every tradition which would blind his eyes to the existence of truth in all religions. He must not, while loving and clinging to one form of religion, permit himself to detest all others. It is essential that he search for truth in all religions, and, if his seeking be in earnest, he will assuredly succeed.

Now the first discovery which we make in our “Search after Truth,” will lead us to the second principle, which is the “Unity of Mankind.” All men are servants of the One God. One God reigns over all the nations of the world and has pleasure in all His children. All men are of one family; the crown of humanity rests on the head of every human being.

In the eyes of the Creator all His children are equal; His goodness is poured forth on all. He does not favor this nation nor that nation, all alike are His creatures. This being so, why should we make divisions, separating one race from another? Why should we create barriers of superstition and tradition bringing discord and hatred among the people?

The only difference between members of the human family is that of degree. Some are like children who are ignorant, and must be educated until they arrive at maturity. Some are like the sick and must be treated with tenderness and care. None are bad or evil! We must not be repelled by these poor children. We must treat them with great kindness, teaching the ignorant and tenderly nursing the sick.

Consider: Unity is necessary to existence. Love is the very cause of life; on the other hand, separation brings death. In the world of material creation, for instance, all things owe their actual life to unity. The elements which compose wood, mineral, or stone, are held together by the law of attraction. If this law should cease for one moment to operate these elements would not hold together, they would fall apart, and the object would in that particular form cease to exist. The law of attraction has brought together certain elements in the form of this beautiful flower, but when that attraction is withdrawn from this center the flower will decompose, and, as a flower, cease to exist.

So it is with the great body of humanity. The wonderful Law of Attraction, Harmony and Unity, holds together this marvelous Creation.

As with the whole, so with the parts; whether a flower or a human body, when the attracting principle is withdrawn from it, the flower or the man dies. It is therefore clear that attraction, harmony, unity and Love, are the cause of life, whereas repulsion, discord, hatred and separation bring death.

We have seen that whatever brings division into the world of existence causes death. Likewise in the world of the spirit does the same law operate.

Therefore should every servant of the One God be obedient to the law of love, avoiding all hatred, discord, and strife. We find when we observe nature, that the gentler animals group themselves together into flocks and herds, whereas the savage, ferocious creatures, such as the lion, the tiger, and the wolf, live in wild forests, apart from civilization. Two wolves, or two lions, may live amicably together; but a thousand lambs may share the same fold and a large number of deer can form one herd. Two eagles can dwell in the same place, but a thousand doves can gather into one habitation.

Man should, at least, be numbered among the gentler animals; but when he becomes ferocious he is more cruel and malicious than the most savage of the animal creation!

Now Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the "Unity of the World of Mankind." All peoples and nations are of one family, the children of one Father, and should be to one another as brothers and sisters! I hope that you will endeavor in your lives to show forth and spread this teaching.

Bahá'u'lláh said that we should love even our enemies and be to them as friends. If all men were obedient to this principle, the greatest unity and understanding would be established in the hearts of mankind.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the second principle of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings – "The Unity of Mankind." He emphasizes that all individuals, regardless of race or background, are servants of the One God and form one family. 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls for the recognition of the fundamental equality of all people and discourages the creation of divisions based on superstition and tradition. He asserts that unity is essential for existence and likens it to the law of attraction in the material world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá underscores the importance of love, harmony, and the avoidance of hatred and discord to foster unity among humanity.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Second Principle:

- Identifying the second principle as "The Unity of Mankind."
- Linking this principle to the initial step of searching for truth in all religions.

2. The Oneness of Humanity:

- Emphasizing that all individuals are servants of the One God.
- Declaring the unity of mankind, with all people belonging to one family.

3. Equality Before the Creator:

- Asserting that all human beings are equal in the eyes of the Creator.
- Denouncing the creation of divisions based on nationality, race, or traditions.

4. Degrees of Maturity and Understanding:

- Describing the diversity in humanity as a difference in degrees of maturity.
- Encouraging the compassionate treatment of those less knowledgeable or in need.

5. Unity in Nature and Spirit:

- Drawing parallels between unity in the material world and spiritual unity.
- Discussing the law of attraction, harmony, and love as causes of life.

6. Importance of Unity:

- Stating that unity is essential for existence.
- Explaining how repulsion, discord, and hatred bring about death, both physically and spiritually.

7. Comparison to Animal Behavior:

- Observing the gentler animals' tendency to group together.
- Contrasting with the behavior of ferocious animals that live in isolation.

8. Bahá'u'lláh's Proclamation:

- Highlighting Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation of the "Unity of the World of Mankind."
- Urging individuals to see each other as brothers and sisters, fostering unity and understanding.

9. Principles of Love and Unity:

- Quoting Bahá'u'lláh's teaching to love even enemies and be friends to them.
- Illustrating how universal adherence to this principle would establish profound unity and understanding.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the significance of the second principle, "The Unity of Mankind," in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings?

A: It emphasizes that all individuals are part of one family and calls for unity, equality, and love among people.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá connect unity in the material world with spiritual unity?

A: He draws parallels, stating that just as attraction, harmony, and unity are causes of life in the material world, the same principles are crucial for spiritual life.

3. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá use the behavior of gentler animals to illustrate the importance of unity?

A: He illustrates how cooperation and unity among gentler animals contrast with the isolation of ferocious animals, emphasizing the positive outcomes of unity.

4. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggest about the treatment of those less knowledgeable or in need?

A: He encourages compassionate treatment, likening some individuals to children needing education or the sick requiring care.

5. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what would happen if everyone loved their enemies and treated them as friends?

A: He suggests that the greatest unity and understanding would be established in the hearts of mankind.

The Third Principle—Love and Affection

[“That *religion ought to be a Cause of Love and Affection*” is much emphasized in many of the Discourses of which the Notes are given in this book, as well as in the explanation of several of the other Principles.]

Summary:

The third principle, "Love and Affection," underscores the idea that religion should serve as a source of love and unity among people. This principle is emphasized in various discourses, highlighting the importance of fostering love and affection through religious teachings. The concept is intertwined with other principles, contributing to the overall framework of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Third Principle:

- Identifying the third principle as "Love and Affection."
- Emphasizing its recurrent theme in various discourses and teachings.

2. Religion as a Source of Love:

- Stating that religion should be a cause of love and affection.
- Emphasizing the positive impact of religious teachings on fostering unity and compassion.

3. Integration with Other Principles:

- Discussing the interconnection of the principle of love and affection with other fundamental principles.
- Illustrating how this principle contributes to the broader framework of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

4. Application in Daily Life:

- Exploring practical ways in which individuals can manifest love and affection through religious principles.
- Emphasizing the transformative power of love in building harmonious communities.

5. Unity Through Love:

- Discussing how the principle of love and affection contributes to the unity of mankind.
- Highlighting examples or stories that illustrate the positive impact of applying this principle.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: Why is the principle of "Love and Affection" considered significant in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings?

A: It emphasizes the idea that religion should be a source of love and unity, promoting harmonious relationships among people.

2. Q: How does the concept of love and affection integrate with other principles in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings?

A: It is intertwined with various principles, contributing to a holistic framework that emphasizes the interconnectedness of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

3. Q: In what ways can individuals apply the principle of love and affection in their daily lives?

A: By manifesting love through compassionate actions, understanding, and unity, individuals can actively contribute to creating harmonious communities.

4. Q: How does the principle of love and affection contribute to the unity of mankind?

A: It fosters an environment where people treat each other with kindness, compassion, and understanding, ultimately contributing to the greater unity of humanity.

5. Q: Are there specific examples or stories that highlight the positive impact of applying the principle of love and affection in religious teachings?

A: Examples could include narratives illustrating how acts of love have transformed individuals, communities, or societies, emphasizing the practical impact of this principle.

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The Fourth Principle—The Acceptance of the Relation between Religion and Science

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

November 12th

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

I have spoken to you of some of the principles of Bahá’u’lláh: *The Search after Truth* and *The Unity of Mankind*. I will now explain the *Fourth Principle*, which is *The Acceptance of the Relation between Religion and Science*.

There is no contradiction between true religion and science. When a religion is opposed to science it becomes mere superstition: that which is contrary to knowledge is ignorance.

How can a man believe to be a fact that which science has proved to be impossible? If he believes in spite of his reason, it is rather ignorant superstition than faith. The true principles of all religions are in conformity with the teachings of science.

The Unity of God is logical, and this idea is not antagonistic to the conclusions arrived at by scientific study.

All religions teach that we must do good, that we must be generous, sincere, truthful, law-abiding, and faithful; all this is reasonable, and logically the only way in which humanity can progress.

All religious laws conform to reason, and are suited to the people for whom they are framed, and for the age in which they are to be obeyed.

Religion has two main parts:

(1) The Spiritual.

(2) The Practical.

The spiritual part never changes. All the Manifestations of God and His Prophets have taught the same truths and given the same spiritual law. They all teach the one code of morality. There is no division in the truth. The Sun has sent forth many rays to illumine human intelligence, the light is always the same.

The practical part of religion deals with exterior forms and ceremonies, and with modes of punishment for certain offences. This is the material side of the law, and guides the customs and manners of the people.

In the time of Moses, there were ten crimes punishable by death. When Christ came this was changed; the old axiom “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” was converted into “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,” the stern old law being changed into one of love, mercy and forbearance!

In the former days the punishment for theft was the cutting off of the right hand; in our time this law could not be so applied. In this age, a man who curses his father is allowed to live, when formerly he would have been put to death. It is therefore evident that whilst the spiritual law never alters, the practical rules must change their application with the necessities of the time. The spiritual aspect of religion is the greater, the more important of the two, and this is the same for all time. It never changes! It is the same, yesterday, today, and forever! “As it was the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.”

Now, all questions of morality contained in the spiritual, immutable law of every religion are logically right. If religion were contrary to logical reason then it would cease to be a religion and be merely a tradition. Religion and science are the two wings upon which man’s intelligence can soar into the heights, with which the human soul can progress. It is not possible to fly with one wing alone! Should a man try to fly with the wing of religion alone he would quickly fall into the quagmire of superstition, whilst on the other hand, with the wing of science alone he would also make no progress, but fall into the despairing slough of materialism. All religions of the present day have fallen into superstitious practices, out of harmony alike with the true principles of the teaching they represent and with the scientific discoveries of the time. Many religious leaders have grown to think that the importance of religion lies mainly in the adherence to a collection of certain dogmas and the practice of rites and ceremonies! Those whose souls they profess to cure are taught to believe likewise, and these cling tenaciously to the outward forms, confusing them with the inward truth.

Now, these forms and rituals differ in the various churches and amongst the different sects, and even contradict one another; giving rise to discord, hatred, and disunion. The outcome of all this dissension is the belief of many cultured men that religion and science are contradictory terms, that religion needs no powers of reflection, and should in no wise be regulated by science, but must of necessity be opposed, the one to the other. The unfortunate effect of this is that science has drifted apart from religion, and religion has become a mere blind and more or less apathetic following of the precepts of certain religious teachers, who insist on their own favorite dogmas being accepted even when they are contrary to science. This is foolishness, for it is quite evident that science is the light, and, being so, religion *truly* so-called does not oppose knowledge.

We are familiar with the phrases “Light and Darkness,” “Religion and Science.” But the religion which does not walk hand in hand with science is itself in the darkness of superstition and ignorance.

Much of the discord and disunion of the world is created by these man-made oppositions and contradictions. If religion were in harmony with science and they walked together, much of the hatred and bitterness now bringing misery to the human race would be at an end.

Consider what it is that singles man out from among created beings, and makes of him a creature apart. Is it not his reasoning power, his intelligence? Shall he not make use of these in his study of religion? I say unto you: weigh carefully in the balance of reason and science

everything that is presented to you as religion. If it passes this test, then accept it, for it is truth! If, however, it does not so conform, then reject it, for it is ignorance!

Look around and see how the world of today is drowned in superstition and outward forms!

Some worship the product of their own imagination: they make for themselves an imaginary God and adore this, when the creation of their finite minds cannot be the Infinite Mighty Maker of all things visible and invisible! Others worship the sun or trees, also stones! In past ages there were those who adored the sea, the clouds, and even clay!

Today, men have grown into such adoring attachment to outward forms and ceremonies that they dispute over this point of ritual or that particular practice, until one hears on all sides of wearisome arguments and unrest. There are individuals who have weak intellects and their powers of reasoning have not developed, but the strength and power of religion must not be doubted because of the incapacity of these persons to understand.

A small child cannot comprehend the laws that govern nature, but this is on account of the immature intellect of that child; when he is grown older and has been educated he too will understand the everlasting truths. A child does not grasp the fact that the earth revolves round the sun, but, when his intelligence is awakened, the fact is clear and plain to him.

It is impossible for religion to be contrary to science, even though some intellects are too weak or too immature to understand truth.

God made religion and science to be the measure, as it were, of our understanding. Take heed that you neglect not such a wonderful power. Weigh all things in this balance.

To him who has the power of comprehension religion is like an open book, but how can it be possible for a man devoid of reason and intellectuality to understand the Divine Realities of God?

Put all your beliefs into harmony with science; there can be no opposition, for truth is one. When religion, shorn of its superstitions, traditions, and unintelligent dogmas, shows its conformity with science, then will there be a great unifying, cleansing force in the world which will sweep before it all wars, disagreements, discords and struggles—and then will mankind be united in the power of the Love of God.

Summary:

The fourth principle, "The Acceptance of the Relation between Religion and Science," emphasizes the harmony between true religion and science. 'Abdu'l-Bahá rejects the idea of contradiction between them, stating that when religion opposes science, it becomes mere superstition. He explains that the spiritual principles of religion remain constant, while practical aspects adapt to the changing needs of society. The discourse highlights the detrimental effects of discord between religion and science and encourages a balanced approach, wherein both contribute to the progress of humanity.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Fourth Principle:

- Identifying the fourth principle as "The Acceptance of the Relation between Religion and Science."
- Emphasizing the lack of contradiction between true religion and science.

2. Condemnation of Contradiction:

- Stating that when religion opposes science, it becomes superstition.
- Emphasizing the importance of avoiding beliefs that contradict scientifically proven facts.

3. Consistency in Spiritual Principles:

- Distinguishing between the spiritual and practical aspects of religion.
- Affirming that spiritual principles remain constant across religions and throughout time.

4. Changing Practical Applications:

- Explaining how practical rules change with the necessities of the time.
- Illustrating the evolution of punishments and moral guidelines in different eras.

5. Harmony between Religion and Science:

- Advocating for the unity of religion and science.
- Rejecting the notion that they are contradictory and emphasizing their complementary nature.

6. Dangers of Discord:

- Discussing the negative consequences of discord between religion and science.
- Highlighting the importance of aligning religious teachings with scientific understanding.

7. The Power of Reason:

- Emphasizing the significance of reasoning and intellect in understanding religion.
- Encouraging individuals to weigh religious beliefs against the measure of reason and science.

8. Unifying Force of Truth:

- Asserting that truth unifies and cleanses the world from conflicts and struggles.

- Proposing that conformity between religion and science brings a unifying force in the Love of God.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasize the lack of contradiction between true religion and science?

A: He argues that when religion opposes science, it becomes mere superstition, and truth is consistent between the two.

2. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explain the relationship between the spiritual and practical aspects of religion?

A: He distinguishes the spiritual principles as constant across religions while acknowledging that practical rules adapt to the necessities of the time.

3. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasize the importance of harmony between religion and science?

A: He highlights the negative consequences of discord between them and advocates for their complementary nature in fostering progress.

4. Q: What role does reason and intellect play in understanding religion, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

A: He stresses the significance of reasoning and intellect in comprehending religious truths, encouraging individuals to use these faculties to evaluate beliefs.

5. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá envision the unifying force of truth between religion and science?

A: He proposes that conformity between them will result in a unifying and cleansing force that eradicates conflicts and struggles, bringing humanity together in the Love of God.

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The Fifth Principle—The Abolition of Prejudices

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

November 13th

All prejudices, whether of religion, race, politics or nation, must be renounced, for these prejudices have caused the world’s sickness. It is a grave malady which, unless arrested, is capable of causing the destruction of the whole human race. Every ruinous war, with its terrible bloodshed and misery, has been caused by one or other of these prejudices.

The deplorable wars going on in these days are caused by the fanatical religious hatred of one people for another, or the prejudices of race or color.

Until all these barriers erected by prejudice are swept away, it is not possible for humanity to be at peace. For this reason Bahá’u’lláh has said, “These Prejudices are destructive to mankind.”

Contemplate first the prejudice of religion: consider the nations of so-called religious people; if they were truly worshippers of God they would obey His law which forbids them to kill one another.

If priests of religion really adored the God of love and served the Divine Light, they would teach their people to keep the chief Commandment, "To be in love and charity with all men." But we find the contrary, for it is often the priests who encourage nations to fight. Religious hatred is ever the most cruel!

All religions teach that we should love one another; that we should seek out our own shortcomings before we presume to condemn the faults of others, that we must not consider ourselves superior to our neighbors! We must be careful not to exalt ourselves lest we be humiliated.

Who are *we* that we should judge? How shall *we* know who, in the sight of God, is the most upright man? God's thoughts are not like our thoughts! How many men who have seemed saint-like to their friends have fallen into the greatest humiliation. Think of Judas Iscariot; he began well, but remember his end! On the other hand, Paul, the Apostle, was in his early life an enemy of Christ, whilst later he became His most faithful servant. How then can we flatter ourselves and despise others?

Let us therefore be humble, without prejudices, preferring others' good to our own! Let us never say, "I am a believer but he is an infidel," "I am near to God, whilst he is an outcast." We can never know what will be the final judgment! Therefore let us help all who are in need of any kind of assistance.

Let us teach the ignorant, and take care of the young child until he grows to maturity. When we find a person fallen into the depths of misery or sin we must be kind to him, take him by the hand, help him to regain his footing, his strength; we must guide him with love and tenderness, treat him as a friend not as an enemy.

We have no right to look upon any of our fellow-mortals as evil.

Concerning the prejudice of race: it is an illusion, a superstition pure and simple! For God created us all of one race. There were no differences in the beginning, for we are all descendants of Adam. In the beginning, also, there were no limits and boundaries between the different lands; no part of the earth belonged more to one people than to another. In the sight of God there is no difference between the various races. Why should man invent such a prejudice? How can we uphold war caused by an illusion?

God has not created men that they should destroy one another. All races, tribes, sects and classes share equally in the Bounty of their Heavenly Father.

The only difference lies in the degree of faithfulness, of obedience to the laws of God. There are some who are as lighted torches, there are others who shine as stars in the sky of humanity. The lovers of mankind, these are the superior men, of whatever nation, creed, or color they may be. For it is they to whom God will say these blessed words, "Well done, My good and faithful servants." In that day He will not ask, "Are you English, French, or perhaps Persian? Do you come from the East, or from the West?"

The only division that is real is this: There are heavenly men and earthly men; self-sacrificing servants of humanity in the love of the Most High, bringing harmony and unity, teaching peace and goodwill to men. On the other hand there are those selfish men, haters of their brethren, in whose hearts prejudice has replaced loving kindness, and whose influence breeds discord and strife.

To which race or to which color belong these two divisions of men, to the White, to the Yellow, to the Black, to the East or to the West, to the North or to the South? If these are God's divisions, why should we invent others? Political prejudice is equally mischievous, it is one of the greatest causes of bitter strife amongst the children of men. There are people who find pleasure in breeding discord, who constantly endeavor to goad their country into making war upon other nations—and why? They think to advantage their own country to the detriment of all others. They send armies to harass and destroy the land, in order to become famous in the world, for the joy of conquest. That it may be said: “Such a country has defeated another, and brought it under the yoke of their stronger, more superior rule.” This victory, bought at the price of much bloodshed, is not lasting! The conqueror shall one day be conquered; and the vanquished ones victorious! Remember the history of the past: did not France conquer Germany more than once—then did not the German nation overcome France?

We learn also that France conquered England; then was the English nation victorious over France!

These glorious conquests are so ephemeral! Why attach so great importance to them and to their fame, as to be willing to shed the blood of the people for their attainment? Is any victory worth the inevitable train of evils consequent upon human slaughter, the grief and sorrow and ruin which must overwhelm so many homes of both nations? For it is not possible that one country alone should suffer.

Oh! why will man, the disobedient child of God, who should be an example of the power of the spiritual law, turn his face away from the Divine Teaching and put all his effort into destruction and war?

My hope is that in this enlightened century the Divine Light of love will shed its radiance over the whole world, seeking out the responsive heart's intelligence of every human being; that the light of the Sun of Truth will lead politicians to shake off all the claims of prejudice and superstition, and with freed minds to follow the Policy of God: for Divine Politics are mighty, man's politics are feeble! God has created all the world, and bestows His Divine Bounty upon every creature.

Are we not the servants of God? Shall we neglect to follow our Master's Example, and ignore His Commands?

I pray that the Kingdom shall come on Earth, and that all darkness shall be driven away by the effulgence of the Heavenly Sun.

Summary:

The fifth principle, "The Abolition of Prejudices," underscores the necessity to renounce all forms of prejudice, be it related to religion, race, politics, or nationality. 'Abdu'l-Bahá contends that these prejudices have been the root cause of destructive wars, fueled by religious animosity, racial bias, and political discord. He emphasizes the importance of eradicating these barriers to achieve global peace and unity. The discourse stresses the illusory nature of racial distinctions and the need for humanity to recognize its common origin, thereby promoting harmony and eliminating divisive ideologies.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Fifth Principle:

- Identifying the fifth principle as "The Abolition of Prejudices."
- Highlighting the grave consequences of prejudice leading to destructive wars.

2. Religious Prejudice:

- Critiquing religious leaders who incite hatred and wars.
- Emphasizing that true worship involves obeying God's law to love one another.

3. Race as an Illusion:

- Asserting that racial distinctions are illusions.
- Reiterating that all humans are descendants of Adam, created equally by God.

4. Degrees of Faithfulness:

- Introducing the concept that differences lie in the degree of faithfulness to God's laws.
- Distinguishing between those who serve humanity selflessly and those who breed discord.

5. Political Prejudice and Wars:

- Condemning political prejudice as a cause of bitter strife.
- Criticizing those who seek conquest and fame through war.
- Highlighting the ephemeral nature of conquests and their inevitable cycle.

6. Humanity's Obedience to God:

- Urging humanity to be obedient to God's commands.
- Encouraging individuals to turn away from destruction and war, following the Divine Teaching.

7. Divine Politics vs. Man's Politics:

- Contrasting the feeble nature of human politics with the might of Divine Politics.
- Advocating for the shedding of prejudice and superstition, embracing Divine guidance.

8. Hope for an Enlightened Century:

- Expressing hope that the Divine Light of love will illuminate the world.

- Aspiring for politicians to abandon prejudice and follow the Policy of God for a harmonious world.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the root cause of many wars?

A: Prejudices related to religion, race, politics, or nationality, which have caused destructive conflicts.

2. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describe the illusory nature of racial distinctions?

A: He asserts that all humans are descendants of Adam, emphasizing the lack of real differences in the sight of God.

3. Q: What is the proposed solution for achieving global peace, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

A: The abolition of all prejudices, as they obstruct humanity's path to unity and harmony.

4. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá view the political motives behind wars and conquests?

A: He criticizes political prejudices that lead to wars, highlighting their temporary nature and the eventual cycle of victory and defeat.

5. Q: What is the hope expressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the future?

A: He hopes for an enlightened century where the Divine Light of love will guide humanity, leading politicians away from prejudice and conflict, and ushering in a Kingdom of peace on Earth.

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The Sixth Principle—Means of Existence

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris

One of the most important principles of the Teaching of Bahá’u’lláh is:

The right of every human being to the daily bread whereby they exist, or the equalization of the means of livelihood.

The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, that everyone, as far as possible, according to his rank and position, shall share in comfort and well-being.

We see amongst us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones who starve with nothing; those who possess several stately palaces, and those who have not where to lay their head. Some we find with numerous courses of costly and dainty food; whilst others can scarce find sufficient crusts to keep them alive. Whilst some are clothed in velvets, furs and fine linen, others have insufficient, poor and thin garments with which to protect them from the cold.

This condition of affairs is wrong, and must be remedied. Now the remedy must be carefully undertaken. It cannot be done by bringing to pass absolute equality between men.

Equality is a chimera! It is entirely impracticable! Even if equality could be achieved it could not continue—and if its existence were possible, the whole order of the world would be destroyed. The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. Heaven has so decreed in the creation of man.

Some are full of intelligence, others have an ordinary amount of it, and others again are devoid of intellect. In these three classes of men there is order but not equality. How could it be possible that wisdom and stupidity should be equal? Humanity, like a great army, requires a general, captains, under-officers in their degree, and soldiers, each with their own appointed duties. Degrees are absolutely necessary to ensure an orderly organization. An army could not be composed of generals alone, or of captains only, or of nothing but soldiers without one in authority. The certain result of such a plan would be that disorder and demoralization would overtake the whole army.

King Lycurgus, the philosopher, made a great plan to equalize the subjects of Sparta; with self-sacrifice and wisdom was the experiment begun. Then the king called the people of his kingdom, and made them swear a great oath to maintain the same order of government if he should leave the country, also that nothing should make them alter it until his return. Having secured this oath, he left his kingdom of Sparta and never returned. Lycurgus abandoned the situation, renouncing his high position, thinking to achieve the permanent good of his country by the equalization of the property and of the conditions of life in his kingdom. All the self-sacrifice of the king was in vain. The great experiment failed. After a time all was destroyed; his carefully thought-out constitution came to an end.

The futility of attempting such a scheme was shown and the impossibility of attaining equal conditions of existence was proclaimed in the ancient kingdom of Sparta. In our day any such attempt would be equally doomed to failure.

Certainly, some being enormously rich and others lamentably poor, an organization is necessary to control and improve this state of affairs. It is important to limit riches, as it is also of importance to limit poverty. Either extreme is not good. To be seated in the mean¹ is most desirable. If it be right for a capitalist to possess a large fortune, it is equally just that his workman should have a sufficient means of existence.

A financier with colossal wealth should not exist whilst near him is a poor man in dire necessity. When we see poverty allowed to reach a condition of starvation it is a sure sign that somewhere we shall find tyranny. Men must bestir themselves in this matter, and no longer delay in altering conditions which bring the misery of grinding poverty to a very large number of the people. The rich must give of their abundance, they must soften their hearts and cultivate a compassionate intelligence, taking thought for those sad ones who are suffering from lack of the very necessities of life.

There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved.

The government of the countries should conform to the Divine Law which gives equal justice to all. This is the only way in which the deplorable superfluity of great wealth and miserable, demoralizing, degrading poverty can be abolished. Not until this is done will the Law of God be obeyed.

Summary:

The sixth principle, "Means of Existence," emphasizes the right of every individual to a livelihood, promoting the equalization of living conditions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá critiques extreme economic disparities and calls for the elimination of poverty, urging a balanced approach to wealth distribution. While absolute equality is deemed impracticable, he advocates for an organized effort to regulate both wealth and poverty. He draws lessons from historical attempts at achieving economic equality and underscores the importance of adhering to divine laws in governance to address socioeconomic issues.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Sixth Principle:

- Identifying the sixth principle as "Means of Existence" or the right to a daily livelihood.
- Stating the goal of eradicating poverty and achieving a balanced distribution of wealth.

2. Current Economic Disparities:

- Describing the stark contrasts between extreme wealth and dire poverty.
- Highlighting the unjust conditions where some possess abundance while others suffer from deprivation.

3. Impracticality of Absolute Equality:

- Dismissing absolute equality as impracticable and unsustainable.
- Advocating for a balanced approach without complete uniformity.

4. Importance of Degrees and Organization:

- Emphasizing the necessity of order and organization in society.
- Comparing the organization of humanity to a structured army with various roles and responsibilities.

5. Historical Lessons - Lycurgus and Sparta:

- Narrating the failed experiment of Lycurgus in Sparta to equalize property and conditions.
- Illustrating the futility of absolute economic equality through historical examples.

6. Importance of Moderation:

- Advocating for moderation in wealth and poverty.
- Stating that a middle ground is most desirable for the well-being of society.

7. Role of Government and Divine Law:

- Calling for specific laws to address extreme wealth and poverty.
- Urging governments to conform to divine laws that ensure equal justice for all.

8. Guarding General Rights of Mankind:

- Emphasizing the responsibility of governments to protect the general rights of all individuals.
- Proposing the elimination of economic extremes as a means of obeying the Law of God.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the fundamental principle related to economic disparities?

A: The right of every human being to a daily livelihood and the equalization of living conditions.

2. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá deem absolute economic equality impracticable?

A: He argues that absolute equality is unsustainable and that a balanced approach without complete uniformity is more realistic.

3. Q: What historical example does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá use to illustrate the futility of attempting absolute economic equality?

A: The failed experiment of Lycurgus in Sparta to equalize property and conditions.

4. Q: What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá propose as the most desirable condition for society regarding wealth and poverty?

A: A middle ground or moderation in wealth and poverty.

5. Q: What is the role of government in addressing economic extremes according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

A: Governments should create specific laws to regulate extreme wealth and poverty, conforming to divine laws that ensure equal justice for all.

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The Seventh Principle—Equality of Men

“The Laws of God are not imposition of will, or of power, or of pleasure, but the resolutions of truth, reason and justice.”

All men are equal before the law, which must reign absolutely.

The object of punishment is not vengeance, but the prevention of crime.

Kings must rule with wisdom and justice; prince, peer and peasant alike have equal rights to just treatment, there must be no favor shown to individuals. A judge must be no “respector of persons,” but administer the law with strict impartiality in every case brought before him.

If a person commit a crime against you, you have not the right to forgive him; but the law must punish him in order to prevent a repetition of that same crime by others, as the pain of the individual is unimportant beside the general welfare of the people.

When perfect justice reigns in every country of the Eastern and Western World, then will the earth become a place of beauty. The dignity and equality of every servant of God will be acknowledged; the ideal of the solidarity of the human race, the true brotherhood of man, will be realized; and the glorious light of the Sun of Truth will illumine the souls of all men.

Summary:

The seventh principle, "Equality of Men," underscores the Laws of God as resolutions of truth, reason, and justice. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts the absolute equality of all individuals before the law. He emphasizes that punishment's purpose is prevention rather than vengeance. Rulers, whether kings or judges, are expected to govern with wisdom and justice, treating all, from prince to peasant, impartially. Forgiveness is not a right when a crime is committed; the law must act to prevent further offenses and prioritize the general welfare over individual pain. The attainment of perfect justice globally is envisioned as the key to realizing the dignity and equality of every individual, fostering true brotherhood and illuminating the world with the light of the Sun of Truth.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Seventh Principle:

- Presenting the seventh principle as "Equality of Men."
- Emphasizing the divine nature of laws as resolutions of truth, reason, and justice.

2. Equality Before the Law:

- Declaring the absolute equality of all individuals before the law.
- Rejecting any form of favoritism or partiality in the administration of justice.

3. Purpose of Punishment:

- Clarifying that the objective of punishment is prevention of crime, not vengeance.
- Emphasizing the role of the law in maintaining general welfare by addressing criminal behavior.

4. Wisdom and Justice in Governance:

- Asserting that rulers, including kings and judges, must rule with wisdom and justice.
- Stating the equal rights of individuals, irrespective of their social status, to fair treatment.

5. Impartiality and Justice:

- Advocating for judges to be impartial, with no favoritism shown to individuals.
- Rejecting the idea of a judge as a "respector of persons" and promoting strict adherence to the law.

6. Non-Right to Forgiveness:

- Explaining that forgiveness is not an individual right when a crime is committed.
- Arguing that the law must act to prevent the repetition of the crime for the greater good.

7. Global Vision of Justice:

- Envisioning a world where perfect justice prevails in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres.
- Predicting that such justice will lead to the acknowledgment of the dignity and equality of every individual.

8. Realization of Brotherhood:

- Highlighting the achievement of true brotherhood among humanity through the realization of equality.
- Linking global justice to the illumination of souls with the light of the Sun of Truth.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the main emphasis in the seventh principle, "Equality of Men"?

A: The absolute equality of all individuals before the law.

2. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the purpose of punishment?

A: The prevention of crime, not vengeance.

3. Q: How should rulers, including kings and judges, govern according to this principle?

A: They must rule with wisdom and justice, treating all individuals equally, regardless of social status.

4. Q: What role does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá assign to judges in the administration of justice?

A: Judges must be impartial, showing no favoritism to individuals, and administer the law with strict adherence.

5. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá argue against the right to forgive when a crime is committed?

A: Forgiveness is not a right because the law must act to prevent the repetition of the crime for the general welfare of the people.

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The Eighth Principle—Universal Peace

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris

A Supreme Tribunal shall be established by the peoples and Governments of every nation, composed of members elected from each country and Government. The members of this Great Council shall assemble in unity. All disputes of an international character shall be submitted to this Court, its work being to arrange by arbitration everything which otherwise would be a cause of war. The mission of this Tribunal would be to prevent war.

One of the great steps towards universal peace would be the establishment of a universal language. Bahá’u’lláh commands that the servants of humanity should meet together, and either choose a language which now exists, or form a new one. This was revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas forty years ago. It is there pointed out that the question of diversity of tongues is a very difficult one. There are more than eight hundred languages in the world, and no person could acquire them all.

The races of mankind are not isolated as in former days. Now, in order to be in close relationship with all countries it is necessary to be able to speak their tongues.

A universal language would make intercourse possible with every nation. Thus it would be needful to know two languages only, the mother tongue and the universal speech. The latter would enable a man to communicate with any and every man in the world!

A third language would not be needed. To be able to talk with a member of any race and country without requiring an interpreter, how helpful and restful to all!

Esperanto has been drawn up with this end in view: it is a fine invention and a splendid piece of work, but it needs perfecting. Esperanto as it stands is very difficult for some people.

An international Congress should be formed, consisting of delegates from every nation in the world, Eastern as well as Western. This Congress should form a language that could be acquired by all, and every country would thereby reap great benefit.

Until such a language is in use, the world will continue to feel the vast need of this means of intercourse. Difference of speech is one of the most fruitful causes of dislike and distrust that exists between nations, which are kept apart by their inability to understand each other's language more than by any other reason.

If everybody could speak one language, how much more easy would it be to serve humanity!

Therefore appreciate "Esperanto," for it is the beginning of the carrying out of one of the most important of the Laws of Bahá'u'lláh, and it must continue to be improved and perfected.

Summary:

The eighth principle, "Universal Peace," envisions the establishment of a Supreme Tribunal by the peoples and governments of every nation, tasked with arbitrating international disputes to prevent war. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the need for a universal language to foster global unity, echoing Bahá'u'lláh's command for the servants of humanity to choose or create such a language. The goal is to enable communication with people of all nations and eliminate language barriers. While recognizing Esperanto as a step towards this objective, 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggests its improvement and perfection through an international Congress of delegates from every nation.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Eighth Principle:

- Introducing "Universal Peace" as the eighth principle.
- Describing the envisioned establishment of a Supreme Tribunal to prevent war.

2. Universal Language for Global Unity:

- Stressing the importance of a universal language for fostering global unity.
- Quoting Bahá'u'lláh's command to choose or create a language for humanity's service.

3. Challenges of Language Diversity:

- Highlighting the difficulty posed by over eight hundred languages in the world.
- Discussing the need for a solution due to increased interaction between races and nations.

4. Benefits of a Universal Language:

- Proposing the use of two languages: mother tongue and a universal language.
- Emphasizing the ease of communication with any person worldwide using a universal language.

5. Esperanto as a Step Forward:

- Acknowledging Esperanto as an invention aligned with Bahá'u'lláh's vision.
- Recognizing Esperanto's need for improvement and perfection.

6. Call for an International Congress:

- Advocating the formation of an international Congress with delegates from all nations.
- Proposing the creation of a language that could be acquired by all, benefiting every country.

7. Language Barriers as a Source of Dislike:

- Identifying language differences as a significant cause of dislike and distrust between nations.
- Emphasizing the role of a universal language in bridging gaps and fostering understanding.

8. Appreciation for Esperanto:

- Encouraging the appreciation of Esperanto as the initial step toward implementing Bahá'u'lláh's Laws.

- Urging continuous improvement and perfection of Esperanto for effective global communication.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the primary objective of the Supreme Tribunal mentioned in the eighth principle?
A: To arbitrate international disputes and prevent war.
2. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasize the need for a universal language?
A: A universal language would enable communication with people of all nations and eliminate language barriers.
3. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggest addressing the challenge of language diversity?
A: By advocating the use of two languages—mother tongue and a universal language.
4. Q: Why does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá consider Esperanto significant in the pursuit of a universal language?
A: Esperanto is considered the beginning of implementing one of Bahá’u’lláh's important laws, but it needs improvement and perfection.
5. Q: What solution does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá propose for perfecting Esperanto and fostering global unity?
A: The formation of an international Congress with delegates from every nation, which could improve and perfect Esperanto or create a new language.

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The Ninth Principle—The Noninterference of Religion with Politics

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

November 17th

In the conduct of life, man is actuated by two main motives: “The Hope for Reward” and “The Fear of Punishment.”

This hope and this fear must consequently be greatly taken into account by those in authority who have important posts under Government. Their business in life is to consult together for the framing of laws, and to provide for their just administration.

The tent of the order of the world is raised and established on the two pillars of “Reward and Retribution.”

In despotic Governments carried on by men without Divine faith, where no fear of spiritual retribution exists, the execution of the laws is tyrannical and unjust.

There is no greater prevention of oppression than these two sentiments, hope and fear. They have both political and spiritual consequences.

If administrators of the law would take into consideration the spiritual consequences of their decisions, and follow the guidance of religion, “They would be Divine agents in the world of

action, the representatives of God for those who are on earth, and they would defend, for the love of God, the interests of His servants as they would defend their own.” If a governor realizes his responsibility, and fears to defy the Divine Law, his judgments will be just. Above all, if he believes that the consequences of his actions will follow him beyond his earthly life, and that “as he sows so must he reap,” such a man will surely avoid injustice and tyranny.

Should an official, on the contrary, think that all responsibility for his actions must end with his earthly life, knowing and believing nothing of Divine favors and a spiritual kingdom of joy, he will lack the incentive to just dealing, and the inspiration to destroy oppression and unrighteousness.

When a ruler knows that his judgments will be weighed in a balance by the Divine Judge, and that if he be not found wanting he will come into the Celestial Kingdom and that the light of the Heavenly Bounty will shine upon him, then will he surely act with justice and equity. Behold how important it is that Ministers of State should be enlightened by religion!

With political questions the clergy, however, have nothing to do! Religious matters should not be confused with politics in the present state of the world (for their interests are not identical).

Religion concerns matters of the heart, of the spirit, and of morals.

Politics are occupied with the material things of life. Religious teachers should not invade the realm of politics; they should concern themselves with the spiritual education of the people; they should ever give good counsel to men, trying to serve God and humankind; they should endeavor to awaken spiritual aspiration, and strive to enlarge the understanding and knowledge of humanity, to improve morals, and to increase the love for justice.

This is in accordance with the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh. In the Gospel also it is written, “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things which are God’s.”

In Persia there are some amongst the important Ministers of State who are religious, who are exemplary, who worship God, and who fear to disobey His Laws, who judge justly and rule their people with Equity. Other Governors there are in this land who have no fear of God before their eyes, who think not of the consequences of their actions, working for their own desires, and these have brought Persia into great trouble and difficulty.

Oh, friends of God, be living examples of justice! So that by the Mercy of God, the world may see in your actions that you manifest the attributes of justice and mercy.

Justice is not limited, it is a universal quality. Its operation must be carried out in all classes, from the highest to the lowest. Justice must be sacred, and the rights of all the people must be considered. Desire for others only that which you desire for yourselves. Then shall we rejoice in the Sun of Justice, which shines from the Horizon of God.

Each man has been placed in a post of honor, which he must not desert. A humble workman who commits an injustice is as much to blame as a renowned tyrant. Thus we all have our choice between justice and injustice.

I hope that each one of you will become just, and direct your thoughts towards the unity of mankind; that you will never harm your neighbors nor speak ill of anyone; that you will respect the rights of all men, and be more concerned for the interests of others than for your own. Thus will you become torches of Divine justice, acting in accordance with the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, who, during His life, bore innumerable trials and persecutions in order to show forth to the world of mankind the virtues of the World of Divinity, making it possible for you to realize the supremacy of the spirit, and to rejoice in the Justice of God.

By His Mercy, the Divine Bounty will be showered upon you, and for this I pray!

Summary:

The ninth principle, "The Noninterference of Religion with Politics," emphasizes the dual motives of "Hope for Reward" and "Fear of Punishment" in governing human conduct. 'Abdu'l-Bahá underscores the importance of considering spiritual consequences in administering laws, advocating that administrators act as Divine agents for justice and equity. While acknowledging the role of religion in guiding administrators, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts the separation of religious and political matters. Religious leaders are advised to focus on spiritual education, moral improvement, and justice, leaving political affairs to secular governance. The discourse concludes with an exhortation for individuals to embody justice, respect the rights of others, and work toward the unity of mankind.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Ninth Principle:

- Highlighting the motives of "Hope for Reward" and "Fear of Punishment" in human conduct.
- Emphasizing the significance of considering spiritual consequences in governance.

2. The Role of Administrators and Divine Agents:

- Describing administrators as Divine agents when guided by spiritual considerations.
- Stressing the importance of a ruler's belief in spiritual consequences for just judgments.

3. Political Questions and the Role of Clergy:

- Asserting the noninterference of clergy in political matters.
- Defining the distinct realms of religion, focused on the spirit and morals, and politics, concerned with material aspects of life.

4. Persian Governance as an Example:

- Illustrating Persian Ministers of State who are religious and just, in contrast to those motivated by personal desires.
- Encouraging religious leaders to contribute to spiritual education and moral improvement.

5. Universal Justice and Responsibilities:

- Affirming the universal quality of justice that applies to all classes.
- Encouraging individuals to choose justice over injustice and become examples of divine justice.

6. Unity of Mankind and Compassion:

- Urging individuals to direct thoughts toward the unity of mankind.
- Encouraging respect for the rights of all and selfless concern for others.

7. Exemplifying Divine Justice:

- Calling individuals to become torches of divine justice.
- Reminding of Bahá'u'lláh's trials to demonstrate the virtues of the World of Divinity.

8. Prayer for Divine Bounty:

- Praying for Divine Bounty to be showered upon those who embody justice and follow Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what are the two main motives that actuate man in the conduct of life?

A: "The Hope for Reward" and "The Fear of Punishment."

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá characterize administrators when they consider spiritual consequences in their decisions?

A: As Divine agents for those on earth, defending the interests of God's servants.

3. Q: What distinction does 'Abdu'l-Bahá make between religion and politics?

A: Religious matters concern the spirit, morals, and spiritual education, while politics deal with material aspects of life.

4. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is the role of religious leaders in relation to politics?

A: Religious leaders should not interfere in political matters but should focus on spiritual education, moral improvement, and justice.

5. Q: What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's exhortation to individuals regarding justice and their responsibilities?

A: To become torches of divine justice, choosing justice over injustice, respecting the rights of all, and working toward the unity of mankind.

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The Tenth Principle—Equality of Sex

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

November 14th

The Tenth Principle of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the equality of the sexes.

God has created all creatures in couples. Man, beast, or vegetable, all the things of these three kingdoms are of two sexes, and there is absolute equality between them.

In the vegetable world there are male plants and female plants; they have equal rights, and possess an equal share of the beauty of their species; though indeed the tree that bears fruit might be said to be superior to that which is unfruitful.

In the animal kingdom we see that the male and the female have equal rights; and that they each share the advantages of their kind.

Now in the two lower kingdoms of nature we have seen that there is no question of the superiority of one sex over the other. In the world of humanity we find a great difference; the female sex is treated as though inferior, and is not allowed equal rights and privileges. This

condition is due not to nature, but to education. In the Divine Creation there is no such distinction. Neither sex is superior to the other in the sight of God. Why then should one sex assert the inferiority of the other, withholding just rights and privileges as though God had given His authority for such a course of action? If women received the same educational advantages as those of men, the result would demonstrate the equality of capacity of both for scholarship.

In some respects woman is superior to man. She is more tenderhearted, more receptive, her intuition is more intense.

It is not to be denied that in various directions woman at present is more backward than man, also that this temporary inferiority is due to the lack of educational opportunity. In the necessity of life, woman is more instinct with power than man, for to her he owes his very existence.

If the mother is educated then her children will be well taught. When the mother is wise, then will the children be led into the path of wisdom. If the mother be religious she will show her children how they should love God. If the mother is moral she guides her little ones into the ways of uprightness.

It is clear therefore that the future generation depends on the mothers of today. Is not this a vital responsibility for the woman? Does she not require every possible advantage to equip her for such a task?

Therefore, surely, God is not pleased that so important an instrument as woman should suffer from want of training in order to attain the perfections desirable and necessary for her great life's work! Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven. Dignity before God depends, not on sex, but on purity and luminosity of heart. Human virtues belong equally to all!

Woman must endeavor then to attain greater perfection, to be man's equal in every respect, to make progress in all in which she has been backward, so that man will be compelled to acknowledge her equality of capacity and attainment.

In Europe women have made greater progress than in the East, but there is still much to be done! When students have arrived at the end of their school term an examination takes place, and the result thereof determines the knowledge and capacity of each student. So will it be with woman; her actions will show her power, there will no longer be any need to proclaim it by words.

It is my hope that women of the East, as well as their Western sisters, will progress rapidly until humanity shall reach perfection.

God's Bounty is for all and gives power for all progress. When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights! One of the principles then of Bahá'u'lláh is the equality of sex.

Women must make the greatest effort to acquire spiritual power and to increase in the virtue of wisdom and holiness until their enlightenment and striving succeeds in bringing about the unity of mankind. They must work with a burning enthusiasm to spread the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh among the peoples, so that the radiant light of the Divine Bounty may envelop the souls of all the nations of the world!

Summary:

The tenth principle, "Equality of Sex," underscores Bahá'u'lláh's teaching of absolute equality between men and women. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that in the divine creation, there is no inherent superiority of one sex over the other. Existing disparities are attributed to education rather than nature. While acknowledging that women might be temporarily more backward in various respects, 'Abdu'l-Bahá attributes this to a lack of educational opportunities. He contends that woman, being the source of human existence, has innate powers, and it is imperative to provide her with proper training for her significant role in shaping future generations. 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls for women's equal rights, highlighting their importance in guiding the moral and spiritual development of children. He expresses hope for women's progress, urging them to strive for spiritual power and wisdom. 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisions a future where the equality of women is universally recognized, eliminating the need for struggles over their rights.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Tenth Principle:

- Introducing the principle of "Equality of Sex."
- Emphasizing the absence of inherent superiority between men and women in divine creation.

2. Equality in Nature:

- Drawing parallels between the equality of sexes in the vegetable and animal kingdoms.
- Highlighting that distinctions in human society are due to education rather than nature.

3. Educational Disparities and Temporary Inferiority:

- Acknowledging the educational disparities causing temporary inferiority in women.
- Stating that the lack of educational opportunities is the cause of women being more backward in various aspects.

4. Women's Inherent Powers and Responsibilities:

- Recognizing woman's inherent powers and asserting her importance in the necessity of life.
- Affirming the critical role of educated mothers in guiding children toward wisdom, morality, and spirituality.

5. Call for Equality and Educational Opportunities:

- Advocating for the respect of equal rights for both sexes.
- Emphasizing the need for women to have equal educational opportunities to fulfill their vital responsibilities.

6. Dignity Before God and Spiritual Power:

- Stating that dignity before God depends on purity and luminosity of heart, not on gender.
- Encouraging women to strive for spiritual power and increase in virtue and wisdom.

7. Women's Progress and Spread of Bahá'u'lláh's Teaching:

- Acknowledging greater progress of women in Europe but highlighting the need for continual improvement.

- Expressing hope for women's rapid progress and urging them to spread Bahá'u'lláh's teachings for the unity of mankind.

8. Vision of the Future:

- Envisioning a future where women's equality is universally recognized, eliminating the need for struggles over their rights.

- Encouraging women to work with enthusiasm to envelop the souls of all nations with the radiant light of divine bounty.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is the cause of the disparities between the sexes in human society?

A: The disparities are due to education rather than nature.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá attribute women's temporary inferiority in various aspects?

A: It is attributed to the lack of educational opportunities.

3. Q: What significant role does 'Abdu'l-Bahá attribute to women in the necessity of life?

A: Women are instinct with power, and the future generation depends on the mothers of today.

4. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what does dignity before God depend on?

A: Dignity before God depends on purity and luminosity of heart, not on gender.

5. Q: What is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's vision for the future regarding the equality of women?

A: He envisions a future where women's equality is universally recognized, eliminating the need for struggles over their rights.

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The Eleventh Principle—The Power of the Holy Spirit

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

November 18th

In the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, it is written: "By the Power of the Holy Spirit alone is man able to progress, for the power of man is limited and the Divine Power is boundless." The reading of history brings us to the conclusion that all truly great men, the benefactors of the human race, those who have moved men to love the right and hate the wrong and who have caused real progress, all these have been inspired by the force of the Holy Spirit.

The Prophets of God have not all graduated in the schools of learned philosophy; indeed they were often men of humble birth, to all appearance ignorant, unknown men of no importance in the eyes of the world; sometimes even lacking the knowledge of reading and writing.

That which raised these great ones above men, and by which they were able to become Teachers of the truth, was the power of the Holy Spirit. Their influence on humanity, by virtue of this mighty inspiration, was great and penetrating.

The influence of the wisest philosophers, without this Spirit Divine, has been comparatively unimportant, however extensive their learning and deep their scholarship.

The unusual intellects, for instance, of Plato, Aristotle, Pliny and Socrates, have not influenced men so greatly that they have been anxious to sacrifice their lives for their teachings; whilst some of those simple men so moved humanity that thousands of men have become willing martyrs to uphold their words; for these words were inspired by the Divine Spirit of God! The prophets of Judah and Israel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, were humble men, as were also the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Peter, the chief of the apostles, used to divide the proceeds of his fishing into seven parts, and when, having taken one part for each day's use, he arrived at the seventh portion, he knew it was the Sabbath day. Consider this! and then think of his future position; to what glory he attained because the Holy Spirit wrought great works through him.

We understand that the Holy Spirit is the energizing factor in the life of man. Whosoever receives this power is able to influence all with whom he comes into contact.

The greatest philosophers without this Spirit are powerless, their souls lifeless, their hearts dead! Unless the Holy Spirit breathes into their souls, they can do no good work. No system of philosophy has ever been able to change the manners and customs of a people for the better. Learned philosophers, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, have often been men of inferior morality; they have not proclaimed in their actions the reality of their beautiful phrases.

The difference between spiritual philosophers and others is shown by their lives. The Spiritual Teacher shows His belief in His own teaching, by Himself *being* what He recommends to others.

A humble man without learning, but filled with the Holy Spirit, is more powerful than the most nobly-born profound scholar without that inspiration. He who is educated by the Divine Spirit can, in his time, lead others to receive the same Spirit.

I pray for you that you may be informed by the life of the Divine Spirit, so that you may be the means of educating others. The life and morals of a spiritual man are, in themselves, an education to those who know him.

Think not of your own limitations, dwell only on the welfare of the Kingdom of Glory. Consider the influence of Jesus Christ on His apostles, then think of their effect upon the world. These simple men were enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to spread the glad tidings!

So may you all receive Divine assistance! No capacity is limited when led by the Spirit of God!

The earth of itself has no properties of life, it is barren and dry, until fertilized by the sun and the rain; still the earth need not bewail its own limitations.

May you be given life! May the rain of the Divine Mercy and the warmth of the Sun of Truth make your gardens fruitful, so that many beautiful flowers of exquisite fragrance and love may blossom in abundance. Turn your faces away from the contemplation of your own finite selves and fix your eyes upon the Everlasting Radiance; then will your souls receive in full measure the Divine Power of the Spirit and the Blessings of the Infinite Bounty.

If you thus keep yourselves in readiness, you will become to the world of humanity a burning flame, a star of guidance, and a fruitful tree, changing all its darkness and woe into light and joy by the shining of the Sun of Mercy and the infinite blessings of the Glad Tidings.

This is the meaning of the power of the Holy Spirit, which I pray may be bountifully showered upon you.

Summary:

The eleventh principle, "The Power of the Holy Spirit," emphasizes the pivotal role of the Holy Spirit in human progress. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts that throughout history, great benefactors and inspirers of humanity, including the Prophets of God, were moved by the force of the Holy Spirit. The influence of the Holy Spirit distinguishes spiritual philosophers and teachers from others, giving life and power to their teachings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá highlights that a humble person filled with the Holy Spirit can be more powerful than a deeply scholarly individual lacking that inspiration. The address encourages individuals to be receptive to the Divine Spirit, allowing it to transform their lives and become a source of guidance for others. 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisions a world where humanity is illuminated by the power of the Holy Spirit, fostering positive change and joy.

Key Points:

1. Introduction to the Eleventh Principle:

- Introducing the principle of "The Power of the Holy Spirit."
- Stating that human progress is achievable through the boundless power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Inspiration of Great Men and Prophets:

- Emphasizing that great men and Prophets were inspired by the force of the Holy Spirit.
- Noting that the most influential benefactors of humanity were moved by this Divine Power.

3. The Humility of Prophets and Apostles:

- Highlighting the humility of Prophets and apostles, often of humble birth.
- Illustrating the transformative influence of the Holy Spirit in raising individuals to positions of glory.

4. Spiritual Philosophers vs. Philosophers:

- Distinguishing spiritual philosophers by the influence of the Holy Spirit.
- Asserting that the greatest philosophers without this Spirit are powerless and lifeless.

5. The Power of Divine Assistance:

- Encouraging individuals to receive Divine assistance through the Holy Spirit.
- Asserting that the Spirit of God can lead beyond human limitations.

6. Education by the Divine Spirit:

- Stating that a humble person filled with the Holy Spirit is more powerful than a deeply scholarly person lacking inspiration.
- Envisioning individuals receiving Divine assistance, becoming instruments for educating others.

7. Influence of Spiritual Lives:

- Emphasizing that the lives and morals of spiritual individuals serve as education.
- Urging individuals to focus on the welfare of the Kingdom of Glory, not personal limitations.

8. Becoming Instruments of Divine Power:

- Praying that individuals may be informed by the life of the Divine Spirit.
- Encouraging readiness to become a source of guidance, a burning flame, and a star of illumination.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, what is the pivotal factor enabling human progress?

A: Human progress is enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Q: What distinguishes the influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of great benefactors and Prophets?

A: The Holy Spirit gives life and penetrating influence to their teachings.

3. Q: How does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describe the humility of Prophets and apostles?

A: They were often of humble birth, unknown and lacking worldly importance.

4. Q: What differentiates spiritual philosophers from others, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?

A: Spiritual philosophers are distinguished by the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

5. Q: In what way does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá envision individuals receiving Divine assistance?

A: By becoming instruments of education, a burning flame, and a star of guidance through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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This Great and Glorious Cause

4 Avenue de Camoëns, Paris,

November 28th

In these gatherings where we have met and spoken together you have all become acquainted with the principles of this dispensation, and with the *reality of facts*. Unto you it has been given to know these things, but there are many still unenlightened and submerged in superstition. They have heard but little of this great and glorious Cause, and the knowledge they have is for the most part based only on hearsay. Alas, poor souls, the knowledge they have is not based on truth, the foundation of their belief is not the teaching of Bahá’u’lláh! There is, assuredly, a certain amount of truth in what they have been told, but for the most part their information has been inaccurate.

The true principles of the blessed Cause of God are the eleven rules which I have given you, and I have carefully explained these, one by one.

You must endeavor always to live and act in direct obedience to the teachings and laws of Bahá’u’lláh, so that every individual may see in all the acts of your life that in word and in deed you are followers of the Blessed Perfection.

Exert yourselves so that this glorious teaching may encircle the globe, and that spirituality may be infused into the hearts of men.

The breath of the Holy Spirit shall confirm you, and although many will arise against you, they shall not prevail!

When the Lord Christ was crowned with thorns, He knew that all the diadems of the world were at His feet. All earthly crowns, however brilliant, powerful and resplendent, bowed in adoration before the crown of thorns! It was from this sure and certain knowledge He spoke, when He said: "All power is given unto Me, in Heaven and in earth."¹

Now I say unto you, bear this on your hearts and in your minds. Verily your light shall illumine the whole world, your spirituality shall affect the heart of things. You shall in truth become the lighted torches of the globe. Fear not, neither be dismayed, for your light shall penetrate the densest darkness. This is the Promise of God, which I give unto you. Rise! and serve the Power of God!

Summary:

In "This Great and Glorious Cause," 'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses those who have gained understanding of the principles of the Bahá'í Faith. He emphasizes the responsibility to live in obedience to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and encourages spreading the message globally. Despite challenges, the believers are assured that the breath of the Holy Spirit will confirm them. 'Abdu'l-Bahá draws parallels to Christ's resilience and triumph over earthly powers. Believers are called to be lighted torches, confident that their spirituality will illuminate even the densest darkness.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- Addressing those familiar with the principles of the Bahá'í Faith.
- Acknowledging the responsibility to impart true knowledge of the Cause.

2. Living in Obedience:

- Emphasizing the importance of living and acting in direct obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.
- Highlighting the significance of embodying Bahá'í principles in all aspects of life.

3. Global Dissemination of the Faith:

- Encouraging believers to spread the teachings globally.
- Expressing the need to infuse spirituality into the hearts of humanity.

4. The Breath of the Holy Spirit:

- Assuring believers that the breath of the Holy Spirit will confirm them.
- Acknowledging the challenges and adversaries, yet emphasizing their ultimate inability to prevail.

5. Parallels to Christ's Triumph:

- Drawing parallels to Christ's experience with the crown of thorns.
- Relating Christ's triumph over earthly crowns to the believers' potential impact.

6. Becoming Lighted Torches:

- Promising that believers will become lighted torches of the globe.
- Encouraging confidence and dispelling fear.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the foundation of the true principles of the Bahá'í Cause, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: The eleven rules given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, carefully explained one by one.

2. Q: What responsibility does 'Abdu'l-Bahá stress regarding the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?

A: Living and acting in direct obedience to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

3. Q: What assurance does 'Abdu'l-Bahá provide to believers despite challenges?

A: The breath of the Holy Spirit shall confirm them, and adversaries shall not prevail.

4. Q: What parallel does 'Abdu'l-Bahá draw regarding Christ's experience with the crown of thorns?

A: Earthly crowns, however brilliant, bowed in adoration before the crown of thorns.

5. Q: What is the believers' ultimate potential, as described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: They shall become lighted torches of the globe, penetrating even the densest darkness.

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The Last Meeting

15 Rue Greuze, Paris,

December 1st

When I arrived in Paris some time ago for the first time, I looked around me with much interest, and in my mind I likened this beautiful city to a large garden.

With loving care and much thought I examined the soil, and found it to be very good and full of possibility for steadfast faith and firm belief, for a seed of God's love has been cast into the ground.

Clouds of Heavenly Mercy showered their rain upon it, and the Sun of Truth fell warmly upon the young seeds, and today one can see in your midst the birth of belief. The seed cast into the ground has begun to spring up, and day by day you will see it grow. The bounties of the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh shall indeed bring forth a wondrous harvest!

Behold! I bring you glad and joyful tidings! Paris will become a garden of roses! All kinds of beautiful flowers will spring up and flourish in this garden, and the fame of their fragrance and beauty will be spread in all lands. When I think of Paris in the future, I seem to see her bathed in the light of the Holy Spirit! Verily, the day is dawning when Paris will receive her illumination, and the Goodness and Mercy of God will be visible to every living creature.

Do not allow your minds to dwell on the present, but with eyes of faith look into the future, for in truth the Spirit of God is working in your midst.

Since my arrival a few weeks ago, I can see the growth of spirituality. At the beginning only a few souls came to me for Light, but during my short sojourn among you the numbers have increased and doubled. This is a promise for the future!

When Christ was crucified and left this world, He had only eleven disciples and a very few followers; but as He served the Cause of truth, look today at the result of His life's work! He has illumined the world, and given life to dead humanity. After His ascension little by little His Cause grew, the souls of His followers became more and more luminous, and the exquisite perfume of their saintly lives spread on all sides.

Now today, thank God, a similar condition has begun in Paris. There are many souls who have turned to the Kingdom of God, and who are attracted to unity, love and truth.

Try so to work that the goodness and mercy of the Most Glorious may enfold the whole of Paris. The Breath of the Holy Spirit will help you, the Celestial Light of the Kingdom will shine in your hearts, and the blessed angels of God from Heaven will bring you strength and will succor you. Then thank God with all your hearts that you have attained to this supreme benefit. A great part of the world is plunged in sleep, but you have been awakened. Many are blind, but you see!

The call of the Kingdom is heard in your midst. Glory be to God, you have been born again, you have been baptized by the fire of the Love of God; you have been plunged in the Sea of Life and regenerated by the Spirit of Love!

Having received such favor be thankful unto God, and never doubt His Goodness and Loving Kindness but have undying faith in the Bounties of the Kingdom. Consort together in brotherly love, be ready to lay down your lives one for the other, and not only for those who are dear to you, but for all humanity. Look upon the whole human race as members of one family, all children of God; and, in so doing, you will see no difference between them.

Humanity may be likened to a tree. This tree has branches, leaves, buds and fruit. Think of all men as being flowers, leaves or buds of this tree, and try to help each and all to realize and enjoy God's blessings. God neglects none: He loves all.

The only real difference that exists between people is that they are at various stages of development. Some are imperfect—these must be brought to perfection. Some are asleep—they must be awakened; some are negligent—they must be roused; but one and all are the children of God. Love them all with your whole heart; no one is a stranger to the other, all are friends. Tonight I come to say farewell to you—but bear this in your minds, that although our bodies may be far apart, in spirit we shall always be together.

I bear you one and all in my heart, and will forget none of you—and I hope that none of you will forget me.

I in the East, and you in the West, let us try with heart and soul that unity may dwell in the world, that all the peoples may become one people, and that the whole surface of the earth may be like one country—for the Sun of Truth shines on all alike.

All the Prophets of God came for love of this one great aim.

Look how Abraham strove to bring faith and love among the people; how Moses tried to unite the people by sound laws; how the Lord Christ suffered unto death to bring the light of love and truth into a darkened world; how Muḥammad sought to bring unity and peace between the various uncivilized tribes among whom He dwelt. And last of all, Bahá'u'lláh has suffered forty years for the same cause—the single noble purpose of spreading love among the children of men—and for the peace and unity of the world the Báb gave up His life.

Thus, strive to follow the example of these Divine Beings, drink from Their fountain, be illumined by Their Light, and to the world be as symbols of the Mercy and Love of God. Be unto the world as rain and clouds of mercy, as suns of truth; be a celestial army, and you shall indeed conquer the city of hearts.

Be thankful unto God that Bahá'u'lláh has given us a firm and solid foundation. He left no place for sadness in hearts, and the writings of His sacred pen contain consolation for the whole world. He had the words of truth, and anything that is contrary to His teaching is false. The chief aim of all His work was to do away with division.

The testament of Bahá'u'lláh is a Rain of Goodness, a Sun of Truth, Water of Life, the Holy Spirit. Thus open your hearts to receive the full power of His Beauty, and I will pray for you all that this joy may be yours.

Now I say "Good-bye."

This I say only to your outer selves; I do not say it to your souls, for our souls are always together.

Be comforted, and rest assured that day and night I shall turn to the Kingdom of the Most Glorious in supplication for you, that day by day you may grow better and holier, nearer to God, and more and more illumined by the radiance of His Love.

Summary:

In "The Last Meeting," 'Abdu'l-Bahá bids farewell to Parisian believers. He likens Paris to a fertile garden where the seed of God's love has been planted. Despite challenges, he foresees a future where Paris will become a garden of roses, bathed in the light of the Holy Spirit. 'Abdu'l-Bahá commends the spiritual growth witnessed during his short stay and encourages believers to spread the teachings globally. He imparts messages of unity, brotherly love, and viewing humanity as one family. Expressing gratitude for Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, he urges believers to be symbols of mercy and love, striving for peace and unity.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá likens Paris to a large garden and examines its spiritual potential.
- Describes the fertile soil, the rain of Heavenly Mercy, and the warmth of the Sun of Truth.

2. Growth of Spirituality:

- Observations of spiritual growth during his short stay.
- Assures believers of a promising future as witnessed by increasing numbers.

3. Paris as a Garden of Roses:

- Proclaims a future where Paris becomes a garden of roses.
- Envisions the city bathed in the light of the Holy Spirit, radiating God's goodness and mercy.

4. Exhortations for Global Spread:

- Encourages believers to spread the teachings globally.
- Expresses confidence in the Breath of the Holy Spirit aiding their efforts.

5. Unity, Brotherly Love, and Humanity as One Family:

- Urges believers to work for the goodness and mercy of the Most Glorious to enfold all of Paris.
- Describes humanity as a tree with individuals as flowers, leaves, or buds, emphasizing unity.

6. Remembrance and Gratitude:

- Expresses gratitude for the believers' spiritual awakening.
- Acknowledges the sleep and blindness of much of the world, contrasting it with the believers' awakening.

7. Following Divine Examples:

- Urges believers to follow the examples of Divine Beings like Christ, Moses, Muḥammad, and Bahá'u'lláh.
- Encourages believers to be symbols of mercy, love, and truth.

8. Bahá'u'lláh's Testament and Consolation:

- Describes Bahá'u'lláh's writings as a Rain of Goodness, a Sun of Truth, and Water of Life.

- States Bahá'u'lláh's chief aim to eliminate division and the testament as a source of consolation.

9. Farewell and Spiritual Connection:

- Bids farewell to their outer selves but emphasizes that souls are always together.
- Promises prayers for believers' growth, holiness, and proximity to God.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá envision the future of Paris?

A: He envisions Paris becoming a garden of roses, bathed in the light of the Holy Spirit.

2. Q: What observations does 'Abdu'l-Bahá share regarding spiritual growth in Paris?

A: During his short stay, he notes an increase in the number of souls seeking spiritual guidance.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe humanity in the context of a tree?

A: Humanity is likened to a tree with individuals as flowers, leaves, or buds, emphasizing unity.

4. Q: What is the chief aim of Bahá'u'lláh's work according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: The chief aim is to do away with division and promote unity among humanity.

5. Q: What does 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasize about the souls of the believers and the concept of farewell?

A: He emphasizes that while bidding farewell to outer selves, in spirit, the souls are always together.

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Part Three

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Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Friends' Meeting House, St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C.

Sunday, January 12th, 1913

About one thousand years ago a society was formed in Persia called the Society of the Friends, who gathered together for silent communion with the Almighty.

They divided Divine philosophy into two parts: one kind is that of which the knowledge can be acquired through lectures and study in schools and colleges. The second kind of philosophy was that of the Illuminati, or followers of the inner light. The schools of this philosophy were

held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, from that central Light the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected in the hearts of these people. All the Divine problems were solved by this power of illumination.

This Society of Friends increased greatly in Persia, and up to the present time their societies exist. Many books and epistles were written by their leaders. When they assemble in their meeting-house they sit silently and contemplate; their leader opens with a certain proposition, and says to the assembly “You must meditate on this problem.” Then, freeing their minds from everything else, they sit and reflect, and before long the answer is revealed to them. Many abstruse divine questions are solved by this illumination.

Some of the great questions unfolding from the rays of the Sun of Reality upon the mind of man are: the problem of the reality of the spirit of man; of the birth of the spirit; of its birth from this world into the world of God; the question of the inner life of the spirit and of its fate after its ascension from the body.

They also meditate upon the scientific questions of the day, and these are likewise solved.

These people, who are called “Followers of the inner light,” attain to a superlative degree of power, and are entirely freed from blind dogmas and imitations. Men rely on the statements of these people: by themselves—within themselves—they solve all mysteries.

If they find a solution with the assistance of the inner light, they accept it, and afterwards they declare it: otherwise they would consider it a matter of blind imitation. They go so far as to reflect upon the essential nature of the Divinity, of the Divine revelation, of the manifestation of the Deity in this world. All the divine and scientific questions are solved by them through the power of the spirit.

Bahá’u’lláh says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time—he cannot both speak and meditate.

It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed.

You cannot apply the name “man” to any being void of this faculty of meditation; without it he would be a mere animal, lower than the beasts.

Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit—the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation.

The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food.

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see.

This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God.

This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out; through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God.

Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man; they are like waves moving in the sea without result. But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the inner light and characterized with divine attributes, the results will be confirmed.

The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these.

But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained.

Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed—turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects—so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit.

May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven.

Summary:

In 'Abdu'l-Bahá's address at the Friends' Meeting House in London, he speaks about the Society of the Friends in Persia, also known as the Illuminati or Followers of the inner light. They engage in silent communion, meditating to receive answers to profound questions, both divine and scientific. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the power of meditation, referring to it as the key to opening the doors of mysteries. He asserts that through meditation, one transcends the animal nature, discerns reality, and connects with God, receiving inspiration and heavenly insights. The address stresses the importance of directing the meditative faculty towards spiritual realms.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- Description of the Society of the Friends in Persia.
- Division of divine philosophy into two parts: one acquired through study, the other through the inner light.

2. The Illuminati's Philosophy:

- The Illuminati engage in silent meditation.
- They contemplate divine and scientific questions, seeking solutions through illumination.

3. Questions Addressed by Meditation:

- Fundamental spiritual questions addressed by meditation.
- Illumination's role in answering questions about the spirit's reality, birth, and fate.

4. Scientific Questions and Inner Light:

- Application of meditation to scientific questions.
- The power of the inner light in solving problems.

5. The Significance of Silence and Contemplation:

- The connection between intellect, contemplation, and silence.
- Meditation as the key to opening the doors of mysteries.

6. Meditation and the Spirit of Man:

- The role of meditation in strengthening and informing the spirit.
- The bestowal of the Holy Spirit through reflection and meditation.

7. The Faculty of Meditation and Human Attributes:

- The faculty of meditation as essential for human attributes.
- The distinction between man and mere animals based on the power of meditation.

8. Meditation as the Source of Inventions and Progress:

- Meditation as the source of inventions, colossal undertakings, and smooth governance.
- Entering the Kingdom of God through the meditative faculty.

9. Usefulness of Thoughts and Directed Meditation:

- Differentiating between useful and useless thoughts.
- The importance of directing the meditative faculty towards the heavenly Sun.

10. Meditation as a Reflective Mirror:

- Comparing the meditative faculty to a mirror.
- Reflecting earthly or heavenly realities based on the direction of meditation.

11. Conclusion:

- Encouragement to keep the meditative faculty directed towards the heavenly Sun.
- Aspiring to become mirrors that reflect heavenly realities and purity.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the Society of the Friends in Persia?

A: They are a society engaged in silent communion, dividing divine philosophy into two parts: knowledge acquired through study and the Illuminati's philosophy of the inner light.

2. Q: What questions does the meditative faculty address according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: It addresses profound questions about the reality of the spirit, its birth, and its fate after ascending from the body.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá explain the role of meditation in scientific matters?

A: Meditation is applied to scientific questions, and the inner light aids in solving these problems.

4. Q: Why does 'Abdu'l-Bahá consider meditation akin to a mirror?

A: Meditation is compared to a mirror: reflecting earthly objects when directed towards them and heavenly constellations when turned heavenwards.

5. Q: What is the significance of silence and contemplation in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's address?

A: Silence and contemplation are described as essential, with meditation being the key to opening the doors of mysteries.

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Prayer

97 Cadogan Gardens, London,

December 26th, 1912

“Should Prayer take the form of action?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Yes: In the Bahá’í Cause arts, sciences and all crafts are (counted as) worship. The man who makes a piece of notepaper to the best of his ability, conscientiously, concentrating all his forces on perfecting it, is giving praise to God. Briefly, all effort and

exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. A physician ministering to the sick, gently, tenderly, free from prejudice and believing in the solidarity of the human race, he is giving praise.”

“What is the purpose of our lives?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “To acquire virtues. We come from the earth; why were we transferred from the mineral to the vegetable kingdom—from the plant to the animal kingdom? So that we may attain perfection in each of these kingdoms, that we may possess the best qualities of the mineral, that we may acquire the power of growing as in the plant, that we may be adorned with the instincts of the animal and possess the faculties of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, until from the animal kingdom we step into the world of humanity and are gifted with reason, the power of invention, and the forces of the spirit.”

Summary:

In 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discourse on prayer at 97 Cadogan Gardens, London, on December 26th, 1912, he emphasizes the Bahá'í perspective on prayer. He asserts that in the Bahá'í Cause, arts, sciences, and crafts are considered worship. Any effort or exertion put forth by a person with the highest motives and a will to serve humanity is worship. 'Abdu'l-Bahá connects prayer with service, stating that serving mankind and ministering to people's needs is a form of prayer. He also addresses the purpose of human life, stating that it is to acquire virtues and progress through various stages of existence, ultimately reaching the realm of humanity.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- Context of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discourse on prayer.
- Location: 97 Cadogan Gardens, London.
- Date: December 26th, 1912.

2. Prayer as Action:

- In the Bahá'í Cause, arts, sciences, and crafts are forms of worship.
- Any effort or exertion done with the highest motives and a will to serve humanity is considered prayer.
- Examples: Creating notepaper, providing medical care with love and diligence.

3. Service as Worship:

- The act of serving mankind is equated with prayer.
- Description of a physician ministering to the sick with gentleness, tenderness, and a belief in the unity of the human race.

4. Purpose of Human Life:

- The primary purpose is to acquire virtues.
- Humans progress through various stages of existence, from the mineral to the animal kingdom, gaining qualities from each.
- Advancement into the world of humanity includes reason, invention, and spiritual forces.

5. Virtue Acquisition:

- Humans are transferred through different kingdoms to acquire the best qualities from each.
- The goal is to possess the virtues of the mineral, the power of growth like plants, instincts of animals, and finally, reason and spiritual faculties.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá define worship in the Bahá'í Cause?

A: In the Bahá'í Cause, arts, sciences, and crafts are considered worship. Any effort or exertion with the highest motives and a will to serve humanity is worship.

2. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is equated with prayer?

A: Serving mankind is equated with prayer.

3. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the purpose of human life?

A: The purpose is to acquire virtues. Humans progress through various stages, gaining qualities from each, until they reach the realm of humanity with reason, invention, and spiritual forces.

4. Q: What examples does 'Abdu'l-Bahá provide for prayer as action?

A: Creating notepaper to the best of one's ability and providing medical care with love and diligence are examples.

5. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the process of acquiring virtues?

A: Humans are transferred through different kingdoms to acquire virtues, starting from the mineral and progressing to the plant, animal, and finally reaching the realm of humanity.

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Evil

“What is evil?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Evil is imperfection. Sin is the state of man in the world of the baser nature, for in nature exist defects such as injustice, tyranny, hatred, hostility, strife: these are characteristics of the lower plane of nature. These are the sins of the world, the fruits of the tree from which Adam did eat. Through education we must free ourselves from these imperfections. The Prophets of God have been sent, the Holy Books have been written, so that man may be made free. Just as he is born into this world of imperfection from the womb of his earthly mother, so is he born into the world of spirit through divine education. When a man is born into the world of phenomena he finds the universe; when he is born from this world to the world of the spirit, he finds the Kingdom.”

Summary:

In response to the question "What is evil?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá defines evil as imperfection. He explains that sin is a state in the lower nature of man, characterized by defects such as injustice, tyranny, hatred, hostility, and strife—attributes of the baser plane of nature. These imperfections are considered the sins of the world, originating from the metaphorical tree from which Adam ate. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that through education, humanity can free itself from these imperfections. The Prophets of God and Holy Books are sent to guide and educate, enabling individuals to transcend the lower nature and attain the world of spirit.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá responds to the question: "What is evil?"

2. Definition of Evil:

- Evil is described as imperfection.
- Sin is associated with the lower nature of man, manifested through various defects.

3. Characteristics of Sin:

- Characteristics of the lower nature include injustice, tyranny, hatred, hostility, and strife.
- These attributes are considered the sins of the world.

4. Origins of Imperfection:

- Imperfections originate from the metaphorical tree from which Adam ate.
- Education is presented as the means to free oneself from these imperfections.

5. **Divine Education and Liberation:

- The Prophets of God and Holy Books are sent to provide divine education.
- Through this education, humanity can transcend the lower nature and find the Kingdom.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is evil?

A: Evil is defined as imperfection.

2. Q: How is sin described in the lower nature of man?

A: Sin is the state of man in the world of the baser nature, characterized by defects like injustice, tyranny, hatred, hostility, and strife.

3. Q: What are considered the sins of the world, according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

A: The sins of the world are the fruits of the tree from which Adam ate—manifestations of imperfections.

4. Q: What is the role of education in relation to imperfections?

A: Through education, humanity can free itself from imperfections and defects associated with the lower nature.

5. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the purpose of the Prophets of God and Holy Books?

A: They are sent to provide divine education, allowing individuals to transcend the lower nature and find the Kingdom.

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The Progress of the Soul

“Does the soul progress more through sorrow or through the joy in this world?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him. Look back to the times past and you will find that the greatest men have suffered most.”

“He who through suffering has attained development, should he fear happiness?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Through suffering he will attain to an eternal happiness which nothing can take from him. The apostles of Christ suffered: they attained eternal happiness.”

“Then it is impossible to attain happiness without suffering?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “To attain eternal happiness one must suffer. He who has reached the state of self-sacrifice has true joy. Temporal joy will vanish.”

“Can a departed soul converse with someone still on earth?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “A conversation can be held, but not as our conversation. There is no doubt that the forces of the higher worlds interplay with the forces of this plane. The heart of man is open to inspiration; this is spiritual communication. As in a dream one talks with a friend while the mouth is silent, so is it in the conversation of the spirit. A man may converse with the ego within him saying: ‘May I do this? Would it be advisable for me to do this work?’ Such as this is conversation with the higher self.”

Summary:

In 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discussion on "The Progress of the Soul," he addresses the question of whether the soul progresses more through sorrow or joy. He asserts that the mind and spirit of man advance through suffering, comparing it to ploughing the ground for better seed growth. Suffering and tribulation lead to a state of complete detachment and divine happiness. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that great men in history have often endured significant suffering. Responding to questions, he states that one who attains development through suffering should not fear happiness, as it leads to eternal joy. 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms that to attain eternal happiness, one must experience suffering and that temporal joy is transitory. The discussion concludes with the possibility of departed souls conversing with those on earth, describing it as a form of spiritual communication similar to silent conversations in dreams.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses the progress of the soul, focusing on the impact of sorrow and joy.
- The analogy of ploughing the ground for seed growth is introduced.

2. Progress Through Suffering:

- The mind and spirit advance when tried by suffering.
- Ploughing deeply purifies the soul from worldly affairs, leading to complete detachment.
- Suffering is likened to the heat of fire maturing an unripe man.

3. Attainment of Eternal Happiness:

- Development through suffering leads to an eternal happiness that cannot be taken away.
- Reference to the suffering of the apostles of Christ who attained eternal happiness.

4. Suffering as a Prerequisite for Happiness:

- To attain eternal happiness, one must go through suffering.
- True joy comes with the state of self-sacrifice, while temporal joy is transient.

5. Communication with Departed Souls:

- Discussion on the possibility of departed souls conversing with those on earth.
- Spiritual communication is compared to the silent conversations in dreams.
- A man may converse with his higher self, seeking guidance and advice.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, how does the soul progress—through sorrow or joy?

A: The soul progresses more through sorrow. The mind and spirit of man advance when tried by suffering.

2. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá describe the effect of suffering on the soul?

A: Suffering purifies the soul from worldly affairs, leading to complete detachment and divine happiness.

3. Q: Should one who has attained development through suffering fear happiness?

A: No, through suffering, one attains eternal happiness that nothing can take away.

4. Q: Is it possible to attain happiness without suffering?

A: To attain eternal happiness, one must experience suffering. Temporal joy is transient.

5. Q: Can a departed soul converse with someone on earth?

A: Yes, a conversation can be held, but it differs from our usual conversation. It involves spiritual communication, akin to silent conversations in dreams.

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The Four Kinds of Love

97 Cadogan Gardens, London,

Saturday, January 4th, 1913

What a power is love! It is the most wonderful, the greatest of all living powers.

Love gives life to the lifeless. Love lights a flame in the heart that is cold. Love brings hope to the hopeless and gladdens the hearts of the sorrowful.

In the world of existence there is indeed no greater power than the power of love. When the heart of man is aglow with the flame of love, he is ready to sacrifice all—even his life. In the Gospel it is said God is love.

There are four kinds of love. The first is the love that flows from God to man; it consists of the inexhaustible graces, the Divine effulgence and heavenly illumination. Through this love the world of being receives life. Through this love man is endowed with physical existence, until, through the breath of the Holy Spirit—this same love—he receives eternal life and becomes the image of the Living God. This love is the origin of all the love in the world of creation.

The second is the love that flows from man to God. This is faith, attraction to the Divine, enkindlement, progress, entrance into the Kingdom of God, receiving the Bounties of God, illumination with the lights of the Kingdom. This love is the origin of all philanthropy; this love causes the hearts of men to reflect the rays of the Sun of Reality.

The third is the love of God towards the Self or Identity of God. This is the transfiguration of His Beauty, the reflection of Himself in the mirror of His Creation. This is the reality of love, the Ancient Love, the Eternal Love. Through one ray of this Love all other love exists.

The fourth is the love of man for man. The love which exists between the hearts of believers is prompted by the ideal of the unity of spirits. This love is attained through the knowledge of God, so that men see the Divine Love reflected in the heart. Each sees in the other the Beauty of God reflected in the soul, and finding this point of similarity, they are attracted to one another in love. This love will make all men the waves of one sea, this love will make them all the stars of one heaven and the fruits of one tree. This love will bring the realization of true accord, the foundation of real unity.

But the love which sometimes exists between friends is not (true) love, because it is subject to transmutation; this is merely fascination. As the breeze blows, the slender trees yield. If the wind is in the East the tree leans to the West, and if the wind turns to the West the tree leans to the East. This kind of love is originated by the accidental conditions of life. This is not love, it is merely acquaintanceship; it is subject to change.

Today you will see two souls apparently in close friendship; tomorrow all this may be changed. Yesterday they were ready to die for one another, today they shun one another's society! This is not love; it is the yielding of the hearts to the accidents of life. When that which has caused this "love" to exist passes, the love passes also; this is not in reality love.

Love is only of the four kinds that I have explained. (a) The love of God towards the identity of God. Christ has said God is Love. (b) The love of God for His children—for His servants. (c) The love of man for God and (d) the love of man for man. These four kinds of love originate from God. These are rays from the Sun of Reality; these are the Breathings of the Holy Spirit; these are the Signs of the Reality.

Summary:

In this discourse, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the transformative power of love, categorizing it into four types. The first kind is the divine love flowing from God to man, bringing inexhaustible graces and spiritual illumination. The second type is the love flowing from man to God, manifesting as faith, attraction to the Divine, and spiritual progress. The third is the love of God for His own Self, representing the transfiguration of His Beauty and the eternal essence of love. The fourth type is the love of man for man, founded on the unity of spirits and reflected in the hearts of believers, fostering true accord and unity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá distinguishes this from transient friendships and attractions, asserting that genuine love originates from God.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá explores the profound significance and power of love.

2. Four Kinds of Love:

a. Love from God to Man:

- Inexhaustible graces and Divine effulgence.
- Endows physical existence and grants eternal life.

b. Love from Man to God:

- Faith, attraction to the Divine, spiritual progress.
- Causes hearts to reflect the rays of the Sun of Reality.

c. Love of God towards His Self:

- Transfiguration of God's Beauty, eternal and ancient love.
- The source of all other forms of love.

d. Love of Man for Man:

- Attracted by the unity of spirits and the reflection of Divine Love.
- Establishes unity, making humanity waves of one sea and stars of one heaven.

3. True Accord and Unity:

- The love of man for man leads to the realization of true accord and the foundation of real unity.

4. Transient Friendships vs. Genuine Love:

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá distinguishes between true love and transient friendships.
- Genuine love is rooted in God and endures beyond the changing circumstances of life.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the first kind of love, and what does it bring to man?

A: The first kind is the love flowing from God to man, bringing inexhaustible graces and spiritual illumination.

2. Q: What characterizes the second type of love, and how does it manifest?

A: The second type is the love flowing from man to God, manifesting as faith, attraction to the Divine, and spiritual progress.

3. Q: What is the third kind of love, and what does it represent?

A: The third kind is the love of God for His own Self, representing the transfiguration of His Beauty and the eternal essence of love.

4. Q: What is the foundation of the love of man for man, and what does it lead to?

A: The foundation is the unity of spirits and the reflection of Divine Love. It leads to true accord and the foundation of real unity.

5. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá distinguish genuine love from transient friendships?

A: True love, rooted in God, endures beyond changing circumstances, while transient friendships are subject to change and originate from the accidental conditions of life.

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Tablet Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

August 28th, 1913

O Thou my beloved daughter!

Thine eloquent and fluent letter was perused in a garden, under the cool shade of a tree, while the gentle breeze was wafting. The means of physical enjoyment was spread before the eyes and thy letter became the cause of spiritual enjoyment. Truly, I say, it was not a letter but a rose-garden adorned with hyacinths and flowers.

It contained the sweet fragrance of paradise and the zephyr of Divine Love blew from its roseate words.

As I have not ample time at my disposal, I will give herein a brief, conclusive and comprehensive answer. It is as follows:

In this Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the women go neck and neck with the men. In no movement will they be left behind. Their rights with men are equal in degree. They will enter all the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs. Rest ye assured. Do ye not look upon the present conditions; in the not far distant future the world of women will become all-refulgent and all-glorious, *For His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh Hath Willed It so!* At the time of elections the right to vote is the inalienable right of women, and the entrance of women into all human departments is an irrefutable and incontrovertible question. No soul can retard or prevent it.

But there are certain matters, the participation in which is not worthy of women. For example, at the time when the community is taking up vigorous defensive measures against the attack of foes, the women are exempt from military engagements. It may so happen that at a given time warlike and savage tribes may furiously attack the body politic with the intention of carrying on a wholesale slaughter of its members; under such a circumstance defense is necessary, but it is the duty of men to organize and execute such defensive measures and not the women—because

their hearts are tender and they cannot endure the sight of the horror of carnage, even if it is for the sake of defense. From such and similar undertakings the women are exempt.

As regards the constitution of the House of Justice, Bahá'u'lláh addresses the men. He says: "O ye men of the House of Justice!"

But when its members are to be elected, the right which belongs to women, so far as their voting and their voice is concerned, is indisputable. When the women attain to the ultimate degree of progress, then, according to the exigency of the time and place and their great capacity, they shall obtain extraordinary privileges. Be ye confident on these accounts. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has greatly strengthened the cause of women, and the rights and privileges of women is one of the greatest principles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Rest ye assured! Erelong the days shall come when the men addressing the women, shall say: "*Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye! Verily ye are worthy of every gift. Verily ye deserve to adorn your heads with the crown of everlasting glory, because in sciences and arts, in virtues and perfections ye shall become equal to man, and as regards tenderness of heart and the abundance of mercy and sympathy ye are superior.*"

Summary:

In this Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on August 28th, 1913, he responds to a letter with eloquence and joy. He assures that in the Bahá’í Revelation, women are equal to men and will not be left behind in any movement. Women's rights are considered equal to men's in all aspects, including political participation. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphasizes that women will attain the highest stations in the world of humanity and will be actively involved in all affairs. However, he notes certain exceptions, such as exemption from military engagements during times of vigorous defense. Regarding the constitution of the House of Justice, Bahá’u’lláh addresses men, but women have indisputable rights in electing its members. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses confidence that as women progress, they will obtain extraordinary privileges, strengthening the cause of women, and becoming equal to men in sciences, arts, virtues, and perfections.

Key Points:

1. Introduction:

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expresses joy and describes the spiritual enjoyment derived from reading the recipient's eloquent letter.
- Compares the letter to a rose-garden adorned with hyacinths and flowers.

2. Equality of Men and Women:

- Affirms that women in the Bahá’í Revelation are equal to men and will not be left behind in any movement.
- Women's rights are equal in degree, and they will attain the highest stations in the world of humanity.

3. Political Participation:

- Asserts that women will enter all administrative branches of politics and participate in all affairs.
- Emphasizes that women's rights are equal to men's during elections, and their involvement in human departments is unquestionable.

4. Exceptions and Considerations:

- Notes exemptions for women from certain matters, such as military engagements during defensive measures.
- Highlights the tenderness of women's hearts and their exemption from undertakings involving horror and carnage.

5. Privileges and Progress:

- Encourages confidence in the progress of women.
- Foresees extraordinary privileges for women as they attain the ultimate degree of progress.
- Quotes Bahá’u’lláh addressing the men about the constitution of the House of Justice but emphasizes women's indisputable rights in voting and voicing their opinions.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: What is the role of women in the Bahá'í Revelation?

A: Women are equal to men and will not be left behind in any movement, attaining the highest stations in the world of humanity.

2. Q: What is emphasized regarding women's rights in political participation?

A: Women will enter all administrative branches of politics, and their rights during elections are considered equal to men's.

3. Q: Are there any exceptions or considerations for women?

A: Women are exempt from certain matters, such as military engagements during vigorous defensive measures due to the tenderness of their hearts.

4. Q: How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá foresee the future of women's progress?

A: He expresses confidence that, with progress, women will obtain extraordinary privileges, becoming equal to men in sciences, arts, virtues, and perfections.

5. Q: What rights do women have in the election of the House of Justice?

A: Women have indisputable rights in voting and voicing their opinions when the members of the House of Justice are to be elected.

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Notes and References in this Publication

Part One

5. God Comprehends All; He Cannot Be Comprehended

1. John 14:11. ↵

12. The Clouds That Obscure the Sun of Truth

1. Matthew 24:30, 16:27. ↵

2. John 3:13. ↵

13. Religious Prejudices

1. John 18:11. ↵

17. The Holy Spirit, the Intermediary Power between God and Man

1. Manifestations of God. ↵

22. The Two Kinds of Light

1. Exodus 3:2. ↵

25. Bahá'u'lláh

1. A certain man who was present when Badí' was told he should carry the Epistle to the Sháh saw him transfigured; he became radiant. ↵

27. The True Meaning of Baptism by Water and Fire
 1. John 3:5. ↵
 2. Matthew 3:11. ↵
29. The Evolution of the Spirit
 1. i.e.—All good actions bring their own reward. ↵
31. Concerning Body, Soul and Spirit
 1. A small orange-tree on the table nearby. ↵
33. On Calumny
 1. i.e.—Divine Manifestation. ↵

Part Two

46. The Sixth Principle—Means of Existence
 1. “Give me neither poverty nor riches.”—Proverbs 30:8. ↵
52. This Great and Glorious Cause
 1. Matthew 18:18. ↵

Importance of Paris Talks

Paris Talks among books urgently needed for translation (in the past)

"...he does not consider it necessary to publish at present "This Earth One Country"; there are other books more urgently needed by the German friends such as "Some Answered Questions" and the "Paris Talks" of the Master."

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Light of Divine Guidance, vol. 1, p. 160)

"Some Answered Questions" is more important in the teaching work than "Paris Talks"

"He thinks that "Some Answered Questions" is more important in the teaching work than "Paris Talks", and recommends to get "Some Answered Questions" out first."

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Light of Divine Guidance, vol. 1, p. 168)

Notes on Authenticity

"In regard to the question you raise in your letter of June 9th about the "Paris Talks", the Guardian does not advise your putting the suggested footnote, as we cannot be absolutely sure, unless we see the Persian text, that what you propose is really what the Master means. The present translation cannot be considered accurate in all its details, obviously, and as at the moment the Persian text is not available, he suggests you either put no footnote at all, or one stating that the meaning is obscure and future re-translation will clear up such passages."

(On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Unfolding Destiny, p. 178)

"Regarding the status of Abdu'l-Baha's talks published in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" and "Paris Talks", original Persian transcripts of some, but not all, of the talks are available. We provide the following extract from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice which indicates that "in the future each talk will have to be identified and those which are unauthenticated will have to be clearly distinguished from those which form a part of Baha'i Scripture":

"The original of "Some Answered Questions" in Persian is preserved in the Holy Land; its text was read in full and corrected by Abdu'l-Baha Himself. Unfortunately, Abdu'l-Baha did not read and authenticate all transcripts of His other talks, some of which have been translated into various languages and published. For many of His addresses included in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" and "Paris Talks", for example, no original authenticated text has yet been found. However, the Guardian allowed such compilations to continue to be used by the friends. In the future each talk will have to be identified and those which are unauthenticated will have to be clearly distinguished from those which form a part of Baha'i Scripture. This does not mean that the unauthenticated talks will have to cease to be used -- merely that the degree of authenticity of every document will have to be known and understood. (23 March 1987)"

(From a memorandum of the Research department dated 28 March 1996)

Notes on Publication

This morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about America and the probability of his return to that country. He said: "God willing! If I go to America another time I will go differently; but it is very difficult. This first trip was made with great exertion." As I was reading one of his addresses delivered in America, he said it would be well if all his addresses in that country could be printed in one or two volumes. At present, he declared, they are all scattered and not collected. He called attention to how quickly the Paris and London addresses delivered last year were printed; and this was done through one woman, Lady Blomfield. Some one mentioned the name of a prominent wealthy woman and he said: "One of these poor, sincere and honest women is more beloved by me than a thousand millionaires; just now this Lady Blomfield is dearer to me than all the queens of the world."

(Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol 3, No 19)