

Unity in Diversity

Devotional Readings

August 16, 2020

1

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves. That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. These principles and laws, these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated.

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 287)

2

It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold Them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of Being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendor! Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: "I am the return of all the Prophets," He, verily, speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established....

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 51)

3

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(Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 13)

4

O thou seeker after truth! The world of the Kingdom is one world. The only difference is that spring returneth over and over again, and setteth up a great new commotion throughout all created things. Then plain and hillside come alive, and trees turn delicately green, and leaves, blossoms and fruits come forth in beauty, infinite and tender. Wherefore the dispensations of past ages are intimately connected with those that follow them: indeed, they are one and the same, but as the world groweth, so doth the light, so doth the downpour of heavenly grace, and then the Day-Star shineth out in noonday splendour.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 58)

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5

White doves and gray doves associate with each other in perfect friendship. Man draws imaginary lines on the planet and says, "This is a Frenchman, a Musselman, an Italian!" Upon these differences wars are waged. Men are fighting for the possession of the earth. They fight for that which becomes their graves, their cemeteries, their tombs.

In reality all are members of one human family -- children of one Heavenly Father. Humanity may be likened unto the vari-colored flowers of one garden. There is unity in diversity. Each sets off and enhances the other's beauty.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 25)

6

If this warfare and conflict are not entirely effaced, if the whole world of humanity is not united and in accord, if the various races refuse to associate with one another, how can we ever aspire to the realization of that dream of the millennium of which it is said, "The earth will be transformed into a delectable paradise and all the children of men will live in the utmost happiness"? If the members of a family are perfectly united it will add to their comfort and joy. If the people of a city are inspired with civic unity the whole community will advance. If the inhabitants of a great continent become one spirit in different bodies marvelous progress will be made and if the people of the entire globe are welded into one great commonwealth the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," will be a reality for each will have the kingdom within himself.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 183)

7

How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and colour! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men. Verily, it is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and the binder and regulator in the world of humanity.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 291)

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8

The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script. When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home. These things are obligatory and absolutely essential. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 165)

9

By nature is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things. And these realities of things, though in the utmost diversity, are yet intimately connected one with the other. For these diverse realities an all-unifying agency is needed that shall link them all one to the other. For instance, the various organs and members, the parts and elements, that constitute the body of man, though at variance, are yet all connected one with the other by that all-unifying agency known as the human soul, that causeth them to function in perfect harmony and with absolute regularity, thus making the continuation of life possible. The human body, however, is utterly unconscious of that all-unifying agency, and yet acteth with regularity and dischargeth its functions according to its will.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to August Forel, p. 12)

10

We are striving with heart and soul, resting neither day nor night, seeking not a moment's ease, to make this world of man the mirror of the unity of God. Then how much more must the beloved of the Lord reflect that unity? And this cherished hope, this yearning wish of ours will be visibly fulfilled only on the day when the true friends of God arise to carry out the Teachings of the Abha Beauty -- may my life be a ransom for His lovers! One amongst His Teachings is this, that love and good faith must so dominate the human heart that men will regard the stranger as a familiar friend, the malefactor as one of their own, the alien even as a loved one, the enemy as a companion dear and close. Who killeth them, him will they call a bestower of life; who turneth away from them, him will they regard as turning towards them; who denieth their message, him will they consider as one acknowledging its truth. The meaning is that they must treat all humankind even as they treat their sympathizers, their fellow-believers, their loved ones and familiar friends.

Should such a torch light up the world community, ye will find that the whole earth is sending forth a fragrance, that it hath become a delightful paradise, and the face of it the image of high heaven. Then will the whole world be one native land, its diverse peoples one single kind, the nations of both east and west one household.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 84)

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11

O Pen of the Most High! Recount unto him who hath turned unto Thy Lord, the All-Glorious, that which shall enable him to dispense with the sayings of men. Say: Spirit, mind, soul, and the powers of sight and hearing are but one single reality which hath manifold expressions owing to the diversity of its instruments. As thou dost observe, man's power to comprehend, move, speak, hear, and see all derive from this sign of his Lord within him. It is single in its essence, yet manifold through the diversity of its instruments. This, verily, is a certain truth. For example, if it directeth its attention to the means of hearing, then hearing and its attributes become manifest. Likewise, if it directeth itself to the means of vision, a different effect and attribute appear. Reflect upon this subject that thou mayest comprehend the true meaning of what hath been intended, find thyself independent of the sayings of the people, and be of them that are well assured. In like manner, when this sign of God turneth towards the brain, the head, and such means, the powers of the mind and the soul are manifested. Thy Lord, verily, is potent to do whatsoever He pleaseth.

(Baha'u'llah, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 150)

12

The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers.

In the days of old an instinct for warfare was developed in the struggle with wild animals; this is no longer necessary; nay, rather, co-operation and mutual understanding are seen to produce the greatest welfare of mankind. Enmity is now the result of prejudice only.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Abdu'l-Baha in London, p. 19)

13

O ye lovers of this wronged one! Cleanse ye your eyes, so that ye behold no man as different from yourselves. See ye no strangers; rather see all men as friends, for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness. And in this new and wondrous age, the Holy Writings say that we must be at one with every people; that we must see neither harshness nor injustice, neither malevolence, nor hostility, nor hate, but rather turn our eyes toward the heaven of ancient glory. For each of the creatures is a sign of God, and it was by the grace of the Lord and His power that each did step into the world; therefore they are not strangers, but in the family; not aliens, but friends, and to be treated as such.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 24)

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14

"This is the day to make mention of God, to celebrate His praise, and to serve Him; deprive not yourselves thereof. Ye are the letters of the words, and the words of the Book. Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish. He hath protected you from the mighty winds of misbelief, and the tempestuous gales of impiety, and nurtured you with the hands of His loving providence. Now is the time for you to put forth your leaves, and yield your fruit. The fruits of the tree of man have ever been and are goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. Withhold not these fruits from the heedless. If they be accepted, your end is attained, and the purpose of life achieved. If not, leave them in their pastime of vain disputes. Strive, O people of God, that haply the hearts of the divers kindreds of the earth may, through the waters of your forbearance and loving-kindness, be cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred, and be made worthy and befitting recipients of the splendors of the Sun of Truth."

(Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 25)

15

O God, my God! Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion, protect them with the watchful eye of thy loving-kindness from all rancor, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy care and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy divine unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy holy kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thine all-swaying power that cometh from Thy realm of glory. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious.

(Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i Prayers, p. 134)