

The Bahai Revelation

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The Bahai Revelation*

* Believed to have been published by Roy Cochran Wilhelm (1875–1951).

Beware of prejudice; 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 the west.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

* ‘Abdu’l-Baha, Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy, p. 25. Note: Old “transcriptions” have been revised.

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The Bahai Revelation

The Baha'í revelation is not an organization. The Baha'í cause can never be confined to an organization. The Baha'í revelation is the spirit of this age. It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Baha'í cause is an inclusive movement; the teachings of all religions and societies are found here. Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Mohammedans, * Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, etc., find their highest aims in this cause. Socialists and philosophers find their theories fully developed in this revelation.† 1

The cause of Baha'u'llah is the same as the cause of Christ. It is the same Temple and the same Foundation. ... In the coming of Christ the divine teachings were given in accordance with the infancy of the human race. The teachings of Baha'u'llah have the same basic principles, but are according to the stage of maturity of the world today and the requirements of this illumined age.‡

—‘Abdu’l-Baha

* Muslims.

† Y. S. Tsao, “The unity of civilization”, Bahá’í Year Book 1925–1926, vol. 1, p. 146.

‡ 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, vol. 3, p. 535.

The Bahá'í Cause*

The Baha'í revelation, which had its rise in Persia in the year 1844, today has become known throughout the world. "... it is not so much a new religion as Religion renewed and unified."†

This unique movement for social and spiritual reconstruction was first centered in a radiant youth called the Bab, whose mission it was to proclaim the coming of a great world messenger. Many European historians have described the wonderful charm of this pure-hearted hero of progressive religion, who was martyred in 1850 after six years of brilliant teaching.

Baha'u'llah,‡ a Persian noble, then appeared as the one heralded by the Bab. He announced the dawn of a new age, an age when brotherhood and peace should cover the earth even as the waters cover the sea. The principles he advocated, however, were too universal for the limited minds of his contemporaries. He and a few of his followers were driven by the reactionary powers of Persia into exile and prison, and at last, in 1868, were immured in the desolate barracks of 'Akka in Syria.

But the persecutions of men cannot extinguish the light of God's holy spirit when it shines from the heart of his prophets. From the "Most Great Prison" of 'Akka, Baha'u'llah spread his gospel of unity and love throughout western Asia. In 1892, at the end of forty years of exile and imprisonment, he passed away, leaving his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha,§ as the appointed expounder of his word and the promulgator of his cause, the "Center of the Covenant".

Under the guidance of 'Abdu'l-Baha the Baha'í message has been carried to all lands and all religions. It has bound Christians and Mohammedans, Buddhists and Parsis, Jews and Hindus, into the most spiritual brotherhood the world has ever known.

The Baha'ís believe this is the beginning of that Golden Age upon earth, the age of universal peace and love when, as Christ foretold, men "shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."**

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Y. S. Tsao, "The unity of civilization", Bahá'í Year Book 1925–1926, vol. 1, pp. 146–7.

† 'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, vol. 1, p. viii.

‡ Lit. "Glory of God".

§ Lit. "Servant of Baha".

** Quote from 'Abdu'l-Baha, Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy, p. 25.

Twelve basic Bahá'í principles*

1. The oneness of mankind.
2. Independent investigation of truth.
3. The foundation of all religions is one.
4. Religion must be the cause of unity.
5. Religion must be in accord with science and reason.

6. Equality between men and women.
7. Prejudice of all kinds must be forgotten.
8. Universal peace.
9. Universal education.
10. Solution of the economic problem.
11. An international auxiliary language.
12. An international tribunal.

* These twelve basic Baha'í principles were enunciated by Baha'u'llah over sixty years ago and are to be found in His published Writings of that time. Compiled from the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

1. The oneness of mankind

Baha'u'llah addresses Himself to the world of man saying, "Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one arbor."† That is, the world of existence is no other than one tree, and the nations or peoples are like unto the different branches or limbs thereof, and human individuals are similar to the fruits and blossoms thereof ... while in all past religious books and epistles, the world of humanity has been divided into two parts: one called the "people of the Book", or the "pure tree", and the other, the "evil tree". One-half of the people of the world were looked upon as belonging to the faithful, and the other as belonging to the irreligious and the infidel; one-half of the people were consigned to the mercy of the Creator, and the other half were considered as objects of the wrath of their Maker. But Baha'u'llah proclaimed the oneness of the world of humanity—He submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity.

2. Independent investigation of truth

No man should follow blindly his ancestors and forefathers. Nay, each must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, and investigate truth in order that he may find the Truth; whereas the religion of forefathers and ancestors is based upon blind imitation—man should investigate the truth.

3. The foundation of all religions is one

The foundation underlying all the divine precepts is one reality. It must needs be reality, and reality is one, not multiple. Therefore the foundation of the divine religions is one. But we can see that certain forms have come in, certain imitations of forms and ceremonials have crept in. They are

* "Appendix 1: Summary of Baha'í teachings", The Bahá'í World 1926–1928, pp. 294–6.

† See Baha'u'llah in Baha'i Scriptures, p. 281.

heretical, they are accidental, because they differ; hence they cause differences among religions. But if we set aside these imitations and seek the reality of the foundation we shall all agree, because religion is

one and not multiple.

4. Religion must be the cause of unity among mankind

Every religion is the greatest divine effulgence, the cause of life amongst men, the cause of the honor of humanity, and is productive of life everlasting amongst humankind. Religion is not for enmity or hatred. It is not for tyranny or injustice. If religion be the cause of enmity and rancor, if it should prove the cause of alienating men, assuredly non-religion would be better. For religion and the teachings which appertain to it are as a course of treatment. What is the object of any course of treatment? It is cure and healing. But if the outcome of a course of treatment should be productive of mere diagnosis and discussion of symptoms, the abolition of it is evidently preferable. In this sense, abandoning religion would be a step toward unity.

5. Religion must be in accord with science and reason

Religion must be reasonable; it must agree perfectly with science, so that science shall sanction religion and religion sanction science. The two must be brought together, indissolubly, in reality. Down to the present day it has been customary for man to accept a thing because it was called religion, even though it were not in accord with human reason.

6. Equality between men and women

This is peculiar to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, for all former religious systems placed men above women. Daughters and sons must follow the same

form of study and the same education. Having one course of education promotes unity among mankind.

7. Abandonment of all prejudices

It is established that all the prophets of God have come to unite the children of men and not to disperse them, and to put in action the law of love and not enmity. Consequently we must throw aside all these prejudices—the racial prejudice, the patriotic prejudice, the religious and political prejudices. We must become the cause of unity of the human race.

8. Universal peace

All men and nations shall make peace. There shall be universal peace amongst governments, universal peace amongst religions, universal peace amongst races, universal peace amongst the denizens of all regions. Today in the world of humanity the most important matter is the question of universal peace. The realization of this principle is the crying need of the time.

9. Universal education

All mankind should partake of both knowledge and education, and this partaking of knowledge and of education is one of the necessities of religion. The education of each child is obligatory. If there are no parents, the community must look after the child.

10. Solution of the economic problem

No religious books of the past prophets speak of the economic question, while this problem has been thoroughly solved in the teachings of Baha'u'llah. ... Certain regulations are revealed which insure the welfare and well-being of all humanity. Just as the rich man enjoys his rest and his pleasures surrounded by luxuries, the poor man must

likewise have a home, be provided with sustenance, and not be in want. ... Until this is effected happiness is impossible. All are equal in the estimation of God; their rights are one and there is no distinction for any soul; all are protected beneath the justice of God.

11. An international auxiliary language

An international auxiliary language shall be adopted which shall be taught by all the schools and academies of the world. A committee appointed by national bodies shall select a suitable language to be used as a means of international communication, and that language shall be taught in all the schools of the world in order that everyone shall need but two languages, his national tongue and the international auxiliary language. All will acquire the international auxiliary language.

12. An international tribunal

A universal tribunal under the power of God, under the protection of all men, shall be established. Each one must obey 'the decisions of this tribunal, in order to arrange the difficulties of every nation.

About fifty years ago Baha'u'llah commanded the people to establish universal peace and summoned all the nations to the "divine banquet of international arbitration" so that the questions of boundaries, of national honor and property and of vital interests between nations might be decided by an arbitral court of justice.

Remember, these precepts were given more than half a century ago. At that moment no one spoke of universal peace, nor of any of these principles; but Baha'u'llah proclaimed them to all the sovereigns of the world. ... They are the spirit of this age, the light of this age; they are the well-being of this age.

Nine qualifications by which
the Great Master may be recognized*

1. That Great Master will be the educator of the world of humanity.
2. His teachings must be universal and confer illumination upon humankind.
3. His knowledge must be innate and spontaneous, and not acquired.
4. He must answer the questions of all sages, solve all the difficult problems of humanity, and be able to withstand all the persecutions and sufferings heaped upon Him.
5. He must be a joy-bringer and the herald of the kingdom of happiness.
6. His knowledge must be infinite and his wisdom all-comprehensive.
7. The penetration of his Word and the potency of his influence must

be so great as to humble even his worst enemies.

8. Sorrows and tribulations must not vex him. His courage and conviction must be God-like. Day unto day he must become firmer and more zealous.

9. He must be the establisher of universal civilization, the unifier of religions, the standard-bearer of universal peace, and the embodiment of all the highest and noblest virtues of the world of humanity.

Whenever you find these conditions realized in a human temple, turn to Him and look for guidance and illumination.†

—‘Abdu’l-Baha

The Manifestation of the Essence of God is like unto the sun, which has different risings. The dawning places are different but the sun is always the same. The lamps are different, but the light is one.‡

—‘Abdu’l-Baha

* ‘Abdu’l-Baha in Baha’i Scriptures, p. 300. Talk given at the Theosophical Society, Buda Pest, 12 April 1913.

† *ibid.*

‡ ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s visit to Philadelphia, 8–10 June 1912, in *Star of the West*, V:6, p. 86.

From the Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh

O sons of Adam! O ye discerning ones of the people! Verily the words which have descended from the heaven of the will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences and welcome all with the light of oneness. Be the cause of comfort and promotion of humanity. Live among the people a life that will manifest signs of God. This handful of dust, the world, is one home: let it be in unity. Forsake pride, it is a cause of discord. Follow that which tends to harmony.

O friends! Consort with all the people of the world with joy and fragrance. Fellowship is the cause of unity, and unity is the source of order in the world. Blessed are they who are kind and serve with love.

O son of man! Wert thou to observe mercy thou wouldst not regard thine own interest, but the interest of mankind. Wert thou to observe justice, choose thou for others what thou dost choose for thyself.

Verily, man is uplifted to the heaven of glory and power through meekness; again, through pride, is he degraded to the lowest station.

In this day he who seeks the light of the sun of truth must free his mind from the tales of the past, must adorn his head with the crown of severance (from the world), and his temple with the robe of virtue.

Then shall he arrive at the ocean of oneness and enter the presence of singleness. The heart must become free from the fire of superstitions, that it may receive the light of assurance, and that it may perceive the

glory of God.

Oneness, in its true significance, means that God alone should be realized as the one power which

animates and dominates all things, which are but manifestations of its energy.

God, singly and alone, abideth in his own place which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description and definition, height and depth.

O my God! O my God! Adorn the heads of thy chosen ones with the crown of love and their temples with the robes of virtue.*

O brothers! Deal with one another in patience: sever your minds from the world: boast not thyself when in honor: and be not ashamed in abasement. I declare by my beauty that I have created ye all from the dust and to dust shall I turn ye again. (See Hidden Words, Persian No. 48)

The principle of faith is to lessen words and to increase deeds. He whose words exceed his acts, know verily, that his non-being is better than his being and death better than his life.

The root of all knowledge is the knowledge of God: glory be to him!

And this knowledge is impossible save through his Manifestation.†

O children of men! Do ye know why we have created ye from one clay?

That no one should glorify himself over the other. Be ye ever mindful of how ye were created. Since we created ye all from the same substance, ye must be as one soul, walking with the same feet, eating with one mouth, and living in one land, that ye may manifest with your being, and by your deeds and actions, the signs of unity and the spirit of oneness.

This is my counsel to ye, O people of lights! Therefore follow it that ye may attain the fruits of holiness from the tree of might and power.‡

O friends! Be not satisfied with the beauty that is mortal, discarding the eternal beauty, and attach not thyself to the world of clay. (See Hidden Words, Persian No. 14)

* For this and the preceding paragraphs, see Baha'i Scriptures, pp. 157–8.

† For this and the preceding paragraph, Baha'i Scriptures, p. 158.

‡ Three paragraphs: Baha'u'llah, *The Bahá'í World 1930–1932*, vol. 4, p. 506.

O son of existence! Be not engrossed with this world, for with fire we test the gold, and with gold we try the servants. (See Hidden Words, Arabic No. 55)

O son of humanity! Rejoice not if fortune smile upon thee; and if sorrow overtake thee, mourn not because of it, for in their time, they both shall cease and be no more. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 174)

O emigrants! The tongue is especially for the mention of me: stain it not with slander. If the fire of self overcome ye, be mindful to

remember your own faults, and speak not evil of my creatures, because each one of ye is more conscious and better informed of his own self than of my creatures. (See Hidden Words, Persian No. 66)

O my servant! The lowest of men are those who bear no fruit upon the earth; they are indeed counted as dead. Nay, the dead are preferred in the presence of God before those who are indolent and negligent.

(See Hidden Words, Persian No. 81)

O my servant! The best of people are they who gain by work, and spend for themselves and their kindred in the love of God, the Lord of the creatures. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 183)

O son of man! Breathe not the sins of anyone as long as thou art a sinner. If thou doest contrary to this command thou art not of me: to this I bear witness. (See Hidden Words, Arabic No. 27)

O son of spirit! Know verily that he who exhorts men to equity and himself does injustice, is not of me, even though he bear my name.

(Baha'i Scripture, p. 173)

O son of existence! Attribute not to any soul that which thou desirest not to be attributed to thyself, and do not promise that which thou dost not fulfil. This is my command to thee: obey it! (See Hidden Words, Arabic No. 29)

O son of existence! Examine thy deeds each day, before thou art judged, for death will suddenly overtake thee, and then thy deeds shall judge thee. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 173)

The people of Baha must serve the Lord with wisdom, teach others by their lives and manifest the light of God in their deeds. The effect of deeds is in truth more powerful than that of words. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 158)

The progress of man depends upon faithfulness, wisdom, chastity, intelligence and deeds. He is ever degraded by ignorance, lack of faith, untruth and selfishness. Verily, man is not called man until he be imbued with the attributes of the merciful. He is not man because of wealth and adornment, learning and refinement. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 158)

O sons of earth! Know the truth that a heart, wherein lingers the least trace of envy, shall never attain unto my immortal dominion, nor feel the fragrances of purity from my holy kingdom. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 176)

O ye tyrants on earth! Withdraw your hands from oppression, for I have vowed to pass not over any one's oppression. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 181)

O my friend by word! Reflect a little! Hast thou ever heard of the beloved and the stranger dwelling in the same heart? Therefore, send away the stranger, so that the beloved may enter his home. (See Hidden Words, Persian No. 26)

In this day all must serve God with purity and virtue. The effect of the word spoken by the teacher depends upon his purity of purpose

and upon his severance. Some are content with words, but the truth of words is tested by deeds and dependent upon life. Deeds reveal the station of the man. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 158)

The source of these utterances is justice. It is the freedom of man from superstition and imitation, that he may discern the Manifestations of God with the eye of oneness, and consider all affairs with keen vision. (Baha'i Scripture, p. 159)

—Baha'u'llah

Exhortation*

O People! The doors of the Kingdom are opened the sun of truth is shining upon the world the fountains of life are flowing the daysprings of mercy have appeared the greatest and most glorious light is now manifest to illuminate the hearts of men: wake up and hear the voice of God calling from all parts of the supreme world "Come unto me, O ye children of men; come unto me, O ye who are thirsty, and drink from this sweet water which is descending in torrents upon all parts of the globe!"

Now is the time! Now is the accepted time!

Look ye at the time of Christ; had the people realized that the Holy Spirit of God was speaking to them through his divine mouth they would not have waited three centuries before accepting him.

And now is it meet for you that ye are sleeping upon the beds of idleness and neglect, while the Father foretold by Christ has come amongst us and opened the greatest door of bounteous gifts and divine favors? Let us not be like those in past centuries who were deaf to his call and blind to his beauty; but let us try and open our eyes that we may see him, and open our ears that we may hear him, and cleanse our hearts that he may come and abide in our temples.

These days are the days of faith and deeds not the days of words and lip service. Let us arise from the sleep of negligence and realize what a great feast is prepared for us, first eating thereof ourselves, then giving unto others who are thirsting for the water of knowledge and hungering for the bread of life.

* 'Abdu'l-Baha, most of the text can be found in Star of the West, IV:15, p. 258.

These great days are swiftly passing and once gone can never be recalled; so while the rays of the sun of truth are still shining, and the Center of the Covenant of God is manifest, let us go forth to work, for after a while the night will come and the way to the vineyard will not then be so easy to find.

The light of knowledge hath appeared before which the darkness of every superstitious fancy will be annihilated. The hosts of the supreme concourse are descending to assist all those who rise up to serve their Lord, to subdue and gain the victory over the city of the hearts, to proclaim the glad tidings of the coming of the Lord, and to unite the souls of his creatures.

—‘Abdu’l-Baha

We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? ... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? ... Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family.... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind*

—Baha’u’llah

* Baha’u’llah cited in E. G. Browne, Introduction to A Traveller's Narrative

Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab, vol. 2, p. xl.

To live the life is:*

To be no cause of grief to any one.

To be kind to all people and to love them with a pure spirit.

Should opposition or injury happen to us, to bear it, to be as kind as ever we can be, and through all, to love the people. Should calamity exist in the greatest

degree, to rejoice, for these things are the gifts and favors of God.

To be silent concerning the faults of others, to pray for them, and to help them, through kindness, to correct their faults.

To look always at the good and not at the bad. If a man has ten good qualities and one bad one, look at the ten and forget the one. And if a man has ten bad qualities and one good one, to look at the one and forget the ten.

Never to allow ourselves to speak one unkind word about another, even though that other be our enemy.

To do all of our deeds in kindness.

To cut our hearts from ourselves and from the world.

To be humble.

To be servants of each other, and to know that we are less than any one else.

To be as one soul in many bodies; for the more we love each other, the nearer we shall be to God; but to know that our love, our unity, our obedience must not be by confession, but of reality.

To act with cautiousness and wisdom.

To be truthful.

To be hospitable.

To be reverent.

To be a cause of healing for every sick one, a comforter for every sorrowful

one, a pleasant water for every thirsty one, a heavenly table for every hungry one, a star to every horizon, a light for every lamp, a herald to every one who yearns for the kingdom of God.

—‘Abdu’l-Baha

Consider the candle, how it weeps its life away, drop by drop, that it may shed its light.†

—‘Abdu’l-Baha

*

These principles are attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Baha. However, no authoritative sources can be found for the exact wording. (‘Abdu’l-Baha, quoted in George Townshend, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Master, pp. 72–3)

† Marzieh Gail (tr.) in Summon Up Remembrance, p. 235. “Behold a candle how

it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its

flame of light.” (May Maxwell, An Early Pilgrimage, 1953, p. 42)

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This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes. ...

The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and 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.*

—‘Abdu’l-Baha

* ‘Abdu’l-Baha, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London, pp. 19–20.

Inquirers may address Bahai Assembly

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These booklets may be obtained from the above Assemblies at the rate of three dollars per hundred, post-paid.

May 1914. “The Baha’í Faith is not an organization. You can never organize the Baha’í Cause. The Baha’í Faith is the spirit of this age. It is the essence

of all the highest ideals of this century. The Baha’í Cause is an inclusive Faith: The teachings of all the religions and societies are found here; the Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, et. al., find their highest aims in this Cause. Even the Socialists and philosophers find their theories fully developed in this Faith.” (Star of the West, V:5, p. 67)

There is a very similar statement in Eric Adolphus Dime, “Is the Millennium upon Us?” The Forum, LVIII (August, 1917), p. 175.

The slight Bahai organization which exists is, in comparison with the Revelation itself, only as body in comparison to soul. Obviously, the cosmically conscious person of to-day cannot accept any arbitrary, limiting classification. (Horace Holley, Bahai: The Spirit of the Age (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1921), pp. 27–28)

The supposed quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Baha that the Baha’í Cause is not an organization should read, “You cannot limit the Baha’í Cause to an organization.” The Baha’í Cause must be organized just as everything must be. Institutions are necessary. All institutions now are decadent, but without institutions we should have nothing but anarchy. Baha’ís regard institutions not as ends, but as means. (“Glimpses of the New World Order”, Part II: Notes on a visit to Haifa and ‘Akka”, Mabel and Sylvia Paine, Star of the West, XXIV:1, 1933, p. 19)

— The Bahai Revelation (Used by permission of the curator)