

Knowing God Through Love
and
Farewell Address
of
Mirza Abul Fazl

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Knowing god through love

By Mirza Abul Fazl¹

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We cannot know God except through the embodiment of human perfection. One of the leading men of thought and purity among the former Sufis had a poem, a verse, the gist of whose meaning is the following: That were God the Almighty to be seen and perceived only through the outward senses, only through sense perception, even the animal, even the brute, would have been able to see and know Him. The literal translation of the verse is, that if the animal, sense perception could see Him, then the cow and the horse could have already seen and known Him.

One of the Baha'is told Mirza that when he was in the presence of Baha 'Ullah,² he heard Him say the following: That there is a point before mankind to which man aspires and that point is called the *most great elixir*, and if man develops and attains to that point, he develops and attains to everything; and then our Loyal illustrator stated, in speaking of Christ in comparison with the sages and philosophers of the world, that each one of these philosophers came into the world and studied and labored and wrote; and 60, 50, 40 years passed before their thought could be known in any part of the world, in or outside of their country; but Jesus the Christ came and when He began to teach during the short time of His ministry His Name and His voice were known and heard throughout many countries of the world. Why? Because Jesus had attained to what is called the most lofty point, the most great elixir, and it was *that* which spread His Word, whereas the philosophers had not attained to that lofty point. For it is

¹ Mírzá Muḥammad Gulpáygání (1844–1914) (pseudonym Abu'l-Faḍl—“Father or progenitor of Virtue”).

² Bahá'u'lláh.

offered themselves, who sacrificed themselves, the men who gave up everything they had for the good of the world, they would have been thoroughly generous, whereas we find that while they gave everything they had, yet they excepted themselves, because they were a part of the household to which he showed goodness through generosity; and moreover, if a man squanders all that he had on people without wisdom, then he will naturally become poor, and therefore a burden upon the shoulders of his fellow men, and consequently he should not squander it. He should give in the sense that generosity is good and comely.

Another of the requisites of love is forgiveness. For mankind in itself is not infallible and not proof against sinning. The only one who is infallible is the One Person, the Manifestation of God, in His Day. Now then mankind is not infallible, consequently he is liable to sin, and then if forgiveness be not shown by those against whom a man has sinned, or men have sinned, how can human society stand? Therefore if each one of us, when committing that which is not right, is in need of forgiveness on the part of the person with whom he deals, let himself or herself have forgiveness towards those who sin against him or her. Consequently love for all mankind is impossible without man having forgiveness. Hence Christ said, forgive your brethren in order that the Heavenly Father may forgive you. Therefore he believes that one of the primary conditions for the actualization of a universal love is the quality of mercy, the quality of forgiveness.

Another requisite, another test of love and of lofty attainment is trustworthiness, and by trustworthiness is not only meant not violating the property of men, the property which is given in their charge, but it means also, not violating the right of our fellow man by speaking against him in his absence. For it is impossible to consider, as a lover of the world, of humanity, a man who backbites, who slanders humanity. For those who hear a man slander, speak

evil against another, will lose trust and confidence in him, because they think that just as he is slandering another, he might slander them, in their absence. Consequently it is said by the spiritually wise that man cannot be a lover of mankind, cannot be endowed with lofty divine qualities unless he is *trustworthy* in his *hands* and *loyal* in HIS MOUTH; that is to say, unless he does not violate the property of man in his charge, nor slander people in their absence.

Not only this, but Baha 'Ullah has carried this command further by saying that even glorying over men is contradictory to divine qualities in man. For by glory is meant self-glorification, which is the uplifting of one's self in preference before another. So true love cannot exist if it is based upon self-glory. Many a brotherhood has a conflict because one of the members has considered himself higher and boasted himself in glory over another. Consequently they have said that one of the most necessary things for a man to cultivate in himself is meekness towards all men and humbleness before them. Baha 'Ullah says that the language of kindness is the touchstone of hearts and the sustainer of the soul.

There are other conditions of love, and if those conditions as well as those we have already stated are found within the person of a man, in his heart and in his deeds and actions and life, then that man can be said to be a lover of mankind.

Then that man can be considered as a trainer and educator of the world of humanity. Consequently it is said by one of the saints and spiritual men of the past prophetic days that (a translation of which is the following): Love is a strengthening divine essence which attracts the lover towards the Supreme Concourse and makes him a ruler of the inferior kingdom. Love is a divine quality, a strengthening quality, which attracts the one who has it towards the Supreme Concourse, the Word of God, the Spiritual Word,

and makes him as a ruler of the inferior concourse, the world. And from this statement we learn two lessons. One of them is this, that when man is characterized with a love based upon its requisites, then the spirit of God shall descend into him, because such a lofty man is full of love universal, full of love divine, that person would be the loftiest and best receptacle, the loftiest and best place or object upon whom the spirit of God should descend, and then his soul would become the soul of the angels of the Supreme Concourse. And then that man will be a king, as it is said here, over the world of humanity. How? By that is meant, when a man has love for mankind he naturally becomes public spirited, and one who is public spirited is attached by all men and they listen to him, whereas if they love him and are attached to him, that man has control over them. Now by this we understand that Moses as well as the prophets and the disciples after him became rulers of men in those days, became kings and judges, because they made themselves an embodiment of the love universal, love divine, and it was through this same love that Jesus Christ and His disciples conquered the world.

And it is by this penetrating quality of love that we can differentiate between true love and false love, between love within the heart based upon good deeds and actions, and the love based upon the verbiage, the verbal statement of it. For wherever you happen to travel throughout the world, you will hear men stating the same things, you will hear people say it is good to love each other, etc., but love must be based upon all the attributes of perfection in man, otherwise it cannot be true love.

Then how to differentiate between those who have the true love and those who have it not. We differentiate by the penetrating effect which the word of the true love has, I mean in preference before the word of a man who is a verbal lover of mankind. On this day when the world of humanity is divided religiously, politically as well as nation-

ally into sects, many divisions, many nations; in this day when the watchword of the world of humanity is hostility, warfare; in such a day as this when the organized world of humanity is reduced to this chaotic state of confusion, it is our duty each and all of us to pray God Almighty to shower, to pour upon all of us that spirit of true love, that spirit of real love through which all of us can rise to the watchword of universal peace, and to remove all warfare and all divisions, religious as well as national, from among mankind.

* * * * *

O SON OF MAN!

Because I loved thy creation, thus I created thee. Therefore love Me, that I may mention thee and in the Spirit of Life confirm thee.

O SON OF EXISTENCE!

Thy paradise is My Love and thy heaven is My Nearness! Therefore be impatient to enter into it. This is what was ordained to thee in Our Highest Kingdom and Supreme Majesty.

O SON OF EXISTENCE!

Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou dost not love Me I will never love thee. Know that, oh, servant!

O SON OF EXISTENCE!

My Love is My Fort: Whosoever enters it is protected and safe, and he who rejects it is led astray and perishes.

O SON OF EXISTENCE!

My Bowl thou art, and My Light is in thee: Therefore be enlightened by it, and seek not any beside Me, for I have created thee rich and bestowed abundantly Grace upon thee.¹

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¹ Old translations of Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic Nos 4, 6, 5, 9 & 11.

Farewell words

of our venerable teacher

Mirza Abul Fazl

To the American Baha'is

At a Reception given in his honor by Bro. A. P. Dodge, on Tuesday evening. 29 November 1904, at which a large number of believers from New York, Newark, Brooklyn, Hoboken, Washington, DC, etc., were present.

After having received the album containing the autographs of those present, which was handed to him by Mr William Dodge, Mirza Abul Fazl said:

I accept this token of your love with great pleasure. I have often said at various assemblies of the faithful, that my greatest hope and honor is to be accepted by God as one of His humble servants. As lack of time and certain physical inconveniences do not allow me to express my feelings in the form of a proper speech, I therefore confine myself to offering this short prayer in your behalf: May the Beauty of al-Baha enable you to shine as luminous stars in the Heaven of His Cause and transmit the rays of union and harmony to the world of humanity!

Indeed my faculty of speech fails to express adequate thanks to our Lord for His great mercy in having blessed me with such noble, sincere brothers and sisters. I can only say, this expression of love on the part of you[r] beloved ones, reminds me of the Words of His Holiness, Christ (on whom be Glory!): St. Mark, 10th Ch., 29-30 v. "And Jesus answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father,

or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

In order to show the fulfillment of these blessed words, I call your attention to the following statement:

About thirty-two years ago, when I was on the point of departure from my birth-place, the city of Gulpaygan, to Teheran, though I was the son of a prominent Mohammedan divine of the place, the only ones who came to visit me and bid me farewell, were my own mother, sisters and brothers. At that time I was not a believer in this Great Cause. Three years subsequent to my arrival in Teheran, I was blessed with faith in this wonderful Revelation. As a consequence of my acceptance of this Truth, which was contrary to the religious opinion of my relatives, my mother, brothers and sisters entirely abandoned me, and I was left alone with no sympathy on the part of kith or kin. Now consider how our Lord blessed me with "An hundred-fold" more than I sacrificed for His sake! During the many years of my travels in different lands as a teacher of this Truth: upon arriving at every city and town, I have been greeted most cordially by thousands of brethren, sisters and other spiritual relatives, who encompassed me like heavenly stars. How can I thank God for His Benevolence in having given me such real brethren and sisters in every city in the East and the West? Each one of you shares with me in this spiritual bounty. For in whatever part of the world you may travel, and in whatever city you arrive, the first ones to greet you will be your spiritual Baha'i brethren and sisters.

The best and only proper way for me to respond to your heartfelt feelings is to remember you and mention you in our Lord's Presence. When in the Holy City, I shall pray God to confirm you and bless you with great

honor and glory. I shall cling to the hem of our Lord and supplicate to Him to grant that the American Nation shall be strengthened to plant the standard of this Truth in every clime and to succeed in the unification of mankind. I shall likewise remember and pray for you while visiting the Holy Tomb of Baha 'Ullah and the Sacred Shrine of the Bab. This is the way I hope to return thanks for your love and kindness!

Now allow me to end with a few remarks concerning the teaching of this Truth. When you come in contact with any people or individual to deliver the great Message, the first thing they will ask will be this: "What is the particular thing which Baha 'Ullah has done in addition to the deeds of former Prophets? What has Baha 'Ullah revealed which was not revealed by former Revelators? What is that which justifies and necessitates our acceptance of His Message?"

Nay, it is indeed a cause of wonder that some pass judgment on Baha 'Ullah and His Message, even without having taken the trouble of asking the above questions! For instance, one of the learned adherents of the Concord School of Transcendental Philosophy, who has not even investigated the Teachings of Baha 'Ullah; nor inquired into the purport of this Revelation; has stated in an article quoted last September in the Boston *Transcript*, that Baha 'Ullah has brought nothing new!

Not only the adherents of philosophical schools or the votaries of great religions such as Christianity and Mohammedanism, etc., ask the above questions from a Baha'i Teacher, but members of small sects and denominations have the same queries upon their lips. For they cannot as yet see, nor investigate enough to realize the great proofs by which the Baha'is consider the validity of their religion as clear as the Sun in mid-day; otherwise they would never hesitate in acknowledging this great Truth.

The first answer that you Baha'is shall give to such questions must be couched in the following words or queries:

In a temporal government, can a nation or community continue to be governed by a ruler who lived at a previous time?

When a new ruler is appointed, shall the nation consider him unnecessary because he did not bring any new laws? To such queries reason answers, no! It is the presence of the ruler which insures order in the affairs of a nation and secures the preservation of a community. The same example is exactly applicable to the Divine Government or Kingdom, whose King is the Spiritual Ruler of mankind. In my lectures given two years ago in Washington, DC, on the Meaning of the Kingdom, I have demonstrated that the Kingdom of God is embodied in his Religion; that is, by the establishing of the Kingdom of God on earth, is intended the universal spread of His Religion. Just as a temporal Kingdom has a temporal ruler, so the Spiritual Kingdom is headed by a Spiritual King. Yet the influence and power of the laws of the Spiritual Kingdom too far transcend those of a temporal kingdom to come within the reach of any comparison. For the commands of a temporal kingdom are changed and seldom survive the temporal law-giver, while the laws of the Divine Kingdom control human actions and influence hearts and souls of successive generations. The following example shows the effectiveness and influence of the Divine Laws: The laws of God through Moses so influenced the Israelites that for thirty-four centuries they have abstained from touching fire on the Sabbath. The command of His Holiness Christ so controlled the Christians that they did not take the liberty of marrying more than one wife for nineteen centuries. For it is a matter of history that before their conversion to Christianity, the Romans indulged in polygamy, and that this liberty was entirely checked by the Command of Christ.

But such is by no means the case with laws enacted by temporal rulers, nor with the tenets of philosophers,

which undergo change and reformation in every quarter or half a century!

Time does not allow any further elucidation of this important matter, and I trust these instances will suffice to show that the Divine Kingdom on this earth, is no other than the Living Religion.

When through dissensions, factions and other detrimental measures, a temporal government degenerates to chaos and anarchy, the best means for its restoration is the appointment of a new wise ruler to rebuild it on a more solid administrative basis. Likewise when the Spiritual Kingdom, that is, the Divine Religion, falls into selfish hands, and its laws are ignored or superseded by man-made laws or practice according to human interpretations of those laws; it is indispensable that a new Divine King should adorn the throne of authority and enforce or enact new reformatory laws for the training of His subjects.

By such Divine Kings we mean Moses, Jesus Christ and other Revelators in their respective time, and in this Day Baha 'Ullah and His beloved Son and servant, 'Abdu'l Baha. Just as the very presence of a ruler is conducive to order in a temporal government, even though he may not bring new laws, so the very coming of a Divine Manifestation responds to the requirements of mankind and breathes a new life in the bodies of former prophets' laws; even though He may not enact new laws and regulations.

But in Baha 'Ullah we have both the fulfiller of former laws and the revealer of new laws applicable to the needs of all mankind. The benefits imparted by this Revelation to humanity are numerous. Among the Bounties particular to the Revelation of Baha 'Ullah alone are special laws revealed for the removal of all the causes of universal in-harmony, and for the practical unification of the human race.

How the unity of mankind has begun to be realized through this Revelation is shown by the following considerations:

It is a matter of fact and pure reason, that no nation ever denied God and His Manifestations knowingly and deliberately. Had the Jews known Jesus to be the Messiah, they would have never rejected him. So the Zoroastrians did not knowingly deny Jesus and the Christians did not knowingly refuse to accept Mohammed as a true prophet. There may have been a few only who denied God and His Truth while knowing Him as the True One; yet such few are but exceptions and rather enforce than affect the general rule.

What is then the reason that nations denied each other's prophet? In the opening chapter of the Book of Ighan Baha 'Ullah gives the main reason to be every nation's lack of understanding of the other's religious books. When we consider attentively, we find that every nation would willingly sacrifice children, relatives, home and belongings rather than give up its Heavenly Book. On the other hand, the very Books prove that their prophetic texts have been revealed in symbols and therefore sealed and veiled from the people. Thus every people who refused to accept a new Manifestation, were compelled to this transgression by taking the prophecies literally and by their ignorance of the true spirit of the meanings which alone is fulfilled in a new Manifestation.

For instance, the most ancient religion on record is Sabeanism. It contains prophecies symbolically revealed concerning the coming of the Manifestation; such as the darkening of the Sun, the falling of the stars, the raising of the dead, the rolling up of the old heavens, the expansion of new heavens and the renewal of the earth, etc.

Subsequent to that dispensation, Moses and the Israelitish prophets, speaking of the coming of the Lord, repeated the same symbolic signs and tokens. Daniel records that in that day the dead shall arise; Isaiah states that the Sun shall be darkened, etc. Yet none of these prophets ever gave any interpretation of such signs, but

simply repeated similar tokens in a sealed language. Likewise, Zoroaster speaking of the same Day, made similar prophecies in His Book, even without explaining their inner purport.

When Christ became manifest, He, too, repeated the same signs concerning the coming of the Father and His own return. Subsequently Mohammed appeared and stated similar prophecies, which, He added, shall be fulfilled in the coming of the Mahdi and the Lord.

Now consider, when a Christian missionary seeks to convert a Jew, and explains Jesus to be the Savior and the Messiah, the Jew will naturally allude to the prophecies in the Old Testament, which were not literally fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. The Jew will answer that their different Books clearly state that the Messiah shall restore the Jewish people and deliver them from the hands of other nations; and that He shall establish them in the Holy Land. How shall he recognize Jesus as the Messiah, in whose coming the contrary was the case concerning the Jews? For the Jews would reason that it is a matter of history, that previous to the coming of Jesus, they were actually established in their land, and enjoyed glory as a nation; while in the rise of Christ began their dispersion, suffering and exile which have continued for nineteen centuries. During this long period, the Christian teachers could not succeed in converting the Jews because of inability to interpret the sealed prophecies of the Old Testament.

Likewise with the rise of Islam and following Arab conquests in Persia, the Parsees who clung to their religious Book could not recognize in Mohammed the literal fulfillment of their prophecies. The Mohammedans, being ignorant of the real meanings of the Parsee Book, finally sought to convert them through the sword and compulsion. The majority of the Parsees thus became Mohammedans, while a number of them emigrated to India, thus delivering themselves from the conqueror's sword.

But when Baha 'Ullah appeared, one of the important works He accomplished was to interpret the symbolic prophecies of all nations in the Book of Ighan. In this great Book He furnished the key to the seekers to open and unseal the prophetic words, which He further elucidated in His other blessed Tablets. He instructed His followers in the knowledge of the Divine Words, and endowed them with such spiritual weapons by which they gain victory over the hearts and souls of various nations. This removal of the great obstacle brought many out of all religions to believe in Him as the promised Manifestation, and through Him to recognize the truth of all former prophets. This fulfilled the prophecies concerning the opening of the sealed Books as alluded to in the Apocalypse and in Daniel.

Were it not for the appearance of Baha 'Ullah to reveal such hidden mysteries, the unification of mankind might remain unrealized for thousands of years.

Not only would, in such a case, the nations fail to be united in religious faith, but prophetic Books would remain a subject of derision to materialistic philosophers.

This opening of the sealed Book which leads to the unity of mankind, is one of the evidences distinguishing the Revelation of Baha 'Ullah from all former religions. We hope you will, in time, come to know of other similar evidences of this Truth, through the study of the Heavenly Books.

According to St. Matthew, Jesus Christ, in answering the tempter, alluded to the Word of God as being the only Source of Life. Isaiah symbolized the Word of God by the "Water descended from Heaven" for the development of the world. Thus the Divine Words of Baha 'Ullah shall prove the life-principle to humanity, and shall accomplish that for which they have been revealed. They shall fulfill two things upon which depends the reformation of the world:

They shall wipe away all sins of unbelief and division by upbuilding the Temple of Unity among men.

They shall dispel and remove the darkness of inharmony from the world. Nay, rather, according to Isaiah, the Words of Baha 'Ullah shall swallow even death, that is, infidelity, enmity, and international, racial and religious hatred and bias.

Blessed are you! O ye beloved of al-Baha! for you are the channels through which the Heavenly Water of the Word of Baha 'Ullah and 'Abdu'l Baha, will be distributed to the parched deserts of mankind. You are the ones who shall give the thirsty ones and seekers of Truth, to drink from this overflowing spiritual cup!

May the blessing of our Lord descend upon you now and forevermore!