

O ye concourse of the Kingdom of Abhá! Two calls to...

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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O ye concourse of the Kingdom of Abhá! Two calls to success and prosperity are being raised from the heights of the happiness of mankind, awakening the slumbering, granting sight to the blind, causing the heedless to become mindful, bestowing hearing upon the deaf, unloosing the tongue of the mute and resuscitating the dead.

The one is the call of civilization, of the progress of the material world. This pertaineth to the world of phenomena, promoteth the principles of material achievement, and is the trainer for the physical accomplishments of mankind. It compriseth the laws, regulations, arts and sciences through which the world of humanity hath developed; laws and regulations which are the outcome of lofty ideals and the result of sound minds, and which have stepped forth into the arena of existence through the efforts of the wise and cultured in past and subsequent ages. The propagator and executive power of this call is just government.

The other is the soul-stirring call of God, Whose spiritual teachings are safeguards of the everlasting glory, the eternal happiness and illumination of the world of humanity, and cause attributes of mercy to be revealed in the human world and the life beyond.

This second call is founded upon the instructions and exhortations of the Lord and the admonitions and altruistic emotions belonging to the realm of morality which, like unto a brilliant light, brighten and illumine the lamp of the realities of mankind. Its penetrative power is the Word of God.

However, until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfections, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained. For although, on the one hand, material achievements and the development of the physical world produce prosperity, which exquisitely manifests its intended aims, on the other hand dangers, severe calamities and violent afflictions are imminent.



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Consequently, when thou lookest at the orderly pattern of kingdoms, cities and villages, with the attractiveness of their adornments, the freshness of their natural resources, the refinement of their appliances, the ease of their means of travel, the extent of knowledge available about the world of nature, the great inventions, the colossal enterprises, the noble discoveries and scientific researches, thou wouldst conclude that civilization conduceth to the happiness and the progress of the human world. Yet shouldst thou turn thine eye to the discovery of destructive and infernal machines, to the development of forces of demolition and the invention of fiery implements, which uproot the tree of life, it would become evident and manifest unto thee that civilization is conjoined with barbarism. Progress and barbarism go hand in hand, unless material civilization be confirmed by Divine Guidance, by the revelations of the All-Merciful and by godly virtues, and be reinforced by spiritual conduct, by the ideals of the Kingdom and by the outpourings of the Realm of Might.

Consider now, that the most advanced and civilized countries of the world have been turned into arsenals of explosives, that the continents of the globe have been transformed into huge camps and battlefields, that the peoples of the world have formed themselves into armed nations, and that the governments of the world are vying with each other as to who will first step into the field of carnage and bloodshed, thus subjecting mankind to the utmost degree of affliction.

Therefore, this civilization and material progress should be combined with the Most Great Guidance so that this nether world may become the scene of the appearance of the bestowals of the Kingdom, and physical achievements may be conjoined with the effulgences of the Merciful. This in order that the beauty and perfection of the world of man may be unveiled and be manifested before all in the utmost grace and splendor. Thus everlasting glory and happiness shall be revealed.

Praise be to God, throughout succeeding centuries and ages the call of civilization hath been raised, the world of humanity hath been advancing and progressing day by day, various countries have been developing by leaps and bounds, and material improvements have increased, until the world of existence obtained universal capacity to receive the spiritual teachings and to hearken to the Divine Call. The suckling babe passeth through various physical stages, growing and developing at every stage, until its body reacheth the age of maturity. Having arrived at this stage it acquireth the capacity to manifest spiritual and intellectual perfections. The lights of comprehension, intelligence and knowledge become perceptible in it and the powers of its soul unfold. Similarly, in the contingent world, the human species hath undergone progressive physical changes and, by a slow process, hath scaled the ladder of civilization, realizing in itself the wonders, excellencies and gifts of humanity in their most glorious form, until it gained the capacity to express the splendors of spiritual perfections and divine ideals and became capable of hearkening to the call of God. Then at last the call of the Kingdom was raised, the spiritual virtues and perfections were revealed, the Sun of

Reality dawned, and the teachings of the Most Great Peace, of the oneness of the world of humanity and of the universality of men, were promoted. We hope that the effulgence of these rays shall become more and more intense, and the ideal virtues more resplendent, so that the goal of this universal human process will be attained and the love of God will appear in the utmost grace and beauty and bedazzle all hearts.

O ye beloved of God! Know ye, verily, that the happiness of mankind lieth in the unity and the harmony of the human race, and that spiritual and material developments are conditioned upon love and amity among all men. Consider ye the living creatures, namely those which move upon the earth and those which fly, those which graze and those which devour. Among the beasts of prey each kind liveth apart from other species of its genus, observing complete antagonism and hostility; and whenever they meet they immediately fight and draw blood, gnashing their teeth and baring their claws. This is the way in which ferocious beasts and bloodthirsty wolves behave, carnivorous animals that live by themselves and fight for their lives. But the docile, good-natured and gentle animals, whether they belong to the flying or grazing species, associate with one another in complete affinity, united in their flocks, and living their lives with enjoyment, happiness and contentment. Such are the birds that are satisfied with and grateful for a few grains; they live in complete gladness, and break into rich and melodious song while soaring over meadows, plains, hills and mountains. Similarly those animals which graze, like the sheep, the antelope and the gazelle, consort in the greatest amity, intimacy and unity while living in their plains and prairies in a condition of complete contentment. But dogs, wolves, tigers, hyenas and those other beasts of prey, are alienated from each other as they hunt and roam about alone. The creatures of the fields and birds of the air do not even shun or molest one another when they come upon their mutual grazing and resting grounds but accept each other with friendliness, unlike the devouring beasts who immediately tear each other apart when one intrudes upon the other's cave or lair; yea, even if one merely passeth by the abode of another the latter at once rusheth out to attack and if possible kill the former.

Therefore, it hath been made clear and manifest that in the animal kingdom also love and affinity are the fruits of a gentle disposition, a pure nature and praiseworthy character, while discord and isolation are characteristic of the fierce beasts of the wild.

The Almighty hath not created in man the claws and teeth of ferocious animals, nay rather hath the human form been fashioned and set with the most comely attributes and adorned with the most perfect virtues. The honor of this creation and the worthiness of this garment therefore require man to have love and affinity for his own kind, nay rather, to act towards all living creatures with justice and equity.

Similarly, consider how the cause of the welfare, happiness, joy and comfort of humankind are amity and union, whereas dissension and discord are most conducive to hardship, humiliation, agitation and failure.

But a thousand times alas, that man is negligent and unaware of these facts, and daily doth he strut abroad with the characteristics of a wild beast. Lo! At one moment he turneth into a ferocious tiger; at the next he becometh a creeping, venomous viper! But the sublime achievements of man reside in those qualities and attributes that exclusively pertain to the angels of the Supreme Concourse. Therefore, when praiseworthy qualities and high morals emanate from man, he becometh a heavenly being, an angel of the Kingdom, a divine reality and a celestial effulgence. On the other hand, when he engageth in warfare, quarrelling and bloodshed, he becometh viler than the most fierce of savage creatures, for if a bloodthirsty wolf devoureth a lamb in a single night, man slaughtereth a hundred thousand in the field of battle, strewing the ground with their corpses and kneading the earth with their blood.

In short, man is endowed with two natures: one tendeth towards moral sublimity and intellectual perfection, while the other turneth to bestial degradation and carnal imperfections. If ye travel the countries of the globe ye shall observe on one side the remains of ruin and destruction, while on the other ye shall see the signs of civilization and development. Such desolation and ruin are the result of war, strife and quarrelling, while all development and progress are fruits of the lights of virtue, cooperation and concord.

If one were to travel through the deserts of Central Asia he would observe how many cities, once great and prosperous like Paris and London, are now demolished and razed to the ground. From the Caspian Sea to the River Oxus there stretch wild and desolate plains, deserts, wildernesses and valleys. For two days and two nights the Russian railway traverseth the ruined cities and uninhabited villages of that wasteland. Formerly that plain bore the fruit of the finest civilizations of the past. Tokens of development and refinement were apparent all around, arts and sciences were well protected and promoted, professions and industries flourished, commerce and agriculture had reached a high stage of efficiency, and the foundations of government and statesmanship were laid on a strong and solid basis. Today that vast stretch of land hath become mostly the shelter and asylum of Turkoman tribes, and an arena for the ferocious display of wild beasts. The ancient cities of that plain, such as Gurgán, Nissá, Abívard and Şhahristán, famous throughout the world for their arts, sciences, culture, industry, and well known for their wealth, greatness, prosperity and distinction, have given way to a wilderness wherein no voice is heard save the roaring of wild beasts and where bloodthirsty wolves roam at will. This destruction and desolation was brought about by war and strife, dissension and discord between the Persians and the Turks, who differed in their religion and customs. So rigid was the spirit of religious prejudice that the faithless leaders sanctioned the shedding of innocent blood, the ruin of property and the desecration of family honor. This is to cite only one illustration.

Consequently, when thou traversest the regions of the world, thou shalt conclude that all progress is the result of association and cooperation, while ruin is the outcome of

animosity and hatred. Notwithstanding this, the world of humanity doth not take warning, nor doth it awake from the slumber of heedlessness. Man is still causing differences, quarrels and strife in order to marshal the cohorts of war and, with his legions, rush into the field of bloodshed and slaughter.

Then again, consider the phenomenon of composition and decomposition, of existence and nonexistence. Every created thing in the contingent world is made up of many and varied atoms, and its existence is dependent on the composition of these. In other words, through the divine creative power a conjunction of simple elements taketh place so that from this composition a distinct organism is produced. The existence of all things is based upon this principle. But when the order is deranged, decomposition is produced and disintegration setteth in, then that thing ceaseth to exist. That is, the annihilation of all things is caused by decomposition and disintegration. Therefore attraction and composition between the various elements is the means of life, and discord, decomposition and division produce death. Thus the cohesive and attractive forces in all things lead to the appearance of fruitful results and effects, while estrangement and alienation of things lead to disturbance and annihilation. Through affinity and attraction all living things like plants, animals and men come into existence, while division and discord bring about decomposition and destruction.

Consequently, that which is conducive to association and attraction and unity among the sons of men is the means of the life of the world of humanity, and whatever causeth division, repulsion and remoteness leadeth to the death of humankind.

And if, as thou passest by fields and plantations, thou observest that the plants, flowers and sweet-smelling herbs are growing luxuriantly together, forming a pattern of unity, this is an evidence of the fact that that plantation and garden is flourishing under the care of a skilful gardener. But when thou seest it in a state of disorder and irregularity thou inferrest that it hath lacked the training of an efficient farmer and thus hath produced weeds and tares.

It therefore becometh manifest that amity and cohesion are indicative of the training of the Real Educator, and dispersion and separation a proof of savagery and deprivation of divine education.

A critic may object, saying that peoples, races, tribes and communities of the world are of different and varied customs, habits, tastes, character, inclinations and ideas, that opinions and thoughts are contrary to one another, and how, therefore, is it possible for real unity to be revealed and perfect accord among human souls to exist?

In answer we say that differences are of two kinds. One is the cause of annihilation and is like the antipathy existing among warring nations and conflicting tribes who seek each other's destruction, uprooting one another's families, depriving one another of

rest and comfort and unleashing carnage. The other kind which is a token of diversity is the essence of perfection and the cause of the appearance of the bestowals of the Most Glorious Lord.

Consider the flowers of a garden: though differing in kind, color, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellisheth the world of humanity. This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole. When these different limbs and organs come under the influence of man's sovereign soul, and the soul's power pervadeth the limbs and members, veins and arteries of the body, then difference reinforceth harmony, diversity strengtheneth love, and multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination.

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 color! 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.

Praise be to God, today the splendor of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations, and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony. Oh! What a great number of meetings are held adorned with souls from various races and diverse sects! Anyone attending these will be struck with amazement, and might suppose that these souls are all of one land, one nationality, one community, one thought, one belief and one opinion; whereas, in fact, one is an American, the other an African, one cometh from Asia and another from Europe, one is a native of India, another is from Turkestan, one is an Arab, another a Tajik, another a Persian and yet another a Greek. Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity, love and freedom; they have one voice, one thought and one purpose. Verily, this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God! If all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement as to unite the members of

different races and to raise up from the heart of the world a voice that shall dispel war and strife, uproot dissension and disputation, usher in the era of universal peace and establish unity and concord amongst men.

Can any power withstand the penetrative influence of the Word of God? Nay, by God! The proof is clear and the evidence is complete! If anyone looketh with the eyes of justice he shall be struck with wonder and amazement and will testify that all the peoples, sects and races of the world should be glad, content and grateful for the teachings and admonitions of Bahá'u'lláh. For these divine injunctions tame every ferocious beast, transform the creeping insect into a soaring bird, cause human souls to become angels of the Kingdom, and make the human world a focus for the qualities of mercy.

Furthermore each and every one is required to show obedience, submission and loyalty towards his own government. Today no state in the world is in a condition of peace or tranquillity, for security and trust have vanished from among the people. Both the governed and the governors are alike in danger. The only group of people which today submitteth peacefully and loyally to the laws and ordinances of government and dealeth honestly and frankly with the people, is none other than this wronged community. For while all sects and races in Persia and Turkestan are absorbed in promoting their own interests and only obey their governments either with the hope of reward or from fear of punishment, the Bahá'ís are the well-wishers of the government, obedient to its laws and bearing love towards all peoples.

Such obedience and submission is made incumbent and obligatory upon all by the clear Text of the Abhá Beauty. Therefore the believers, in obedience to the command of the True One, show the utmost sincerity and goodwill towards all nations; and should any soul act contrary to the laws of the government he would consider himself responsible before God, deserving divine wrath and chastisement for his sin and wrongdoing. It is astonishing that, in spite of this, some of the officials of the government consider the Bahá'ís to be ill-wishers while they regard the members of other communities as their well-wishers. Gracious God! Recently, when there was general revolution and agitation in Tīhrán and in other provinces of Persia, it was proven that not a single Bahá'í had taken part nor intervened in these affairs. For this reason they were reproached by the ignorant because they had obeyed the command of the Blessed Perfection and refrained absolutely from interference in political matters. They were not associated with any party, but busied themselves with their own affairs and professions and discharged their own duties.

All the friends of God bear witness to the fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is, from every standpoint, the well-wisher of all governments and nations, and prayeth sincerely for their progress and advancement, especially for the two great states of the east, for these two countries are the native land and the place of exile of Bahá'u'lláh. In all

epistles and writings he hath commended and praised these two governments and hath supplicated divine confirmations for them from the Threshold of the One true God. The Abhá Beauty — may my life be a sacrifice for His loved ones — hath offered prayers on behalf of Their Imperial Majesties. Gracious God! How strange that, notwithstanding these conclusive proofs, every day some event transpireth and difficulties arise. But we, and the friends of God, should on no account slacken our efforts to be loyal, sincere and men of good will. We should at all times manifest our truthfulness and sincerity, nay rather, we must be constant in our faithfulness and trustworthiness, and occupy ourselves in offering prayers for the good of all.

O ye beloved of God, these are days for steadfastness, for firmness and perseverance in the Cause of God. Ye must not focus your attention upon the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for ere long he will bid you farewell. Rather must ye fix your gaze upon the Word of God. If the Word of God is being promoted, rejoice and be happy and thankful, though 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself be threatened by the sword or burdened by the weight of chains and fetters. For the Holy Temple of the Cause of God is important, not the physical body of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The friends of God must arise with such steadfastness that if, at any moment, a hundred souls like 'Abdu'l-Bahá become the target for the arrows of affliction, they will not shift or waver in their resolve, their determination, their enkindlement, their devotion and service in the Cause of God. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is himself a servant at the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty and a manifestation of pure and utter servitude at the Threshold of the Almighty. He hath no other station or title, no other rank or power. This is my ultimate Purpose, my eternal Paradise, my holiest Temple and my Sadratu'l-Muntahá. With the Abhá Blessed Beauty and the Exalted One, His Herald — may my life be a sacrifice for Them both — hath ended the appearance of God's independent and universal Manifestation. And for a thousand years all shall be illumined by His lights and be sustained by the ocean of His favors.

O ye lovers of God! This, verily, is my last wish and my admonition unto you. Blessed, therefore, is he who is aided by God to follow that which is inscribed upon this scroll whose words are sanctified from the symbols current amongst men.

