Bahá'í Meetings

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From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh[1]

The friends of God, one and all, are remembered by the Supreme Pen: The bounties of the Source of Bounty are at every moment visibly descending. It behoveth the friends in whatever land they be, to gather together in meetings, and therein to speak wisely and with eloquence, and to read the verses of God; for it is God's Words that kindle love's fire and set it ablaze.

[1]

By My life and My Cause! Round about whatever dwelling the friends of God may enter, and from which their cry shall rise as they praise and glorify the Lord, shall circle the souls of true believers and all the favoured angels. And should the door of the true eye be opened unto some, they shall witness the Supreme Concourse as it circleth and crieth: "Blessed art thou, O house, for God hath made thee a resting-place for those He favoureth, and a lodging for those He holdeth dear, and a home for those in whom He hath placed His trust. Unto thee be His praise and His glory and His endless grace."

[2]

They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion. The conversation carried by these holy souls should be informed with such power that these same atoms of dust will be thrilled by its influence. They should conduct themselves in such manner that the earth upon which they tread may never be allowed to address to them such words as these: "I am to be preferred above you. For witness, how patient I am in bearing the burden which the husbandman layeth upon me. I am the instrument that continually imparteth unto all beings the blessings with which He Who is the Source of all grace hath entrusted me. Notwithstanding the honor conferred upon me, and the unnumbered evidences of my wealth—a wealth that supplieth the needs of all creation—behold the measure of my humility, witness with what absolute submissiveness I allow myself to be trodden beneath the feet of men...."

(*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), sec. 5, pp. 7–8) **[3]**

Blessed is the house that hath attained unto My tender mercy, wherein My remembrance is celebrated, and which is ennobled by the presence of My loved ones, who have proclaimed My praise, cleaved fast to the cord of My grace and been honoured by chanting My verses. Verily they are the exalted servants whom God hath extolled in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá' and other scriptures. Verily He is the All-Hearing, the Answerer, He Who perceiveth all things.

[4]

From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá[2]

Praise be to God! that ye are gathered in one assembly like unto the stars of the Pleiades, are illumined with the light of the knowledge of God and through the outpouring of the cloud of the love of God, ye are the fresh flowers of the meadow and plain; ye are intimate and familiar with infinite unity and love.

Therefore, this meeting is blessed. But if it is firmly established and become constant, it will bring forth great results and most weighty developments will be attained. Consequently, persevere ye in renewing your meetings and display utmost magnanimity in firmness and steadfastness. When the root of the tree of the garden is well established and its protection is safeguarded, it will bring forth luscious fruits.

Likewise, when the regiment of an army and the individuals of a cohort are united and related with ease, untold triumphs will be acquired. But if they come together one day and disperse another day, no fruits will be produced.

Therefore, as ye have prepared an army of heaven and become the host of life, ye must continue to hold meetings, have spiritual communications, be firm in resolution, steadfast in purpose and be constant and persevering so that ye may win celestial conquests.

I supplicate and entreat at the Threshold of God to assist and confirm you in firmness and steadfastness and cause you to guide the inhabitants of that region.

(*Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas,* vol. 3 (Chicago: Bahá'í Publishing Society, 1916), p. 690) **[5]**

If thou seekest after the light of the Kingdom, hasten undoubtedly to the meetings of the believers, in order that the rays of truth may reflect in thy heart.

(*Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas,* vol. 3, p. 695) **[6]**

...Hold meetings and read and chant the heavenly teachings, so that city may be illumined with the light of reality and that country become a veritable paradise by the strength of the Holy Spirit, for this cycle is the cycle of the Glorious Lord and the melody of oneness and solidarity of the world of mankind must reach the ears of the East and West.

(*Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas,* vol. 3, p. 631) **[7]**

Every meeting which is organized for the purpose of unity and concord will be conducive to changing strangers into friends, enemies into associates, and Abdul-Baha will be present in his heart and soul with that meeting.

(*Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas,* vol. 3, p. 553) **[8]**

...One consecrated soul is preferable to a thousand other souls. If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss. The hosts of the Company on high will defend them, and the angels of the Abhá Paradise, in continuous succession, will come down to their aid.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), sec. 39, p. 81) **[9]**

The hearts of all the friends rejoiced, and in particular, the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, when we heard of thy rising up to serve the Cause of God, and that thou hast set apart one of the rooms in

thy home for meetings of the lovers of God, so that from it may ascend to the Lord of Revelation the clamour of chanted prayers.

By the life of God! The queens of the world, with all their castles, cannot boast of such a room, since from it shineth forth the light of lights.

[10]

We hear that thou hast in mind to embellish thy house from time to time with a meeting of Bahá'ís, where some among them will engage in glorifying the All-Glorious Lord... Know that shouldst thou bring this about, that house of earth will become a house of heaven, and that fabric of stone a congress of the spirit.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,* sec. 57, p. 94) **[11]**

Whensoever a company of people shall gather in a meeting place, shall engage in glorifying God, and shall speak with one another of the mysteries of God, beyond any doubt the breathings of the Holy Spirit will blow gently over them, and each shall receive a share thereof.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,* sec. 56, p. 94) **[12]**

Once in every week, gather ye the steadfast friends together in a meeting-place, and there let them engage in praising and glorifying the Lord.

[13]

It befitteth the friends to hold a gathering, a meeting, where they shall glorify God and fix their hearts upon Him, and read and recite the Holy Writings of the Blessed Beauty—may my soul be the ransom of His lovers! The lights of the All-Glorious Realm, the rays of the Supreme Horizon, will be cast upon such bright assemblages, for these are none other than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, the Dawning-Points of God's Remembrance, which must, at the direction of the Most Exalted Pen, be established in every hamlet and city... These spiritual gatherings must be held with the utmost purity and consecration, so that from the site itself, and its earth and the air about it, one will inhale the fragrant breathings of the Holy Spirit.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, sec. 55, pp. 93–94) **[14]**

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written in regard to the Sunday meeting, saying that it is established in the utmost of love. Undoubtedly you must be firm in holding it, and on the day of meeting raise such song and melody in the glorification and praise of Bahá'u'lláh that you may cause a tumult in that city—so that everyone may hear the call of God and obtain a new spirit through the soul-refreshing breeze wafted from the rose-garden of the Covenant.

[15]

If it were possible that in every city a few of the awakened ones, when opportunity offered, could hold a meeting, and therein habitually present the proofs and arguments of God, this would do much to expand the consciousness of men; provided, however, that the discourse be kept to this one theme.

[16]

Ye have written as to the meetings of the friends, and how filled they are with peace and joy. Of course this is so; for wherever the spiritually minded are gathered together, there in His beauty reigneth Bahá'u'lláh. Thus it is certain that such reunions will yield boundless happiness and peace.

Today it behoveth one and all to forgo the mention of all else, and to disregard all things. Let their speaking, let their inner state be summed up thus: "Keep all my words of prayer and praise confined to one refrain; make all my life but servitude to Thee." That is, let them concentrate all their thoughts, all their words, on teaching the Cause of God and spreading the Faith of God, and inspiring all to characterize themselves with the characteristics of God; on loving mankind; on being pure and holy in all things, and spotless in their public and private life; on being upright and detached, and fervent, and afire. All is to be yielded up, save only the remembrance of God; all is to be dispraised, except His praise. Today, to this melody of the Company on high, the world will leap and dance: "Glory be to my Lord, the All-Glorious!" But know ye this: save for this song of God, no song will stir the world, and save for this nightingale-cry of truth from the Garden of God, no melody will lure away the heart. "Whence cometh this Singer Who speaketh the Beloved's name?"

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,* sec. 54, p. 93) **[17]**

Verily, 'Abdu'l-Bahá inhaleth the fragrance of the love of God from every meeting-place where the Word of God is uttered and proofs and arguments set forth that shed their rays across the world, and where they recount the tribulations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the evil hands of those who have violated the Covenant of God.

O handmaid of the Lord! Speak thou no word of politics; thy task concerneth the life of the soul, for this verily leadeth to man's joy in the world of God. Except to speak well of them, make thou no mention of the earth's kings, and the worldly governments thereof. Rather, confine thine utterance to spreading the blissful tidings of the Kingdom of God, and demonstrating the influence of the Word of God, and the holiness of the Cause of God. Tell thou of abiding joy and spiritual delights, and godlike qualities, and of how the Sun of Truth hath risen above the earth's horizons: tell of the blowing of the spirit of life into the body of the world.

(*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,* sec. 53, pp. 92–93) **[18]**

...Rest you assured that the breathings of the Holy Spirit will loosen your tongue. Speak, therefore; speak out with great courage at every meeting. When you are about to begin your address, turn first to Bahá'u'lláh and ask for the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, then open your lips and say whatever is suggested to your heart; this, however, with the utmost courage, dignity and conviction. It is my hope that from day to day your gatherings will grow and flourish, and that those who are seeking after truth will hearken therein to reasoned arguments and conclusive proofs. I am with you heart and soul at every meeting; be sure of this.

Hold you the Nineteen Day Feasts with utmost dignity.

[19]

At these meetings, there should be no extraneous conversation whatever. Rather, the assemblage should confine itself to reading and reciting the Holy Words, and to the discussion of matters relating to the Cause of God: expounding, for example, conclusive proofs and arguments, and the Writings of the Best Beloved of mankind. Those who present themselves at these gatherings must first array themselves in spotless clothing, turn their faces toward the Kingdom of Abhá, and then with lowliness and submissiveness enter in. During the readings they must maintain complete silence. Should anyone wish to speak, he should say his say in all humility, with exactitude and eloquence.

[20]

All the meetings must be for teaching the Cause and spreading the Message, and suffering the souls to enter in the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh. Look at me. All my thoughts are centered around

the proclamation of the Kingdom.

I have a Lamp in my hand searching through the lands and seas to find souls who can become heralds of the Cause. Day and night I am engaged in this work. Any other deliberations in the meetings are futile and fruitless. Convey the message! Attract the hearts! Sow the seeds! Teach the Cause to those who do not know.

I enter all meetings, all churches, so that the Cause may be spread. When the MOST IMPORTANT work is before our sight, we must let go the *Important* one.

If the meetings or Spiritual Assembly has any other occupation, the time is spent in futility. All the deliberations, all consultation, all the talks and addresses must revolve around one focal center and that is: TEACH THE CAUSE! TEACH! TEACH! Convey the Message! Awaken the souls!

Now is the time of laying the foundation. Now we must gather brick, stone, wood, iron, and other building materials! This is not the time of decoration. We must strive day and night and think and work. What can I say that may become effective? What can I do that may bring results? What can I write that may bring forth fruits?

Nothing else will be useful, today. The interests of such a Glorious Cause will not advance without undivided attention. While we are carrying this load we cannot carry any other load!

(*Star of the West,* vol. 4, no. 15 (12 December 1913), p. 256) **[21]**

Amongst other things is the holding of the meetings for teaching so that blessed souls and the old ones from amongst the believers may gather together the youths of the love of God in schools of instruction and teach them all the divine proofs and irrefragable arguments, explain and elucidate the history of the Cause, and interpret also the prophecies and proofs which are recorded and are extant in the divine Books and Epistles regarding the Manifestation of the Promised One, so that the young ones may go in perfect knowledge in all these degrees.

(*Tablets of the Divine Plan Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the North American Bahá'ís,* rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 51–52) **[22]**

...Such a gathering as this is worthy of thanksgiving; it is peerless and unique among meetings. Other meetings are held from motives of material interests—such as social, political, commercial, educational—but this assemblage has no other purpose than attainment to the divine Kingdom; therefore, it is unique, unequaled. The hearts have turned to God; spirits are exalted through the glad tidings of God; the intentions of all are directed to God. What better meeting could be imagined than this?

Such a gathering is fundamentally spiritual, sincere and most important. But we must arise in the accomplishment of its purposes, for our attention is directed toward the heavenly Kingdom unto which we must render faithful service. Therefore, all individuals present here must be in the attitude of perfect love and fellowship, manifesting the utmost humility and self-sacrifice, turning our thoughts toward the Kingdom of God so that our meeting may be an expression of the glorified hosts of the Supreme Concourse.

(*The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912,* 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 334) **[23]**

Thou hast written concerning the meetings and gathering-places of the believers of God. Such assemblies and gatherings will greatly aid the promotion of the Word and all the audience, whether friends or not, will become affected. But when the friends have the intention of entering

into these meetings they must disengage the heart from all other reflections, ask the Inexhaustible Divine Confirmation, and with the utmost devotion and humility set their feet in the gathering-place. Let them not introduce any topic in the meeting except the mentioning of the True One, neither must they confuse that merciful assembly with complex outside questions. They must ... either commune or supplicate and pray to God, either read Tablets or give out advices and exhortations.

(*Star of the West,* vol. 2, no. 6 (24 June 1911), p. 5) **[24]**

You have written concerning the spiritual meetings. The foundation of the spiritual meetings must be the teaching and delivering of the Cause of God. In these meetings the believers and maid-servants of the Merciful must proclaim the proofs and arguments and explain the signs of the appearance of the Beauty of Abhá—May my life be a sacrifice to the beloved ones! Meanwhile they may read some Tablets and Communes, and at the end of the meetings, if they desire to sing with the utmost supplication and meekness, it is acceptable. But the fundamental principle of the establishment of spiritual meetings is for the sake of teaching and delivering the Truth so that those souls who are present may become informed of the Divine Evidences and Proofs.

((*Star of the West,* vol. 2, no. 6 (24 June 1911), p. 5) **[25]**

...Let the beloved of God gather together and associate most lovingly and spiritually and happily with one another, conducting themselves with the greatest courtesy and self-restraint. Let them read the holy verses, as well as essays which are of benefit, and the letters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; encourage and inspire one another to love each and all; chant the prayers with serenity and joy; give eloquent talks, and praise the matchless Lord.

[26]

From the Writings of Shoghi Effendi

They must undertake the arrangement of the regular meetings of the friends, the feasts and the anniversaries, as well as the special gatherings designed to serve and promote the social, intellectual and spiritual interests of their fellow-men.

(12 March 1923 to the Bahá'ís of America, Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan and Australasia, published in *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922–1932* [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 38) **[27]**

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Individual Believers

With regard to the question that you had asked, Shoghi Effendi feels that as he has formerly said in Bahá'í meetings it is quite proper for some of the friends to deliver talks, but their speeches must have a direct bearing on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and our dear Master. It is not absolutely necessary that in all the meetings only the writings and utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master should be read, but when lectures and talks are given they must bear either directly or indirectly on the Cause.

(10 February 1926) **[28]**

Regarding your question as to the advisability of holding Bahá'í meetings at a time coinciding with church meetings; the Guardian would advise the friends to avoid such a coincidence, as otherwise many church people may feel offended, and this may lead to unnecessary and even harmful misunderstandings and developments which may injure the Cause and affect its prestige in the eyes of the public. The friends should, under all circumstances, be careful not to arouse unnecessarily any feelings of religious antagonism.

(5 September 1936, published in *Bahá'í News* 111 (October 1937), p. 1) **[29]**

Since you have found in the Bahá'í Teachings the fulfilment of your highest aspirations and the realization of those ideals most dear to your heart, it is your paramount duty now to spare no effort for their study and their dissemination.

To this end, the Guardian would recommend that, in addition to your studies of Bahá'í writings, you closely associate with your fellow-Bahá'ís, and take part in various activities of your local group, so that you may not only acquire a theoretical knowledge of the Cause, but grow to become a loving, active and efficient member of the Community.

(25 November 1938) **[30]**

...In some places the Bahá'ís have held meetings for prayer, for people who desire to meet and pray. As we have such wonderful prayers and meditations in our writings, the reading of these with friends who are interested in and crave for this type of small meeting is often a step towards attracting them to the Faith. Perhaps you could start such an activity in your city.

(4 February 1950) **[31]**

We should try not to introduce any set patterns into our teaching methods; however, if this form of group meditation produces unity and a deeper understanding of the teachings, he sees no reason why it should be not used at least in the beginning of a teaching class—providing the people want to, like it, and fully understand it has nothing to do with the teachings of the Faith, but is a method which sometimes proves helpful.

(30 July 1956) **[32]**

Notes

1 From unpublished Tablets unless otherwise noted. ↩
2 From unpublished Tablets unless otherwise noted. ↩

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