

Knower, the Ordainer, the Omniscient. (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*)³⁹



We have revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: 'O members of parliaments throughout the world! Select ye a single language for the use of all on earth, and adopt ye likewise a common script. God, verily, maketh plain for you that which shall profit you and enable you to be independent of others. He, of a truth, is the Most Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.' This binding commandment hath been sent down from the realm of ancient glory for the peoples of the world and, in particular, for the members of the parliaments, inasmuch as the task of executing the laws, the ordinances and statutes that have been sent down in the Book, hath been delegated unto the men of the divine Houses of Justice, and this law is the greatest means for achieving unity, and the mightiest instrument for promoting the intercourse and mutual affection of the people in all lands.

It is observable that most nations, by reason of the diversity of languages spoken by the peoples of the world, are deprived of intercourse and association, and of benefiting each from the other's fund of learning and wisdom. For this reason, and as an evidence of Our surpassing bounty and munificence, all have been commanded to select, and speak, a single language, whether this be newly created, or amongst the existing languages of the earth. If this be followed, the whole earth will become even as a single city, since all will be acquainted with each other's tongue, and understand each other's true intention. This will be the cause of

the advancement and exaltation of the world. Should anyone travel from his native land, into whatsoever city he entereth it shall be as if he were entering his own home. Cleave ye thereunto, O legislators and citizens!

Were anyone to reflect awhile, he would perceive that whatsoever hath been sent down from the heaven of divine will, is naught but purest bounty, whose virtue redoundeth to the benefit of all. Certain souls, however, so suck from the breast of heedlessness and ignorance, that they disregard that which is good, the excellence of which, whether from the standpoint of reason or of tradition, is both clear and manifest; through hearken- ing unto the idle contentions of heedless souls, they have grown oblivious of that divine wisdom which is the cause and means for the advancement of the world and the upliftment of its peoples. They, of a surety, are in manifest loss.

Each people discourseth in its own language, such as the Turks in Turkish, the Iranians in Persian, the Arabs in Arabic, and the peoples of Europe in their own divers tongues. These tongues are current amongst the differ- ent peoples, and specific unto each group. Now, another language hath been commanded for all the peoples of the world, that all may be familiar with each other's speech, and understand each other's purpose. This is the portal of love and amity, of harmony and unity, and this is the most great conveyor of meaning, the key that unlocketh the treasure of Him Who is the Ancient of Days.

How many a soul hath been seen to spend his whole time in the acquisition of various tongues! How truly regrettable that a man should devote his life, which is the dearest of all things in the world, to matters of this

kind! The object of these exertions in learning the divers languages is to be able to apprehend the purpose of the many nations, and become apprised of whatsoever they possess. Now, were such people to act in accordance with what hath been commanded, it would suffice everyone, and all would be spared the need for these interminable efforts.

That which is beloved before Our throne is that all should speak in Arabic, for it is the richest of all the languages. Were anyone to become acquainted with the wealth and vastness of this eloquent tongue, he would assuredly select it. The Persian tongue is passing sweet, and, in the present Dispensation, the Tongue of God hath spoken in both Arabic and Persian tongues; yet it doth not have the vastness of the Arabic. Nay, in comparison, all the languages of the earth are limited, and shall remain so.

What hath been said of Arabic is in the nature of a preference; howbeit Our intention is that the peoples of the earth should select a single tongue, and that everyone should speak it. This is that which God hath ruled, and this is that which shall be of benefit to the people, if only they could apprehend it. In like manner, they should select a single script, apart from those peculiar unto the different peoples, and everyone should occupy themselves in using it, in order that all scripts may be seen as one script, and all languages as a single language. This will cause the hearts and souls of the peoples of the world to become united. He, verily, informeth you of that wherein is your advantage; cleave ye thereunto. He, verily, is the Admonisher, the Counsellor, the Expounder, the Disposer, the Compassionate, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. At length, all languages and

scripts will culminate in one, and the different regions of the earth shall be considered even as a single region. 'Then shalt thou see in it no irregularity or distortion.' (*Nafahát-i-Quds*)⁴⁰



23. Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 94.
24. For a more elaborate discussion of the following issues in Bahá'í perspective, see Meyjes, 'Language and world order in Bahá'í perspective'.
25. See Rosenfelder, *Language Construction Kit*.
26. Meyjes, *Choice of an Auxiliary Language for the World*.
27. Lenneberg, *Biological Foundations of Language*.
28. Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy*, p. 84.
29. Crystal, *English as a Global Language*.
30. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, p. 193.
31. Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 189.
32. *ibid.* See also second passage, section V (Texts by and on behalf of the Universal House of Justice).
33. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Bishárát', *Tablets*, p. 22.
34. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih', *Tablets*, p. 68.
35. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Lawḥ-i-Dunyá', *Tablets*, p. 89.
36. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Ishráqát', *Tablets*, p. 127.
37. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd', *Tablets*, pp. 165-6.
38. *ibid.* p. 166.
39. Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle*, pp. 137-9.
40. Bahá'u'lláh, 'Nafahát-i-Quds', pp. 5-8. Provisional translation of the original Arabic Tablet, including a quotation from Qur'án 20:107, approved by the Universal House of Justice for inclusion in this book.
41. Letter to Mrs Jane Elizabeth Whyte, in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections*, pp. 31-2. Mrs Jane Elizabeth Whyte, of Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, was the wife of Reverend Alexander Whyte, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. In 1906 Mrs Whyte visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká and in 1913 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed with the Whytes during His visit to Scotland.
42. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections*, p. 301. Excerpted from a reply to a letter addressed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá by the Committee at The Hague. The Tablet, dated 17 December 1919, is described by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* as being of 'far-reach-