



## Science and Religion

*All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.*  
Bahá'u'lláh

The Bahá'í teachings stress the fundamental harmony of science and religion. This view derives from the belief that truth (or reality) is one. For if truth is indeed one, it is not possible for something to be scientifically false and religiously true. 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed forcefully this idea in the following passage:

*If religious beliefs and opinions are found contrary to the standards of science, they are mere superstitions and imaginations; for the antithesis of knowledge is ignorance, and the child of ignorance is superstition. Unquestionably there must be agreement between true religion and science. If a question be found contrary to reason, faith and belief in it are impossible, and there is no outcome but wavering and vacillation.*

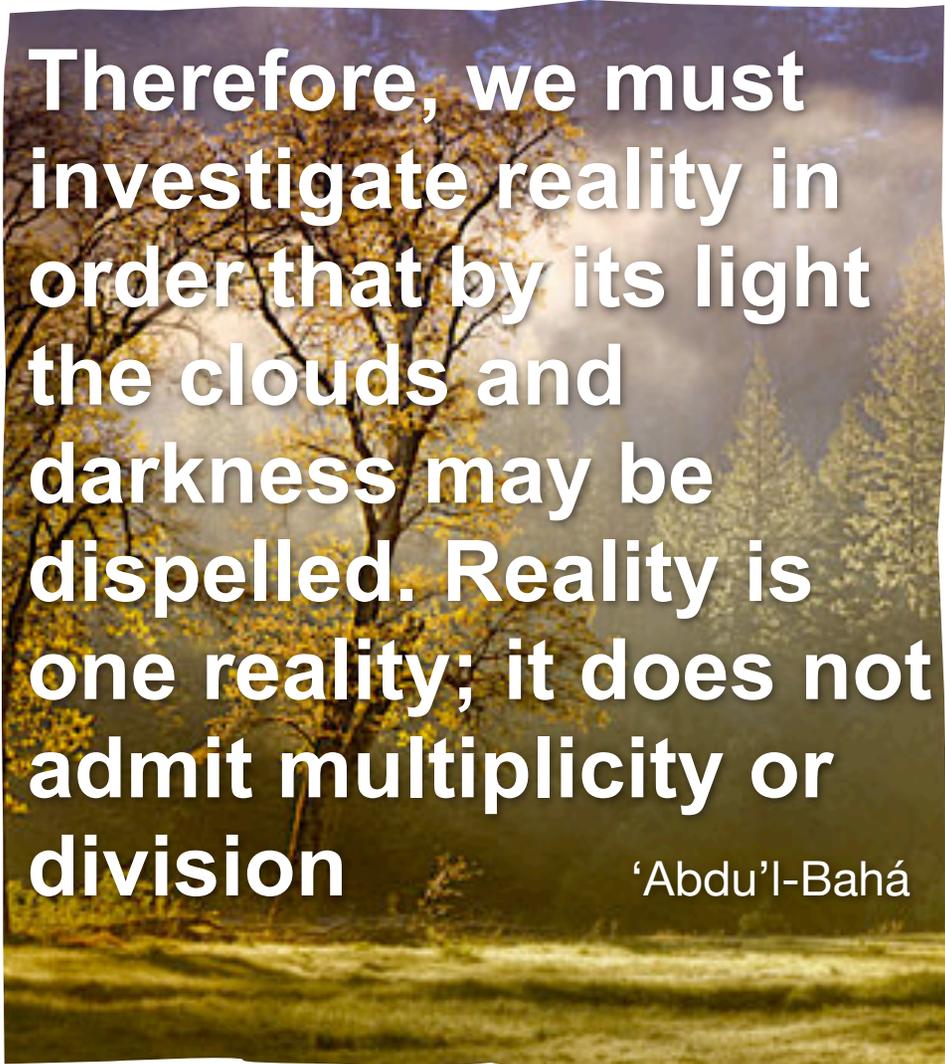
Bahá'u'lláh affirmed that man's intelligence and reasoning powers are a gift from God: *"This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation."* Science results from our systematic use of these God-given powers. The truths of science are thus discovered truths. The truths of prophetic religion are revealed truths, i.e., truths which God has shown to us without our having to discover them for ourselves. Bahá'ís consider that it is the same unique God who is both the Author of revelation and the Creator of the reality which science investigates, and hence there can be no contradiction between the two.

Contradictions between science and traditional religious beliefs are attributed to human fallibility and arrogance. 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirmed that religion and science are, in fact, complementary:

*Religion and science are the two wings upon which man's intelligence can soar into the heights, with which the human soul can progress. It is not possible to fly with one wing alone! Should a man try to fly with the wing of religion alone he would quickly fall into the quagmire of superstition, whilst on the other hand, with the wing of science alone he would also make no progress, but fall into the despairing slough of materialism.*

A fundamental principle of the Bahá'í Faith

# Investigation of Reality



**Therefore, we must investigate reality in order that by its light the clouds and darkness may be dispelled. Reality is one reality; it does not admit multiplicity or division**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes the fundamental obligation of human beings to acquire knowledge with their "own eyes and not through the eyes of others." One of the main sources of conflict in the world today is the fact that many people blindly and uncritically follow various traditions, movements, and opinions. God has given each human being a mind and the capacity to differentiate truth from falsehood. History has witnessed conflict and even bloodshed over slight alterations in religious practice, or a minor change in the interpretation of doctrine. Personal search for truth enables the individual to know why he or she adheres to a given ideology or doctrine.



## Consultation: A Procedure For Determining Truth

*If they agree on a subject, even though it be wrong, it is better than to disagree and be in the right, for this difference will produce the demolition of the divine foundation. Though one of the parties may be in the right and they disagree that will be the cause of a thousand wrongs, but if they agree and both parties are in the wrong, as it is in unity the truth will be revealed and the wrong made right.*

*'Abdu'l-Bahá*

### **Bahá'í consultation is based on the following principles:**

- Information should be gathered from the widest possible range of sources, seeking a diversity of points of view. This may mean making special efforts to seek the views of specialists--such as lawyers, doctors, or scientists. It may also mean looking for information outside traditional specialties or making a special effort to consider the views of community members from diverse backgrounds.
- During discussion, participants must make every effort to be as frank and candid as possible, while maintaining a courteous interest in the views of others. Personal attacks, blanket ultimatums and prejudicial statements are to be avoided.
- When an idea is put forth it becomes at once the property of the group. Although this notion sounds simple, it is perhaps the most profound principle of consultation. For in this rule, all ideas cease to be the property of any individual, sub-group, or constituency. When followed, this principle encourages those ideas that spring forth from a sincere desire to serve, as opposed to ideas that emanate from a desire for personal aggrandizement or constituency-building.
- The group strives for unanimity, but a majority vote can be taken to bring about a conclusion and make the decision. An important aspect to this principle is the understanding that once a decision is made, it is incumbent on the entire group to act on it with unity--regardless of how many supported the measure.

In this sense, there can be no "minority" report or "position of the opposition" in consultation. Rather, Bahá'ís believe that if a decision is a wrong one, it will become evident in its implementation--but only if the decision-making group and, indeed, the community at large, support it wholeheartedly.



## Nature: An Expression of God's Will

*Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator.*  
*Bahá'u'lláh*

The attributes of God are revealed within every created thing. "Nature," writes Bahá'u'lláh, "is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world." It is the embodiment of God's name, "the Creator."

'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that "The world, indeed each existing being, proclaims to us one of the names of God". Within every atom "are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that most great Light".

*"[E]very time I turn my gaze to Thine earth," Bahá'u'lláh addresses God, "I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. And when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence..."*

The Bahá'í Writings describe nature as an organic whole whose various systems and processes operate by ordained laws and principles.

*"Reflect upon the inner realities of the universe, the secret wisdoms involved, the enigmas, the interrelationships, the rules that govern all. For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance..."*

'Abdu'l-Bahá has described the gradual growth and development of all beings as "the universal divine organization and the natural system. The seed does not at once become a tree; the embryo does not at once become a man; the mineral does not suddenly become a stone. No, they grow and develop gradually and attain the limit of perfection."

Progress, He has said in another passage, is the "expression of spirit in the world of matter." Spiritual truths are expressed at every level of creation, and each new degree adds to the capacities of the level below it. In the mineral kingdom, for example, spirit is expressed through the power of cohesion; in the vegetable kingdom, through the power of growth and reproduction; in the animal kingdom, through the power of the senses.

In the human kingdom, the spirit finds expression through the powers of the mind. While possessing the powers of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, human beings have the unique capacity to imagine, think, understand, and speak.