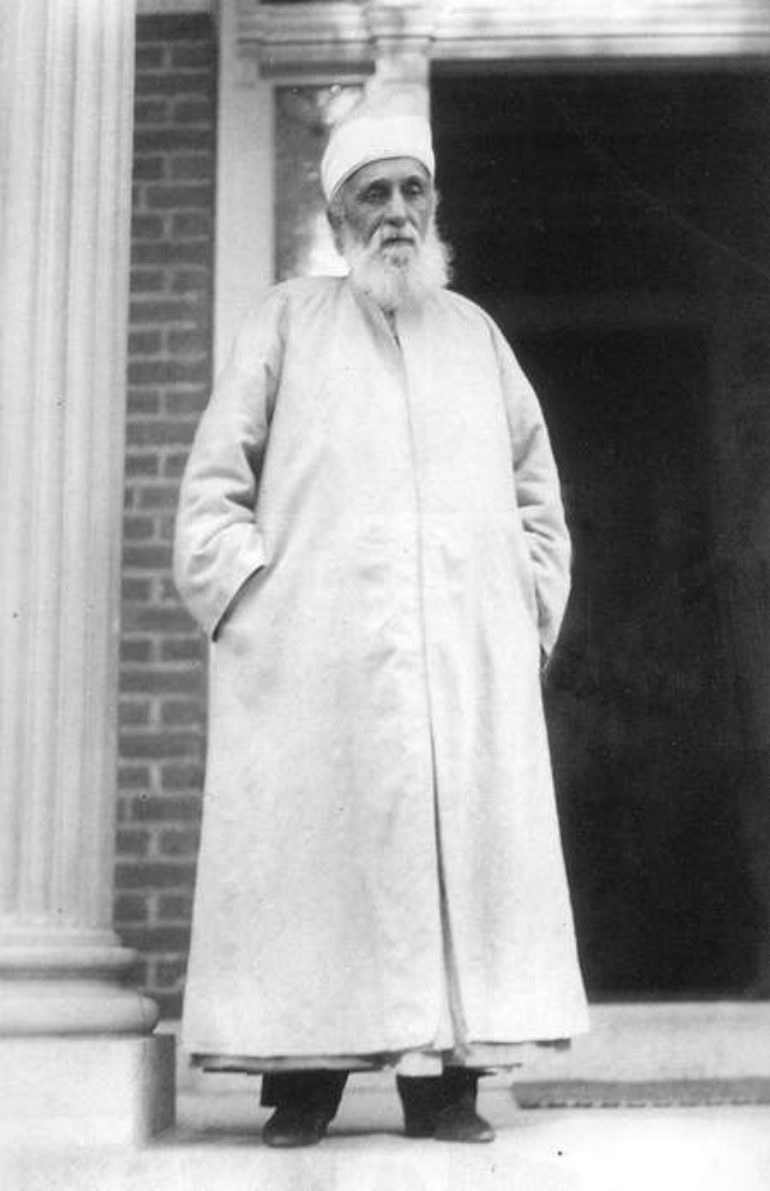


Abdu'l-Bahá's Travels to the West

Washington, D.C.
10 November 1912
Divine reality

Washington, D.C.

In a talk at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Parsons, in Washington, D.C., 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained the Bahá'í understanding of what is God or the divine reality



'Abdu'l-Bahá in
Washington, D.C.

Divine Reality

What is the reality of Divinity, or what do we understand by God?

When we consider the world of existence, we find that the essential reality underlying any given phenomenon is unknown. Phenomenal, or created, things are known to us only by their attributes. Man discerns only manifestations, or attributes, of objects, while the identity, or reality, of them remains hidden.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 125)

Divine Reality

For example, we call this object a flower. We understand that the qualities appertaining to this organism are perceptible to us, but the intrinsic elemental reality, or identity, of it remains unknown.... Inasmuch as the realities of material phenomena are impenetrable and unknowable and are only apprehended through their properties or qualities, how much more this is true concerning the reality of Divinity, that holy essential reality which transcends the plane and grasp of mind and man?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 125)

Divine Reality

...the reality of Divinity in its identity is beyond the range of human intellection because the human mind, the human intellect, the human thought are limited, whereas the reality of Divinity is unlimited. How can the limited grasp the unlimited and transcend it?

Impossible. ...every concept of Divinity which has come within the intellection of a human being is finite, or limited, and is a pure product of imagination, whereas the reality of Divinity is holy and sacred above and beyond all such concepts.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 125)

Divine Reality

But the question may be asked: How shall we know God? We know Him by His attributes. We know Him by His signs. We know Him by His names. We know not what the reality of the sun is, but we know the sun by the ray, by the heat, by its efficacy and penetration.... If we wish to come in touch with the reality of Divinity, we do so by recognizing its phenomena, its attributes and traces, which are widespread in the universe.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 125)

Divine Reality

...it is quite evident that our kind of life, our form of existence, is limited and that the reality of all accidental phenomena is, likewise, limited. The very fact that the reality of phenomena is limited well indicates that there must needs be an unlimited reality, for were there no unlimited, or infinite, reality in life, the finite being of objects would be inconceivable.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 125)

Divine Reality

To make it plainer for you, if there were no wealth in the world, you would not have poverty. If there were no light in the world, you could not conceive of darkness, for we know things philosophically by their antitheses. We know, for example, that poverty is the lack of wealth.... What is ignorance? It is the absence of knowledge. Therefore, our limited existence is a conclusive proof that there is an unlimited reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), 125)



'Abdu'l-Bahá