

Sin

This physical world of man is subject to the power of the lusts, and sin is the consequence of this power of the lusts, for it is not subject to the laws of justice and holiness. The body of man is a captive of nature; it will act in accordance with whatever nature orders. It is, therefore, certain that sins such as anger, jealousy, dispute, covetousness, avarice, ignorance, prejudice, hatred, pride and tyranny exist in the physical world. All these brutal qualities exist in the nature of man. A man who has not had a spiritual education is a brute. Like the savages of Africa, whose actions, habits and morals are purely sensual, they act according to the demands of nature to such a degree that they rend and eat one another. Thus it is evident that the physical world of man is a world of sin. In this physical world man is not distinguished from the animal.

All sin comes from the demands of nature, and these demands, which arise from the physical qualities, are not sins with respect to the animals, while for man they are sin. The animal is the source of imperfections, such as anger, sensuality, jealousy, avarice, cruelty, pride: all these defects are found in animals but do not constitute sins. But in man they are sins.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pp. 119-120

...Sin is the state of man in the world of the baser nature, for in nature exist defects such as injustice, tyranny, hatred, hostility, strife: these are characteristics of the lower plane of nature. These are the sins of the world, the fruits of the tree from which Adam did eat. Through education we must free ourselves from these imperfections. The Prophets of God have been sent, the Holy Books have been written, so that man may be made free. Just as he is born into this world of imperfection from the womb of his earthly mother, so is he born into the world of spirit through divine education. When a man is born into the world of phenomena he finds the universe; when he is born from this world to the world of the spirit, he finds the Kingdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pp. 177-178

Adam is the spirit of Adam, and Eve is His soul; the tree is the human world, and the serpent is that attachment to this world which constitutes sin, and which has infected the descendants of Adam. Christ by His holy breezes saved men from this attachment and freed them from this sin. The sin in Adam is relative to His position. Although from this attachment there proceed results, nevertheless, attachment to the earthly world, in relation to attachment to the spiritual world, is considered as a sin. The good deeds of the righteous are the sins of the Near Ones. This is established. So bodily power is not only defective in relation to spiritual power; it is weakness in comparison. In the same way, physical life, in comparison with eternal life in the Kingdom, is considered as death. So Christ called the physical life death, and said: “Let the dead bury their dead.”¹ Though those souls possessed physical life, yet in His eyes that life was death.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, p. 126

Saints are men who have freed themselves from the world of matter and who have overcome sin. They live in the world but are not of it, their thoughts being continually in the world of the spirit. Their lives are spent in holiness, and their deeds show forth love, justice and godliness. They are illumined from on high; they are as bright and shining lamps in the dark places of the earth. These are the saints of God. The apostles, who were the disciples of Jesus Christ, were just as other men are; they, like their fellows, were attracted by the things of the world, and each thought only of his own advantage. They knew little of justice, nor were the Divine perfections found in their midst. But when they followed Christ and believed in Him, their ignorance gave place to understanding, cruelty was changed to justice, falsehood to truth, darkness into light. They had been worldly, they became spiritual and divine. They had been children of darkness, they became sons of God, they became saints! Strive therefore to follow in their steps, leaving all worldly things behind, and striving to attain to the Spiritual Kingdom.

Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world, and beacons of light to disclose the mysteries of the Kingdom to those with understanding hearts.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pp. 60-61

O SON OF WORLDLINESS!

Pleasant is the realm of being, wert thou to attain thereto; glorious is the domain of eternity, shouldst thou pass beyond the world of mortality; sweet is the holy ecstasy if thou drinkest of the mystic chalice from the hands of the celestial Youth. Shouldst thou attain this station, thou wouldst be freed from destruction and death, from toil and sin.

Bahá’u’lláh: Persian Hidden Words, p. 70

Thus, when the spirit is fed with holy virtues, then is the body joyous; if the soul falls into sin, the body is in torment!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, p. 65

¹ Matthew 8:22

“As regards backbiting, i.e., discussing the faults of others in their absence, the teachings are very emphatic. In a Tablet to an American friend the Master wrote: ‘The worst human quality and the most great sin is backbiting, more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting were shut eternally and each one of the believers unsealed his lips in praise of others, then the teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh would spread, the hearts be illumined, the spirits glorified, and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.’ (Quoted in *Star of West*, Vol. IV. p. 192) Bahá’u’lláh says in the Hidden Words: ‘Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command ACCURSED ART THOU.’ The condemnation of backbiting could hardly be couched in stronger language than in these passages, and it is obviously one of the foremost obligations for Bahá’ís to set their faces against this practice. Even if what is said against another person be true, the mentioning of his faults to others still comes under the category of backbiting, and is forbidden.”

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, Feb. 11, 1925

What the Bahá’ís must do is not commit adultery if they are married, and refrain from sexual intimacy before marriage. It is not a sin in the Bahá’í Faith if you do not marry, but marriage is recommended to the believers by Bahá’u’lláh.

Shoghi Effendi: Preserving Marriages, p. 452

Therefore the beloved of God and maid-servants of the Merciful must train their children with life and heart and teach them in the school of virtue and perfection. They must not be lax in this matter; they must not be inefficient. Truly, if a babe did not live at all it were better than to let it grow ignorant, for that innocent babe, in later life, would become afflicted with innumerable defects, responsible to and questioned by God, reproached and rejected by the people. What a sin this would be and what an omission!

Beware! Beware! that ye fail not in this matter. Endeavour with heart, with life, to train your children, especially the daughters. No excuse is acceptable in this matter.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Vol. III, p. 579

Deal not treacherously with the substance of your neighbor. Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess. He, in truth, is the All-Bounteous, the Most Generous. O people of Bahá’í! Subdue the citadels of men's hearts with the swords of wisdom and of utterance. They that dispute, as prompted by their desires, are indeed wrapped in a palpable veil. ...If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin. He, verily, is the Concealer, the Lord of grace abounding...

Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 54-55

...Should anyone be afflicted by a sin, it behoveth him to repent thereof and return unto his Lord. He, verily, granteth forgiveness unto whomsoever He willeth, and none may question that which it pleaseth Him to ordain. He is, in truth, the Ever-Forgiving, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

Bahá’u’lláh: The Kitáb-i-Áqdas, p. 37

...I know not for which sin to beg Thy forgiveness and implore Thy pardon, nor from which of mine iniquities to turn aside unto the Court of Thy bounteousness and the Sanctuary of Thy favor. Such are my sins and trespasses that no man can number them, nor pen describe them. I implore Thee, O Thou that turnest darkness into light, and revealest Thy mysteries on the Sinai of Thy Revelation, to aid me, at all times, to put my trust in Thee, and to commit mine affairs unto Thy care. Make me, then, O my God, content with that which the finger of Thy decree hath traced, and the pen of Thy ordinance hath written. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee, and in Thy grasp are the reins of all that are in heaven and on earth. No God is there but Thee, the All-knowing, the All-Wise.

Bahá’u’lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 8-9

You who are the servants of God fight against oppression, hate and discord, so that wars may cease and God's laws of peace and love may be established among men.

Work! Work with all your strength, spread the Cause of the Kingdom among men; teach the self-sufficient to turn humbly towards God, the sinful to sin no more, and await with glad expectation the coming of the Kingdom.

Love and obey your Heavenly Father, and rest assured that Divine help is yours. Verily I say unto you that you shall indeed conquer the world!

Only have faith, patience and courage—this is but the beginning, but surely you will succeed, for God is with you!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Paris Talks, p. 101