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## Table Talks

Arthur S. Agnew

1907

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### APRIL 10, 1907 (MIDDAY MEAL)

I have been wishing that such a day might come. Thank God that such a day has come in which we see each other. Today the greatest happiness to me is the meeting of the friends.

The believers are my soldiers. Through them will ‘Abdu’l-Bahá triumph and gain the victory over the cities of the hearts of people. They are like wings for me, and the Cause for which we serve is very great. To-day has many troubles, labors, much difficulty, great tests and trials, but the end is good.

Though the way is a long distance, yet the Kingdom of God is very great.

The Blessed Beauty has put in our hands the lamp of teachings. By this light the world will be illuminated. But all the people of the world seek to put it out, all endeavor to put it out. And these lights are the lights of the Kingdom and nobody can put them out (quench them). Before long they will illuminate all the world because these lights are illuminated by the light and wisdom of God; and the effulgence of them is the teaching of BAHÁ’U’LLÁH.

His Holiness Christ was the light of the Kingdom of God and the disciples were lights that were illuminated through him. All the `{{p4}}` people of the world wished to put them out, to quench them, but they could not.

Day by day the light of those lamps increased and now it is the same case; all the powers of the world gathered together cannot quench this light. You know Nero, the Roman Emperor, could not put out that light — such a man as Nero could not — but by and by he himself was quenched — while they became more and more illuminated. And I hope that now you may also become divine lights and that if all the people of the world gather to put them out they would not be able. America will be enlightened very much and from there (that place) lights will be sent to all places. Therefore, I hope that from America teachers may go to other places — to China, Japan, India and to Europe and other countries.

It is very important that those places be firmly united — Chicago, New York and Washington.

#### APRIL 10 (EVENING MEAL)

These dishes are Persian dishes. Although the Persian dishes are simple, I hope the spiritual dishes may be powerful. The principal food is the spiritual food, which is called the supper of the Lord. The strength or power of the physical food is only for one night, but the power of the spiritual food strengthens and sustains us throughout eternity. From the physical strength the result will be slight, but from the spiritual food the greatest results will be produced. Physical power when it touches a thing will have effect upon it, but the spiritual power in order to have effect does not require direct contact. For instance, while this spiritual power is in the East, its effect is felt in the West.

For instance, Christ appeared in the East, but the effect of the Holy Spirit manifested in the West. When Christ appeared in the East his cause did not spread so much in the East as in the West, so I hope as this Greatest Manifestation has appeared in the East, its greatest influence shall be in the West. Between the material things and spiritual things there is connection. The more the body is healthful the greater will be the power of the spirit in man; the power of the intellect, the power of the memory, the power of reflection shall be more powerful. This world is like the body. The Cause of God, the Confirmation of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Bounties, the Spiritual Power are like the Spirit.

The physical body of man when in the condition of seed has not the capacity, has not the power to show forth spiritual powers in that condition perfectly. When it is born its capacity will be more and its spiritual power will be more. When the time for it to be at the breast is over the power of the spirit will be more powerful. When it reaches maturity then the spiritual power will appear perfect. So the perfection of the body is the means for the expression of the power of the spirit.

Therefore, when we look at the world we see that the physical matters, material things, have made a great development and made a great advance. It cannot be compared with the past centuries or any other of the former centuries. The past centuries are in great beauty and appearance, civilization is advanced, science is also, industries and discoveries have reached the highest station. The physical world has made a great advance, in such manner that it is going to reach the station of maturity. But in the former centuries it was like a babe at the breasts. But as the longer the body has lived, the stronger the spiritual power, likewise as the physical world has made a great advance and is near to reach maturity, so it is with the Cause of God, and the Holy Spirit will appear with great power and the Word of God will have a great effect.

All the prophets and especially Christ wished to deliver the world, they wanted to establish the great peace and spread perfect love among the people, that the whole world become like unto an ocean and the people like unto waves, that all may become waves of the same sea and through this the uniting of the world may appear. But this world had not this capacity in ancient times because it was like the babe at the breasts, and because this is the time of maturity it

is possible that the divine teachings, exhortations, confirmations, bounties and spiritual laws of God may appear perfectly because there is capacity now.

I hope that the East and the West will become {{p7}} one, also the North and the South and differences will be removed.

How lovely it is that you from the West and we from the East should Sit around one table. This is impossible through the physical powers, but the power of the Word of God gathers us together.

#### **APRIL 11, 1907 (MIDDAY MEAL)**

In the Persian language they call America the new world. This is a very good name. This new Revelation will be the cause of America becoming a new world. It will gain a new life. His Holiness Christ said that man must gain a new birth, and I hope that all parts of America will be born. America surpassed all Europe in this Cause while Europe is nearer.

The Kingdom of God is like unto the sun. It sends the rays on all things. This globe of earth is illuminated by it. In every country where there is no cloud the sun reflects and where there is a cloud all of the sun of the country is concealed. Thank God that the atmosphere (weather) of America is clear and that the rays of the Sun of Truth are reflecting. Those who have sight can see the light but the blind will deny, but when through the heat of the sun the trees grow, the blind will also touch it and feel it. Therefore, such signs will be seen that all will testify.

Now the season is the spiritual season and the material season of spring. If you look over the {{p8}} mountains and plains, everywhere you see how beautiful and splendid it is, and from the spiritual spring of the Kingdom before long you will see spiritual faces shining so brightly.

But there will come a day of trial and people will be occupied in blaming others and will say rough things. They will hate and curse you; what they did to us they will do to you. Thus the people will accuse you and say many things against you, but I am sure you will show steadfastness. For the sake of Christ the people hated very much the disciples and injured them. They accused them and hated them and they rose up and executed them. But now the people will only hurt you with their tongues. You must show steadfastness and firmness perfectly and as a consequence the accusation will become salutation and all tongues will praise you.

#### **APRIL 12, 1907 (MIDDAY MEAL)**

(Mr. Chase and Mr. Scheffler came) {ed}

To-day is a beautiful day. I have been longing to see such a day. I am very happy. My happiness is from the point that it is the power of God which has gathered us together, that while before we were far apart now we are together.

Were it not for the power of the Word of God such a meeting were impossible. We are all gathered together in love. While it is possible for different nations to arrange a meeting together still their hearts are not united. But such a meeting {{p9}} as this, of different nations united in heart, is from the power of the Word of God. And you are the representatives of all the believers in America. It is as if all are here. For the love of God is like an ocean, the believers its waves. All are the waves of one sea. Therefore, each is the representative of all. There is one ray, one reflection, from the sun but through various windows it reflects into the room. The light is one light and the Kingdom is one and all the believers are children of the same Kingdom. All are the letters of one book, the flowers of one garden, and the pearls of one sea. Therefore, today it seems to me as if all the believers were present. The believers of Persia are longing to see the believers of America.

For a long time Mr. Chase could not come, until the time came when he could come with others. You have come in a good time. It is the season of spring.

The philosophers of Europe and America have an idea that unity may be settled among the people and they have tried very much. They have conceived this idea and have written many books concerning this matter, but they have not been able and the result was contrary, for differences and opposition were raised up more than before.

In olden times if a war took place there would be gathered by each party about one hundred thousand men and during one year perhaps seven or eight thousand would be killed. But {{p10}} now in this age in the war between Russia and Japan about one and a half million were called to arms and one third of that number were lost, and a half million were wounded or sick. Such a war has never before occurred.

Therefore, we say that what the philosophers tried is without result, useless. But the power of the Word of God will unite East and West. The philosophers wished to promulgate their idea but they had not the power to render it effective. They were only ideas and thoughts and nothing else. But the power of God gives the idea to the people and also the power to execute it.

When we look upon the existence we find that all things, all existence, is composed of many elements. For instance, this flower is composed of different elements. These elements have found unity with each other. What is the result? As dust it was nothing, but after it was composed it became a flower.

If there should not be decomposition, composition would not be. For instance, take several things. Until the different things are separately decomposed the composition and union is impossible. For example, if you wish the dust and stone and wood to be mixed perfectly with each other, it is impossible unless each be decomposed into its salts; when we have dissolved them then we can compose them. For instance, in a pharmacy they first dissolve the medicines, then bring them together and then they give a firm {{p11}} union. Before dissolution composition is impossible.

Therefore the Word of God decomposes the selfishness of people, their evil habits, their bad morals, and afterward composes them. If such a thing does not happen, perfect union cannot be attained. Therefore philosophers failed to do these things.

For instance, the power of the Word takes away the ideas of the nations — as with the Jews, the Christians and Muḥammadans — and gives them and other nations a new idea through which they become united. Therefore, the different nations become one.

For instance, Christ appeared; the Jews believed in him; the Romans, Greeks, Anglo-Saxons believed in him. So he gathered all again and made them one, made them Christians. The religions that were before Christianity were abolished. This was done through the Word of God. It cannot be done through the power of the philosophers.

#### **APRIL 12, 1907, (LATE IN THE EVENING)**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked about the House of Spirituality and was told the twelve members were as one person. He said:

It must be so. Twelve thousand men must be one. Everything will be obtained by unity and harmony, and the very greatest thing by division will disappear, will be annihilated. The appearance of prophets is for the sake of unity and {{p12}} harmony. The manifestation of Christ was for the sake of unity and the manifestation of BAHÁ’U’LLÁH was for the same sake, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself has had many trials and troubles for the same sake, to cause the people to unite. There must be established the unification of mankind.

I admire and praise this night. This is a good night. To-day I met some people who were very difficult to meet, but for the sake of love I had to bear it, only for the sake of love and tenderness, and I became very tired from the meeting but I had to bear it. It is my happiness to be with you, but when I meet with strangers, then there is trouble and difficulty for me; but you have to bear them as I bear them. Whatever you see from strangers, if they oppose you and injure you, you have to bear it and be patient. As much as they injure you and hate you, you have to show your kindness to them. You have to treat them as friends. It must be so. If they give you poison, you have to give them honey; if they wound you, you have to plaster their wounds. So I hope that love may be established in this world, that all hatred and rancour may pass away.

When we look upon the existence, we see there is decomposition and composition. Composition is the means and cause of life and decomposition is the cause of death. Now several elements are Composed and united and form this flower, and so several elements are composed and the body is formed, and so with everything. By this it {{p13}} is known and understood that all unification and composition is the cause of life in all stations-in the mineral, vegetable, animal and human stations. The lowest station is the station of the mineral. If unification is not

found, the several molecules will not be gathered and composed.

For instance, in this wood there are molecules. These molecules are gathered together and composed, then wood will be found. All substance gets its life from unification and composition and when separation takes place among these molecules, death is certain. Now we understand that in all existence composition is the cause of life and that variation and disagreement is the cause of death.

#### **APRIL 13, 1907 (MIDDAY MEAL)**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked if we were at rest and in peace. He said:

This is a prison and in prison one cannot find rest. Whatever it may be, this is a prison and you will stay some days in this prison with us and you will be counted as prisoners. In fact, you are my companions in servitude to the world, and you are in prison as I am, and in everything we are partners.

All of man’s body is body, all are parts of the body, the hands, the head, the feet, etc., but God has chosen and specified the mind of man, and so the power of intellect in the mind of man has made it to be peculiar. Also, the globe of the world, all is alike, all are lands, there is no {{p14}} difference, but God has preferred this land for the manifestation or appearance of prophets. Abraham was in Haran, but at last he was brought to this place, and the King of Peace, the teacher of Abraham, was here. Moses was here in these surroundings. The prophets of Israel all were here. Jesus Christ was also from here and Muḥammad emigrated to this place, and this new Revelation also came to this place; although He originated in Persia, the Blessed Perfection came to this place. God has given this Holy Spot a special blessing, when He gives all the teachings from this place, and the revelations have appeared, and the Holy Tomb is here, and the Great Prison is here. Therefore you must thank God that you have come to such a place and you are counted as if you are from here.

People who are under the shade of the Kingdom, they are from the Kingdom although they are from various places. Although ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is from Persia, he is from the Kingdom and you are also from the Holy Land, and for all these blessings you must thank God very much and praise Him. The rule is that whenever a man wants to do something he has first to think about it, then to decide, then to perform it. For instance, those who are intending to discover the North Pole; first they think for that end, they consider it, the difficulty they are about to undertake, and they imagine the things necessary to discover it and {{p15}} the labors they have to bear. After meditating, then they decide to do it. After that they will travel to go and perform it. The discovery of the Pole, although it is important, yet in proportion to the Cause of God it is as nothing. How much trouble and labor people suffer to discover the Pole and how much trouble and hardship they endure for its sake. They sacrifice their lives and endanger themselves for it. How many ships went to discover it and no news came back from them. How many were broken by the frost, and how many wise men lost their lives in this way. Still now they form a party and go

again, that perhaps they may discover it.

But now we are intending to discover the Pole of the Kingdom. First of all we must meditate about it and think of the hardships, troubles and calamities, then we must decide and begin to perform. We see that people give up their wealth and many things, to discover the North Pole, with great devotion. How much more we must make our devotion for the discovery of the Pole of the Kingdom. The reward for them is only in the mention of their names, viz.: that so and so went to discover such a place; but our reward is to be a servant of the Kingdom, everlasting life, heavenly enlightenment, immortality. Now we see how these people endeavor, but they have not discovered it, but thank God that we without much labor succeed. It is evident how great is His favor upon us.

His Holiness Christ arranged a supper and {{p16}} called it the Lord's supper. He called it so be-cause on that night he gave teachings to his disciples. He did not intend by the supper the food which was served, but rather the heavenly table which was his teachings. The Blessed Beauty has prepared the Lord's supper for us in all His Holy Tablets. He has prepared so much that there is no end to it, and I pray now that today our dinner may be a heavenly dinner because it was in the utmost fragrance and love.

#### **APRIL 13, 1907 (EVENING MEAL)**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written a Tablet specially for the purpose, that should anyone ask about his station, it is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and no more, that all men may be in unity with each other. There should be no variation. He is always thinking of unity, that all should be one. This is for the sake that there should be harmony among the believers.

The believers of America now must endeavor that capacity and ability may be gained in America, because the most important thing is ability and capacity. If there should be no capacity nor ability the abundance and bounties have no effect. What bounty is greater than the rays of the sun, what bounty is greater than the showers of rain and the breeze of spring, but the barren ground will not bring forth any benefit, and there will nothing grow in the land that is full of thorns. From the heat of the sun and the showers of rain and the blowing of the {{p17}} winds, nothing will grow in the barren desert. These abundances have effect and result when the land is good and clear. Therefore, it is evident that capacity and ability are most important things.

The divine kingdom is like a beautiful garden but if the people who enter into that garden be blind they cannot realize anything from the beauty of the flowers, and if they should be deaf they cannot hear the melodies of the nightingale of that garden, and if they have caught cold they cannot smell the fragrances of the flowers. What is the reason? It is because the deaf and blind have not the capacity and ability to feel these things. It is as if they had not entered into that garden. And so it is with the divine kingdom of God. Its stores are open — those who have capacity can get the benefit, and if they have not capacity they

will get no benefit at all. Therefore, we must try and endeavor to get ability.

The most important of all forms of ability and capacity is unification. If union and harmony should not be attained we cannot get the benefit from the kingdom, as some blind persons sitting in front of the rays of the sun, or a number of deaf people listening to the melodies of the birds, or a number of people with bad colds in their heads entering into a flower garden — they can sense nothing. Therefore, I hope that you, when you return to Chicago and New York, you will try and endeavor as far as you can to cause unity and harmony among the believers. {{p18}}

#### **APRIL 14, 1907 (MIDDAY MEAL)**

This kind of food is not Persian. It is European, except that there is one Persian dish — the sweetened rice. At first there were no potatoes in Persia. This is something new with the Persians-imported from Europe. At first the Persians did not take kindly to the potato, saying it was an apple of Europe, because of their fanaticism. But now whenever they mention your names all become glad and happy. How different it is that it has become so. See and realize the power of BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, what he has done.

If you go into Persia you will see many more things. Really the believers of Persia love you very much.

There is a Sentence in the New Testament where Christ says he will not eat of the grape again until he eats thereof in His Father's Kingdom. What do the great and learned men think Concerning this sentence? There is no grape in the Kingdom. This a symbol and sign of the Word of God. The intoxication of this wine is such that it will be seen. The English people are notable for their much drinking, but we hope our intoxication will surpass them. Their intoxication is from the outward wine and our intoxication is from the wine of the love of God. After they drink, giddiness will result, but our wine is a wine of everlasting exhilaration. {{p19}}

#### **APRIL 15, 1907 (MIDDAY MEAL)**

Mírzá Asadu'lláh said to the Master that we wished to take dinner in the name of the Council Board of Chicago.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: Not only in remembrance of the Council Board but also of all the believers. And when you go to visit the Holy Tomb you must remember all the believers.

In Europe and America there is a meeting of the parliament. In this parliament there are men, each of them represents many men. A single man is like ten thousand men. It seems in fact as if ten thousand or twenty thousand men are present in that meeting. His word is the word of all and what he accepts all of them accept.



‘Abdu’l-Bahá considers that you are representatives of all the believers in America. You are the representatives of all. In reality and in fact it seems as if all are present and all are dining with him.

If a light is ignited in a meeting it is the same as if all lights were illuminated. Because light is one thing. Although the candlesticks are many yet the light is one. All are believers of the light, the truth and reality, and in the light of truth there is no separation, and all are the rays of one sun, therefore each of you represents all. Let us suppose a beloved one and a thousand lovers. The lovers are one, their forms one, yet all are different, but to the beloved one all are the face of the lover, therefore all are one. {{p20}}

The beloved of God although they are far away in body, in reality, in spirit, they are present. They exist here, though they are not present. If spiritual meeting were not possible I would go to meet all the believers in America, because I am anxious to meet them, but the people would say he has fled away from the prison, but if he goes and comes back again he would say I have been over and met the believers and I have come back again. I have been to the meeting and met Mr. Scheffler, Mr. Chase, Mr. and Mrs. Agnew. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá said in English, “Very well,” and was so happy he said it in French, “Trés bien,” in Italian “Multo Bono,” and in Turkish, Persian and Arabic)."

See how good this meeting is that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá speaks in different languages. He praises this meeting. Could anyone believe that we would gather so together in such a meeting, but the love of BAHÁ’U’LLÁH has gathered us.

The need itself attracts generosity. To be thirsty shows that there is water.

#### **APRIL 15,1907 (EVENING MEAL)**

It is a good gathering. Thank God that believers are gathered around this table from every part, with utmost sincerity, unity and friendship. I beg of God that as we are gathered in this contingent world round this table, we may also be gathered in the world of the Kingdom and be united. {{p21}}

I hope that the gathering together of the believers may be the source of the unity and harmony of the people of the world. That this physical table may be a symbol of the heavenly table. Christ said that he was the heavenly bread which was sent down from heaven, and this bread means the heavenly table. I hope tonight that heavenly blessings may descend upon you. That you may be born again a new spirit, a new power, a new life. God’s abundances and favors are boundless, without end, and the blessings of BAHÁ’U’LLÁH are like a boundless ocean. One wave of the ocean of His blessings will cover (drown) all the mountains of the world. Now these waves are rolling upon your head. I hope you will be drowned in these waves, that you will get endless, boundless, blessings and bounties.

This material world is very dark, and this handful of dust is very narrow. I hope that the doors of divine worlds may be opened before your faces, that

you may soar up in a space whose lights are eternal, enter a garden whose fruits are everlasting, become the center of human virtues and the appearances of divine perfections, that your hearts be adorned with the commemoration of God, your faces illumined with the light of the love of God, your ears may hear the melodies of sanctity, your spirits may be gladdened with divine glad tidings, your tongues may move in praising God; in short, that you {{p22}} may attain to such a station as to be called the Children of the Kingdom.

[The foregoing was delivered at the meeting of the Persian and American believers, 9 to 11 o'clock, in the evening of April 15, 1907, on the balcony of the house.] {.ed}

#### **APRIL 16, 1907 (MIDDAY MEAL)**

Concerning the Temple, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, it is a very important matter. The most important thing now in America is the building of the Temple. You and your friends must endeavor in this matter. This building will be the cause of confirmation of the believers. It has a great effect because it is the beginning of the foundation. After centuries it is not so important as it is now, but now it is very important. At first they build the Temple and worship in it and grow. In past centuries they could not build it so outwardly. This building will be the cause of unity and prosperity of the cause. The unity comes. From every part the believers will assist. This is a heavenly society. And also it will be the cause of strength. The believers will get blessing and bounties. It cannot be compared with the church of the old time. You have only to begin; everything will be all right. If you cannot build a large building, let it be a smaller one.

Take this message to the House of Spirituality and to the believers. You must announce this matter, that you are going to begin the {{p23}} building of this building. Build it wherever it may be best. It is not necessary that it be built in the center of the city where the lands are expensive. Let it be built where the lands are cheaper. The Temple must be built in such a place that around it may be built gardens and flowers. If possible near the lake, it is much better.

Now, each of you must be a volume for the believers. Had 'Abdu'l-Bahá time, he would write for each of the believers a Tablet, but you know that he has not the time. You have witnessed with your own eyes that he has not the time. There are two kinds of letters, one the silent letter and one the spoken letter. I hope you are the spoken letters. You will be the means of mentioning the happiness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. You must give forth such pleasure and happiness that 'Abdu'l-Bahá may hear the noise of their rejoicing.

As now you are going back to America from here you have a special and particular strength, a particular power, strength and confirmation of the Holy Spirit and the heavenly hosts will help you.