

## Love of God

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In the May 11 article, Ms. Sharon Lennox-Infante proficiently wrote about Christ's exhortation to love God.

In the Gospels, Christ said that baptism must be with spirit and with water and also with spirit and with fire. Since physical water and fire are direct opposites, and baptism with physical fire is impossible, Baha'i writings interpret these terms symbolically – by “spirit” is meant divine grace; “water” symbolizes the water of life, which is knowledge; and “fire” is the fire of the love of God. Thus nearness to God requires all three.

Baha'i writings say, “...that which leads to everlasting life, eternal honour, universal enlightenment, and true success and salvation is, first and foremost, the knowledge of God.... Second comes the love of God. The light of this love is kindled, through the knowledge of God, in the lamp of the heart, and its spreading rays illumine the world and bestow upon man the life of the Kingdom. And in truth the fruit of human existence is the love of God, which is the spirit of life and grace everlasting. Were it not for the love of God, the contingent world would be plunged in darkness...., the hearts of men would be bereft of life and deprived of the stirrings of conscience...., the perfections of the human world would entirely vanish...., no real connection could exist between human hearts...., spiritual union would be lost. Were it not for the love of God, the light of the oneness of mankind would be extinguished...., the East and the West would not embrace as two lovers...., discord and division would not be transmuted into fellowship...., estrangement would not give way to unity...., the stranger would not become the friend. Indeed, love in the human world is a ray of the love of God and a reflection of the grace of His bounty.

“It is clear that human realities differ one from another, that opinions and perceptions vary, and that this divergence of thoughts, opinions, understandings, and sentiments among individuals is an essential requirement. ... We stand therefore in need of a universal power which can prevail over the thoughts, opinions, and sentiments of all, which can annul these divisions and bring all souls under the sway of the principle of the oneness of humanity. And it is clear and evident that the greatest power in the human world is the love of God. It gathers diverse peoples under the shade of the tabernacle of oneness and fosters the greatest love and fellowship among hostile and contending peoples and nations.

“Observe how numerous were the diverse nations, races, clans, and tribes who, after the advent of Christ, gathered through the power of the love of God under the shadow of His Word. Consider how the differences and divisions of a thousand years were entirely abolished, how the delusion of the superiority of race and nation was dispelled, how the unity of souls and sentiments was attained, and how all became Christians in truth and in spirit.”

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