

Becoming A Brilliant Star Overview

Purpose of Humanity

1. I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth. There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 314

2. Love is the fundamental principle of God's purpose for man, and He has commanded us to love each other even as He loves us. All these discords and disputes which we hear on all sides only tend to increase materiality.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 122

3. The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 299

4. All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. The Almighty beareth Me witness: To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Say: O friends! Drink your fill from this crystal stream that floweth through the heavenly grace of Him Who is the Lord of Names. Let others partake of its waters in My name, that the leaders of men in every land may fully recognize the purpose for which the Eternal Truth hath been revealed, and the reason for which they themselves have been created.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, p. 215

Humanity Is The Entity Through Which The World Is Enlightened

5. Besides this, it is necessary that the signs of the perfection of the spirit should be apparent in this world, so that the world of creation may bring forth endless results, and this body may receive life and manifest the divine bounties. So, for example, the rays of the sun must shine upon the earth, and the solar heat develop the earthly beings; if the rays and heat of the sun did not shine upon the earth, the earth would be uninhabited, without meaning; and its development would be retarded. In the same way, if the perfections of the spirit did not appear in this world, this world would be unenlightened and absolutely brutal. By the appearance of the spirit in the physical form, this world is enlightened. As the spirit of man is the cause of the life of the body, so the world is in the condition of the body, and man is in the condition of the spirit. If there were no man, the perfections of the spirit would not appear, and the light of the mind would not be resplendent in this world. This world would be like a body without a soul.

This world is also in the condition of a fruit tree, and man is like the fruit; without fruit the tree would be useless.

Moreover, these members, these elements, this composition, which are found in the organism of man, are an attraction and magnet for the spirit; it is certain that the spirit will appear in it. So a mirror which is clear will certainly attract the rays of the sun. It will become luminous, and wonderful images will appear in it - that is to say, when these existing elements are gathered together according to the natural order, and with perfect strength, they become a magnet for the spirit, and the spirit will become manifest in them with all its perfections.

Under these conditions it cannot be said, "What is the necessity for the rays of the sun to descend upon the mirror?" - for the connection which exists between the reality of things, whether they be spiritual or material, requires that when the mirror is clear and faces the sun, the light of the sun must become apparent in it. In the same way, when the elements are arranged and combined in the most glorious system, organization and manner, the human spirit will appear and be manifest in them. This is the decree of the Powerful, the Wise.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 200-201

Both Science And Religion Are Standards For Knowledge

6. There is no contradiction between true religion and science. When a religion is opposed to science it becomes mere superstition: that which is contrary to knowledge is ignorance.

How can a man believe to be a fact that which science has proved to be impossible? If he believes in spite of his reason, it is rather ignorant superstition than faith. The true principles of all religions are in conformity with the teachings of science.

The Unity of God is logical, and this idea is not antagonistic to the conclusions arrived at by scientific study.

All religions teach that we must do good, that we must be generous, sincere, truthful, law-abiding, and faithful; all this is reasonable, and logically the only way in which humanity can progress.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 141-146

Study Reality Using An Organismic Or Systems Approach

7. Now concerning nature, it is but the essential properties and the necessary relations inherent in the realities of things. And though these infinite realities are diverse in their character yet they are in the utmost harmony and closely connected together. As one's vision is broadened and the matter observed carefully, it will be made certain that every reality is but an essential requisite of other realities. Thus to connect and harmonize these diverse and infinite realities an all-unifying Power is necessary, that every part of existent being may in perfect order discharge its own function. Consider the body of man, and let the part be an indication of the whole. Consider how these diverse parts and members of the human body are closely connected and harmoniously united one with the other. Every part is the essential requisite of all other parts and has a function by itself. It is the mind that is the all-unifying agency that so uniteth all the component parts one with the other that each dischargeth its specific function in perfect order, and thereby co-operation and reaction are made possible. All parts function under certain laws that are essential to existence. Should that all-unifying agency that directeth all these parts be harmed in any way

there is no doubt that the constituent parts and members will cease functioning properly; and though that all-unifying agency in the temple of man be not sensed or seen and the reality thereof be unknown, yet by its effects it manifesteth itself with the greatest power.

Thus it hath been proven and made evident that these infinite beings in this wondrous universe will discharge their functions properly only when directed and controlled by that Universal Reality, so that order may be established in the world. For example, interaction and co-operation between the constituent parts of the human body are evident and indisputable, yet this does not suffice; an all-unifying agency is necessary that shall direct and control the component parts, so that these through interaction and co-operation may discharge in perfect order their necessary and respective functions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablet to August Forel*, pp. 20-22

Where Should We Start?

8. At the outset of every endeavour, it is incumbent to look to the end of it. Of all the arts and sciences, set the children to studying those which will result in advantage to man, will ensure his progress and elevate his rank. Thus the noisome odours of lawlessness will be dispelled, and thus through the high endeavours of the nation's leaders, all will live cradled, secure and in peace.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 168-169

‘Abdu’l-Bahá Would Like For Us To Become Brilliant Stars

9. Through the graces of His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh--may my life be sacrificed for His friends--I cherish the hope that ye will, day by day, progress more and more in the Kingdom of God; that each one of you will shine like unto a brilliant star from the horizon of the supreme Guidance, thus proving to be the cause of guidance unto others, giving sight unto their eyes, hearing power unto their ears and quickening unto their hearts.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 39

10. O God, guide me, protect me, make of me a shining lamp and a brilliant star. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá'í Prayers* (US edition), p. 37

The Three Degrees Of The Human Being

11. There are in the world of humanity three degrees; those of the body, the soul, and spirit.

The body is the physical or animal degree of man. From the bodily point of view man is a sharer of the animal kingdom. The bodies alike of men and animals are composed of elements held together by the law of attraction.

Like the animal, man possesses the faculties of the senses, is subject to heat, cold, hunger, thirst, etc.; unlike the animal, man has a rational soul, the human intelligence.

This intelligence of man is the intermediary between his body and his spirit.

When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all Creation; because man, being the culmination of all that went before and thus superior to all previous evolutions, contains all the lower world within himself. Illumined by the spirit

through the instrumentality of the soul, man's radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-point of Creation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 96-97

Creation Is Voluntary

12. O SON OF MAN!

Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee: therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.

Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #3

13. Furthermore, it is a philosophical principle that the existence of phenomena implies composition and that mortality, or nonexistence, is equivalent to decomposition.... On this account the materialists are of the opinion that life is the mere conjoining of elemental substances into myriad forms and shapes. The materialist comes to the conclusion that life, in other words, means composition; that wherever we find single elements combined in aggregate form, there we behold the phenomena of organic life; that every organic composition is organic life. Now if life means composition of elements, then the materialist may come to the conclusion of the nonnecessity of a composer, the nonnecessity of a creator; for composition is all there is to it, and that is accomplished by adhesion or cohesion. In response to this we say that composition must needs be of three kinds: One form of composition is termed philosophically the accidental, another the involuntary, and a third the voluntary. As to the first, or accidental, composition: This would signify that certain elements through inherent qualities and powers of attraction or affinity have been gathered together, have blended, and so composed a certain form, being or organism. This can be proven to be false; for composition is an effect, and philosophically no effect is conceivable without causation. No effect can be conceived of without some primal cause. For example, this heat is an effect; but that energy which gives forth this phenomenon of heat is the cause. This light is an effect, but back of it is the energy which is the cause. Is it possible for this light to be separated from the energy whereof it is a property? That is impossible and inconceivable. It is self-evidently false. Accidental composition is, therefore, a false theory and may be excluded.

As to the second form of composition - involuntary: This means that each element has within itself as an inherent property the power of composition. For example, the inherent quality of fire is burning, or heat; heat is a property of fire. Humidity is the inherent nature or property of water. You cannot conceive H²O, which is the chemical form of water, without having humidity associated; for that is an inherent quality of water. The power of attraction has as its function attractive, or magnetic, qualities. We cannot separate attraction from that power. The power of repulsion has as its function repelling - sending off. You cannot separate the effect from the cause. If these premises be true - and they are self-evident - then it would be impossible for a composite being, for the elements which have gone into the makeup of a composite organism, ever to be decomposed because the inherent nature of each element would be to hold fast together. As fire cannot be separated from heat, likewise the elemental being could not be subjected to decomposition, and this does not hold true because we see decomposition everywhere. Hence this theory is untrue, inasmuch as we observe that after each composition there is a process of decomposition which forever ends it. By this we learn that composition as

regards phenomena is neither accidental nor involuntary.

Then what have we left as a form of composition? It is the voluntary form of composition, which means that composition is effected through a superior will, that there is will expressed in this motive or action. It is thus proved that the existence of phenomena is effected through the eternal Will, the Will of the Living, Eternal and Self-subsistent, and this is a rational proof concerning composition whereof there is no doubt or uncertainty.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 423-424

There Is No Repose In Nature; Everything Is Always In Motion

14. Absolute repose does not exist in nature. All things either make progress or lose ground. Everything moves forward or backward, nothing is without motion. From his birth, a man progresses physically until he reaches maturity, then, having arrived at the prime of his life, he begins to decline, the strength and powers of his body decrease, and he gradually arrives at the hour of death. Likewise a plant progresses from the seed to maturity, then its life begins to lessen until it fades and dies. A bird soars to a certain height and having reached the highest possible point in its flight, begins its descent to earth.

Thus it is evident that movement is essential to all existence. All material things progress to a certain point, then begin to decline. This is the law which governs the whole physical creation....

My hope for you is that you will progress in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of matter; that your intelligence will develop, your knowledge will augment, and your understanding be widened.

You must ever press forward, never standing still; avoid stagnation, the first step to a backward movement, to decay.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 88-89, 90-91

Human Progress Occurs In Stages

15. In a living organism the full measure of its development is not known or realized at the time of its inception or birth. Development and progression imply gradual stages or degrees.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 131

16. Fundamentally all existing things pass through the same degrees and phases of development, and any given phenomenon embodies all others. An ancient statement of the Arabian philosophers declares that all things are involved in all things. It is evident that each material organism is an aggregate expression of single and simple elements, and a given cellular element or atom has its coursings or journeyings through various and myriad stages of life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 349

Style, Temperament and Personality

The Rational Soul Has Its Own Personality

17. The rational soul--that is to say, the human spirit--has neither entered this body nor existed through it; so after the disintegration of the composition of the body, how should it be in need of a substance through which it may exist? On the contrary, the rational soul is the substance through which the body exists. The personality of the rational soul is from its beginning; it is not due to the instrumentality of the body, but the state and the personality of the rational soul may be strengthened in this world; it will make progress and will attain to the degrees of perfection, or it will remain in the lowest abyss of ignorance, veiled and deprived from beholding the signs of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 239-240

Diversity Of Thought, Temperament And Character Is Desirable

18. Consider the flowers of a garden. Though differing in kind, color, form, and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 103

Physical Development

We Should Not Neglect Our Physical Health

19. He is delighted to hear you are now fully recovered and again active in your important work for the Cause. However, you should not neglect your health, but consider it the means which enables you to serve. It--the body--is like a horse which carries the personality and spirit, and as such should be well cared for so it can do its work! You should certainly safeguard your nerves, and force yourself to take time, and not only for prayer and meditation, but for real rest and relaxation. We don't have to pray and meditate for hours in order to be spiritual.

Shoghi Effendi: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I (Health & Healing), p. 482; Vol II (Prayer & Med.), p. 242

Cognitive Development

The Physical Powers And The Intellectual Powers

20. In man five outer powers exist, which are the agents of perception--that is to say, through these five powers man perceives material beings. These are sight, which perceives visible forms; hearing, which perceives audible sounds; smell, which perceives odors; taste, which perceives foods; and feeling, which is in all parts of the body and perceives tangible things. These five powers perceive outward existences.

Man has also spiritual powers: imagination, which conceives things; thought, which reflects upon realities; comprehension, which comprehends realities; memory, which retains whatever man imagines, thinks and comprehends. The intermediary between the five outward powers and the inward powers is the sense which they possess in common--that is to say, the sense which acts between the outer and inner powers, conveys to the inward powers whatever the outer powers discern. It is termed the common faculty, because it communicates between the outward and inward powers and thus is common to the outward and inward powers.

For instance, sight is one of the outer powers; it sees and perceives this flower, and conveys this perception to the inner power--the common faculty--which transmits this perception to the power of imagination, which in its turn conceives and forms this image and transmits it to the power of thought; the power of thought reflects and, having grasped the reality, conveys it to the power of comprehension; the comprehension, when it has comprehended it, delivers the image of the object perceived to the memory, and the memory keeps it in its repository.

The outward powers are five: the power of sight, of hearing, of taste, of smell and of feeling.

The inner powers are also five: the common faculty, and the powers of imagination, thought, comprehension and memory.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 210-211

Mental Faculties Are Inherent Properties Of The Soul

21. Now concerning mental faculties, they are in truth of the inherent properties of the soul, even as the radiation of light is the essential property of the sun. The rays of the sun are renewed but the sun itself is ever the same and unchanged. Consider how the human intellect develops and weakens, and may at times come to naught, whereas the soul changeth not. For the mind to manifest itself, the human body must be whole; and a sound mind cannot be but in a sound body, whereas the soul dependeth not upon the body. It is through the power of the soul that the mind comprehendeth, imagineth and exerteth its influence, whilst the soul is a power that is free. The mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete, but the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless. It is by the aid of such senses as those of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, that the mind comprehendeth, whereas the soul is free from all agencies. The soul as thou observest, whether it be in sleep or waking, is in motion and ever active. Possibly it may, whilst in a dream, unravel an intricate problem, incapable of solution in the waking state. The mind, moreover, understandeth not whilst the senses have ceased to function, and in the embryonic stage and in early infancy the reasoning power is totally absent, whereas the soul is ever endowed with full strength. In short, the proofs

are many that go to show that despite the loss of reason, the power of the soul would still continue to exist. The spirit however possesseth various grades and stations.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablet to August Forel*, pp. 8-9

The Reality Of Man Is His Thought

22. The reality of man is his thought, not his material body. The thought force and the animal force are partners. Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings.

If a man’s thought is constantly aspiring towards heavenly subjects then does he become saintly; if on the other hand his thought does not soar, but is directed downwards to centre itself upon the things of this world, he grows more and more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 17-18

The Priceless Gift Of Intelligence And Rational Faculty

23. The Heavenly Father gave the priceless gift of intelligence to man so that he might become a spiritual light, piercing the darkness of materiality, and bringing goodness and truth into the world. If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe. Strive therefore, with heart and soul, to follow the precepts of the Blessed Perfection, and rest assured that if ye succeed in living the life he marks out for you, Eternal Life and everlasting joy in the Heavenly Kingdom will be yours, and celestial sustenance will be sent to strengthen you all your days.

It is my heartfelt prayer that each one of you may attain to this perfect joy!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 113-114

The Result Of Acquiring Both Virtues And Knowledge Is 'Light Upon Light'

24. If, however, an individual hath spiritual characteristics, and virtues that shine out, and his purpose in life be spiritual and his inclinations be directed toward God, and he also study other branches of knowledge--then we have light upon light:¹ his outer being luminous, his private character radiant, his heart sound, his thought elevated, his understanding swift, his rank noble.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Compilation of Compilations* (Vol. I) (Education), p. 282

Affective/Emotional Development

Mankind Possess Two Kinds Of Susceptibilities

25. Man possesses two kinds of susceptibilities: the natural emotions, which are like dust upon the mirror, and spiritual susceptibilities, which are merciful and heavenly characteristics.

¹ Qur’án 24:35

There is a power which purifies the mirror from dust and transforms its reflection into intense brilliancy and radiance so that spiritual susceptibilities may chasten the hearts and heavenly bestowals sanctify them. What is the dust which obscures the mirror? It is attachment to the world, avarice, envy, love of luxury and comfort, haughtiness and self-desire; this is the dust which prevents reflection of the rays of the Sun of Reality in the mirror. The natural emotions are blameworthy and are like rust which deprives the heart of the bounties of God. But sincerity, justice, humility, severance, and love for the believers of God will purify the mirror and make it radiant with reflected rays from the Sun of Truth.

It is my hope that you may consider this matter, that you may search out your own imperfections and not think of the imperfections of anybody else. Strive with all your power to be free from imperfections. Heedless souls are always seeking faults in others. What can the hypocrite know of others' faults when he is blind to his own? This is the meaning of the words in the Seven Valleys. It is a guide for human conduct. As long as a man does not find his own faults, he can never become perfect. Nothing is more fruitful for man than the knowledge of his

own shortcomings. The Blessed Perfection says, "I wonder at the man who does not find his own imperfections."

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 244

Seek The Spiritual Emotions

26. At every instant, I beg for you assistance, bounty, and a fresh favour and blessing, so that the confirmations of Bahá’u’lláh may, like unto the sea, be constantly surging, the lights of the Sun of Truth may shine upon you all and that ye may be confirmed in service, may become the manifestations of bounty and that each one of you may, at dawn, turn unto the Holy Land and may experience spiritual emotions with all intensity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 89

Love Is The Fundamental Principle Of God’s Purpose For Man

27. Love is the fundamental principle of God's purpose for man, and He has commanded us to love each other even as He loves us. All these discords and disputes which we hear on all sides only tend to increase materiality.

The world for the most part is sunk in materialism, and the blessings of the Holy Spirit are ignored. There is so little real spiritual feeling, and the progress of the world is for the most part merely material. Men are becoming like unto beasts that perish, for we know that they have no spiritual feeling--they do not turn to God, they have no religion! These things belong to man alone, and if he is without them he is a prisoner of nature, and no whit better than an animal.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 122

Love Manifests Its Reality In Deeds, Not Only In Words

28. Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words--these alone are without effect. In order that love may manifest its power there must be an object, an instrument, a motive.

There are many ways of expressing the love principle; there is love for the family, for the country, for the race, there is political enthusiasm, there is also the love of community of interest in service. These are all ways and means of showing the power of love. Without any such means, love would be unseen, unheard, unfelt--altogether unexpressed, unmanifested! Water shows its power in various ways, in quenching thirst, causing seed to grow, etc. Coal expresses one of its principles in gas-light, while one of the powers of electricity is shown in the electric light. If there were neither gas nor electricity, the nights of the world would be darkness! So, it is necessary to have an instrument, a motive for love's manifestation, an object, a mode of expression.

We must find a way of spreading love among the sons of humanity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, pp. 35-36

Conative/Volitional Development

All That An Individual Can Possess Can Be Manifested Only As A Result Of Volition

29. ...The incomparable Creator hath created all men from one same substance, and hath exalted their reality above the rest of His creatures. Success or failure, gain or loss, must, therefore, depend upon man's own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress. We fain would hope that the vernal showers of the bounty of God may cause the flowers of true understanding to spring from the soil of men's hearts, and may wash them from all earthly defilements.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, pp. 81-82

Our Past Is Not As Important As What We Intend To Do With Our Future

30. “Our past is not the thing that matters so much in this world as what we intend to do with our future. The inestimable value of religion is that when a man is vitally connected with it, through a real and living belief in it and in the Prophet Who brought it, he receives a strength greater than his own which helps him to develop his good characteristics and overcome his bad ones. The whole purpose of religion is to change not only our thoughts but our acts; when we believe in God and His Prophet and His Teachings, we find we are growing, even though we perhaps thought ourselves incapable of growth and change!”

Letter Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi: *Lights of Guidance*, p. 209

Knowledge, Volition And Action Necessary For Attainment Of Any Object

31. The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action. Unless these three conditions are forthcoming, there is no execution or accomplishment. In the erection of a house it is first necessary to know the ground, and design the house suitable for it; second, to obtain the means or funds necessary for the construction; third, actually to build it. Therefore, a power is needed to carry out and execute what is known and admitted to be the remedy for human conditions--namely, the unification of mankind. Furthermore, it is evident that this cannot be realized through material process and means. The accomplishment of this unification cannot be through racial power, for races are different and diverse in tendencies. It cannot be through patriotic power, for nationalities are unlike. Nor can it be effected through political power since

the policies of governments and nations are various. That is to say, any effort toward unification through these material means would benefit one and injure another because of unequal and individual interests. Some may believe this great remedy can be found in dogmatic insistence upon imitations and interpretations. This would likewise be without foundation and result. Therefore, it is evident that no means but an ideal means, a spiritual power, divine bestowals and the breaths of the Holy Spirit will heal this world sickness of war, dissension and discord. Nothing else is possible; nothing can be conceived of. But through spiritual means and the divine power it is possible and practicable.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 157-158

Strain Every Nerve To Acquire Both Inner And Outer Perfections

32. Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I (Bahá’í Education), p. 247; (Excellence in All Things), p. 368

Social Development

God Is Our Best Friend

33. O DWELLERS OF MY PARADISE!

With the hands of loving-kindness I have planted in the holy garden of paradise the young tree of your love and friendship, and have watered it with the goodly showers of My tender grace; now that the hour of its fruiting is come, strive that it may be protected, and be not consumed with the flame of desire and passion.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Persian Hidden Words*, p. 34

Beware Lest Ye Offend Any Heart

34. Beware lest ye offend any heart, lest ye speak against anyone in his absence, lest ye estrange yourselves from the servants of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 469

Friendship Leads To World Peace

35. I supplicate God that ye may become the army of that kingdom, in order that by the power of the Most Great Name, the friends of God may conquer this world through love, friendship and the strength of the Kingdom of peace; the human race become compassionate, and bloodshed and carnage be completely effaced from the universe.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 409

36. O handmaid of God, peace must first be established among individuals, until it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 246

Spiritual Development

The Human Spirit Has Two Aspects

37. The human spirit may be likened to the bounty of the sun shining on a mirror. The body of man, which is composed from the elements, is combined and mingled in the most perfect form; it is the most solid construction, the noblest combination, the most perfect existence. It grows and develops through the animal spirit. This perfected body can be compared to a mirror, and the human spirit to the sun. Nevertheless, if the mirror breaks, the bounty of the sun continues; and if the mirror is destroyed or ceases to exist, no harm will happen to the bounty of the sun, which is everlasting. This spirit has the power of discovery; it encompasses all things. All these wonderful signs, these scientific discoveries, great enterprises and important historical events which you know are due to it. From the realm of the invisible and hidden, through spiritual power, it brought them to the plane of the visible. So man is upon the earth, yet he makes discoveries in the heavens. From known realities--that is to say, from things known and visible--he discovers unknown things....

But the spirit of man has two aspects: one divine, one satanic--that is to say, it is capable of the utmost perfection, or it is capable of the utmost imperfection. If it acquires virtues, it is the most noble of the existing beings; and if it acquires vices, it becomes the most degraded existence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 144

The Reality of Humanity Is Spiritual

38. Man--the true man--is soul, not body; though physically man belongs to the animal kingdom, yet his soul lifts him above the rest of creation. Behold how the light of the sun illuminates the world of matter: even so doth the Divine Light shed its rays in the kingdom of the soul. The soul it is which makes the human creature a celestial entity!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 85

The Highest Development Of Man Is His Entrance Into The Divine Kingdom

39. The honour of man is through the attainment of the knowledge of God; his happiness is from the love of God; his joy is in the glad-tidings of God; his greatness is dependent upon his servitude to God. The highest development of man is his entrance into the divine kingdom; and the outcome of this human existence is the nucleus and essence of eternal life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 329

Teaching the Cause of God Required For Spiritual Development

40. God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of teaching His Cause.

Baha'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 335

41. When the friends do not endeavour to spread the message, they fail to remember God befittingly, and will not witness the tokens of assistance and confirmation from the Abhá Kingdom nor comprehend the divine mysteries. However, when the tongue of the teacher is engaged in teaching, he will naturally himself be stimulated, will become a magnet attracting the divine aid and bounty of the Kingdom, and will be like unto the bird at the hour of dawn, which itself becometh exhilarated by its own singing, its warbling and its melody.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 267-268

Moral Character

The Companions Of God Must Show Forth Good Character

42. The companions of God are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character, that all mankind may profit by their example.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 19; *Compilation of Compilations* (Vol. I) (Excellence in All Things), p. 367; *Compilation of Compilations* (Vol. II) (Trustworthiness), p. 334

43. The sword of a virtuous character and upright conduct is sharper than blades of steel.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 29

Mankind Possesses Two Types of Virtues

44. Man possesses two types of virtues: One is material, and the other ideal in character. For example, the body of man expresses certain material virtues, but the spirit of man manifests virtues that are ideal. The sense of sight in man is a physical virtue; but insight, the power of inner perception, is ideal in its nature. The sense of hearing is a physical endowment, whereas memory in man is ideal. Among other human forces the power of ideation, or faculty of intellection, is material, but the power of love is spiritual. The acquisition of the realities of phenomena is an ideal virtue; likewise, the emotions of man and his ability to prove the existence of God. Realization of moral standards and the world of discovery involve virtues essentially ideal.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 325

Citizenship: Overview

The Distinguishing Feature Of The Bahá'í Faith Is The Oneness Of Mankind

45. "In every Dispensation," writes 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "the light of Divine Guidance has been focussed upon one central theme.... In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God and the distinguishing feature of His Law is the consciousness of the Oneness of Mankind."

Shoghi Effendi: *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36

We Should Love All Humanity

46. Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...

Bahá'u'lláh: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol II (Peace), p. 157

The Purpose Of Religion Is To Establish Unity And Concord

47. The ninth Ishraq

The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God's House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to enquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions. We call upon the manifestations of the power of God--the sovereigns and rulers on earth--to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 129-130

Human Rights Must Be Established

48. ...Baha'u'llah taught that an equal standard of human rights must be recognized and adopted. In the estimation of God all men are equal; there is no distinction or preferment for any soul in the dominion of His justice and equity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 182

Consultation Is A Cause Of Awareness And Awakening And Leads To Well-Being

49. In all things it is necessary to consult. This matter should be forcibly stressed by thee, so that consultation may be observed by all. The intent of what hath been revealed from the Pen of the Most High is that consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I (Consultation), p. 93

50. The Great Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 168

Universal Peace Must Be Established

51. Today the human world is in need of a great power by which these glorious principles and purposes may be executed. The cause of peace is a very great cause; it is the Cause of God, and all the forces of the world are opposed to it. Governments, for instance, consider militarism as the step to human progress, that division among men and nations is the cause of patriotism and honor, that if one nation attack and conquer another, gaining wealth, territory and glory thereby, this warfare and conquest, this bloodshed and cruelty are the cause of that victorious nation's advancement and prosperity. This is an utter mistake. Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations, and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families. Therefore, as strife and dissension destroy a family and prevent its progress, so nations are destroyed and advancement hindered.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 156-157

Equality Of Women And Men Must Be Established

52. Exalted, immensely exalted is He Who hath removed differences and established harmony. Glorified, infinitely glorified is He Who hath caused discord to cease, and decreed solidarity and unity. Praised be God, the Pen of the Most High hath lifted distinctions from between His servants and handmaidens and, through His consummate favours and all-encompassing mercy, hath conferred upon all a station and rank on the same plane. He hath broken the back of vain imaginings with the sword of utterance and hath obliterated the perils of idle fancies through the pervasive power of His might.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol II (Women), p. 357

53. In proclaiming the oneness of mankind He taught that men and women are equal in the sight of God and that there is no distinction to be made between them. The only difference between them now is due to lack of education and training. If woman is given equal opportunity of education, distinction and estimate of inferiority will disappear. The world of humanity has two wings, as it were: One is the female; the other is the male. If one wing be defective, the strong perfect wing will not be capable of flight. The world of humanity has two hands. If one be imperfect, the capable hand is restricted and unable to perform its duties. God is the Creator of mankind. He has endowed both sexes with perfections and intelligence, given them physical members and organs of sense, without differentiation or distinction as to superiority; therefore, why should woman be considered inferior? This is not according to the plan and justice of God. He has created them equal; in His estimate there is no question of sex. The one whose heart is purest, whose deeds are most perfect, is acceptable to God, male or female. Often in history women have been the pride of humanity--for example, Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was the glory of mankind. Mary Magdalene, Asiyih, daughter of Pharaoh, Sarah, wife of Abraham, and innumerable others have glorified the human race by their excellences. In this day there are women among the Bahá'ís who far outshine men. They are wise, talented, well-informed, progressive, most intelligent and the light of men. They surpass men in courage. When they speak in meetings, the men listen with great respect. Furthermore, the education of women is of greater importance than the education of men, for they are the mothers of the race, and mothers rear the children. The first teachers of children are the mothers. Therefore, they must be capably trained in order to educate both sons and daughters. There are many provisions in the words of Bahá'u'lláh in regard to this.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 174-175

Racial, Ethnic, Religious, And Other Prejudices Must Be Eliminated

54. A second characteristic principle of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that which commands recognition of the oneness of the world of humanity.

Addressing all mankind, He says, “Ye are all the leaves of one tree.” There are no differences or distinctions of race among you in the sight of God. Nay, rather, all are the servants of God, and all are submerged in the ocean of His oneness. Not a single soul is bereft. On the contrary, all are the recipients of the bounties of God. Every human creature has a portion of His bestowals and a share of the effulgence of His reality. God is kind to all. Mankind are His sheep, and He is their real Shepherd. No other scriptures contain such breadth and universality of statement; no other teachings proclaim this unequivocal principle of the solidarity of humanity. As regards any possible distinctions, the utmost that Bahá'u'lláh says is that conditions among men vary, that some, for instance, are defective. Therefore, such souls must be educated in order that they may be brought to the degree of perfection. Some are sick and ailing; they must be treated and cared for until they are healed. Some are asleep; they need to be awakened. Some are immature as children; they should be helped to attain maturity. But all must be loved and cherished. The child must not be disliked simply because it is a child. Nay, rather, it should be patiently educated. The sick one must not be avoided nor slighted merely because he is ailing.

Nay, rather, he must be regarded with sympathy and affection and treated until he is healed. The soul that is asleep must not be looked upon with contempt but awakened and led into the light.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 433-434

Environment Must Be Protected

55. Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory. Whatever hath been said hath come from God. Unto this, He, verily, hath borne, and beareth now, witness, and He, in truth, is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 44

Be Unrestrained As The Wind While Carrying God’s Message

56. Be unrestrained as the wind, while carrying the Message of Him Who hath caused the Dawn of Divine Guidance to break. Consider, how the wind, faithful to that which God hath ordained, bloweth upon all the regions of the earth, be they inhabited or desolate. Neither the sight of desolation, nor the evidences of prosperity, can either pain or please it. It bloweth in every direction, as bidden by its Creator. So should be every one that claimeth to be a lover of the one true God. It behoveth him to fix his gaze upon the fundamentals of His Faith, and to labor diligently for its propagation. Wholly for the sake of God he should proclaim His Message, and with that same spirit accept whatever response his words may evoke in his hearer. He who shall accept and believe, shall receive his reward; and he who shall turn away, shall receive none other than his own punishment.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 339

Citizenship: Marriage and Family

Family Is The Smallest Unit Of Human Organization

57. Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations, and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families. Therefore, as strife and dissension destroy a family and prevent its progress, so nations are destroyed and advancement hindered.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 157

All Of Humankind Is A Single Family

58. The mystery of this phenomenon, the cause thereof is this, that mankind has been created from one single origin, has branched off from one family. Thus in reality all mankind represents one family. God has not created any difference. He has created all as one that thus this family might live in perfect happiness and well-being.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 38

It Is Highly Important To Raise A Family

59. It is highly important for man to raise a family. So long as he is young, because of youthful self-complacency, he does not realize its significance, but this will be a source of regret when he grows old.... In this glorious Cause the life of a married couple should resemble the life of the angels in heaven--a life full of joy and spiritual delight, a life of unity and concord, a friendship both mental and physical. The home should be orderly and well-organized. Their ideas and thoughts should be like the rays of the sun of truth and the radiance of the brilliant stars in the heavens. Even as two birds they should warble melodies upon the branches of the tree of fellowship and harmony. They should always be elated with joy and gladness and be a source of happiness to the hearts of others. They should set an example to their fellow-men, manifest a true and sincere love towards each other and educate their children in such a manner as to blazon the fame and glory of their family.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I, (Family Life), p. 397

The Home Should Be A Place Of Peace, Joy And Laughter

60. My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whosoever enters through the portals of this home, must go out with gladsome heart. This is the home of light; whosoever enters here must become illumined....

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I (Family Life), p. 397

Parents Must Rear Their Children To Be Staunch In Faith

61. It is the bounden duty of parents to rear their children to be staunch in faith, the reason being that a child who removeth himself from the religion of God will not act in such a way as to win the good pleasure of his parents and his Lord. For every praiseworthy deed is born out of the light of religion, and lacking this supreme bestowal the child will not turn away from any evil, nor will he draw nigh unto any good.

Bahá’u’lláh: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I (Bahá’í Education), p.248; (Women), p.372

Citizenship: Work and Career

Everyone Must Work

62. We have enjoined upon all to become engaged in some trade or profession, and have accounted such occupation to be an act of worship. Before all else, however, thou shouldst receive, as a sign of God's acceptance, the mantle of trustworthiness from the hands of divine favour; for trustworthiness is the chief means of attracting confirmation and prosperity. We entreat God to make of it a radiant and mercifully showering rain-cloud that shall bring success and blessings to thy affairs. He of a truth is the All-Bountiful, the Gracious.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 355

63. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion; at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls, and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. But the energies of the heart must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 182

Everyone Must Bear Fruit

64. MY SERVANT!

The basest of men are they that yield no fruit on earth. Such men are verily counted as among the dead, nay better are the dead in the sight of God than those idle and worthless souls.

Bahá'u'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Persian #81

Citizenship: Wealth and Finances

True Wealth Is Spiritual

65. The essence of wealth is love for Me; whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy. This is that which the Finger of Glory and Splendour hath revealed.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 156

True Wealth Lies In A Person's Character

66. Say: Honesty, virtue, wisdom and a saintly character redound to the exaltation of man, while dishonesty, imposture, ignorance and hypocrisy lead to his abasement. By My life! Man's distinction lieth not in ornaments or wealth, but rather in virtuous behaviour and true understanding.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 57

Material Wealth Is Also Important

67. The first Taraz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples. They are, in truth, cup-bearers of the life-giving water of knowledge and guides unto the ideal way. They direct the peoples of the world to the straight path and acquaint them with that which is conducive to human upliftment and exaltation. The straight path is the one which guideth man to the dayspring of perception and to the dawning-place of true understanding and leadeth him to that which will redound to glory, honour and greatness.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 34-35

68. It should not be imagined that the writer's earlier remarks constitute a denunciation of wealth or a commendation of poverty. Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes. Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor--in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society--its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 24-25

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