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In memory of the six youth whose

complete love for the Blessed Beauty

resulted in their executions on 18 June 1983

in Shiraz

Shirin Dalvand

Ruya Ishraqi

Muna Mahmudnizhad

Mahshid Nirumand

Simin Sabiri

Akhtar Thabit

with the hope that the Bahá’í youth of the

world will be inspired to vindicate these

sacrifices through a renewed sense of

dedication and service to the Cause of

Bahá’u’lláh

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# Foreword

In January 1984 the Universal House of Justice ad-

dressed a historic message to the Bahá’í youth of the world.

Although the immediate concern of the message was with

the 1985 International Youth Year, the letter’s impact was far

greater, as its soul-stirring contents conveyed an exciting

vision of the future opportunities and tasks of an entire

generation. The response of the Bahá’í youth has subse-

quently led to plans beyond 1985 and to an upsurge of youth

activity in many countries that may well signal the begin-

ning of a movement that, in the words of the Universal

House of Justice, has already “caught the imagination of the

friends far and wide.”

During the many consultations of the youth about the

implications of a Bahá’í youth movement that would attract

the support of thousands of youth on every continent, it

became clear that the greatest challenge to each individual

participant would be learning to live according to a spiritual

discipline akin to that of the first generation of the youth of

this Dispensation—of Mullá Ḥusayn, Ṭáhirih, Quddús, and

Badí‘. Striving for such a discipline, in turn, would imply

achieving a new balance in life, a balance that would be

conducive to heroic deeds and to a state of complete devo-

tion. Indeed, each individual youth would have to struggle

against the pressures of an environment that at its best

interprets as moderation the notion of living comfortably

according to the norms of mediocrity and that consistently

tries to pull youth away from true spiritual excellence and

from commitment to significant social change. The Bahá’í

youth would have to achieve a different vision of moderation

and, to do so, would have to remind themselves constantly of

the sacrifices of their brethren in Iran during the recent

years.

It became clear in the deliberations that, in order to rise

to their high destiny, the Bahá’í youth would have to analyze

themselves, their potential, and the world with a logic

different from the reasoning they have inherited from a

materialistic society; they would have to see through the eyes

of faith and systematically plan and achieve goals that would

seem impossible to everyone untouched by the fire of their

zeal. Yet practical questions always remained. How would

the youth organize their lives to meet the challenges of their

generation and of their own growth and preparation and, at

the same time, follow the standards of dedication and action

required by the special call of the Universal House of Justice

that they “contribute significantly to shaping the societies of

the coming century” and that they “move the world”.

The answer clearly lies in the dynamic of a spiritual life

very different from the present life-style fragmented by op-

posing social forces, forces that themselves are in conflict

with the true human spirit. The challenge is to live a

spiritual life that is whole, pure, intense, purposeful, active,

and responsive to all the requirements of being a Bahá’í

youth in this moment of history. The present compilation

prepared by the Bahá’í National Youth Committee and the

Publishing Trust of the Bahá’ís of the United States exactly

tries to integrate the many aspects of such a spiritual life of

service and dedication to the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh. It is

hoped that it will become our close companion in all our

endeavors as we participate in the unfoldment of the destiny

of the present generation of Bahá’í youth throughout the

world. Farzam Arbab

Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth

and the heyday of his life will arise

to serve the Cause of the Lord of the

beginning and of the end, and

adorn his heart with His love.

The manifestation of such a grace

is greater than the creation of the

heavens and of the earth.

Blessed are the steadfast and

well is it with those who are firm.

—Bahá’u’lláh

1 Prayers for spiritual
growth

## Short obligatory prayer

To be recited once in twenty-four hours, at noon

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*

## Spiritual awakening

I have wakened in Thy shelter, O my God, and it becometh

him that seeketh that shelter to abide within the Sanctu-

ary of Thy protection and the Stronghold of Thy defense.

Illumine my inner being, O my Lord, with the splendors of

the Dayspring of Thy Revelation, even as Thou didst illu-

mine my outer being with the morning light of Thy

favor. —*Bahá’u’lláh*

My God, my Adored One, my King, my Desire! What tongue

can voice my thanks to Thee? I was heedless, Thou didst

awaken me. I had turned back from Thee, Thou didst

graciously aid me to turn towards Thee. I was as one dead,

Thou didst quicken me with the water of life. I was

withered, Thou didst revive me with the heavenly stream of

Thine utterance which hath flowed forth from the Pen of

the All-Merciful.

O Divine Providence! All existence is begotten by Thy

bounty; deprive it not of the waters of Thy generosity,

neither do Thou withhold it from the ocean of Thy mercy. I

beseech Thee to aid and assist me at all times and under all

conditions, and seek from the heaven of Thy grace Thine

ancient favor. Thou art, in truth, the Lord of bounty, and

the Sovereign of the kingdom of eternity. —*Bahá’u’lláh*

O Lord! Help this daughter of the Kingdom to be exalted in

both worlds; cause her to turn away from this mortal world

of dust and from those who have set their hearts thereon

and enable her to have communion and close association

with the world of immortality. Give her heavenly power

and strengthen her through the breaths of the Holy Spirit

that she may arise to serve Thee.

Thou art the Mighty One. —‘Abdu’l-Bahá

## Spiritual qualities

Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil

conscience within me, O my Hope! Through the spirit of

power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved,

and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O

Thou the Goal of my desire! Through the power of Thy

transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy

holiness, O Source of my being, and by the breezes of

Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God! Let

Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquillity on me, O

my Companion, and let the riches of Thine ancient counte-

nance deliver me from all except Thee, O my Master, and let

the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence

bring me joy, O Thou Who art the most manifest of the

manifest and the most hidden of the hidden! —*Bahá’u’lláh*

O Thou Lord of wondrous grace! Bestow upon us new

blessings. Give to us the freshness of the spring. We are

saplings which have been planted by the fingers of Thy

bounty and have been formed out of the water and clay of

Thy tender affection. We thirst for the living waters of Thy

favors and are dependent upon the outpourings of the

clouds of Thy generosity. Abandon not to itself this grove

wherein our hopes aspire, nor withhold therefrom the

showers of Thy loving-kindness. Grant that from the

clouds of Thy mercy may fall copious rain so that the trees

of our lives may bring forth fruit and we may attain the

most cherished desire of our hearts. —‘*Abdu’l-Bahá*

## Protection and assistance

O God, my God! I have set out from my home, holding fast

unto the cord of Thy love, and I have committed myself

wholly to Thy care and Thy protection. I entreat Thee by

Thy power through which Thou didst protect Thy loved

ones from the wayward and the perverse, and from every

contumacious oppressor, and every wicked doer who hath

strayed far from Thee, to keep me safe by Thy bounty and

Thy grace. Enable me, then, to return to my home by Thy

power and Thy might. Thou art, truly, the Almighty, the

Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. —*Bahá’u’lláh*

I adjure Thee by Thy might, O my God! Let no harm beset

me in times of tests, and in moments of heedlessness guide

my steps aright through Thine inspiration. Thou art God,

potent art Thou to do what Thou desirest. No one can

withstand Thy Will or thwart Thy Purpose. —*The Báb*

O Lord! Unto Thee I repair for refuge, and toward all Thy

signs I set my heart.

O Lord! Whether traveling or at home, and in my

occupation or in my work, I place my whole trust in Thee.

Grant me then Thy sufficing help so as to make me

independent of all things, O Thou Who art unsurpassed in

Thy mercy!

Bestow upon me my portion, O Lord, as Thou pleasest,

and cause me to be satisfied with whatsoever Thou hast

ordained for me.

Thine is the absolute authority to command.

 —*The Báb*

## Parents

O Lord! In this Most Great Dispensation Thou dost accept

the intercession of children in behalf of their parents. This

is one of the special infinite bestowals of this Dispensa-

tion. Therefore, O Thou kind Lord, accept the request of

this Thy servant at the threshold of Thy singleness and

submerge his father in the ocean of Thy grace, because

this son hath arisen to render Thee service and is exerting

effort at all times in the pathway of Thy love. Verily, Thou

art the Giver, the Forgiver and the Kind! *—‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

## Teaching and service

Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! I implore Thee, by Thy

Name which none hath befittingly recognized, and whose

import no soul hath fathomed; I beseech Thee, by Him Who

is the Fountainhead of Thy Revelation and the Dayspring

of Thy signs, to make my heart to be a receptacle of Thy

love and of remembrance of Thee. Knit it, then, to Thy

most great Ocean, that from it may flow out the living

waters of Thy wisdom and the crystal streams of Thy

glorification and praise.

The limbs of my body testify to Thy unity, and the hair

of my head declareth the power of Thy sovereignty and

might. I have stood at the door of Thy grace with utter

self-effacement and complete abnegation, and clung to the

hem of Thy bounty, and fixed mine eyes upon the horizon

of Thy gifts.

Do Thou destine for me, O my God, what becometh the

greatness of Thy majesty, and assist me, by Thy strength-

ening grace, so to teach Thy Cause that the dead may speed

out of their sepulchers, and rush forth towards Thee,

trusting wholly in Thee, and fixing their gaze upon the

orient of Thy Cause, and the dawning-place of Thy Revela-

tion.

Thou, verily, art the Most Powerful, the Most High, the

All-Knowing, the All-Wise. —*Bahá’u’lláh*

O Thou kind Lord! Bestow heavenly confirmation upon

this daughter of the kingdom, and graciously aid her that

she may remain firm and steadfast in Thy Cause and that

she may, even as a nightingale of the rose garden of

mysteries, warble melodies in the Abhá Kingdom in most

wondrous tones, thereby bringing happiness to everyone.

Make her exalted among the daughters of the kingdom and

enable her to attain life eternal.

Thou art the Bestower, the All-Loving. —*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

O Lord! Make this youth radiant, and confer Thy bounty

upon this poor creature. Bestow upon him knowledge,

grant him added strength at the break of every morn and

guard him within the shelter of Thy protection so that he

may be freed from error, may devote himself to the service

of Thy Cause, may guide the wayward, lead the hapless,

free the captives and awaken the heedless, that all may be

blessed with Thy remembrance and praise. Thou art the

Mighty and the Powerful. —*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

O my God, aid Thou Thy servant to raise up the Word, and

to refute what is vain and false, to establish the truth, to

spread the sacred verses abroad, reveal the splendors, and

make the morning’s light to dawn in the hearts of the

righteous.

Thou art, verily, the Generous, the Forgiving.

 —‘Abdu’l-Bahá

O God, my God! Aid Thou Thy trusted servants to have

loving and tender hearts. Help them to spread, amongst all

the nations of the earth, the light of guidance that cometh

from the Company on high. Verily, Thou art the Strong,

the Powerful, the Mighty, the All-Subduing, the Ever-

Giving. Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Gentle, the

Tender, the Most Bountiful. —*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

Praise and glory be to Thee, O Lord my God! This is a

choice sapling which Thou hast planted in the meads of

Thy love and hast nurtured with the fingers of Thy Lord-

ship. Thou hast watered it from the wellspring of everlast-

ing life which streameth forth from the gardens of Thy

oneness, and Thou hast caused the clouds of Thy tender

mercy to shower Thy favors upon it. It hath now grown and

developed beneath the shelter of Thy blessings which are

manifest from the Dayspring of Thy divine essence. It hath

burst forth into leaves and blossoms, is laden with fruit

through the providence of Thy wondrous gifts and boun-

ties and is stirred by the fragrant breeze wafting from the

direction of Thy loving-kindness.

O Lord! Cause this sapling to become verdant, fresh

and flourishing by the outpourings of Thy special bounty

and favor, wherewith Thou hast endued the tabernacles of

holiness in Thy eternal kingdom and hast adorned the

essences of unity in the arena of reunion.

O Lord! Assist him through Thy strengthening grace

which proceedeth from Thine invisible kingdom, aid him

with such hosts as are hidden from the eyes of Thy

servants and grant that he may have a sure footing in Thy

presence. Unloose his tongue to make mention of Thee,

and gladden his heart to celebrate Thy praise. Illumine his

face in Thy kingdom, prosper him in the realm above and

graciously confirm him to serve Thy Cause.

Thou art the All-Powerful, the All-Glorious, the

Omnipotent. —*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

O Thou kind Lord! Grant that these trees may become the

adornment of the Abhá Paradise. Cause them to grow

through Thy celestial bounty. Make them fresh and verdant,

and besprinkle them with heavenly dewdrops. Attire them

with robes of radiant beauty, and crown their heads with

gorgeous blossoms. Adorn them with goodly fruit, and waft

over them Thy sweet savors.

Thou art the Bestower, the All-Loving, the Most Radiant,

the Most Resplendent. —*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

2 Relationship with
God

## Knowing and loving God

1. All praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of

His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness

of non-existence, and clothed it with the mantle of life.

From among all created things He hath singled out for His

special favor the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and

invested it with a unique capacity of knowing Him and of

reflecting the greatness of His glory.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 77

2. 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 of Bahá’u’lláh* 4

3. Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth

therein, He, through the direct operation of His uncon-

strained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the

unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love

Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the

generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying

the whole of creation ….

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 65

4. O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee.

Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and

fill thy soul with the spirit of life.

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* 4

Faith and obedience: signs of knowing
and loving God

5. O Son of Being! Walk in My statutes for love of Me and

deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My

pleasure.

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* 12

6. Man’s highest station … is attained through faith in

God in every Dispensation and by acceptance of what hath

been revealed by Him, and not through learning; inas-

much as in every nation there are learned men who are

versed in divers sciences. Nor is it attainable through

wealth; for it is similarly evident that among the various

classes in every nation there are those possessed of riches.

Likewise are other transitory things.

True knowledge, therefore, is the knowledge of God,

and this is none other than the recognition of His Manifes-

tation in each Dispensation. Nor is there any wealth save

in poverty in all save God and sanctity from aught else but

Him—a state that can be realized only when demonstrated

towards Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation.

The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* 89

7. It is certain that man’s highest distinction is to be lowly

before and obedient to his God; that his greatest glory, his

most exalted rank and honor, depend on his close obser-

vance of the Divine commands and prohibitions. Religion

is the light of the world, and the progress, achievement,

and happiness of man result from obedience to the laws set

down in the holy Books.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 71

## Communing with God

### Why we pray

8. Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been

received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh

unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle

thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso

reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed

by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter

abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth,

and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb.

Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet

the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs

sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus

have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by

virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and

wisdom.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 295

9. O thou spiritual friend! Thou hast asked the wisdom of

prayer. Know thou that prayer is indispensable and obliga-

tory, and man under no pretext whatsoever is excused

from performing the prayer unless he be mentally un-

sound, or an insurmountable obstacle prevent him. The

wisdom of prayer is this: That it causeth a connection

between the servant and the True One, because in that

state (i.e., prayer) man with all heart and soul turneth his

face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking His

association and desiring His love and compassion. The

greatest happiness for a lover is to converse with his

beloved, and the greatest gift for a seeker is to become

familiar with the object of his longing; that is why with

every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God, his

greatest hope is to find an opportunity to entreat and

supplicate before his Beloved, appeal for His mercy and

grace and be immersed in the ocean of His utterance,

goodness and generosity.

Beside all this, prayer and fasting is the cause of

awakening and mindfulness and conducive to protection

and preservation from tests.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* 3:683–84

10. Remembrance of God is like the rain and dew which

bestow freshness and grace on flowers and hyacinths,

revive them and cause them to acquire fragrance, redo-

lence and renewed charm. … Strive thou, then, to praise

and glorify God by night and by day, that thou mayest

attain infinite freshness and beauty.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Spiritual Foundations 8–9

11. When a person becomes a Bahá’í, actually what takes

place is that the seed of the spirit starts to grow in the

human soul. This seed must be watered by the outpourings

of the Holy Spirit. These gifts of the spirit are received

through prayer, meditation, study of the Holy Utterances

and service to the Cause of God. The fact of the matter is that

service in the Cause is like the plough which ploughs the

physical soil when seeds are sown. It is necessary that the

soil be ploughed up, so that it can be enriched, and thus

cause a stronger growth of the seed. In exactly the same way

the evolution of the spirit takes place through ploughing up

the soil of the heart so that it is a constant reflection of the

Holy Spirit. In this way the human spirit grows and develops

by leaps and bounds.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/6/54 to an individual believer, in

*The Bahá’í Life* 20

12. … the core of religious faith is that mystic feeling

which unites man with God. This state of spiritual com-

munion can be brought about and maintained by means of

meditation and prayer. And this is the reason why Bahá’-

u’lláh has so much stressed the importance of worship. It is

not sufficient for a believer merely to accept and observe the

teachings. He should, in addition, cultivate the sense of

spirituality which he can acquire chiefly by means of prayer.

The Bahá’í Faith, like all other Divine Religions, is thus

fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the

development of the individual and society, through the

acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. It is the soul of

man which has first to be fed. And this spiritual nourish-

ment prayer can best provide. Laws and institutions, as

viewed by Bahá’u’lláh, can become really effective only when

our inner spiritual life has been perfected and transformed.

Otherwise religion will degenerate into a mere organization,

and becomes a dead thing.

The believers, particularly the young ones, should there-

fore fully realize the necessity of praying. For prayer is

absolutely indispensable to their inner spiritual develop-

ment, and this, as already stated, is the very foundation and

purpose of the religion of God.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/8/35 to Edris Rice-Wray Carson, in *Bahá’í*

*News*, no. 102 (Aug. 1936) 3

### When to pray

13. At the dawn of every day he should commune with God,

and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved.

He should consume every wayward thought with the flame

of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning,

pass by all else save Him.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* 194

14. Although the words “at dawn” are used in the Divine

Book, nevertheless, such prayer is acceptable to God at

dawn and after dawn to sunrise, and further until two

hours after the sun has risen.

Bahá’u’lláh, “Questions and Answers,” in Lights of Guidance 343

15. Supplication to God at morn and eve is conducive to

the joy of hearts, and prayer causes spirituality and fra-

grance. Thou shouldst necessarily continue therein.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* 186

16. Praise be to God, thy heart is engaged in the commem-

oration of God, thy soul is gladdened by the glad tidings of

God and thou art absorbed in prayer. The state of prayer is

the best of conditions, for man is then associating with

God. Prayer verily bestoweth life, particularly when offered

in private and at times, such as midnight, when freed from

daily cares.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 202

17. We may well emulate Bahá’í youth whose recent surge

forward into the van of proclamation and teaching is one of

the most encouraging and significant trends in the Faith,

and who storm the gates of heaven for support in their

enterprises by long-sustained, precedent and continuing

prayer. We are all able to call upon Bahá’u’lláh for His Divine,

all-powerful aid, and He will surely help us. For He is the

Hearer of prayers, the Answerer.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riḍván 1972 to Bahá’ís of the

world, in *Messages from The Universal House of Justice 1968–1973* 91

### Using the obligatory prayers

18. The daily obligatory prayers are three in num-

ber. … The believer is entirely free to choose any one of

these three prayers, but is under the obligation of reciting

either one of them, and in accordance with any specific

directions with which they may be accompanied.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í Prayers* 3

19. By “morning”, “noon” and “evening”, mentioned in

connection with the Obligatory Prayers, is meant respec-

tively the intervals between sunrise and noon, between

noon and sunset, and from sunset till two hours after

sunset.

*A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 36

20. The hour of noon should of course, be observed with

the position of the sun, not in accordance with local time

standards. The short obligatory prayer may be said at any

time between noon and sunset.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8/8/69 to the Bahá’ís of the

British Isles, in *Lights of Guidance* 343

21. Bahá’u’lláh has reduced all ritual and form to an abso-

lute minimum in His Faith. The few forms that there are

—like those associated with the two longer obligatory daily

prayers, are only symbols of the inner attitude. There is a

wisdom in them, and a great blessing, but we cannot force

ourselves to understand or feel these things, that is why He

gave us also the very short and simple prayer, for those who

did not feel the desire to perform the acts associated with the

other two.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/24/49 to an individual believer, in

*Spiritual Foundations* 19–20

22. As to the attitude of resentment which the young

believers are inclined to assume regarding certain precepts

of the Cause such as obligatory prayers; there can and

should be no compromise whatever in such matters that

are specifically enjoined by Bahá’u’lláh. We should neither

have any feeling of shame when observing such laws and

precepts, nor should we overestimate their value and signifi-

cance. Just as the friends have no difficulty in recognizing

the value of the specific prayers revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, such

as the Tablets of Fasting and healing, so also they should

recognize that the obligatory prayers are by their very nature

of greater effectiveness and are endowed with a greater power

than the non-obligatory ones, and as such are essential.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1/4/36 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 9–10

23. You should rest assured that your strict adherence to

the laws and observances enjoined by Bahá’u’lláh is the one

power that can effectively guide and enable you to overcome

the tests and trials of your life, and help you to continually

grow and develop spiritually.

The Guardian particularly appreciates the fact that you

have been faithfully observing Bahá’u’lláh’s injunction re-

garding the recital of the daily obligatory prayers, and have

thereby set such a high example before your Bahá’í fellow-

youth. These daily prayers have been endowed with a special

potency which only those who regularly recite them can

adequately appreciate. The friends should therefore endeav-

or to make daily use of these prayers, whatever the peculiar

circumstances and conditions of their life.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/23/39 to an individual believer, in

*Spiritual Foundations* 16–17

### To whom to pray

24. It behooveth the servant to pray to and seek assistance

from God, and to supplicate and implore His aid. Such

becometh the rank of servitude, and the Lord will decree

whatsoever He desireth, in accordance with His consum-

mate wisdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Spiritual Foundations* 9

25. You have asked whether our prayers go beyond Bahá’-

u’lláh: it all depends whether we pray to Him directly or

through Him to God. We may do both, and also can pray

directly to God, but our prayers would certainly be more

effective and illuminating if they are addressed to Him

through His Manifestation, Bahá’u’lláh.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/14/37 to an individual believer, in

*Spiritual Foundations* 15

26. In regard to your question: we must not be rigid about

praying; there is not a set of rules governing it; the main

thing is we must start out with the right concept of God,

the Manifestation, the Master, the Guardian—we can

turn, in thought, to any one of them when we pray. For

instance you can ask Bahá’u’lláh for some thing, or think-

ing of Him, ask God for it. The same is true of the Master or

the Guardian. You can turn in thought to either of them and

then ask their intercession, or pray direct to God. As long as

you don’t confuse their stations, and make them all equal, it

does not matter much how you orient your thoughts.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/24/46 to an individual believer, in

*Spiritual Foundations* 18

### What prayers to use

27. As to your question about prayer and whether it is

necessary to recite the prayers of only the Central Figures

of our Faith, we have been asked to quote here the follow-

ing two excerpts on this subject, from letters written by

Shoghi Effendi’s secretary on his behalf:

… as the Cause embraces members of all races and reli-

gions we should be careful not to introduce into it the

customs of our previous beliefs. Bahá’u’lláh has given us the

obligatory prayers, also prayers before sleeping, for travelers,

etc. We should not introduce a new set of prayers He has not

specified, when He has given us already so many, for so many

occasions.

He thinks it would be wiser for the Bahá’ís to use the

Meditations given by Bahá’u’lláh, and not any set form of

meditation recommended by someone else; but the believers

must be left free in these details and allowed to have personal

latitude in finding their own level of communion with God.

As to the reading of prayers or selections from the

Sacred Writings of other religions, such readings are per-

missible, and indeed from time to time are included in the

devotional programs of Bahá’í Houses of Worship, demon-

strating thereby the universality of our Faith.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/7/74 to individu-

al believer, in *Lights of Guidance* 339

### Prayer and action

28. O maid-servant of God! Chant the Words of God and,

pondering over their meaning, transform them into ac-

tions! I ask God to cause thee to attain a high station in the

Kingdom of Life forever and ever.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Spiritual Foundations* 9

29. Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be

beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to

do that which is right and noble. Enrich the poor, raise the

fallen, comfort the sorrowful, bring healing to the sick,

reassure the fearful, rescue the oppressed, bring hope to

the hopeless, shelter the destitute!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 81

30. … the acquisition of sciences and the perfection of

arts are considered acts of worship. If a man engageth with

all his power in the acquisition of a science or in the

perfection of an art, it is as if he has been worshiping God

in churches and temples. Thus as thou enterest a school of

agriculture and strivest in the acquisition of that science

thou art day and night engaged in acts of worship—acts

that are accepted at the threshold of the Almighty. What

bounty greater than this that science should be considered

as an act of worship and art as service to the Kingdom of

God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 144–45

31. We work and pray for the unity of mankind, that all the

races of the earth may become one race, all the countries

one country, and that all hearts may beat as one heart,

working together for perfect unity and brotherhood.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 100

## Fasting for love and purification

32. As regards fasting, it constitutes together with the

obligatory prayers, the two pillars that sustain the revealed

Law of God. They act as stimulants to the soul, strengthen,

revive and purify it, and thus insure its steady develop-

ment.

The ordinance of fasting is, as is the case with these

three prayers,[1] a spiritual and vital obligation enjoined by

Bahá’u’lláh upon every believer who has attained the age of

fifteen. In the Aqdas He thus writes: “We have commanded

you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is

ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.

He has exempted from this those who are weak from illness

or age, as a bounty from His Presence, and He is the

Forgiving, the Generous.” And in another passage He says:

“We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period,

1. The three obligatory daily prayers, any one of which the believer is free to

choose.

and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a

feast. … The traveler, the ailing, those who are with child

or giving suck, are not bound by the fast …. Abstain from

food and drink, from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest

desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the

Book.”

Also, in the “Questions and Answers” that form an

appendix to the Aqdas, Bahá’u’lláh reveals the following:

“Verily, I say that God has appointed a great station for

fasting and prayer. But during good health its benefit is

evident, and when one is ill, it is not permissible to fulfill

them.” Concerning the age of maturity, He reveals in the

appendix of that same book: “The age of maturity is in the

fifteenth year; women and men are alike in this respect.”

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days starting as

a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the

twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention

from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially

a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation,

during which the believer must strive to make the necessary

readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigo-

rate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance

and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in char-

acter. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence

from selfish and carnal desires.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1/10/36, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 98

(Mar. 1936) 1

33. Regarding your question concerning the Fast: Travel-

ers are exempt from fasting, but if they want to fast while

they are traveling, they are free to do so. You are exempt the

whole period of your travel, not just the hours you are in a

train or car, etc. If one eats unconsciously during the

fasting hours, this is not breaking the Fast as it is an

accident. The age limit is seventy years, but if one desires

to fast after the age limit is passed, and is strong enough

to, one is free to do so. If during the Fast period a person

falls ill and is unable to fast, but recovers before the fast

period is over, he can start to fast again and continue until

the end. Of course the Fast, as you know, can only be kept

during the month set aside for that purpose.[2]

Shoghi Effendi, letter to Amelia E. Collins, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 167 (Jan.

1944) 2

34. In one of His Tablets ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, after stating that

fasting consists of abstinence from food and drink, categori-

cally says that smoking is a form of “drink”. (In Arabic the

verb “drink” applies equally to smoking.)

*A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 36

35. Fortunate are ye to have obeyed the commandment of

God, and kept this fast during the holy season. For this

material fast is an outer token of the spiritual fast; it is a

symbol of self-restraint, the withholding of oneself from all

appetites of the self, taking on the characteristics of the

spirit, being carried away by the breathings of heaven and

catching fire from the love of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 69–70

## Sacrificing yourself to the love of God

36. He that giveth up himself wholly to God, God shall,

assuredly, be with him; and he that placeth his complete

trust in God, God shall, verily, protect him from whatsoev-

er may harm him, and shield him from the wickedness of

every evil plotter.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 233

37. O thou faithful one!

One of the requirements of faithfulness is that thou

mayest sacrifice thyself and, in the divine path, close thine

eye to every pleasure and strive with all thy soul that thou

2. Additional details on exemptions from the Fast and the like can be found in

*A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 38–39.

mayest disappear and be lost, like unto a drop, in the

ocean of the love of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* 3:552

38. Regarding the points you refer to in your letter: the

complete and entire elimination of the ego would imply

perfection which man can never completely attain but

the ego can and should be ever-increasingly subordinated

to the enlightened soul of man. This is what spiritual

progress implies.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/19/41 to an individual believer, in

*The Bahá’í Life* 8

39. Regarding the questions you asked: self has really two

meanings, or is used in two senses, in the Bahá’í writings;

one is self, the identity of the individual created by God. This

is the self mentioned in such passages as “he hath known

God who hath known himself”, etc. The other self is the ego,

the dark animalistic heritage each one of us has, the lower

nature that can develop into a monster of selfishness, brutal-

ity, lust and so on. It is this self we must struggle against, or

this side of our natures, in order to strengthen and free the

spirit within us and help it to attain perfection.

Self-sacrifice means to subordinate this lower nature

and its desires to the more Godly and noble side of our

selves. Ultimately, in its highest sense, self-sacrifice means

to give our will and our all to God to do with as He pleases.

Then He purifies and glorifies our true self until it becomes a

shining and wonderful reality.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/10/47 to an individual believer, in

The Bahá’í Life 15

40. … it is my hope … that day by day ye will love God

in ever greater measure, and become more tightly bound to

the Beauty that abideth forever, to Him Who is the Light of

the world. For love of God and spiritual attraction do

cleanse and purify the human heart and dress and adorn it

with the spotless garment of holiness; and once the heart

is entirely attached to the Lord, and bound over to the

Blessed Perfection, then will the grace of God be revealed.

This love is not of the body but completely of the soul.

And those souls whose inner being is lit by the love of God

are even as spreading rays of light, and they shine out like

stars of holiness in a pure and crystalline sky. For true

love, real love, is the love for God, and this is sanctified

beyond the notions and imaginings of men.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 202–03

3 The distinctive
Bahá’í life

## The call to spiritual distinction

1. O loved ones of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!

Man’s life has its springtime and is endowed with

marvelous glory. The period of youth is characterized by

strength and vigor and stands out as the choicest time in

human life. Therefore you should strive day and night so

that endowed with heavenly strength, inspired with brilliant

motives and aided by His celestial power and heavenly grace

and confirmation, you may become the ornaments of the

world of humanity, and preeminent among those who are

initiated into true learning and the love of God. You must be

distinguished amidst men by your sanctity and detachment,

loftiness of purpose, magnanimity, determination, noble-

mindedness, tenacity, the elevation of your aims and your

spiritual qualities; that you may become the means of

exaltation and glory for the Cause of God and the dawning

places of His heavenly bestowals; that you may conduct

yourselves in conformity with the counsels and exhortations

of the Blessed Beauty—may my life be offered up for His loved

ones—and by reflecting Bahá’í qualities and attributes, you

may stand out distinguished from others. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ea-

gerly anticipates that each one of you may become even as a

fearless lion moving in the pastures of human perfection and

a musk-laden breeze wafting over the meads of virtue.

The glory of glories rest upon you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, O God, My God … 36

2. I desire distinction for you. The Bahá’ís must be distin-

guished from others of humanity. But this distinction must

not depend upon wealth—that they should become more

affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial

distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction I desire; not

scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I de-

sire spiritual distinction—that is, you must become eminent

and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must

become distinguished from all else. You must become distin-

guished for loving humanity, for unity and accord, for love

and justice. In brief, you must become distinguished in all

the virtues of the human world—for faithfulness and sincer-

ity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness and steadfastness,

for philanthropic deeds and service to the human world, for

love toward every human being, for unity and accord with all

people, for removing prejudices and promoting international

peace. Finally, you must become distinguished for heavenly

illumination and for acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire

this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction

among you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 190

3. We sincerely hope that the forefront of the volunteers,

the Bahá’í youth will arise for the sake of God and, through

their driving force, their ability to endure inhospitable and

arduous conditions, and their contentment with the bare

necessities of life, they will offer an inspiring example to the

peoples and communities they set out to serve, will exert an

abiding influence on their personal lives, and will promote

with distinction the vital interests of God’s Cause at this

crucial stage in the fortunes of the Plan.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3/25/75, in *Lights of Guidance*

514

4. The youth today must show forth a greater maturity

than any previous generation, for they are called upon to

pass through perhaps the gravest crisis in the history of

the world, and they must meet their destiny with faith,

steadfastness, assurance and poise.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *The Bahá’í World* 12:562

## The importance of a good character

5. A good character is, verily, the best mantle for men from

God. With it He adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By

My life! The light of a good character surpasseth the light

of the sun and the radiance thereof. Whoso attaineth unto

it is accounted as a jewel among men. The glory and the

upliftment of the world must needs depend upon it. A

goodly character is a means whereby men are guided to the

Straight Path and are led to the Great Announcement. Well

is it with him who is adorned with the saintly attributes

and character of the Concourse on High.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 36

6. The most vital duty, in this day, is to purify your

characters, to correct your manners, and improve your

conduct. The beloved of the Merciful must show forth such

character and conduct among His creatures, that the

fragrance of their holiness may be shed upon the whole

world, and may quicken the dead, inasmuch as the pur-

pose of the Manifestation of God and the dawning of the

limitless lights of the Invisible is to educate the souls of

men, and refine the character of every living man ….

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, qtd. in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 26

7. He hopes that you will develop into Bahá’ís in character

as well as in belief. The whole purpose of Bahá’u’lláh is that

we should become a new kind of people, people who are

upright, kind, intelligent, truthful, and honest and who live

according to His great laws laid down for this new epoch in

man’s development. To call ourselves Bahá’ís is not enough;

our inmost being must become ennobled and enlightened

through living a Bahá’í life.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8/25/44 to Louhelen School Junior

Youth Session, U.S.A., in *The Bahá’í Life* 10

## The responsibilities of Bahá’í youth

8. This Cause, although it embraces with equal esteem

people of all ages, has a special message and mission for

the youth of your generation. It is their charter for their

future, their hope, their guarantee of better days to come.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/16/42 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* iii

9. The present condition of the world its economic insta-

bility, social dissensions, political dissatisfaction and in-

ternational distrust should awaken the youth from their

slumber and make them enquire what the future is going

to bring. It is *surely they* who will suffer *most* if some

calamity sweep over the world. They should therefore open

their eyes to the existing conditions, study the evil forces

that are at play and then with a concerted effort arise and

bring about the necessary reforms—reforms that shall con-

tain within their scope the spiritual as well as social and

political phases of human life.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/13/32 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 3

10. He urges you to make up your minds to do great, great

deeds for the Faith; the condition of the world is steadily

growing worse, and your generation must provide the

saints, heroes, martyrs and administrators of future years.

With dedication and will power you can rise to great heights!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/2/51 to Junior Youth Session,

U.S.A., in *Bahá’í News*, no. 253 (Mar. 1952) 1

## Meeting the challenge

11. The responsibility of young believers is very great, as

they must not only fit themselves to inherit the work of the

older Bahá’ís and carry on the affairs of the Cause in

general, but the world which lies ahead of them—as prom-

ised by Bahá’u’lláh—will be a world chastened by its

sufferings, ready to listen to His Divine Message at last; and

consequently a very high character will be expected of the

exponents of such a religion. To deepen their knowledge, to

perfect themselves in the Bahá’í standards of virtue and

upright conduct, should be the paramount duty of every

young Bahá’í.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/6/41 to the Bahá’í youth of

Bombay, in *The Importance of Deepening* 43

12. For any person, whether Bahá’í or not, his youthful

years are those in which he will make many decisions which

will set the course of his life. In these years he is most likely

to choose his life’s work, complete his education, begin to

earn his own living, marry, and start to raise his own family.

Most important of all, it is during this period that the mind

is most questing and that the spiritual values that will guide

the person’s future behavior are adopted. These factors

present Bahá’í youth with their greatest opportunities, their

greatest challenges, and their greatest tests—opportunities

to truly apprehend the teachings of their Faith and to give

them to their contemporaries, challenges to overcome the

pressures of the world and to provide leadership for their

and succeeding generations, and tests enabling them to

exemplify in their lives the high moral standards set forth in

the Bahá’í writings. Indeed, the Guardian wrote of the

Bahá’í youth that it is they “who can contribute so decisively

to the virility, the purity, and the driving force of the life of

the Bahá’í community, and upon whom must depend the

future orientation of its destiny, and the complete unfold-

ment of the potentialities with which God has endowed it.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/10/66 to Bahá’í youth in every

land, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 92–93

Transforming society by individual
example

13. Arise, O people, and, by the power of God’s might,

resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply

the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its

servitude to the gods of its idle fancies—gods that have

inflicted such loss upon, and are responsible for the mis-

ery of, their wretched worshipers. These idols form the

obstacle that impedeth man in his efforts to advance in the

path of perfection. We cherish the hope that the Hand of

Divine power may lend its assistance to mankind, and

deliver it from its state of grievous abasement.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 93

14. Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detach-

ment from the things of the world; we must strive to

become more spiritual, more luminous, to follow the coun-

sel of the Divine Teaching, to serve the cause of unity and

true equality, to be merciful, to reflect the love of the

Highest on all men, so that the light of the Spirit shall be

apparent in all our deeds, to the end that all humanity

shall be united, the stormy sea thereof calmed, and all

rough waves disappear from off the surface of life’s ocean

henceforth unruffled and peaceful. Then will the New

Jerusalem be seen by mankind, who will enter through its

gates and receive the Divine Bounty.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 87

15. If we could perceive the true reality of things we would

see that the greatest of all battles raging in the world today

is the spiritual battle. If the believers like yourself, young

and eager and full of life, desire to win laurels for true and

undying heroism, then let them join in the spiritual

battle—whatever their physical occupation may be which

involves the very soul of man. The hardest and the noblest

task in the world today is to be a *true* Bahá’í; this requires

that we defeat not only the current evils prevailing all over

the world, but the weaknesses, attachments to the past,

prejudices, and selfishnesses that may be inherited and

acquired within our own characters; that we give forth a

shining and incorruptible example to our fellow-men.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4/5/42 to an individual believer, in

*Excellence in All Things* 11

## Aspects of Bahá’í character

16. Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.

Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him

with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor,

an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the

needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in

thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no

man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto

them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for

the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and

defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and

uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the

stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for

the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto

the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance

of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the

temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of

mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary

above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human

heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the

heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a

shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit

upon the tree of humility.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 285

17. O ye lovers of this wronged one! Cleanse ye your eyes,

so that ye behold no man as different from yourselves. See

ye no strangers; rather see all men as friends, for love and

unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness. And

in this new and wondrous age, the Holy Writings say that

we must be at one with every people; that we must see

neither harshness nor injustice, neither malevolence, nor

hostility, nor hate, but rather turn our eyes toward the

heaven of ancient glory. For each of the creatures is a sign

of God, and it was by the grace of the Lord and His power

that each did step into the world; therefore they are not

strangers, but in the family; not aliens, but friends, and to

be treated as such.

Wherefore must the loved ones of God associate in

affectionate fellowship with stranger and friend alike,

showing forth to all the utmost loving-kindness, disre-

garding the degree of their capacity, never asking whether

they deserve to be loved. In every instance let the friends be

considerate and infinitely kind. Let them never be defeated

by the malice of the people, by their aggression and their

hate, no matter how intense. If others hurl their darts

against you, offer them milk and honey in return; if they

poison your lives, sweeten their souls; if they injure you,

teach them how to be comforted; if they inflict a wound

upon you, be a balm to their sores; if they sting you, hold to

their lips a refreshing cup.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 24

18. Act in accordance with the counsels of the Lord: that

is, rise up in such wise, and with such qualities, as to

endow the body of this world with a living soul, and to

bring this young child, humanity, to the stage of adult-

hood. So far as ye are able, ignite a candle of love in every

meeting, and with tenderness rejoice and cheer ye every

heart. Care for the stranger as for one of your own; show to

alien souls the same loving kindness ye bestow upon your

faithful friends. Should any come to blows with you, seek

to be friends with him; should any stab you to the heart, be

ye a healing salve unto his sores; should any taunt and

mock at you, meet him with love. Should any heap his

blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a

deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange;

and should he threaten your life, grant him a remedy that

will heal him evermore. Should he be pain itself, be ye his

medicine; should he be thorns, be ye his roses and sweet

herbs. Perchance such ways and words from you will make

this darksome world turn bright at last; will make this

dusty earth turn heavenly, this devilish prison place be-

come a royal palace of the Lord—so that war and strife will

pass and be no more, and love and trust will pitch their

tents on the summits of the world. Such is the essence of

God’s admonitions; such in sum are the teachings for the

Dispensation of Bahá.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 34

19. It is primarily through the potency of noble deeds and

character, rather than by the power of exposition and proofs, that

the friends of God should demonstrate to the world

that what has been promised by God is bound to happen,

that it is already taking place and that the divine glad-

tidings are clear, evident and complete. For unless

some illustrious souls step forth into the arena of service

and shine out resplendent in the assemblage of men, the

task of vindicating the truth of this Cause before the eyes

of the enlightened people would be a formidable

indeed. However, if the friends become embodiments

of virtue and good character, words and arguments

will be superfluous. Their very deeds will serve as

eloquent testimony, and their noble conduct will ensure

the preservation, integrity and glory of the Cause of God.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/19/23 to the Bahá’ís of the East, in *The*

*Bahá’í Life* 1–2

4 Exemplary lives
and heroic deeds

## The vital role of Bahá’í youth

1. From the very beginning of the Bahá’í Era, youth have

played a vital part in the promulgation of God’s Revelation.

The Báb Himself was but twenty-five years old when He

declared His Mission, while many of the Letters of the Living

were even younger. The Master, as a very young man, was

called upon to shoulder heavy responsibilities in the service

of His Father in ‘Iráq and Turkey; and His brother, the Purest

Branch, yielded up his life to God in the Most Great Prison at

the age of twenty-two that the servants of God might “be

quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united.” Shoghi

Effendi was a student at Oxford when called to the throne of

his Guardianship, and many of the Knights of Bahá’u’lláh,

who won imperishable fame during the Ten Year Crusade,

were young people. Let it, therefore, never be imagined that

youth must await their years of maturity before they can

render invaluable services to the Cause of God.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/10/66 to Bahá’í youth in every

land, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 92

2. recent martyrdoms courageous steadfast youth in shí-

ráz, scene inauguration mission martyr-prophet, reminis-

cent acts valor youthful immortals heroic age. confident

bahá’í youth this generation will not allow this fresh blood

shed on very soil where first wave persecution faith took

place remain unvindicated or this sublime sacrifice unavail-

ing. at this hour of affliction and grief, and as we approach

anniversary martyrdom blessed báb call on bahá’í youth to

rededicate themselves to urgent needs cause bahá’u’lláh.

let them recall blessings he promised those who in prime of

youth will arise to adorn their hearts with his love and

remain steadfast and firm. let them call to mind expecta-

tions master for each to be a fearless lion, a musk-laden

breeze wafting over meads virtue. let them meditate over

unique qualities youth so graphically mentioned in writings

guardian who praised their enterprising and adventurous

spirit, their vigor, their alertness, optimism and eagerness,

and their divinely-appointed, holy and enthralling tasks. we

fervently pray at sacred threshold that army of spiritually

awakened and determined youth may immediately arise re-

sponse needs present hour devote in ever greater measure

their valued energies to promote both on homefronts and

in foreign fields, cause their all-watchful and expectant

lord. may they manifest same spirit so recently evinced

their martyr brethren cradle. faith, scale such heights of

endeavor as to become pride their peers consolation

hearts persian believers, and demonstrate that the flame

his omnipotent hand has kindled burns ever brighter and

that its life-imparting warmth and radiance shall soon

envelop permeate whole earth.

The Universal House of Justice, telex dated 6/23/83 to Bahá’í youth

throughout the world

## ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Perfect Exemplar

3. He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] was only eight years old when—in the

wake of a desperate and futile attempt on the life of Náṣiri’d-

Dín Sháh, by two half-crazed men—Bahá’u’lláh was im-

prisoned, and the Bábís were ferociously persecuted. Bahá’-

u’lláh’s house was pillaged, His lands and goods were confis-

cated, and His family reduced from opulence to penury. One

day, while in Europe, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá recalled the sufferings of

those bleak times:

Detachment does not imply lack of means; it is marked by

the freedom of the heart. In Ṭihrán, we possessed everything

at a nightfall, and on the morrow we were shorn of it all,

to the extent that we had no food to eat. I was hungry, but

there was no bread to be had. My mother poured some flour

into the palm of my hand, and I ate that instead of bread. Yet,

we were contented.

And again:

At that time of dire calamities and attacks mounted by the

enemies I was a child of nine.[1] They threw so many stones

into our house that the courtyard was crammed with them

… Mother took us for safety to another quarter, and

rented a house in a back alley where she kept us indoors

and looked after us. But one day our means of subsistence

were barely adequate, and mother told me to go to my aunt’s

house, and ask her to find us a few qiráns …[2] I went and my

aunt did what she could for us. She tied a five-qirán piece in a

handkerchief and gave it to me. On my way home someone

recognized me and shouted: “Here is a Bábí”; whereupon the

children in the street chased me. I found refuge in the

entrance to a house … There I stayed until nightfall, and

when I came out, I was once again pursued by the children

who kept yelling at me and pelted me with stones … When I

reached home I was exhausted. Mother wanted to know what

had happened to me. I could not utter a word and col-

lapsed.

…

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, anxious to see His Father, was

taken to the dungeon. This is His account of that awesome

visit:

They sent me with a black servant to His blessed presence

in the prison. The warders indicated the cell, and the

servant carried me in on his shoulders. I saw a dark, steep

place. We entered a small, narrow doorway, and went down

two steps, but beyond those one could see nothing. In the

middle of the stairway, all of a sudden we heard His blessed

voice: “Do not bring him in here,” and so they took me back.

We sat outside, waiting for the prisoners to be led out.

1. In the reckoning of the lunar year.

2. Iranian silver coin of the period.

Suddenly they brought the Blessed Perfection[3] out of the

dungeon. He was chained to several others. What a chain! It

was very heavy. The prisoners could only move it along with

great difficulty. Sad and heart-rending it was.

Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 9–12

4. That blessed soul [‘Abdu’l-Bahá], following the ascension

of the sacred Abhá Beauty, may our lives be sacrificed for the

dust of His sacred threshold, and until the hour when His

own luminous spirit rose up to the realms on high, for a

period of thirty years had neither a peaceful day nor a night

of quiet rest. Singly and alone, He set about to reform the

world, and to educate and refine its peoples. He invited all

manner of beings to enter the Kingdom of God; He watered

the Tree of the Faith; He guarded the celestial Lote-Tree from

the tempest; He defeated the foes of the Faith, and He

frustrated the hopes of the malevolent; and always vigilant,

He protected God’s Cause and defended His Law.

That subtle and mysterious Being, that Essence of eter-

nal glory, underwent trials and sorrows all the days of His

life. He was made the target of every calumny and malicious

accusation, by foes both without and within. His lot, in all

His life, was to be wronged, and be subjected to toil, to pain

and grief. Under these conditions, the one and only solace of

His sacred heart was to hear good news of the progress of the

Faith, and the proclaiming of God’s Word, and the spreading

of the holy Teachings, and the unity and fervor of the

friends, and the staunchness of His loved ones. This news

would bring smiles to His countenance; this was the joy of

His precious heart.

Meanwhile He trained a number of the faithful and

reared them with the hands of His grace, and rectified their

character and behavior, and adorned them with the excel-

lence of the favored angels of Heaven—that they might arise

today with a new spirit, and stand forth with wondrous

power, and confront the forces of idle fancy, and scatter the

3. One of the designations of Bahá’u’lláh.

troops upon troops of darkness with the blazing light of long

endurance and high resolve; that they might shine out even

as lighted candles, and moth-like, flutter so close about the

lamp of the Faith as to scorch their wings.

Bahíyyih Khánum, in *Bahíyyih Khánum* 142–43

## The Holy Family

### Bahíyyih Khánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf

5. As far back as the concluding stages of the heroic age of

the Cause, which witnessed the imprisonment of Bahá’-

u’lláh in the Síyáh-Chál of Ṭihrán, the Greatest Holy Leaf,

then still in her infancy, was privileged to taste of the cup of

woe which the first believers of that Apostolic Age had

quaffed.

How well I remember her recall, at a time when her

faculties were still unimpaired, the gnawing suspense that

ate into the hearts of those who watched by her side, at the

threshold of her pillaged house, expectant to hear at any

moment the news of Bahá’u’lláh’s imminent execution! In

those sinister hours, she often recounted, her parents had

so suddenly lost their earthly possessions that within the

space of a single day from being the privileged member of

one of the wealthiest families of Ṭihrán she had sunk to the

state of a sufferer from unconcealed poverty. Deprived of the

means of subsistence her illustrious mother, the famed

Navváb, was constrained to place in the palm of her daugh-

ter’s hand a handful of flour and to induce her to accept it as

a substitute for her daily bread.

And when at a later time this revered and precious

member of the Holy Family, then in her teens, came to be

entrusted by the guiding hand of her Father with missions

that no girl of her age could, or would be willing to, perform,

with what spontaneous joy she seized her opportunity and

acquitted herself of the task with which she had been

entrusted! The delicacy and extreme gravity of such func-

tions as she, from time to time, was called upon to fulfill,

when the city of Baghdád was swept by the hurricane which

the heedlessness and perversity of Mírzá Yaḥyá had un-

chained, as well as the tender solicitude which, at so early

an age, she evinced during the period of Bahá’u’lláh’s en-

forced retirement to the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih,

marked her as one who was both capable of sharing the

burden, and willing to make the sacrifice, which her high

birth demanded.

How staunch was her faith, how calm her demeanor,

how forgiving her attitude, how severe her trials, at a time

when the forces of schism had rent asunder the ties that

united the little band of exiles which had settled in Adriano-

ple and whose fortunes seemed then to have sunk to their

lowest ebb! It was in this period of extreme anxiety, when the

rigors of a winter of exceptional severity, coupled with the

privations entailed by unhealthy housing accommodation

and dire financial distress, undermined once for all her

health and sapped the vitality which she had hitherto so

thoroughly enjoyed. The stress and storm of that period

made an abiding impression upon her mind, and she retain-

ed till the time of her death on her beauteous and angelic

face evidences of its intense hardships.

Not until, however, she had been confined in the compa-

ny of Bahá’u’lláh within the walls of the prison-city of ‘Akká

did she display, in the plenitude of her power and in the full

abundance of her love for Him, those gifts that single her

out, next to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, among the members of the Holy

Family, as the brightest embodiment of that love which is

born of God and of that human sympathy which few mortals

are capable of evincing.

Banishing from her mind and heart every earthly attach-

ment, renouncing the very idea of matrimony, she, standing

resolutely by the side of a Brother whom she was to aid and

serve so well, arose to dedicate her life to the service of her

Father’s glorious Cause. Whether in the management of the

affairs of His Household in which she excelled, or in the

social relationships which she so assiduously cultivated in

order to shield both Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whether

in the unfailing attention she paid to the everyday needs of

her Father, or in the traits of generosity, of affability and

kindness, which she manifested, the Greatest Holy Leaf had

by that time abundantly demonstrated her worthiness to

rank as one of the noblest figures intimately associated with

the life-long work of Bahá’u’lláh.

Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahíyyih Khánum* 32–35

6. During the period of the sojourn in Baghdád, Bahíyyih

Khánum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, was her mother’s loving

helper, working always beyond her strength, in the various

household tasks. No childish pleasures or companions were

hers. Always with eyes on her mother, alert to spare her any

fatigue, she rejoiced beyond measure when she could minis-

ter in any way to her or her illustrious father.

“My mother,” she said, “sometimes gave lessons to my

brother ‘Abbás; at other times Mírzá Músá would teach Him,

and on some occasions he would be taught by His father.”

“And *your* lessons?” I asked.

“But I never had any time for studies,” she said, in a tone

which spoke volumes of absolute self-effacement, and this is

the keynote of her whole life, no thought of her unselfishness

entered her mind.

Her thoughtfulness and consideration for all who came

near her; the countless acts of never-failing kindness, were,

in her eyes, all to be taken as a matter of course. Her one joy

was to devote every moment of her existence to being of use

to her mother and father, to whom she was passionately

attached. This loving service was extended, as He grew older,

to her brother ‘Abbás, Sarkár-i-Áqá, and these three were her

being’s end and aim.

Her life was spent in prayer to God and service to her

loved ones, from the time when, as a small child of six, she

cowered in the dark house alone with the tiny Purest

Branch, a baby of two, in her little arms, listening in terror

to the yells of the infuriated, cruel mob, not knowing if they

were murdering her father, or whether they had seized her

mother and the little eight-year-old ‘Abbás.

After those terrible days in Ṭihrán, and the not less

terrible journey to Baghdád, during the sojourn in this city,

she grew into a beautiful girl, very much like her lovely

mother in grace of body and character, a gentle, slender

maiden with large, grey-blue eyes, golden-brown hair, and

warm, ivory-colored skin. Her sense of humor was keen and

her intelligence remarkable.

As she grew up, she implored her father to allow her to

remain unmarried, that she might the better devote herself

to her three dearly loved ones.

And so it was.

Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway* 68–69

### Mírzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch

7. Mírzá Mihdí was taken to Baghdád to join the Family in

the year AH 1276 (circa AD 1860). It was in that city that this

pure and holy youth, noted for his meekness, came in touch

with the Divine Spirit and was magnetized by the energiz-

ing forces of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. From that time on,

he devoted every moment of his life to the service of

his heavenly Father. He was Bahá’u’lláh’s companion in

Baghdád, Adrianople and ‘Akká, and served Him as an

amanuensis towards the end of his life, leaving to posterity

some Tablets in his handwriting. The last ten years of his life

were filled with the hardship and suffering inflicted on

Bahá’u’lláh and His companions in the course of the three

successive banishments from Baghdád to ‘Akká.

The Purest Branch resembled ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and

throughout his short and eventful life he displayed the same

spiritual qualities which distinguished his illustrious Broth-

er. The believers loved and venerated him as they did ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá.

Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh* 3:205

8. To the galling weight of these tribulations was now

added the bitter grief of a sudden tragedy—the premature

loss of the noble, the pious Mírzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch,

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s twenty-two year old brother, an amanuensis

of Bahá’u’lláh and a companion of His exile from the days

when, as a child, he was brought from Ṭihrán to Baghdád to

join his Father after His return from Sulaymáníyyih. He was

pacing the roof of the barracks in the twilight, one evening,

wrapped in his customary devotions, when he fell through

the unguarded skylight onto a wooden crate, standing on

the floor beneath, which pierced his ribs, and caused,

twenty-two hours later, his death, on the 23rd of Rabí‘u’l-

Avval 1287 A.H. (June 23, 1870). His dying supplication to a

grieving Father was that his life might be accepted as a

ransom for those who were prevented from attaining the

presence of their Beloved.

In a highly significant prayer, revealed by Bahá’u’lláh in

memory of His son—a prayer that exalts his death to the

rank of those great acts of atonement associated with Abra-

ham’s intended sacrifice of His son, with the crucifixion of

Jesus Christ and the martyrdom of the Imám Ḥusayn—we

read the following: *“I have, O my Lord, offered up that*

*which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be*

*quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united.”* And,

likewise, these prophetic words, addressed to His martyred

son: *“Thou art the Trust of God and His Treasure in this*

*Land. Erelong will God reveal through thee that which He*

*hath desired.”*

After he had been washed in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh,

he *“that was created of the light of Bahá,”* to whose

*“meekness”* the Supreme Pen had testified, and of the

*“mysteries”* of whose ascension that same Pen had made

mention, was borne forth, escorted by the fortress guards,

and laid to rest, beyond the city walls, in a spot adjacent to

the shrine of Nabí Ṣáliḥ … .

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 188

9. Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! Thou seest me in

this day shut up in my prison, and fallen into the hands of

Thine adversaries, and beholdest my son (The Purest

Branch) lying on the dust before Thy face. He is Thy

servant, O my Lord, whom Thou hast caused to be related

to Him Who is the Manifestation of Thyself and the Day-

Spring of Thy Cause.

At his birth he was afflicted through his separation

from Thee, according to what had been ordained for him

through Thine irrevocable decree. And when he had

quaffed the cup of reunion with Thee, he was cast into

prison for having believed in Thee and in Thy signs. He

continued to serve Thy Beauty until he entered into this

Most Great Prison. Thereupon I offered him up, O my God,

as a sacrifice in Thy path. Thou well knowest what they

who love Thee have endured through this trial that hath

caused the kindreds of the earth to wail, and beyond them

the Concourse on high to lament.

I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by him and by his exile and

his imprisonment, to send down upon such as loved him

what will quiet their hearts and bless their works. Potent

art Thou to do as Thou willest. No God is there but Thee,

the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations* 34–35

10. Upon thee, O Branch of God! be the remembrance of

God and His praise, and the praise of all that dwell in the

Realm of Immortality, and of all the denizens of the

Kingdom of Names. Happy art thou in that thou hast been

faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, until

Thou didst sacrifice thyself before the face of thy Lord, the

Almighty, the Unconstrained. Thou, in truth, hast been

wronged, and to this testifieth the Beauty of Him, the

Self-Subsisting. Thou didst, in the first days of thy life,

bear that which hath caused all things to groan; and made

every pillar to tremble. Happy is the one that remembereth

thee, and draweth nigh, through thee, unto God, the

Creator of the Morn.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow* 73

11. The death of the Purest Branch must be viewed as

Bahá’u’lláh’s own sacrifice, a sacrifice on the same level as

the crucifixion of Christ and the martyrdom of the Báb.

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, states that Bahá’-

u’lláh has exalted the death of the Purest Branch to the

“rank of those great acts of atonement associated with

Abraham’s intended sacrifice of His son, with the cruci-

fixion of Jesus Christ and the martyrdom of the Imám

Ḥusayn …” In another instance, Shoghi Effendi states that

in the Bábí Dispensation, it was the Báb himself who

sacrificed His life for the redemption and purification of

mankind. In the Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh, it was the

Purest Branch who gave his life releasing thereby all the

forces necessary for bringing about the unity of mankind.

Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh* 3:211

## The Letters of the Living

### Ṭáhirih

12. A woman chaste and holy, a sign and token of surpass-

ing beauty, a burning brand of the love of God, a lamp of

His bestowal, was Jináb-i-Ṭáhirih.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful* 190

13. She, according to what is related, was skilled in diverse

arts, amazed the understandings and thoughts of the most

eminent masters by her eloquent dissertations on the

exegesis and tradition of the Perspicuous Book, and was a

mighty sign in the doctrines of the glorious Shaykh of

Ahsá. At the Supreme Shrines she borrowed light on matters

divine from the lamp of Káẓim, and freely sacrificed her life

in the way of the Báb. She discussed and disputed with the

doctors and sages, loosing her tongue to establish her

doctrine. Such fame did she acquire that most people who

were scholars or mystics sought to hear her speech and were

eager to become acquainted with her powers of speculation

and deduction. She had a brain full of tumultuous ideas,

and thoughts vehement and restless. In many places she

triumphed over the contentious, expounding the most sub-

tle questions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *A Traveler’s Narrative* 19–20

14. … after the breakup at Badasht she was captured,

and the oppressors sent her back under guard to Ṭihrán.

There she was imprisoned in the house of Mahmúd Khán,

the Kalántar. But she was aflame, enamored, restless, and

could not be still. The ladies of Ṭihrán, on one pretext or

another, crowded to see and listen to her. It happened that

there was a celebration at the Mayor’s house for the marriage

of his son; a nuptial banquet was prepared, and the house

adorned. The flower of Ṭihrán’s ladies were invited, the

princesses, the wives of vazírs and other great. A splendid

wedding it was, with instrumental music and vocal melodies

—by day and night the lute, the bells and songs. Then

Ṭáhirih began to speak; and so bewitched were the great

ladies that they forsook the cithern and the drum and all the

pleasures of the wedding feast, to crowd about Ṭáhirih and

listen to the sweet words of her mouth.

Thus she remained, a helpless captive. Then came the

attempt on the life of the Sháh; a farmán was issued; she was

sentenced to death. Saying she was summoned to the Prime

Minister’s, they arrived to lead her away from the Kalántar’s

house. She bathed her face and hands, arrayed herself in a

costly dress, and scented with attar of roses she came out of

the house.

They brought her into a garden, where the headsmen

waited; but these wavered and then refused to end her life. A

slave was found, far gone in drunkenness; besotted, vicious,

black of heart. And he strangled Ṭáhirih. He forced a scarf

between her lips and rammed it down her throat. Then they

lifted up her unsullied body and flung it in a well, there in

the garden, and over it threw down earth and stones. But

Ṭáhirih rejoiced; she had heard with a light heart the tidings

of her martyrdom; she set her eyes on the supernal Kingdom

and offered up her life.

Salutations be unto her, and praise. Holy be her dust, as

the tiers of light come down on it from Heaven.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful* 202–03

### Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn

15. The first words which, in the company of the assem-

bled believers, Quddús addressed to Mullá Ḥusayn were the

following: “Now, at this very hour, you should arise and,

armed with the rod of wisdom and of might, silence the host

of evil plotters who strive to discredit the fair name of the

Faith of God. You should face that multitude and confound

their forces. You should place your reliance upon the grace of

God, and should regard their machinations as a futile

attempt to obscure the radiance of the Cause. You should

interview the Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’, that notorious and false-

hearted tyrant, and should fearlessly disclose to his eyes the

distinguishing features of this Revelation. From thence you

should proceed to Khurásán. In the town of Mashhad, you

should build a house so designed as both to serve for our

private residence and at the same time afford adequate

facilities for the reception of our guests. Thither we shall

shortly journey, and in that house we shall dwell. To it you

shall invite every receptive soul who we hope may be guided

to the River of everlasting life. We shall prepare and admon-

ish them to band themselves together and proclaim the

Cause of God ….”

Alone and with a heart wholly detached from all else but

God, Mullá Ḥusayn set out on his journey to Mashhad. His

only companion, as he trod his way to Khurásán, was the

thought of accomplishing faithfully the wishes of Quddús,

and his one sustenance the consciousness of his unfailing

promise. He went directly to the home of Mírzá Muḥammad-

Báqir-i-Qá‘iní, and was soon able to buy, in the neighbor-

hood of that house in Bálá-Khíyábán, a tract of land on

which he began to erect the house which he had been

commanded to build, and to which he gave the name of

Bábíyyih, a name that it bears to the present day. Shortly

after it was completed, Quddús arrived at Mashhad and

abode in that house. A steady stream of visitors, whom the

energy and zeal of Mullá Ḥusayn had prepared for the

acceptance of the Faith, poured into the presence of Quddús,

acknowledged the claim of the Cause, and willingly enlisted

under its banner. The all-observing vigilance with which

Mullá Ḥusayn labored to diffuse the knowledge of the new

Revelation, and the masterly manner in which Quddús

edified its ever-increasing adherents, gave rise to a wave of

enthusiasm which swept over the entire city of Mashhad,

and the effects of which spread rapidly beyond the confines

of Khurásán. The house of Bábíyyih was soon converted into

a rallying center for a multitude of devotees who were fired

with an inflexible resolve to demonstrate, by every means in

their power, the great inherent energies of their Faith.

Nabíl-i-A‘ẓam, *The Dawn-Breakers* 265–67

## The Dawn-Breakers

### Badí‘

16. During the latter days [passed] in Adrianople Bahá’u’lláh

composed a detailed epistle setting forth all matters clearly

and minutely. He unfolded and expounded the main princi-

ples of the sect, and made clear and plain its ethics, man-

ners, course, and mode of conduct: He treated certain

political questions in detail, and adduced sundry proofs of

His truthfulness: He declared the good intent, loyalty, and

sincerity of the sect, and wrote some fragments of prayers,

some in Persian, but the greater part in Arabic. He then

placed it in a packet and adorned its address with the royal

name of His Majesty the King of Persia, and wrote [on it] that

some person pure of heart and pure of life, dedicated to God,

and prepared for martyr-sacrifice, must, with perfect resig-

nation and willingness, convey this epistle into the presence

of the King. A youth named Mírzá Badí‘, a native of Khur-

ásán, took the epistle, and hastened toward the presence of

His Majesty the King. The Royal Train had its abode and

station outside Ṭihrán, so he took his stand alone on a rock

in a place far off but opposite to the Royal Pavilion, and

awaited day and night the passing of the Royal escort or the

attainment of admission into the Imperial Presence. Three

days did he pass in a state of fasting and vigilance: an

emaciated body and enfeebled spirit remained. On the fourth

day the Royal Personage was examining all quarters and

directions with a telescope when suddenly his glance fell on

this man who was seated in the utmost respectful attitude

on a rock. It was inferred from the indications [perceived]

that he must certainly have thanks [to offer], or some

complaint or demand for redress and justice [to prefer]. [The

King] commanded one of those in attendance at the court to

inquire into the circumstances of this youth. On interroga-

tion [it was found that] he carried a letter which he desired to

convey with his own hand into the Royal Presence. On

receiving permission to approach, he cried out before the

pavilion with a dignity, composure, and respectfulness sur-

passing description, and in a loud voice, “O King, I have

come unto thee from Sheba with a weighty message!” [The

King] commanded to take the letter and arrest the bearer.

His Majesty the King wished to act with deliberation and

desired to discover the truth, but those who were present

before him loosed their tongues in violent reprehension,

saying, “This person has shown great presumption and

amazing audacity, for he hath without fear or dread brought

the letter of him against whom all peoples are angered, of

him who is banished to Bulgaria and Sclavonia, into the

presence of the King. If so be that he do not instantly suffer a

grievous punishment there will be an increase of this great

presumption.” So the ministers of the court signified [that

he should suffer] punishment and ordered the torture. As

the first torment they applied the chain and rack, saying,

“Make known thy other friends that thou mayest be delivered

from excruciating punishment, and make thy comrades

captive that thou mayest escape from the torment of the

chain and the keenness of the sword.” But, torture, brand,

and torment him as they might, they saw naught but

steadfastness and silence, and found naught but dumb

endurance [on his part]. So, when the torture gave no result,

they [first] photographed him (the executioners on his left

and on his right, and he sitting bound in fetters and chains

beneath the sword with perfect meekness and composure),

and then slew and destroyed him. This photograph I sent

for, and found worthy of contemplation, for he was seated

with wonderful humility and strange submissiveness, in

utmost resignation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *A Traveler’s Narrative* 58–59

17. Áqá Buzurg of Khurásán, the illustrious “Badí‘” (Won-

derful); converted to the Faith by Nabíl; surnamed the “Pride

of Martyrs”; the seventeen-year old bearer of the Tablet

addressed to Násiri’d-Dín Sháh; in whom, as affirmed by

Bahá’u’lláh, *“the spirit of might and power was breathed,”*

was arrested, branded for three successive days, his head

beaten to a pulp with the butt of a rifle, after which his body

was thrown into a pit and earth and stones heaped upon

it …. For a space of three years Bahá’u’lláh continued to

extol in His writings the heroism of that youth, characteriz-

ing the references made by Him to that sublime sacrifice as

the *“salt of My Tablets.”*

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 199

### Rúḥu’lláh

18. Rúḥu’lláh, the child-martyr of the Bahá’í Faith, was a

prodigy. At the age of twelve, his knowledge of the Holy

Scriptures, his powerful arguments in defense of his beloved

Faith in the presence of the dreaded religious authorities of

Persia, the beautiful poetry he wrote and his sweet, saintly

nature won him admirers everywhere he went. Many of the

noted enemies of the new Faith were charmed by his elo-

quence, while others came to look upon him as a living

miracle.

At the time when Rúḥu’lláh, his father and Mírzá Hu-

sayn had been arrested because of their beliefs and were

being taken to Ṭihrán in chains, the soldiers in charge were

so attracted by the charm of this child of twelve that they

wished to take the heavy chains from round his neck, but he

would not have it so. “I am quite happy with these chains,”

he assured them, “besides, you must be faithful to your

trust. You were given orders to take us to Ṭihrán in chains,

and it is your duty to obey those orders.” He was never heard

to complain of the discomforts of that long and arduous

46 EXEMPLARY LIVES AND HEROIC DEEDS

journey, but seemed to derive great happiness from the

many odes and prayers he chanted to himself as they rode

along.

…

In the prison of Ṭihrán, the Bahá’ís were treated with

extreme cruelty. There were four of them there, all chained

together with the “black pearl” which was put round their

necks. This chain was so heavy that it was difficult for the

men to keep their heads up. Rúḥu’lláh collapsed under its

weight and two supports had to be put under the chain on

each side of him to keep him in a sitting position.

…

… The account of the incident is recorded by Mírzá

Ḥusayn, who was chained with Varqá and Rúḥu’lláh in the

prison. The summary of a part of this chronicle is as follows:

“… Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih entered the prison with a number

of executioners clad in their scarlet clothes, and gave orders

that all the prisoners should be chained to their places. No

one knew what he had in mind and a terrible fear seized

everyone. Then the jailer came to us Bahá’ís and said: ‘Come

with me. You are wanted in court.’ We got up to follow him,

though we did not believe what he said. ‘It is not necessary to

put on your ‘abás,’ he told us, but Rúḥu’lláh insisted on

wearing his. As we came out into the prison yard, we were

surprised to see armed soldiers standing everywhere and

wondered if they had come to shoot us. The executioners too

were standing in a row, and Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih had a savage

look in his eyes. But there was not a sound from anyone, and

the silence was terrifying. At last Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih asked the

jailer to open the locks on our chains and send us two by

two. The jailer’s hands were trembling so badly that he could

not open the locks, so another man stepped forward and

unlocked our chains. Varqá and Rúḥu’lláh were the first to

be taken away ….

…

“… Later on I saw one of the jailers who had shown us

some kindness before. I caught hold of him and begged

him to tell me what had happened. I made him swear by

the martyred saints of Islám that he would tell me the truth

as he had seen it take place. This is what he re-

counted: ‘… Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih said to Varqá: “Which shall I

kill first, you or your son?” Varqá replied: It makes no

difference to me.” Then Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih drew his dagger and

thrust it into Varqá’s heart saying: “How do you feel now?”

Varqá’s words before he died were: “I am feeling much better

than you are. Praise be to God!” Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih ordered

four executioners to cut Varqá’s body into pieces. The sight

of so much blood was horrible to see. Rúḥu’lláh was watch-

ing all the time, overcome with grief. He kept on repeating:

“Father, father, take me with you!” Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih came to

him and said: “Don’t weep. I shall take you with me and give

you a proper salary. I shall ask the Shah to give you a

position!” But Rúḥu’lláh replied: “I want neither a salary

from you, nor a position from the Sháh! I am going to join

my father.” Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih asked for a piece of rope, but no

one could find any rope so they brought the bastinado and

put Rúḥu’lláh’s neck in it. Two of the jailers lifted the

bastinado from either side and held it while Rúḥu’lláh

gasped for breath. As soon as his body was still, they put him

down and Ḥájibu’d-Dawlih called for the two other Bahá’ís to

be brought in. But just then, the child’s body made a sudden

movement, raised itself from the floor and fell several feet

away. Then it was still again. This incident shook Ḥájibu’d-

Dawlih so badly that he did not have the nerve to carry on

with any more killings.’

“You can imagine how we felt after hearing the details of

the martyrdom of Varqá and Rúḥu’lláh. The picture came to

life, and I could not put it out of my mind. My heart would

not be consoled, and I wept for my beloved friends all

through the night. Finally I fell asleep and had a dream. I saw

Rúḥu’lláh coming towards me, looking extremely happy. He

said: ‘Did you see how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s promise came true?’

Rúḥu’lláh had often told me with great pride that when he

was saying farewell to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá after visiting Him in the

Holy Land, the Master had patted him on the shoulder and

said: ‘If God so ordains … He will proclaim His Cause

through Rúḥu’lláh.’”

Faizi, *Fire on the Mountain-Top* 86, 88–91

## Today’s Bahá’í youth and young adults

19. Bahá’í children and youth have contributed their own

significant share to the heroism demonstrated by the believ-

ers in Iran. In spite of the difficulties in communication,

some accounts of their experiences have been received.

Following are a few that have been translated. The names of

persons and places have been omitted in most cases so as to

protect those who have written the accounts.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1/10/85 to all

National Spiritual Assemblies

### Sixteen-year-old boy

20. The following report is taken from a letter written by a

boy 16 years of age.

The teacher in my high school was giving a lesson in

sociology on the subject of cultural colonialism. As an

example, he cited the Bahá’í Faith as a type of cultural

colonialism. According to my spiritual obligation, I had to

reply. I got permission and to the extent possible for me, I

gave a speech on the Faith and countered the statement of

my teacher. After a few days the principal called me to his

office, accusing me of apostasy, stating that Islám is the last

religion of God, etc. One of those present asked me what I

believed. I told him I was a Bahá’í. The Ḥájí, the principal,

rose from his chair, agitated and shouting, “You have no

place in this school! I thought you were a good boy! Now

everything is changed and you have no right to go to your

class until your situation is cleared!”

After a week there was a summons from the office of the

Imám Jum‘ih (High Priest of the town, who is usually

appointed by the Central Government to carry out its policy).

On the way I was trembling, thinking of what they might ask

and what I should reply and what would be my fate. I entered

the Imám’s office in this condition, but as soon as I was

confronted by him I was not the same person anymore. It

was as if somebody had taken me by both hands. Not only

did I not tremble but I was as erect as a column of steel. In

the office of the Imám Jum‘ih were eight of the ‘Ulamá with

turbans, and the bodyguard of the Imám were standing close

behind me. After some time the Imám looked at me asking,

“Do you have any business?” “No,” I replied, “You have

business with me.”

After asking my name and the name of my father, he

asked if I were a Muslim. I told him I was a Bahá’í. He asked

what my father did. I told him he was unemployed. The

Imám then started saying, “You are against Islám, the

Qur’án, and Muḥammad.”

“No,” I responded, “We believe in Islám, in the Qur’án, in

Muḥammad and the Imáms, and we respect them.”

“Now that you say that you are a Muslim and believe in

the Qur’án …”

I interrupted him with an apology and said, “Sir, I never

said that I was a Muslim. I only told you that I believe in

Islám. I believe in Islám as you believe in Judaism and Christ

and Christianity and believe in the Bible.”

Then he said, “All right. Now that you believe in Islám,

have you ever read any books of the Imáms?”

“Yes, to the extent possible.”

“If you have read these books, tell me where is it written

that a wretched woman will give birth to a boy named Siyyid

‘Alí Muḥammad, called the Báb, and that he would be the

Promised One?”

“First of all, it is not proper that you name a woman in a

derogatory manner. We have famous women in history, like

Mary, Khadíjih, Fáṭimih, …”

He interrupted me saying, “Tell me where is it written in

those books about the Báb?”

“It is not written in that way, but you show me in those

books where it is written that He is not coming!”

(The report states that there was then a long discussion

about the Faith and the writer quoted verses from the Qur’án

and the Imáms showing that the Promised One will bring a

new religion.)

On this note another Mullá who was present changed

the subject. He told me that the Bahá’ís are forces of Russia

and that a Russian official called Dolgorouki confessed that

he trained Siyyid ‘Alí Muḥammad to say first that he was the

Promised One, then to claim to be the Light of God, and

ultimately to be God, Himself.

I very boldly replied, “The Bahá’í Community does not

know what tune to dance to. One says that we are forces of

Russia; another says that we are American stooges; still

another says we are agents of Britain and recently of Israel.

You should know philosophy,” I said. “If there is truth then

there should be unanimity in the understanding of that

truth. Everybody understands that when the water reaches

100 degrees it boils. For boiling water, one doesn’t say when

it reaches 80 degrees or 120 degrees it boils. Therefore, it is

not fair for you to present a false thing.”

The Imám suddenly shouted at me, “Be quiet! Islám is

the last religion! No religion will come after it! You are not

right! You are an apostate!”

I asked, “Sir, do you give me permission to speak?”

He replied, “No.”

“Then I am afraid I must speak without your permission.

We are not apostates. We are right, and the time for Islám is

over.”

He interrupted me sharply, shouting, “Islám is eternal!”

and he quoted an Arabic verse which I could not understand.

Then I quoted a verse from the Qur’án, saying every religion

has an end. (Here the writer gives a long discourse about the

meaning of this verse and at the end he quotes a verse from a

reliable Shí‘ih book of traditions to the effect that if Muslims

are virtuous, the life of Islám will be 1000 years and if not, it

will be 500.) Then I told him, “You have been virtuous and

Islám has lasted 1000 years. Now is the time for the Faith,

and no power on earth can arrest it!”

He shouted, “Shut up! Don’t be impudent!” Then he

continued to say that the Bahá’ís are aiding Israel. I replied

that to do so would be a political act and we are not in

politics.

He said that we had buildings in Israel. “You have a

Mashriqu’l-Adhkár.”

“They are our Holy Places.”

“Take your Holy Places out of there!”

“Holy Places cannot be moved. If they could, why don’t

you bring out the Mosque of Aqsá from Jerusalem?”

“The Mosque fits that place very well!”

“So do our Holy Places.”

Again he shouted, “Shut up!” And then he added, “Get

out of the room!”

Throughout the conversation I was very polite and soft-

spoken, and then I bade farewell with great politeness,

smiled, excused myself, and came out.

On the way out of the room, another Mullá said, “Look,

my son, many of us have returned to the bosom of Islám. You

have reached the age of maturity (15); you should follow

those who have come back to Islam.”

I replied, “Yes, I have reached the age of maturity. I have

accepted my Faith by my own choice. And to the last breath

of my life I will support it. I am prepared to undergo any

torture, any difficulty for my Faith! I don’t consider my blood

to be more red than that of my fellow Bahá’ís who are offering

it to God.”

The Imám said, “In that case, we have to expel you from

school.”

“Do whatever your duty demands.”

After I left the office of the Imám Jum‘ih, to my surprise

again I started trembling. I went to my school and said

goodbye to my fellow students, got my dismissal order and

went back home.

(This dismissal order is now one of the documents

preserved in the hands of the Bahá’ís.)

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1/10/85 to all

National Spiritual Assemblies

### Muna Mahmudnizhad

21. Muna [Mahmudnizhad] was another young girl eight-

een years of age when martyred [on 18 June 1983]. She

was a teacher of Bahá’í children’s classes and served on the

Three Members Board and was arrested with her father,

Yadollah Mahmudnizhad.

Twice the order for Muna’s release was issued, but at the

third stage in her trial the religious magistrate, Mr. Qazai,

after insulting and humiliating her, said, “Your father and

mother have deceived and misled you.” In reply Muna said,

“Your honor, it is true that I learned about the Bahá’í Faith

from my parents, but I have done my own reasoning. In the

Bahá’í Faith one adheres to religion after investigation, not

by imitation. You have many of our books; you can read and

find out for yourself. My father and mother did not insist on

my accepting their belief; neither did they force me to

become a Bahá’í. If the religious magistrate thinks I should

abandon my belief, I will never do so, and prefer submitting

to the order of execution.” The religious magistrate was

astounded and said, “Young girl, what do you know about

religion?” Muna exclaimed, “Your honor, I was brought here

from the classroom in school; I have been in prison and

going through trials for three months. What better proof of

my religious certitude than my perseverance and steadfast-

ness in the Faith? It is this Faith that gives me confidence to

go through this trial in your presence ….” The religious

magistrate, impressed by Muna’s sincerity, asked her to say

a prayer. Muna put away the file and, with the usual respect

and humbleness, recited a prayer by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “O kind

Lord, Thou art kinder to me than I am to myself ….” The

religious magistrate remained silent for a while, then said to

Muna, “What harm did you find in Islam that you have

turned to Bahaism?” Muna’s answer was: “The foundation

of all religions is one. From time to time, according to the

exigencies of time and place, God sends His Messenger to

renew religion and guide the people in the right path. The

Bahá’í religion upholds the truth in Islam, but if by Islam

you mean the prevailing animosity, murder, and bloodshed

in the country, a sample of which I have witnessed in prison,

that is the reason I have chosen to be a Bahá’í.”

Muna’s answer was the subject of conversation among

the friends for quite a while in prison. How did Muna dare to

talk to the religious magistrate in this way?

Olya Ruhizadegan, “Extract from an Account Concerning the Interrogation

of Muna Mahmudnizhad, One of the Ten Bahá’í Women Hanged in Shiraz

on June 18, 1983,” in *World Order*, 18 (Winter 1983–84) 28–29

### Zarrin Muqimi

22. When Zarrin [Muqimi] was taken to the religious

magistrate to recant her Faith, and was told as usual either

to recant or to be prepared for execution, she said in reply,

“I have found the way to reality, and I am not prepared to

give it away for any price. Therefore, I submit to the Court’s

verdict.” On another occasion the judge asked Zarrin, “To

what extent are you prepared to adhere to your belief?”

Zarrin answered, “I hope to remain firm in my belief to the

last moment.” “But you must give up your belief!” retorted

the judge. Zarrin, annoyed by the repetition of the same

proposal, exclaimed, “Your honor, you have been conduct-

ing my trial for many days, and have asked the same

question, and I have given you a definite and satisfactory

answer. I don’t think repeating the same thing is neces-

sary!” But the judge rudely repeated the same proposal.

Dear Zarrin started crying and with a loud voice said, “In

what language do you want me to tell you? Why don’t you

leave me alone? My whole being is Bahá’u’lláh! My love is

Bahá’u’lláh! My heart is dedicated to Bahá’u’lláh!” The infur-

iated judge shouted, “I will pull out your heart from your

chest!” Zarrin replied, “Then my heart will call and cry out,

‘Bahá’u’lláh! Bahá’u’lláh!” The judge, moved by this display

of sentiment, left the room.

After Zarrin’s martyrdom, dear Mother described the

event for me over the phone: “Saturday, June 18, 1983, I

went to visit Zarrin as usual, taking fresh fruits with me. It

was raining, and the weather was quite warm. At the visiting

time Zarrin was brought behind the glass partition, and we

started to talk. Her countenance seemed to have changed;

she said to me, “Mother, please pray for me and implore God

to give me perseverance!” She did not say good-bye to me

when leaving, because she did not want to see me saddened.

Zarrin had always told me not to hope for her freedom, but it

did not occur to me that this was our last meeting. The

friends (Bahá’ís) had been urged to recant for the last time,

and most probably they would be executed. Visiting time was

over, and I returned home. The following day, Sunday, June

19, early in the morning I found out that ten women

prisoners had been hanged during the night. I ran out of the

house to inquire from the friends; in the street I met three

friends. With tearful eyes they showed me a list; then I

realized Zarrin was also martyred. I ran toward Adelabad

prison, moaning and crying. This was the place most of our

time had been spent the last eight months. I was allowed to

go into the cold room. What I went through that day, and

what I saw in that historic moment, I cannot describe. I

entered the cold room. O, my God! I saw ten angels lying

motionless next to each other. I knew all of them; I had been

in the same prison with them. Mother and daughter were

together. All had a pair of pants and a summer blouse on.

Some of them had their chadur (long robe) tied around their

waist; others had it thrown on the floor. What force kept me

on my feet and breathing I don’t know! I looked at all the ten

angels, and found Zarrin among them reposed; I embraced

her cold body, put my cheek on her delicate and cold cheek,

and kissed the mark of rope on her lovely neck on behalf of

all of you (Father, who was in prison; myself; and my

brother, out of the country). Her face looked natural and

composed.”

“Extracts from an Account of the Life and Activities of Zarrín Moqimi, One of

the Bahá’í Women Hanged in Shiraz on June 18, 1983,” in *World Order*, 18

(Winter 1983–84) 27–28

### Ruya Ishraqi

23. The following is an account of what Ruya Ishraqi, a

teen-age girl who was martyred with her parents, told a

fellow prisoner. This prisoner was later released and con-

veyed Ruya’s story in a letter.

On one of the days of the trial, she said to the judge, “I

have not seen my father for the past 32 days. If you allow

me to turn around and see for a minute the face of my

father …” (Before the prisoners were taken to the trial

session, they were first blindfolded, then deliberately taken

to wrong rooms and zig-zagged through the prison while

abuses and insults were heaped upon them. Then they

were taken to a wall, their blindfolds were removed, and

they were then given their file and required to write a reply

to the questions presented.) The judge hesitated for a

moment. However, he agreed that Ruya could see her

father in the adjoining room for a few minutes.

She kissed her father, telling him how she loved him

and encouraging him to be brave and steadfast. Touching

the face of her father, she asked why he had not shaved.

The reply was they were not allowed to shave.

At the time Ruya was looking at her father with great

love and kissing his face, the judge interfered saying, “Isn’t

it a pity that you refrain from saying only one word—that

you are not Bahá’ís—by which you could avoid such trouble.

If you say those words, all three of you will be free and all the

frozen assets of your father will be given to him.”

Ruya, with her customary smile and decisive look, re-

plied, “The love between parents and children is natural, but

my love for my Beloved is even greater than my love for my

parents.”

The judge asked, “Are you holding to this view until the

moment of your execution?” And Ruya replied, “I pray and

hope that to the last breath, I will stand firm in my love for

my Beloved.”

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1/10/85 to all

National Spiritual Assemblies

# 5 Education

## Transforming humanity through education

1. Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper educa-

tion hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth

inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the

mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more

he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by

yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded.

The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems

of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to

reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit there-

from.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 161–62

2. Man is said to be the greatest representative of God, and

he is the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of

beings exist in him. If he comes under the shadow of the

True Educator and is rightly trained, he becomes the

essence of essences, the light of lights, the spirit of spirits;

he becomes the center of the divine appearances, the

source of spiritual qualities, the rising-place of heavenly

lights, and the receptacle of divine inspirations. If he is

deprived of this education, he becomes the manifestation

of satanic qualities, the sum of animal vices, and the

source of all dark conditions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 236

3. … education is of three kinds: material, human and

spiritual. Material education is concerned with the prog-

ress and development of the body, through gaining its

sustenance, its material comfort and ease. This education

is common to animals and man.

Human education signifies civilization and progress

—that is to say, government, administration, charitable

works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inven-

tions and discoveries and elaborate institutions, which are

the activities essential to man as distinguished from the

animal.

Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it

consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true

education; for in this state man becomes the focus of

divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, “Let Us

make man in Our image, and after Our likeness.”[1] This is

the goal of the world of humanity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 8

Combining spiritual education with
human education

4. The spiritually learned are lamps of guidance among the

nations, and stars of good fortune shining from the hori-

zons of humankind. They are fountains of life for such as

lie in the death of ignorance and unawareness, and clear

springs of perfections for those who thirst and wander in

the wasteland of their defects and errors. They are the

dawning places of the emblems of Divine Unity and initi-

ates in the mysteries of the glorious Qur’án. They are

skilled physicians for the ailing body of the world, they are

the sure antidote to the poison that has corrupted human

society. It is they who are the strong citadel guarding

humanity, and the impregnable sanctuary for the sorely

distressed, the anxious and tormented, victims of igno-

rance. “Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the

heart of whomsoever He willeth.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 33

1. Cf. Gen. 1:26.

5. O ye young Bahá’í children …. Ye must … put forth a

mighty effort, striving by night and day and resting not for a

moment, to acquire an abundant share of all the sciences

and arts, that the Divine Image, which shineth out from the

Sun of Truth, may illumine the mirror of the hearts of men.

It is the longing desire of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to see each one of

you accounted as the foremost professor in the academies,

and in the school of inner significances, each one becoming

a leader in wisdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 140–41

6. It is incumbent upon Bahá’í children to surpass other

children in the acquisition of sciences and arts, for they have

been cradled in the grace of God.

Whatever other children learn in a year, let Bahá’í chil-

dren learn in a month. The heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá longeth, in

its love, to find that Bahá’í young people, each and all, are

known throughout the world for their intellectual attain-

ments. There is no question but that they will exert all their

efforts, their energies, their sense of pride, to acquire the

sciences and arts.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 141

7. I hope that thou mayest be protected and assisted under

the providence of the True One, be occupied always in

mentioning the Lord and display effort to complete thy

profession. Thou must endeavor greatly so that thou may-

est become unique in thy profession and famous in those

parts, because attaining perfection in one’s profession in

this merciful period is considered to be worship of God.

And whilst thou art occupied with thy profession, thou

canst remember the True One.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 145–46

8. If the Bahá’ís want to be really effective in teaching the

Cause they need to be much better informed and able to

discuss intelligently, intellectually, the present condition of

the world and its problems. We need Bahá’í scholars, not

only people far, far more deeply aware of what our teachings

really are, but also well read and well educated people,

capable of correlating our teachings to the current thoughts

of the leaders of society.

We Bahá’ís should, in other words, arm our minds with

knowledge in order to better demonstrate to, especially, the

educated classes, the truths enshrined in our Faith.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/5/49 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 49

9. Young men and women in the Faith must be deep and

thoughtful scholars of its teachings, so that they can teach

in a way that will convince people that all the problems

facing them have a remedy. They must grasp the Adminis-

tration, so that they can wisely and efficiently administer the

ever-growing affairs of the Cause; and they must exemplify

the Bahá’í way of living. All this is not easy—but the

Guardian is always encouraged to see the spirit

animating such young believers as yourself. He has high

hopes of what your generation will accomplish.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/12/44 to an individual believer, in

The *Importance of Deepening* 45

10. The Universal House of Justice regards Bahá’í scholar-

ship as of great potential importance for the development

and consolidation of the Bahá’í community as it emerges

from obscurity.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1/3/79 to individu-

al believer, qtd. in International Teaching Center, “A Statement on the

Encouragement of Bahá’í Scholarship” (8/9/84) 1

## Attaining spiritual knowledge

11. With fixed and steady gaze, born of the unerring eye of

God, scan for a while the horizon of divine knowledge, and

contemplate those words of perfection which the Eternal

hath revealed, that haply the mysteries of divine wisdom,

hidden ere now beneath the veil of glory and treasured

within the tabernacle of His grace, may be made manifest

unto you.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán* 16–17

12. It is my hope that you may put forth your most earnest

endeavor to accomplish this end, that you may investigate

and study the Holy Scriptures word by word so that you

may attain knowledge of the mysteries hidden therein. Be

not satisfied with words, but seek to understand the

spiritual meanings hidden in the heart of the words.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 459

13. God has given man the eye of investigation by which he

may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with

ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred

upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover

things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment

for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see

through the eyes of another, hear through another’s ears

nor comprehend with another’s brain. Each human crea-

ture has individual endowment, power and responsibility

in the creative plan of God. Therefore, depend upon your

own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of

your own investigation; otherwise, you will be utterly

submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the

bounties of God. Turn to God, supplicate humbly at His

threshold, seeking assistance and confirmation, that God

may rend asunder the veils that obscure your vision. Then

will your eyes be filled with illumination, face to face you

will behold the reality of God and your heart become

completely purified from the dross of ignorance, reflecting

the glories and bounties of the Kingdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 293

14. I strongly urge you to devote, while you are pursuing

your studies, as much time as you possibly can to a

thorough study of the history and teachings of our Beloved

Cause. This is the prerequisite of a future successful

career of service to the Bahá’í Faith in which I hope and

pray you will distinguish yourself in the days to come.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/18/26 to an individual believer, in *The Impor-*

*tance of Deepening* 21

15. It is his fervent hope and his heart’s ardent prayer that

you may increasingly deepen in your faith, and steadily

gain in your understanding and appreciation of the teach-

ings, and display such earnestness and perseverance in

your Bahá’í studies as to gradually acquire the full knowl-

edge, training and experience necessary for active and effec-

tive service to the Faith in the future.

Although still young in age, you should endeavor from

now, through close association with your fellow-believers,

and through your faithful application to your Bahá’í studies,

to prepare yourself for that day when you will be called upon,

as a grown-up and responsible member of the Community,

to take full part in the activities of the Cause, and thus prove

yourself worthy of being a member of this world-wide Fellow-

ship created by Bahá’u’lláh.

The Guardian was truly pleased to note that you have

already started reading some Bahá’í books, and would spe-

cially advise you to endeavor to commit to memory certain

passages from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, and in particular,

some of His prayers. This training would undoubtedly be of

tremendous help to you in your future studies of the Cause,

and would also serve to considerably deepen and enrich your

own spiritual life at present.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4/10/39 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 41–42

16. To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of

Bahá’u’lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give

it to others in its pure form. There are many who have some

superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, there-

fore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their

own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most

careful lest we fall into this error and injure the Movement

we so much adore. There is no limit to the study of the

Cause. The more we read the Writings, the more truths we

can find in them, the more we will see that our previous

notions were erroneous.

Shoghi Effendi, qtd. by the Universal House of Justice in a letter dated

5/27/66 to an individual believer, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 88–89

17. … the foundation of all their [young Bahá’ís] other

accomplishments … is their study of the teachings, the

spiritualization of their lives, and the forming of their

characters in accordance with the standards of Bahá’u’lláh.

As the moral standards of the people around us collapse and

decay, whether of the centuries-old civilizations of the East,

the more recent cultures of Christendom and Islám, or of the

rapidly changing tribal societies of the world, the Bahá’ís

must increasingly stand out as pillars of righteousness and

forbearance. The life of a Bahá’í will be characterized by

truthfulness and decency; he will walk uprightly among his

fellowmen, dependent upon none save God, yet linked by

bonds of love and brotherhood with all mankind; he will be

entirely detached from the loose standards, the decadent

theories, the frenetic experimentation, the desperation of

present-day society, will look upon his neighbors with a

bright and friendly face, and be a beacon light and a haven

for all those who would emulate his strength of character

and assurance of soul.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/10/66 to Bahá’í youth in every

land, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 94

## Studying the Bahá’í writings

18. It behooveth us one and all to recite day and night both

the Persian and Arabic *Hidden Words*, to pray fervently and

supplicate tearfully that we may be enabled to conduct

ourselves in accordance with these divine counsels. These

holy Words have not been revealed to be heard but to be

practiced.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The Importance of Deepening* 11

19. He is indeed pleased to know that the book of *Prayers*

*and Meditations* by Bahá’u’lláh has been out in time to

enable the friends to read it during the Fast, and he has

every hope that the perusal of such a precious volume will

help to deepen, *more than any other publication*, the spirit

of devotion and faith in the friends, and thus charge them

with all the spiritual power they require for the accomplish-

ment of their tremendous duties towards the Cause.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *The Importance of Deepening* 48

20. He is particularly pleased to realize that the book of

*Gleanings* is of such a tremendous inspiration to the Bahá’í

youth, and that they all are making a careful study of its

contents with the view of preparing themselves for proper

teaching work. His hope is that this volume will enable them

to gain a fuller consciousness of their functions and respon-

sibilities, and to arise and set the example before the rest of

the believers, not only in the field of teaching, but in all the

other fields of Bahá’í activity as well. He is ardently supplicat-

ing Bahá’u’lláh on your behalf, and on behalf of the whole

body of young Bahá’ís throughout the States, and specially

the National Youth Committee, that you may be given the

inspiration, knowledge and guidance to press forward to

efficient and loyal service.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/2/36 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 40

21. Some of the younger believers, from letters and reports

received here, seem to lack a firm grounding on such

matters as the Will and Testament and the deeper spiritual

teachings of the Faith. Whenever the grasp of these funda-

mentals is weak, the friends are almost sure to pay undue

attention to secondary procedures, to quibble over details,

to lose themselves in personalities, and to founder in a sea

of unnecessary inharmony. This has nothing to do with

their devotion, their loyalty, their zeal, their eagerness to

serve. It is merely a question of not having received,

perhaps through lack of sufficient teachers to carry on the

all-important work of deepening the friends in their own

faith, a strong enough education in the Covenant before

the duties and responsibilities of the Administrative Order

were thrust upon them.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/26/56 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada, in *The Importance of Deepening* 52–53

22. The Guardian would advise that in their studies of the

Will and Testament the young believers should use the

“Dispensation”, which will undoubtedly help them consid-

erably to grasp the full implications of that sacred and

historic Document which he has described as the “Charter

of the New World Order”.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1/9/39 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 41

23. He fully approves the idea of holding study classes, for

the deeper the friends go in their understanding of the

teachings the more firm and steadfast they will become

and the more unwavering in their support of the institu-

tions of the Faith. Books such as the Íqán, *Some Answered*

*Questions* and *The Dawn-Breakers* should be mastered by

every Bahá’í. They should read these books over and over

again. The first two books will reveal to them the significance

of this divine revelation as well as the unity of all the

Prophets of old. The last book will show how the Faith was

ushered into the world and how its early adherents heroical-

ly faced martyrdom and suffering in their desire to establish

the Cause throughout the world. Knowing the life of those

heroes will create in us the urge to follow their footsteps and

achieve the same.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/9/32 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 33

24. Shoghi Effendi undertook the translation of The

Dawn-Breakers only after being convinced that its publica-

tion will arouse the friends to greater self-sacrifice and a

more determined way of teaching. Otherwise he would not

have devoted so much time to it.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/9/32 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 13

25. The Guardian feels that a sound knowledge of history,

including religious history, and also of social and econom-

ic subjects, is of great help in teaching the Cause to

intelligent people; as to what subjects within the Faith you

should concentrate on he feels that the young Bahá’ís

should gain a mastery of such books as the *Gleanings*, the

*Dawnbreakers*, *God Passes By*, the *Íqán*, *Some Answered*

*Questions* and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the

Faith should be deeply studied ….

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/4/46 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 46

## Acquiring human knowledge

26. Look at the world and ponder a while upon it. It

unveileth the book of its own self before thine eyes and

revealeth that which the Pen of thy Lord, the Fashioner,

the All-Informed, hath inscribed therein. It will acquaint

thee with that which is within it and upon it and will give

thee such clear explanations as to make thee independent

of every eloquent expounder.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 141–42

27. All blessings are divine in origin, but none can be

compared with this power of intellectual investigation and

research, which is an eternal gift producing fruits of

unending delight …. Therefore, you should put forward

your most earnest efforts toward the acquisition of science

and arts. The greater your attainment, the higher your

standard in the divine purpose. The man of science is

perceiving and endowed with vision, whereas he who is

ignorant and neglectful of this development is blind. The

investigating mind is attentive, alive; the callous and

indifferent mind is deaf and dead. A scientific man is a

true index and representative of humanity, for through

processes of inductive reasoning and research he is in-

formed of all that appertains to humanity, its status,

conditions and happenings. He studies the human body

politic, understands social problems and weaves the web

and texture of civilization. In fact, science may be likened

to a mirror wherein the infinite forms and images of

existing things are revealed and reflected. It is the very

foundation of all individual and national development.

Without this basis of investigation, development is impos-

sible. Therefore, seek with diligent endeavor the knowl-

edge and attainment of all that lies within the power of this

wonderful bestowal.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 50

28. Consider carefully: all these highly varied phenomena,

these concepts, this knowledge, these technical proce-

dures and philosophical systems, these sciences, arts,

industries and inventions—all are emanations of the

human mind. Whatever people has ventured deeper into

this shoreless sea, has come to excel the rest. The happi-

ness and pride of a nation consist in this, that it should

shine out like the sun in the high heaven of knowledge.

… And the honor and distinction of the individual con-

sist in this, that he among all the world’s multitudes

should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty

conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within

himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he

has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happi-

ness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true

God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 2–3

Studying disciplines that will benefit
humanity

29. Knowledge is as wings to man’s life, and a ladder for

his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone.

The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be ac-

quired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those

which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed

is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of

the world …. In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure

for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of

exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 51–52

30. O My Servant! The best of men are they that earn a

livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and

upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all

worlds.

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* 51

31. It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some

form of occupation, such as crafts, trades and the like. We

have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to

the rank of worship unto God, the True One.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 26

32. I hope that you will use your understanding to promote

the unity and tranquillity of mankind, to give enlightenment

and civilization to the people, to produce love in all around

you, and to bring about the universal peace.

Study the sciences, acquire more and more knowledge.

Assuredly one may learn to the end of one’s life! Use your

knowledge always for the benefit of others; so may war cease

on the face of this beautiful earth, and a glorious edifice of

peace and concord be raised. Strive that your high ideals

may be realized in the Kingdom of God on earth, as they will

be in Heaven.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 43

33. The individual should, prior to engaging in the study

of any subject, ask himself what its uses are and what fruit

and result will derive from it. If it is a useful branch of

knowledge, that is, if society will gain important benefits

from it, then he should certainly pursue it with all his

heart. If not, if it consists in empty, profitless debates and

in a vain concatenation of imaginings that lead to no result

except acrimony, why devote one’s life to such useless

hairsplittings and disputes.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 106

34. Thy letter was received. Praise be to God it imparted

the good news of thy health and safety and indicated that

thou art ready to enter an agricultural school. This is

highly suitable. Strive as much as possible to become

proficient in the science of agriculture, for in accordance

with the divine teachings the acquisition of sciences and

the perfection of arts are considered acts of worship. If a

man engageth with all his power in the acquisition of a

science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he has been

worshiping God in churches and temples. Thus as thou

enterest a school of agriculture and strivest in the acquisi-

tion of that science thou art day and night engaged in acts

of worship acts that are accepted at the threshold of the

Almighty. What bounty greater than this that science

should be considered as an act of worship and art as

service to the Kingdom of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 144–45

35. The Guardian … was gratified to learn of the progress

of your academic studies, and of your future plans for the

study and the teaching of the Cause. The spirit which is

moving and sustaining you in the service of the Faith is,

indeed, remarkable, and through it you will undoubtedly

be moved to render great and imperishable services to the

Cause of Bahá’u’lláh. The university training which you are

receiving at present will be of immense help to you in your

efforts to present the Message in intellectual circles. In these

days when people are so skeptical about religion and look

with so much contempt towards religious organizations and

movements, there seems to be more need than ever for our

young Bahá’ís to be well-equipped intellectually, so that they

may be in a position to present the Message in a befitting

way, and in a manner that would convince every unbiased

observer of the effectiveness and power of the teachings.

In view of that Shoghi Effendi would urge you to perse-

vere in your studies, and trusts that as a result you will be

greatly assisted in your teaching activities.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/5/34 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 37–38

36. … it is the duty of the children to acquire knowledge

of the arts and sciences and to learn a trade or a profession

whereby they, in turn, can earn their living and support

their families. This, for a Bahá’í youth, is in itself a service

to God, a service, moreover, which can be combined with

teaching the Faith and often with pioneering. The Bahá’í

community will need men and women of many skills and

qualifications; for, as it grows in size the sphere of its

activities in the life of society will increase and diversify. Let

Bahá’í youth, therefore, consider the best ways in which they

can use and develop their native abilities for the service of

mankind and the Cause of God, whether this be as farmers,

teachers, doctors, artisans, musicians, or any one of the

multitude of livelihoods that are open to them.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/10/66 to Bahá’í youth in every

land, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 95

## Suggestions for studying specific courses

37. The first attribute of perfection is learning and the

cultural attainments of the mind, and this eminent station

is achieved when the individual combines in himself a

thorough knowledge of those complex and transcendental

realities pertaining to God, of the fundamental truths of

Qur’ánic[] political and religious law, of the contents of the

sacred Scriptures of other faiths, and of those regulations

and procedures which would contribute to the progress and

civilization of this distinguished country. He should in

addition be informed as to the laws and principles, the

customs, conditions and manners, and the material and

moral virtues characterizing the statecraft of other nations,

and should be well versed in all the useful branches of

learning of the day, and study the historical records of

bygone governments and peoples. For if a learned individual

has no knowledge of the sacred Scriptures and the entire

field of divine and natural science, of religious jurisprudence

and the arts of government and the varied learning of the

time and the great events of history, he might prove unequal

to an emergency, and this is inconsistent with the necessary

qualification of comprehensive knowledge.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 35–36

38. I hope thou wilt acquire great proficiency in writing

literature, composition, eloquence of tongue and fluency of

speech, … becoming an esteemed servant in the Thresh-

old of Oneness and partaking of a share of the heavenly

gifts, and progressing day by day until thou attain to the

apex of the excellencies of this human world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* 501–02

39. We had heard through various channels the wonderful

way your children had grown to speak about the Cause in

public. Shoghi Effendi’s hope is that they will, the three of

them, become able and devoted speakers on the Cause and

subjects akin to it. To do this properly they will need a firm

foundation of scientific and literary training which fortu-

nately they are obtaining. It is just as important for the

Bahá’í young boys and girls to become properly educated in

colleges of high standing as it is to be spiritually developed.

The mental as well as the spiritual side of the youth has to be

developed before he can serve the Cause efficiently.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/28/26 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Education* 59

40. Public speaking is undoubtedly very important for a

person who desires to teach, but this should be learned in

schools and classes especially arranged for such training.

We should not permit an inferior presentation of the Cause

to the public for the sole reason that we desire to learn to

do it better in the future. The youth should be encouraged

to train themselves in public speaking while they are still

pursuing their studies in schools or colleges.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/25/31 to an individual believer, in *Bahá’í News*,

no. 64 (July 1932) 4

41. Regarding the advice you requested from him concern-

ing what studies you should specialize in with a view to

teaching in the future: He would suggest either History,

Economics or Sociology, as these are not only fields in which

Bahá’ís take a great interest but also cover subjects

which our teachings cast an entirely new light upon. Your

knowledge would be of use to the Cause in teaching it in the

future, and you could also perhaps introduce the Bahá’í

ideas into your lectures as an educator.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/13/44 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 15

42. Philosophy, as you will study it and later teach it, is

certainly not one of the sciences that begins and ends in

words. Fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-

splitting is meant, not a sound branch of learning like

philosophy ….

As regards your own studies: he would advise you not

to devote too much of your time to the abstract side of

philosophy, but rather to approach it from a more histori-

cal angle. As to correlating philosophy with the Bahá’í

teaching: this is a tremendous work which scholars in the

future can undertake. We must remember that not only are

all the teachings not yet translated into English, but they are

not even all collected yet. Many important Tablets may still

come to light which are at present owned privately.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/15/47 to an individual believer, in *The Unfolding*

*Destiny of the British Bahá’í Community* 445

43. When deciding what course of training to follow, youth

can consider acquiring those skills and professions that

will be of benefit in education, rural development, agricul-

ture, economics, technology, health, radio and in many

other areas of endeavor that are so urgently needed in the

developing countries of the world. You can also devote time

in the midst of your studies, or other activities, to travel

teaching or service projects in the Third World.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7/4/83 to European Youth

Conference, Innsbruck, Austria

## Balancing human and spiritual education

44. In this great dispensation, art (or a profession) is

identical with an act of worship and this is a clear text of

the Blessed Perfection. Therefore, extreme effort should be

made in art and this will not prevent the teaching of the

people in that region. Nay, rather, each should assist the

other in art and guidance. For instance, when the studying

of art is with the intention of obeying the command of God

this study will certainly be done easily and great progress

will soon be made therein; and when others discover this

fragrance of spirituality in the action itself, this same will

cause their awakening. Likewise, managing art with pro-

priety will become the means of sociability and affinity;

and sociability and affinity themselves tend to guide others

to the Truth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í World Faith* 377

45. Concerning the course of study you may follow: Shoghi

Effendi prefers you to find what subject you like most and

for which you are best fitted …. The Cause is such that

we can serve it no matter what our profession may be. The

only necessity is that we be spiritually minded and not be

guided by purely material considerations. We should also

not let our studies detain us from deepening our knowl-

edge of the literature of the Cause.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/9/31 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 30

46. The Guardian hopes that along with whatever other

studies you take up, you will continually study the teach-

ings and endeavor to acquire a profound knowledge of

them. The importance of young Bahá’ís becoming thor-

oughly steeped in every branch of the teachings cannot be

over-emphasized, as they have great teaching tasks ahead of

them to accomplish.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/24/43 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 44–45

47. O thou true friend! Read, in the school of God, the

lessons of the spirit, and learn from love’s Teacher the

innermost truths. Seek out the secrets of Heaven, and tell

of the overflowing grace and favor of God.

Although to acquire the sciences and arts is the great-

est glory of mankind, this is so only on condition that

man’s river flow into the mighty sea, and draw from God’s

ancient source His inspiration. When this cometh to pass,

then every teacher is as a shoreless ocean, every pupil a

prodigal fountain of knowledge. If, then, the pursuit of

knowledge lead to the beauty of Him Who is the Object of all

Knowledge, how excellent that goal; but if not, a mere drop

will perhaps shut a man off from flooding grace, for with

learning cometh arrogance and pride, and it bringeth on

error and indifference to God.

The sciences of today are bridges to reality; if then they

lead not to reality, naught remains but fruitless illusion.

By the one true God! If learning be not a means of access to

Him, the Most Manifest, it is nothing but evident loss.

It is incumbent upon thee to acquire the various

branches of knowledge, and to turn thy face toward the

beauty of the Manifest Beauty, that thou mayest be a sign

of saving guidance amongst the peoples of the world, and a

focal center of understanding in this sphere from which

the wise and their wisdom are shut out, except for those

who set foot in the Kingdom of lights and become informed

of the veiled and hidden mystery, the well-guarded secret.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 110

# 6 Teaching

## Teaching by word and example

### Talking about the Faith

1. How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath

overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth,

and will, erelong, gather together the whole of mankind

beneath its shelter. Thy day of service is now come.

Countless Tablets bear the testimony of the bounties

vouchsafed unto thee. Arise for the triumph of My Cause,

and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the

hearts of men. Thou must show forth that which will

ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and

the down-trodden. Gird up the loins of thine endeavor,

that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his

chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 92

2. Say: Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá, for

God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming

His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all

deeds. Such a deed is acceptable only when he that teacheth

the Cause is already a firm believer in God, the Supreme

Protector, the Gracious, the Almighty.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 278

3. O ye beloved of God! Repose not yourselves on your

couches, nay bestir yourselves as soon as ye recognize your

Lord, the Creator, and hear of the things which have

befallen Him, and hasten to His assistance. Unloose your

tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall

be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of

the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 330

4. The Faith of the Blessed Beauty is summoning mankind

to safety and love, to amity and peace; it hath raised up its

tabernacle on the heights of the earth, and directeth its

call to all nations. Wherefore, O ye who are God’s lovers,

know ye the value of this precious Faith, obey its teach-

ings, walk in this road that is drawn straight, and show ye

this way to the people. Lift up your voices and sing out the

song of the Kingdom. Spread far and wide the precepts and

counsels of the loving Lord, so that this world will change

into another world, and this darksome earth will be flood-

ed with light, and the dead body of mankind will arise and

live; so that every soul will ask for immortality, through

the holy breaths of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 2–3

5. Rest you assured that the breathings of the Holy Spirit

will loosen your tongue. Speak, therefore; speak out with

great courage at every meeting. When you are about to

begin your address, turn first to Bahá’u’lláh and ask for

the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, then open your lips and

say whatever is suggested to your heart; this, however, with

the utmost courage, dignity and conviction.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, tablet to an individual believer, in *Bahá’í Meetings* 8–9

6. It is at such times that the friends of God avail them-

selves of the occasion, seize the opportunity, rush forth

and win the prize. If their task is to be confined to good

conduct and advice, nothing will be accomplished. They

must speak out, expound the proofs, set forth clear argu-

ments, draw irrefutable conclusions establishing the truth

of the manifestation of the Sun of Reality.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The Individual and Teaching* 11

7. To teach the Cause of God, to proclaim its truths, to

defend its interests, to demonstrate, by words as well as by

deeds, its indispensability, its potency, and universality,

should at no time be regarded as the exclusive concern or

sole privilege of Bahá’í administrative institutions, be they

Assemblies, or committees. All must participate, however

humble their origin, however limited their experience, how-

ever restricted their means, however deficient their educa-

tion, however pressing their cares and preoccupations, how-

ever unfavorable the environment in which they live.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 45

8. The individual alone must … consult his conscience,

prayerfully consider all its aspects, manfully struggle

against the natural inertia that weighs him down in his

effort to arise, shed, heroically and irrevocably, the trivial

and superfluous attachments which hold him back, empty

himself of every thought that may tend to obstruct his

path, mix, in obedience to the counsels of the Author of His

Faith, and in imitation of the One Who is its true Exem-

plar, with men and women, in all walks of life, seek to

touch their hearts, through the distinction which charac-

terizes his thoughts, his words and his acts, and win them

over tactfully, lovingly, prayerfully and persistently, to the

Faith he himself has espoused.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/19/56 to the Bahá’ís of the United States, in

*Citadel of Faith* 148

### Being an example

9. O people of God! Do not busy yourselves in your own

concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will

rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the

hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved

through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a

goodly behavior. Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of

this Cause, and a saintly character will reinforce its power.

Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá! This, verily,

is the commandment which this wronged One hath given

unto you, and the first choice of His unrestrained Will for

every one of you.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 93–94

10. Beware, O people of Bahá, lest ye walk in the ways of

them whose words differ from their deeds. Strive that ye may

be enabled to manifest to the peoples of the earth the signs of

God, and to mirror forth His commandments. Let your acts

be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most

men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is

through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from

others. Through them the brightness of your light can be

shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth

My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him

Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 305

11. … the Faith of God must be propagated through

human perfections, through qualities that are excellent

and pleasing, and spiritual behavior. If a soul of his own

accord advances toward God he will be accepted at the

Threshold of Oneness, for such a one is free of personal

considerations, of greed and selfish interests, and he has

taken refuge within the sheltering protection of his Lord.

He will become known among men as trustworthy and

truthful, temperate and scrupulous, high-minded and

loyal, incorruptible and God-fearing. In this way the pri-

mary purpose in revealing the Divine Law—which is to

bring about happiness in the after life and civilization and

the refinement of character in this—will be realized.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 46

12. … is there any deed in the world that would be nobler

than service to the common good? Is there any greater

blessing conceivable for a man, than that he should be-

come the cause of the education, the development, the

prosperity and honor of his fellow-creatures? No, by the

Lord God! The highest righteousness of all is for blessed

souls to take hold of the hands of the helpless and deliver

them out of their ignorance and abasement and poverty,

and with pure motives, and only for the sake of God, to

arise and energetically devote themselves to the service of

the masses, forgetting their own worldly advantage and

working only to serve the general good.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 103

13. The work in which you are engaged is dear and near to

my heart and constitutes one of the most vital aspects of

the manifold activities of our beloved Faith. The highest

standards of purity, of integrity, of detachment and sacri-

fice must be maintained by the members of your group in

order to enable you to play a decisive part in the spread and

consolidation of the Faith. A tremendous responsibility

has been laid upon you, and nothing short of a pure, a

virtuous, an active and truly exemplary life can enable you

to fulfill your high destiny. I will pray that you may be

guided and strengthened to render the most effective

service to the Cause and by your example lend a fresh

impetus to the onward march of its new-born institutions.

Shoghi Effendi, postscript to letter dated 9/6/34 to Youth Council, Central

States Summer School, Louhelen Ranch, U.S.A.

14. Every day has certain needs. In those early days the

Cause needed Martyrs, and people who would stand all

sorts of torture and persecution in expressing their faith

and spreading the message sent by God. Those days are,

however, gone. The Cause at present does not need mar-

tyrs who would die for the faith, but servants who desire

to teach and establish the Cause throughout the world. To

live to teach in the present day is like being martyred in

those early days. It is the spirit that moves us that counts,

not the act through which that spirit expresses itself; and

that spirit is to serve the Cause of God with our heart and

soul.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8/3/32 to an individual believer, in

*The Bahá’í Life* 4

15. What is needed now is the awakening of all believers to

the immediacy of the challenge so that each may assume

his share of the responsibility for taking the Teachings to

all humanity. Universal participation … must be pressed

toward attainment in every continent, country and island

of the globe. Every Bahá’í, however humble or inarticulate,

must become intent on fulfilling his role as a bearer of the

Divine Message. Indeed, how can a true believer remain

silent while around us men cry out in anguish for truth, love

and unity to descend upon this world?

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11/16/69 to Bahá’ís of the

world, in *Messages from The Universal House of Justice* 34

16. In addition to teaching, every believer can pray. Every

believer can strive to make his “own inner life and private

character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splen-

dor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh.”

Every believer can contribute to the Fund. Not all believers

can give public talks, not all are called upon to serve on

administrative institutions. But all can pray, fight their own

spiritual battles, and contribute to the Fund. If every believer

will carry out these sacred duties, we shall be astonished at

the accession of power which will result to the whole body,

and which in its turn will give rise to further growth and the

showering of greater blessings on all of us.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9/64, in *Wellspring of Guidance*

38

### The power of love and fellowship

17. Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of

friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth,

if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it

with them in a language of utmost kindliness and good-will.

If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is

attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself,

and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly

with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of

men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with

meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and

understanding ….

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 289

18. The friends of God should weave bonds of fellowship

with others and show absolute love and affection towards

them. These links have a deep influence on people and they

will listen. When the friends sense receptivity to the Word

of God, they should deliver the Message with wisdom. They

must first try and remove any apprehensions in the people

they teach. In fact, every one of the believers should choose

one person every year and try to establish ties of friendship

with him, so that all his fear would disappear. Only then,

and gradually, must he teach that person. This is the best

method.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The Individual and Teaching* 12

19. O ye lovers of God! Be kind to all peoples; care for every

person; do all ye can to purify the hearts and minds of

men; strive ye to gladden every soul. To every meadow be a

shower of grace, to every tree the water of life; be as sweet

musk to the sense of humankind, and to the ailing be a

fresh, restoring breeze. Be pleasing waters to all those who

thirst, a careful guide to all who have lost their way; be

father and mother to the orphan, be loving sons and

daughters to the old, be an abundant treasure to the poor.

Think ye of love and good fellowship as the delights of

heaven, think ye of hostility and hatred as the torments of

hell.

Indulge not your bodies with rest, but work with all

your souls, and with all your hearts cry out and beg of God

to grant you His succor and grace. Thus may ye make this

world the Abhá Paradise, and this globe of earth the parade

ground of the realm on high. If only ye exert the effort, it is

certain that these splendors will shine out, these clouds of

mercy will shed down their rain, these life-giving winds will

rise and blow, this sweet-smelling musk will be scattered far

and wide.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 244–45

20. The love we bear mankind, our conviction that Bahá’-

u’lláh’s Faith contains the only and the Divine remedy for all

its ills, must be demonstrated today in action by bringing

the Cause before the public. No doubt the majority are not

yet able to see its true significance, but they must not be

deprived, through our failure in obligation, of the opportuni-

ty of hearing of it. And there are many precious souls who

are seeking for it and ready to embrace it.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/19/42 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 24

21. Through example, loving fellowship, prayer, and kind-

ness the friends can attract the hearts of such people and

enable them to realize that this is the Cause of God in

deed, not merely words!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/24/43 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 25

22. The friends must realize their individual responsibili-

ty. Each must hold a Fireside in his or her home, once in

19 days, where new people are invited, and where some

phase of the Faith is mentioned and discussed. If this is

done with the intent of showing Bahá’í hospitality and love,

then there will be results. People will become interested in

“what” you are interested in, and then be interested in

studying. Individual firesides will bring the knowledge of the

Faith to more people, under favorable circumstances, and

thus constantly enrich its circle of friends, and finally its

members. There is no substitute for the teaching work of the

individual.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/6/57 to Mr. and Mrs. Fred

Bennett, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 317 (July 1957) 4

23. The believers must be encouraged to teach individually

in their own homes. Bahá’u’lláh has enjoined upon the

Bahá’ís the sacred obligation of teaching. We have no priests,

therefore the service once rendered by priests to their reli-

gions is the service every single Bahá’í is expected to render

individually to his religion. He must be the one who enlight-

ens new souls, confirms them, heals the wounded and the

weary upon the road of life, and gives them to quaff from the

chalice of everlasting life—the knowledge of the Manifesta-

tion of God in His Day.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/5/57 to the Bahá’ís of the

Benelux countries, in *The Individual and Teaching* 39

24. The implications of this principle of the oneness of

humanity are many and far-reaching, and it is on these

that, the Guardian feels, our Bahá’í youth should dwell in

their talks and activities, proving by their deeds as well as

through their words, their faithful and whole-hearted adher-

ence to this cornerstone principle of the Faith.

Above all they should strive to get rid of all their ances-

tral prejudices, whether of race, creed or class, and thus

attract through the example of their lives many outsiders to

the Cause. At a time when racial prejudice is becoming so

widespread and intense, it should be their constant endeav-

or to associate and mingle with the members of all races, and

thereby demonstrate to the world at large the hollowness,

nay the stupidity of the racial doctrines and philosophies

which are so increasingly poisoning the minds of the indi-

viduals, classes and nations throughout the world.

This is the high standard of thought and conduct which

the Guardian wishes the Bahá’í youth to strictly and faithful-

ly maintain. May they, each and all, arise and live up to its

high and noble ideals!

Shoghi Effendi, in *A New Way of Life* 13

25. The real secret of universal participation lies in the

Master’s oft-expressed wish that the friends should love

each other, constantly encourage each other, work togeth-

er, be as one soul in one body, and in so doing become a

true, organic, healthy body animated and illumined by the

spirit. In such a body all will receive spiritual health and

vitality from the organism itself, and the most perfect

flowers and fruits will be brought forth.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9/64, in *Wellspring of Guidance*

38–39

### The responsibilities of youth

26. The activities, hopes and ideals of the Bahá’í Youth in

America, as well as in all other parts of the world are close

and dear to my heart. Upon them rests the supreme and

challenging responsibility to promote the interests of the

Cause of God in the days to come, to co-ordinate its world-

wide activities, to extend its scope, to safeguard its integrity,

to exalt its virtues, define its purpose, and translate its

ideals and aims into memorable and abiding achievements.

Theirs is a mighty task, at once holy, stupendous and

enthralling. May the spirit of Bahá’u’lláh protect, inspire and

sustain them in the prosecution of their divinely-appointed

task!

Shoghi Effendi, postscript to letter dated 10/26/32 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* iii

27. It is on young and active Bahá’ís, like you, that the

Guardian centers all his hopes for the future progress and

expansion of the Cause, and it is on their shoulders that he

lays all the responsibility for the upkeep of the spirit of selfless

service among their fellow-believers. Without that spirit no

work can be successfully achieved. With it triumph, though

hardly won, is but inevitable. You should, therefore, try all

your best to carry aflame within you the torch of faith, for

through it you will surely find guidance, strength and

eventual success.

… every one of them is able, in his own measure, to

deliver the Message … Everyone is a potential teacher. He

has only to use what God has given him and thus prove that

he is faithful to his trust.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/1/33 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 21

28. The obligation to teach is essentially the responsibility

of young believers. Their whole training should therefore

be directed in such a way as to make them competent

teachers. It is for this very purpose that Bahá’í summer

schools, which constitute the very basis upon which the

Bahá’í universities of the future will be established, should

be widely attended by young believers.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/15/36 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Centers of*

*Bahá’í Learning* 15

29. The Guardian is looking to the Youth of America to

raise the Banner of the Faith to ever higher and more

glorious heights.

The Youth should become severed from all things of the

world and filled with the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit,

arise to spread the Message and quicken the hearts.

The Divine Confirmations will surely come to each and

everyone of you who arise to teach the Faith and extend the

Administrative Institutions.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8/8/57 to Bahá’í youth group of

Denver, Colorado, in *Bahá’í Youth* 6

30. As to Bahá’í youth, legatees of the heroic early believers

and now standing on their shoulders, we call upon them to

redouble their efforts, in this day of widespread interest in the

Cause of God, to enthuse their contemporaries with the

divine Message and thus prepare themselves for the day

when they will be veteran believers able to assume whatever

tasks may be laid upon them. We offer them this passage

from the Pen of Bahá’u’lláh:

Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the

heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of

the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His

love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the

creation of the heavens and of the earth. Blessed are the

steadfast and well is it with those who are firm.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riḍván 1982 to Bahá’ís of the

world

3. Not yet having acquired all the responsibilities of a

family or a long-established home and job, youth can the

more easily choose where they will live and study or work.

In the world at large young people travel hither and thither

seeking amusement, education, and experiences. Bahá’í

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youth, bearing the incomparable treasure of the Word of God

for this Day, can harness this mobility into service for

mankind and can choose their places of residence, their

areas of travel, and their types of work with the goal in mind

of how they can best serve the Faith.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/10/66, in *Wellspring of*

*Guidance* 95

32. This generation of Bahá’í youth enjoys a unique distinc-

tion. You will live your lives in a period when the forces of

history are moving to a climax, when mankind will see the

establishment of the Lesser Peace, and during which the

Cause of God will play an increasingly prominent role in the

reconstruction of human society. It is you who will be called

upon in the years to come to stand at the helm of the Cause

in face of conditions and developments which can, as yet,

scarcely be imagined ….

… Now is an opportunity to awaken the interest, set

afire the hearts and enlist the active support of young people

of every nation, class and creed in that continent. The key to

success in this endeavor is, firstly, to deepen your under-

standing of the Teachings of the Cause so that you will be

able to apply them to the problems of individuals and

society, and explain them to your peers in ways that they will

understand and welcome; secondly, to strive to model your

behavior in every way after the high standards of honesty,

trustworthiness, courage, loyalty, forbearance, purity and

spirituality set forth in the Teachings; and, above all, to live

in continual awareness of the presence and all-conquering

power of Bahá’u’lláh, which will enable you to overcome

every temptation and surmount every obstacle.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7/4/83 to European Youth

Conference, Innsbruck, Austria

## Ensuring success in teaching

### Being filled with the love of God

33. O Friends! You must all be so ablaze in this day with

the fire of the love of God that the heat thereof may be

manifest in all your veins, your limbs and members of your

body, and the peoples of the world may be ignited by this

heat and turn to the horizon of the Beloved.

Bahá’u’lláh, in *The Individual and Teaching* 3

34. If he be kindled with the fire of His love, if he forgoeth

all created things, the words he uttereth shall set on fire

them that hear him.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 51

35. By God besides Whom is none other God! Should any

one arise for the triumph of our Cause, him will God

render victorious though tens of thousands of enemies be

leagued against him. And if his love for Me wax stronger,

God will establish his ascendancy over all the powers of

earth and heaven. Thus have We breathed the spirit of

power into all regions.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 106

36. With hearts overflowing with the love of God, with

tongues commemorating the mention of God, with eyes

turned to the Kingdom of God, they must deliver the glad

tidings of the manifestation of the Lord of Hosts to all the

people. Know ye of a certainty that whatever gathering ye

enter, the waves of the Holy Spirit are surging over it, and

the heavenly grace of the Blessed Beauty encompasseth

that gathering.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* 38–39

37. The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be

pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his

thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity

exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he

become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the

rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long

as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of

others? Unless he is detached from aught else save God,

how can he teach severance to others!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* 51

38. When a speaker’s brow shineth with the radiance of

the love of God, at the time of his exposition of a subject,

and he is exhilarated with the wine of true understanding,

he becometh the center of a potent force which like unto a

magnet will attract the hearts. This is why the expounder

must be in the utmost enkindlement.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The Individual and Teaching* 11

39. Many are the souls who, in this Holy Cause, without

either worldly means or knowledge, have set ablaze the

hearts of others with the divine love and rendered the

Faith imperishable services. The Guardian hopes that you

will be able to do likewise.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/5/41 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of India and Burma, in *A Special Measure of Love* 2

### Demonstrating love and fellowship

40. O ye beloved of the Lord! Commit not that which

defileth the limpid stream of love or destroyeth the sweet

fragrance of friendship. By the righteousness of the Lord!

Ye were created to show love one to another and not

perversity and rancor. Take pride not in love for yourselves

but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for

your country, but in love for all mankind.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 138

41. … the friends of God must manifest the mercy of the

Compassionate Lord in the world of existence and must

show forth the bounty of the visible and invisible King.

They must purify their sight, and look upon mankind as

the leaves, blossoms and fruits of the tree of creation, and

must always be thinking of doing good to someone, of love,

consideration, affection and assistance to somebody. They

must see no enemy and count no one as an ill wisher. They

must consider every one on the earth as a friend; regard

the stranger as an intimate, and the alien as a companion.

They must not be bound by any tie, nay, rather, they

should be free from every bond. In this day the one who is

favored in the threshold of grandeur is the one who offers

the cup of faithfulness and bestows the pearl of gift to the

enemies, even to the fallen oppressor, lends a helping

hand, and considers every bitter foe as an affectionate

friend.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, tablet appended to His tablet to the Central Organization for a

Durable Peace, The Hague, in *The Bahá’í World* 15:36

42. The Guardian feels that the most effective way for the

Bahá’ís to teach the Faith is to make strong friends with

their neighbors and associates. When the friends have confi-

dence in the Bahá’ís and the Bahá’ís in their friends, they

should give the Message and teach the Cause. Individual

teaching of this type is more effective than any other type.

The principle of the fireside meeting, which was estab-

lished in order to permit and encourage the individual to

teach in his own home, has been proven the most effective

instrument for spreading the Faith.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/27/54 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 33

43. The Bahá’ís must realize that the success of this work

depends upon the individual. The individual must arise as

never before to proclaim the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. The most

effective way for them to carry on their work is for the

individual to make many contacts, select a few who they feel

would become Bahá’ís, develop a close friendship with them,

then complete confidence, and finally teach them the Faith,

until they become strong supporters of the Cause of God.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/13/55 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *The Individual and Teaching*

34

*Demonstrating the power of the Faith
through righteous deeds and a distinctive*character

44. Say: O people of God! That which can insure the victory

of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on

earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scrip-

tures, and are as clear and manifest as the sun. These

hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and charac-

ter, as are acceptable in His sight. Whoso ariseth, in this

Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance

the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright con-

duct, the influence from such an action will, most certain-

ly, be diffused throughout the whole world.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 24

45. The teaching work should under all conditions be

actively pursued by the believers because divine confirma-

tions are dependent upon it. Should a Bahá’í refrain from

being fully, vigorously and wholeheartedly involved in the

teaching work he will undoubtedly be deprived of the bless-

ings of the Abhá Kingdom. Even so, this activity should be

tempered with wisdom—not that wisdom which requireth

one to be silent and forgetful of such an obligation, but

rather that which requireth one to display divine tolerance,

love, kindness, patience, a goodly character, and holy deeds.

In brief, encourage the friends individually to teach the

Cause of God and draw their attention to this meaning of

wisdom mentioned in the Writings, which is itself the

essence of teaching the Faith—but all this to be done with

the greatest tolerance, so that heavenly assistance and divine

confirmation may aid the friends.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The Individual and Teaching* 12

46. Of these spiritual prerequisites of success … the

following stand out as preeminent and vital, which the

members of the American Bahá’í community will do well to

ponder. Upon the extent to which these basic requirements

are met, and the manner in which the American believers

fulfill them in their individual lives, administrative activi-

ties, and social relationships, must depend the measure of

the manifold blessings which the All-Bountiful Possessor

can vouchsafe to them all. These requirements are none

other than a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and

administrative activities, absolute chastity in their individu-

al lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their deal-

ings with peoples of a different race, class, creed, or color.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 21–22

47. The gross materialism that engulfs the entire nation at

the present hour; the attachment to worldly things that

enshrouds the souls of men; the fears and anxieties that

distract their minds; the pleasure and dissipations that fill

their time, the prejudices and animosities that darken

their outlook, the apathy and lethargy that paralyze their

spiritual faculties—these are among the formidable obsta-

cles that stand in the path of every would-be warrior in the

service of Bahá’u’lláh, obstacles which he must battle

against and surmount in his crusade for the redemption of

his own countrymen.

To the degree that the home front crusader is himself

cleansed of these impurities, liberated from these petty

preoccupations and gnawing anxieties, delivered from these

prejudices and antagonisms, emptied of self, and filled by

the healing and the sustaining power of God, will he be able

to combat the forces arrayed against him, magnetize the

souls of those whom he seeks to convert, and win their

unreserved, their enthusiastic and enduring allegiance to

the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh.

Delicate and strenuous though the task may be, however

arduous and prolonged the effort required, whatsoever the

nature of the perils and pitfalls that beset the path of

whoever arises to revive the fortunes of a Faith struggling

against the rising forces of materialism, nationalism, secu-

larism, racialism, ecclesiasticism, the all-conquering potency

of the grace of God, vouchsafed through the Revelation of

Bahá’u’lláh, will, undoubtedly, mysteriously and surprising-

ly, enable whosoever arises to champion His Cause to win

complete and total victory.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/19/56 to the Bahá’ís of the United States, in

*Citadel of Faith* 149

### Deepening in and studying the writings

48. Those who participate in such a campaign, whether in

an organizing capacity, or as workers to whose care the

execution of the task itself has been committed, must, as

an essential preliminary to the discharge of their duties,

thoroughly familiarize themselves with the various as-

pects of the history and teachings of their Faith. In their

efforts to achieve this purpose they must study for them-

selves, conscientiously and painstakingly, the literature of

their Faith, delve into its teachings, assimilate its laws and

principles, ponder its admonitions, tenets and purposes,

commit to memory certain of its exhortations and prayers,

master the essentials of its administration, and keep

abreast of its current affairs and latest developments.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 49

49. If the younger Bahá’í generation, in whom Shoghi

Effendi has great hopes, take the pains of studying the

Cause deeply and thoroughly, read its history, find its

underlying principles and become both well informed and

energetic, they surely can achieve a great deal. It is upon

their shoulders that the Master has laid the tremendous

work of teaching. They are the ones to raise the call of the

Kingdom and arouse the people from slumber. If they fail the

Cause is doomed to stagnation.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4/26/23 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of India, in *The Importance of Deepening* 28

50. … a sound knowledge of history, including religious

history, and also of social and economic subjects, is of

great help in teaching the Cause to intelligent people ….

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/4/46 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 26

51. I wish to urge the necessity of concentrating, at your

next summer session, on the systematic study of the early

history and principles of the Faith, on public speaking,

and on a thorough discussion, both formally and informal-

ly, of various aspects of the Cause. These I regard as

essential preliminaries to a future intensive campaign of

teaching in which the rising generation must engage, if

the spread of the Cause is to be assured in that land. May

you succeed in your efforts to attain that goal!

Shoghi Effendi, postscript to letter dated 11/2/32 to an individual believer, in

*Centers of Bahá’í Learning* 14

52. The interests of our beloved Faith require that the

youth in particular exert every effort to spread it, while at

the same time deepening their own knowledge of the

Teachings and perfecting their private lives in accord-

ance with the standards of conduct laid down by Bahá’-

u’lláh.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/19/41 to the Bahá’í youth of

India, in *Dawn of a New Day* 180

### Consecration, dedication, and service

53. Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word

amongst men. We are with you at all times, and shall

strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly

almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me, will arise and serve

Me with such determination that the powers of earth and

heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 137

54. When the friends do not endeavor 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 myster-

ies. However, when the tongue of the teacher is engaged in

teaching, he will naturally himself be stimulated, will be-

come 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, in *The Individual and Teaching* 10

55. The Hosts of the Supreme Concourse are in martial

array, poised between Earth and Heaven ready to rush to

the assistance of those who arise to Teach the Faith. If one

seeks the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, one can find it

in rich abundance in the Teaching Field. The world is

seeking as never before, and if the Friends will arise with

new determination, fully consecrated to the noble task

ahead of them, victory after victory will be won for the

Glorious Faith of God.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/2/56 to Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of the Anchorage Recording District, in *The Individual and Teaching*

34–35

56. Today, as never before, the magnet which attracts the

blessings from on high, is teaching the Faith of God. The

Hosts of Heaven are poised between heaven and earth, just

waiting, and patiently, for the Bahá’í to step forth, with

pure devotion and consecration, to teach the Cause of God,

so they may rush to his aid and assistance. It is the

Guardian’s prayer that the Friends may treble their efforts, as

the time is short—alas, the workers too few. Let those who

wish to achieve immortality step forth and raise the Divine

Call. They will be astonished at the spiritual victories they

will gain.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/28/53 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 32

57. What is needed to achieve success in the teaching field

is a complete dedication on the part of the individual,

consecration to the glorious task of spreading the Faith,

and the living of the Bahá’í life, because that creates the

magnet for the Holy Spirit, and it is the Holy Spirit which

quickens the new soul. Thus the individual should be as a

reed, through which the Holy Spirit may flow, to give new life

to the seeking soul.

One should search out those who are receptive to the

Faith, and then concentrate on these persons in their teach-

ing.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/19/53 to two individual

believers, in *The Individual and Teaching* 32

58. Consecration, dedication and enthusiastic service is

the Keynote to successful teaching. One must become like

a reed through which the Holy Spirit descends to reach the

student of the Faith. We give the Message, and explain the

Teachings, but it is the Holy Spirit that quickens and

confirms.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/16/55 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 33–34

59. It is not enough for the friends to make the excuse that

their best teachers and their exemplary believers have

arisen and answered the call to pioneer. A “best teacher”

and an “exemplary believer” is ultimately neither more nor

less than an ordinary Bahá’í who has consecrated himself to

the work of the Faith, deepened his knowledge and under-

standing of its Teachings, placed his confidence in Bahá’-

u’lláh, and arisen to serve Him to the best of his ability. This

door is one which we are assured will open before the face of

every follower of the Faith who knocks hard enough, so to

speak. When the will and the desire are strong enough, the

means will be found and the way opened either to do more

work locally, to go to a new goal town … or to enter the

foreign pioneer field ….

… The Bahá’ís are the leaven of God, which must

leaven the lump of their nation. In direct ratio to their

success will be the protection vouchsafed, not only to them

but to their country. These are the immutable laws of God,

from which there is no escape: “For unto whomsoever much

is given, of him shall be much required.”

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/21/57 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *The Individual and Teaching*

40

60. If the friends always waited until they were *fully*

qualified to do any particular task, the work of the Cause

would be almost at a standstill! But the very act of striving to

serve, however unworthy one may feel, attracts the blessings

of God and enables one to become more fitted for the task.

Today the need is so great on the part of humanity to

hear of the Divine Message, that the believers must plunge

into the work, wherever and however they can, heedless of

their own shortcomings, but ever heedful of the crying need

of their fellow-men to hear of the teachings in their darkest

hour of travail.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/4/42 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 24–25

61. Teaching is the source of Divine Confirmation. It is not

sufficient to pray diligently for guidance, but this prayer

must be followed by meditation as to the best methods of

action and then action itself. Even if the action should not

immediately produce results, or perhaps not be entirely

correct, that does not make so much difference, because

prayers can only be answered through action and if some-

one’s action is wrong, God can use that method of showing

the pathway which is right.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8/22/57 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 40

62. The Bahá’í teacher must be all confidence. Therein lies

his strength and the secret of his success. Though single-

handed, and no matter how great the apathy of the people

around you may be, you should have faith that the hosts of

the Kingdom are on your side, and that through their help

you are bound to overcome the forces of darkness that are

facing the Cause of God. Persevere, be happy and confident,

therefore.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/30/37 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 23–24

63. Do not feel discouraged if your labors do not always

yield an abundant fruitage. For a quick and rapidly-won

success is not always the best and the most lasting. The

harder you strive to attain your goal, the greater will be the

confirmations of Bahá’u’lláh, and the more certain you can

feel to attain success. Be cheerful, therefore, and exert

yourself with full faith and confidence. For Bahá’u’lláh has

promised His Divine assistance to everyone who arises with

a pure and detached heart to spread His holy Word, even

though he may be bereft of every human knowledge and

capacity, and notwithstanding the forces of darkness and of

opposition which may be arrayed against him. The goal is

clear, the path safe and certain, and the assurances of

Bahá’u’lláh as to the eventual success of our efforts quite

emphatic. Let us keep firm, and whole-heartedly carry on the

great work which He has entrusted into our hands.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/3/37 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 23

64. O my God, aid Thou Thy servant to raise up the Word,

and to refute what is vain and false, to establish the truth,

to spread the sacred verses abroad, reveal the splendors,

and make the morning’s light to dawn in the hearts of the

righteous.

Thou art, verily, the Generous, the Forgiving.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Prayers* 174

### Attracting divine assistance

65. Whoso openeth his lips in this day, and maketh

mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine

inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My

name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also

descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a

chalice of pure light. Thus hath it been foreordained in the

realm of God’s Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the

All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 84

66. Whosoever quickens one soul in this Cause is like unto

one quickening all the servants and the Lord shall bring

him forth in the day of resurrection into the Riḍván of

oneness, adorned with the Mantle of Himself, the protector,

the mighty, the generous! Thus will ye assist your Lord, and

naught else save this shall ever be mentioned in this day

before God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.

Bahá’u’lláh, in *Bahá’í World Faith* 206

67. Rest ye assured that if a soul arises in the utmost

perseverance and raises the Call of the Kingdom and

resolutely promulgates the Covenant—be he an insignifi-

cant ant—he shall be enabled to drive away the formidable

elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall

cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, tablet dated 6/2/19 to Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Los

Angeles, California, in *Star of the West*, 10 (23 Nov. 1919) 265

## Who to teach

### All humanity

68. Be unrestrained as the wind, while carrying the Mes-

sage 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 behooveth 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 from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 339

69. The Faith of the Blessed Beauty is summoning man-

kind to safety and love, to amity and peace; it hath raised

up its tabernacle on the heights of the earth, and directeth

its call to all nations. Wherefore, O ye who are God’s lovers,

know ye the value of this precious Faith, obey its teach-

ings, walk in this road that is drawn straight, and show ye

this way to the people. Lift up your voices and sing out the

song of the Kingdom. Spread far and wide the precepts and

counsels of the loving Lord, so that this world will change

into another world, and this darksome earth will be flood-

ed with light, and the dead body of mankind will arise and

live; so that every soul will ask for immortality, through

the holy breaths of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 2–3

70. The believers ought to give the Message even to those

who do not seem to be ready for it, because they can never

judge the real extent to which the Word of God can influ-

ence the hearts and minds of the people, even those who

appear to lack any power of receptivity to the Teachings.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1/14/38 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 24

71. The paramount goal of the teaching work at the

present time is to carry the Message of Bahá’u’lláh to every

stratum of human society and every walk of life. An eager

response to the teachings will often be found in the most

unexpected quarters, and any such response should be

quickly followed up, for success in a fertile area awakens a

response in those who were at first uninterested.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10/31/67 to all National

Spiritual Assemblies, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 124

### Peers

72. To the Bahá’í youth of America … I feel a word should

be addressed in particular, as I survey the possibilities

which a campaign of such gigantic proportions has to offer

to the eager and enterprising spirit that so powerfully ani-

mates them in the service of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh.

Though lacking in experience and faced with insufficient

resources, yet the adventurous spirit which they possess,

and the vigor, the alertness, and optimism they have thus

far so consistently shown, qualify them to play an active part

in arousing the interest, and in securing the allegiance, of

their fellow youth in those countries.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 69

73. He feels that teaching the Faith to the youth is of the

utmost importance in these days, as they will not only

become the workers of the future but will be able to widely

spread the Message among their own generation.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/12/44 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 16–17

74. He was … very happy to see the Bahá’í youth are

holding meetings and making every effort to mingle with

other young people, through local clubs and groups, and

thus bring the Cause to their notice.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/23/45 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 17

75. He urges you to redouble your efforts during the

coming year, to teach the youth this great Message of

Bahá’u’lláh. It is indeed the one hope for the spiritual and

material security of the world; and although the response

may be slow at first, through your perseverance and devo-

tion, you will gradually succeed in attracting a very large

group to the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4/7/52 to an individual believer, in

*Dawn of a New Day* 199

### Minorities

76. By all means persevere and associate in a friendly spirit

with other groups of young people, particularly of a differ-

ent race or minority nationality, for such association will

demonstrate your complete conviction of the oneness of

mankind and attract others to the Faith, both young and

old alike.

A spirit of prejudice-free, loving comradeship with

others is what will open the eyes of people more than any

amount of words. Combined with such deeds you can

teach the Faith easily.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/18/45 to newly formed Bahá’í

group, in *The Individual and Teaching* 26

77. He urges you all to devote particular attention to the

contact with racial minorities. In a country which has

such a large element of prejudice against its colored citi-

zens as the United States, it is of the greatest importance

that the Bahá’ís—and more especially the youth—should

demonstrate actively our complete lack of prejudice and,

indeed, our prejudice in favor of minorities.

We cannot very well prosecute a teaching campaign

successfully in Africa if we do not in our home communities

demonstrate to the fullest extent our love for the people who

spring from the African population!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/11/51 to Louhelen School

Senior Youth Session, U.S.A., in *Bahá’í Youth* 18

78. … the House of Justice feels that there are a number

of cases in which Iranian Muslims could be considered for

enrollment as Bahá’ís; for example, in cases where the

Muslim spouse of a Bahá’í has shown his or her interest and

sincerity and has never engaged in opposing the Cause.

Another example is when an Iranian is a permanent resident

of the United States or Canada and apparently has no

ulterior motives, such as assuming Bahá’í membership to

resolve his visa problems ….

While the House of Justice favors the widest possible

dissemination of accurate information about the Faith to

Iranian Muslims, the time has not yet come in the West for

Bahá’ís, especially Persians, to adopt the general goal of

teaching the Cause to Iranian Muslims. As you know, Irani-

ans have a number of societies and organizations; some are

admittedly cultural, others are politically oriented, even if

seemingly cultural in purpose. These organizations are fre-

quented by people whose standards are not compatible with

those of the Faith. Obviously, association with such groups

could exert a baneful influence on some of the Bahá’ís,

particularly the youth.

The House of Justice feels that the friends, and some-

times the Bahá’í institutions, have tended to over-react to

the instructions given from time to time about contacting

and teaching Muslims from Iran and other places in the

Middle East, and they often take to extremes the cautions

given in such instructions. The friends sometimes think

they should shun such people entirely or that any contact

with them is considered a breach of Bahá’í law. We are asked

to point out that the House of Justice has never forbidden

the friends to contact Iranian Muslims, as such a general

prohibition would be contrary to the spirit of the Faith.

However, given the history and the current situation of the

Faith in Iran, it has urged the friends in the West to act

toward these people with wisdom and caution.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3/6/83 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada

### School and college students

79. It is in intellectual circles such as this [a university

circle] that the believers should endeavor to teach, confi-

dent that no matter how limited their capacity may be, yet

their efforts are continually guided and reinforced from on

High. This spirit of confident hope, of cheerful courage,

and of undaunted enthusiasm in itself, irrespective of any

tangible results which it may procure, can alone ensure the

ultimate success of our teaching efforts.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/31/36 to an individual believer, in

*The Individual and Teaching* 22

80. He was greatly pleased and highly encouraged with

your slow but progressive work among members of the

faculty and the student body in State College. It is high

time for the Bahá’ís to try and reach the thinking and

educated youth of the country upon whom so much of the

future depends, especially the stupendous task of applying

the spirit and letter of the Bahá’í teachings to the require-

ments of the time—a work for which generations of prepara-

tion might be necessary.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/13/28 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 17

81. He was deeply interested in your work among the

university students and hopes that it will bear much fruit.

The youth is open-minded, unhampered by prejudice and

ready to accept any message that satisfies his spiritual

longings as well as intellectual demands. The work should,

however, be both intensive and extensive. It is not suffi-

cient that you should address many student bodies; per-

sons have to be found to follow up that work, pick those

who are interested to know more and ground them in the

teachings.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/20/31 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 17–18

82. The account of your work among the foreign students

made Shoghi Effendi very happy. Not only will these young

people get a good impression of American families and

hospitality, but the spiritual training you try to give them

will make their education so much more complete and

worthwhile. This is beside the fact that in their heart is

planted the seeds of the Bahá’í teachings which in time will

germinate and bring forth wondrous fruits. All these young

people when they return home will carry the Message with

them, and even though they do not become confirmed

believers, they will remain friends always ready to render a

service to the Bahá’í teachers they happen to meet. Shoghi

Effendi hopes you will carry on that work but at the same

time try to make them true Bahá’ís—in spirit as well as in

faith.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/4/32 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 19

## Traveling teaching

83. O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the

utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of

“Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá” in cities, villages, mountains, deserts

and oceans, promote the Divine teachings! This, alas, I

cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may

achieve it.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* 39

84. Now is the time for you to divest yourselves of the

garment of attachment to this world that perisheth, to be

wholly severed from the physical world, become heavenly

angels, and travel to these countries.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* 34

85. Bahá’í youth should be encouraged to think of their

studies and of their training for a trade or profession as part

of their service to the Cause of God and in the context of a

lifetime that will be devoted to advancing the interests of the

Faith. At the same time, during their years of study, youth

are often able to offer specific periods of weeks, or months, or

even of a year or more, during which they can devote

themselves to travel teaching or to serving the Bahá’í com-

munity in other ways, such as conducting children’s classes

in remote villages. They should be encouraged to offer such

service, which will in itself be admirable experience for the

future, and the National Assembly should instruct an appro-

priate committee to receive such offers and to organize their

implementation so as to derive the greatest possible advan-

tage from them.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Naw-Rúz 1974 to all National

Spiritual Assemblies, in *Challenge* 11

86. It is our hope that in the international travel teaching

program now being launched the youth will assume a

major role by devoting time during their vacations, and

particularly during the long vacation at the end of the

academic year, to the promotion of the teaching work in all

its aspects, not only within their own national communi-

ties but farther afield. Some youth may have financial

resources of their own, others may be able and willing to

work and save the funds necessary for such projects, still

others may have the financial backing of their parents,

relatives or friends. In other cases the Bahá’í funds may be

able to supplement whatever resources the prospective trav-

eling teacher may be able to supply.

The endurance of youth under arduous conditions, their

vitality and vigor, and their ability to adapt themselves to

local situations, to meet new challenges, and to impart their

warmth and enthusiasm to those they visit, combined with

the standard of conduct upheld by Bahá’í youth, make them

potent instruments for the execution of the contemplated

projects. Indeed, through these distinctive qualities they can

become the spearhead of any enterprise and the driving

force of any undertaking in which they participate, whether

local or national. Our expectant eyes are fixed on Bahá’í

youth!

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 5/25/75 to all National Spiritu-

al Assemblies

## Pioneering

87. They that have forsaken their country for the purpose

of teaching Our Cause—these shall the Faithful Spirit

strengthen through its power. A company of Our chosen

angels shall go forth with them, as bidden by Him Who is

the Almighty, the All-Wise. How great the blessedness that

awaiteth him that hath attained the honor of serving the

Almighty! By My life! No act, however great, can compare

with it, except such deeds as have been ordained by God,

the All-Powerful, the Most Mighty. Such a service is,

indeed, the prince of all goodly deeds, and the ornament of

every goodly act. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is

the Sovereign Revealer, the Ancient of Days.

Whoso ariseth to teach Our Cause must needs detach

himself from all earthly things, and regard, at all times,

the triumph of Our Faith as his supreme objective. This

hath, verily, been decreed in the Guarded Tablet. And

when he determineth to leave his home, for the sake of the

Cause of his Lord, let him put his whole trust in God, as

the best provision for his journey, and array himself with

the robe of virtue. Thus hath it been decreed by God, the

Almighty, the All-Praised.

If he be kindled with the fire of His love, if he forgoeth

all created things, the words he uttereth shall set on fire

them that hear him. Verily, thy Lord is the Omniscient, the

All-Informed. Happy is the man that hath heard Our voice,

and answered Our call. He, in truth, is of them that shall

be brought nigh unto Us.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 334–35

88. It is also recorded in the blessed Gospel: *Travel ye*

*throughout the world and call ye the people to the Kingdom*

*of God.* Now this is the time that you may arise and perform

this most great service and become the cause of the guidance

of innumerable souls. Thus through this superhuman serv-

ice the rays of peace and conciliation may illumine and

enlighten all the regions and the world of humanity may find

peace and composure.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* 22

89. Let this be the paramount and most urgent duty of

every Bahá’í. Let us make it the dominating passion of our

life. Let us scatter to the uttermost corners of the earth;

sacrifice our personal interests, comforts, tastes and pleas-

ures; mingle with the divers kindreds and peoples of the

world; familiarize ourselves with their manners, traditions,

thoughts and customs; arouse, stimulate and maintain

universal interest in the Movement, and at the same time

endeavor by all the means in our power, by concentrated and

persistent attention, to enlist the unreserved allegiance and

the active support of the more hopeful and receptive among

our hearers.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/24/24, in *Bahá’í Administration* 69

90. Young people, being, for the most part, freer than the

older believers, are in a position to arise as pioneers and

move to new towns as settlers. A great number of the

pioneers in America, who left their native cities, and often

their native land, in order to fulfill the Seven Year Plan,

were young people—some of them so young that the Spirit-

ual Assemblies they helped to establish, they were them-

selves not yet old enough to be elected to!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/7/46 to the National Youth Commit-

tee of the British Isles, in *Lights of Guidance* 514–15

91. Shall I continue my education, or should I pioneer

now? Undoubtedly this same question is in the mind of

every young Bahá’í wishing to dedicate his life to the

advancement of the Faith. There is no stock answer which

applies to all situations; the beloved Guardian gave different

answers to different individuals on this question. Obviously

circumstances vary with each individual case. Each indi-

vidual must decide how he can best serve the Cause. In

making this decision, it will be helpful to weigh the following

factors:

Upon becoming a Bahá’í one’s whole life is, or should become

devoted to the progress of the Cause of God, and every talent

or faculty he possesses is ultimately committed to this over-

riding life objective. Within this framework he must consider,

among other things, whether by continuing his education

now he can be a more effective pioneer later, or alternatively

whether the urgent need for pioneers, while possibilities for

teaching are still open, outweighs an anticipated increase in

effectiveness. This is not an easy decision, since oftentimes

the spirit which prompts the pioneering offer is more impor-

tant than one’s academic attainments.

One’s liability for military service may be a factor in timing

the offer of pioneer service.

One may have outstanding obligations to others, including

those who may be dependent on him for support.

It may be possible to combine a pioneer project with a

continuing educational program. Consideration may also be

given to the possibility that a pioneering experience, even

though it interrupts the formal educational program, may

prove beneficial in the long run in that studies would later be

resumed with a more mature outlook.

The urgency of a particular goal which one is especially

qualified to fill and for which there are no other offers.

The fact that the need for pioneers will undoubtedly be with

us for many generations to come, and that therefore there will

be many calls in future for pioneering service.

The principle of consultation also applies. One may have the

obligation to consult others, such as one’s parents, one’s

Local and National Assemblies, and the pioneering commit-

tees.

Finally, bearing in mind the principle of sacrificial service

and the unfailing promises Bahá’u’lláh ordained for those

who arise to serve His Cause, one should pray and meditate

on what his course of action will be. Indeed, it often happens

that the answer will be found in no other way.

We assure the youth that we are mindful of the many

important decisions they must make as they tread the path

of service to Bahá’u’lláh. We will offer our ardent supplica-

tions at the Holy Threshold that all will be divinely guided

and that they will attract the blessings of the All-Merciful.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10/9/68 to Bahá’í youth in every

land, in *Messages from The Universal House of Justice* 18–20

92. In the past, the policy adopted by some National

Assemblies was to discourage young Bahá’ís from enrolling

to serve in activities sponsored by non-Bahá’í voluntary

organizations, as the Assemblies were under the impression

that these young people would not be able to engage in direct

teaching, nor participate, for the most part, in Bahá’í activi-

ties while serving abroad in such programs. Perhaps in

some instances the Bahá’ís involved were not sure how to

function as members of the Bahá’í community in order to

give each aspect of their lives its proper due.

In the light of experience, however, it is now clear that

we should have no misgivings in encouraging young Bahá’ís

to enroll in such voluntary service organization programs as

the United Nations Volunteers, United States Peace Corps,

Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO) and similar

Canadian agencies, the British Volunteer Programme (BVP)

of the United Kingdom, and other voluntary service organi-

zations. Other countries such as Germany, the Netherlands,

and the Scandinavian lands are understood to have similar

service organizations which are compatible with Bahá’í

development goals as now tentatively envisaged.

Some of the advantages of such service to the Faith are

worth mentioning. Volunteers will receive thorough orienta-

tion and sometimes will be taught basic skills which will

enable them to help the Bahá’í community in projects

undertaken in developing countries. Wherever they serve,

these volunteers should be able to participate in Bahá’í

activities, and contribute to the consolidation of the Bahá’í

community. The freedom to teach is to a large extent depen-

dent upon the local interpretation of the group leader, but

even if volunteers do not engage in direct teaching, being

known as Bahá’ís and showing the Bahá’í spirit and attitude

towards work and service should attract favorable attention

and may, in many instances, be instrumental in attracting

individuals to the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh. And finally, the

period of overseas service often produces a taste for such

service, and volunteers may well offer to directly promote the

pioneer work either in the same country or in another

developing country.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12/13/83 to the

National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá’ís of Alaska, Australia, Austria,

Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Hawaiian

Islands, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand,

Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and

the United States

93. This Cause, although it embraces with equal esteem

people of all ages, has a special message and mission for

the youth of your generation. It is their charter for their

future, their hope, their guarantee of better days to come.

Therefore the Guardian is especially happy that the young

Bahá’ís are active in the pioneer work.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter to individual believer, in *Bahá’í News*,

no. 161 (Mar. 1943) 1

7 Cleanliness
and purity

## Purity of character

1. O ye the beloved of the one true God! Pass beyond the

narrow retreats of your evil and corrupt desires, and

advance into the vast immensity of the realm of God, and

abide ye in the meads of sanctity and of detachment, that

the fragrance of your deeds may lead the whole of mankind

to the ocean of God’s unfading glory.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 31

2. A race of men, incomparable in character, shall be

raised up which, with the feet of detachment, will tread

under all who are in heaven and on earth, and will cast the

sleeve of holiness over all that hath been created from

water and clay.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 31

3. Would that ye had the power to perceive the things your

Lord, the All-Merciful, doth see—things that attest the

excellence of your rank, that bear witness to the greatness

of your worth, that proclaim the sublimity of your station!

God grant that your desires and unmortified passions may

not hinder you from that which hath been ordained for

you.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 317

4. The choice of clothing and the cut of the beard and its

dressing are left to the discretion of men. But beware, O

people, lest ye make yourselves the playthings of the igno-

rant.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 23

5. God loveth those who are pure. Naught in the Bayán and

in the sight of God is more loved than purity and immaculate

cleanliness ….

God desireth not to see, in the Dispensation of the

Bayán, any soul deprived of joy and radiance. He indeed

desireth that under all conditions, all may be adorned with

such purity, both inwardly and outwardly, that no repug-

nance may be caused even to themselves, how much less

unto others.

The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* 80

6. O Friends of the Pure and Omnipotent God! To be pure

and holy in all things is an attribute of the consecrated

soul and a necessary characteristic of the unenslaved

mind. The best of perfections is immaculacy and the

freeing of oneself from every defect. Once the individual is,

in every respect, cleansed and purified, then will he be-

come a focal center reflecting the Manifest Light.

First in a human being’s way of life must be purity,

then freshness, cleanliness, and independence of spirit.

First must the stream bed be cleansed, then may the sweet

river waters be led into it. Chaste eyes enjoy the beatific

vision of the Lord and know what this encounter meaneth;

a pure sense inhaleth the fragrances that blow from the

rose gardens of His grace; a burnished heart will mirror

forth the comely face of truth ….

My meaning is this, that in every aspect of life, purity

and holiness, cleanliness and refinement, exalt the human

condition and further the development of man’s inner

reality. Even in the physical realm, cleanliness will con-

duce to spirituality, as the Holy Writings clearly state. And

although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath,

nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit.

It is even as a voice wondrously sweet, or a melody played:

although sounds are but vibrations in the air which affect

the ear’s auditory nerve, and these vibrations are but

chance phenomena carried along through the air, even so,

see how they move the heart. A wondrous melody is wings

for the spirit, and maketh the soul to tremble for joy. The

purport is that physical cleanliness doth also exert its

effect upon the human soul.[1]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 146–47

7. … desire is a flame that has reduced to ashes uncount-

ed lifetime harvests of the learned, a devouring fire that

even the vast sea of their accumulated knowledge could

never quench. How often has it happened that an individu-

al who was graced with every attribute of humanity and

wore the jewel of true understanding, nevertheless fol-

lowed after his passions until his excellent qualities

passed beyond moderation and he was forced into excess.

His pure intentions changed to evil ones, his attributes

were no longer put to uses worthy of them, and the power

of his desires turned him aside from righteousness and its

rewards into ways that were dangerous and dark. A good

character is in the sight of God and His chosen ones and

the possessors of insight, the most excellent and praise-

worthy of all things, but always on condition that its center

of emanation should be reason and knowledge and its base

should be true moderation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* 59–60

8. A rectitude of conduct, an abiding sense of undeviating

justice, unobscured by the demoralizing influences which

a corruption-ridden political life so strikingly manifests; a

chaste, pure, and holy life, unsullied and unclouded by the

1. Bahá’u’lláh, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, exhorts the believers “to be the essence of

cleanliness.” Specifically, one is “to wash one’s feet”, “to perfume one’s self”, “to bathe

in clean water”, “to cut one’s nails”, “to wash soiled things in clean water”, “to be

stainless in one’s dress”, and “to renew the furnishings of one’s house” (*A Synopsis*

*and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 51).

indecencies, the vices, the false standards, which an in-

herently deficient moral code tolerates, perpetuates, and

fosters; a fraternity freed from that cancerous growth of

racial prejudice, which is eating into the vitals of an

already debilitated society—these are the ideals which the

American believers must, from now on, individually and

through concerted action, strive to promote, in both their

private and public lives, ideals which are the chief propel-

ling forces that can most effectively accelerate the march of

their institutions, plans, and enterprises, that can guard

the honor and integrity of their Faith, and subdue any

obstacles that may confront it in the future.

This rectitude of conduct, with its implications of

justice, equity, truthfulness, honesty, fair-mindedness,

reliability, and trustworthiness, must distinguish every

phase of the life of the Bahá’í community.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 23

9. Such a rectitude of conduct must manifest itself, with

ever-increasing potency, in every verdict which the elected

representatives of the Bahá’í community, in whatever ca-

pacity they may find themselves, may be called upon to

pronounce. It must be constantly reflected in the business

dealings of all its members, in their domestic lives, in all

manner of employment, and in any service they may, in the

future, render their government or people. It must be exem-

plified in the conduct of all Bahá’í electors, when exercising

their sacred rights and functions. It must characterize the

attitude of every loyal believer towards nonacceptance of

political posts, nonidentification with political parties, non-

participation in political controversies, and nonmembership

in political organizations and ecclesiastical institutions. It

must reveal itself in the uncompromising adherence of all,

whether young or old, to the clearly enunciated and funda-

mental principles laid down by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His address-

es, and to the laws and ordinances revealed by Bahá’u’lláh in

His Most Holy Book. It must be demonstrated in the imparti-

ality of every defender of the Faith against its enemies, in his

fair-mindedness in recognizing any merits that enemy may

possess, and in his honesty in discharging any obligations

he may have towards him. It must constitute the brightest

ornament of the life, the pursuits, the exertions, and the

utterances of every Bahá’í teacher, whether laboring at home

or abroad, whether in the front ranks of the teaching force,

or occupying a less active and responsible position.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 26–27

10. It must be remembered, however, that the mainte-

nance of such a high standard of moral conduct is not to be

associated or confused with any form of asceticism, or of

excessive and bigoted puritanism. The standard inculcat-

ed by Bahá’u’lláh, seeks, under no circumstances, to deny

anyone the legitimate right and privilege to derive the fullest

advantage and benefit from the manifold joys, beauties, and

pleasures with which the world has been so plentifully

enriched by an All-Loving Creator. *“Should a man,”* Bahá’-

u’lláh Himself reassures us, *“wish to adorn himself with the*

*ornaments of the earth, to wear its apparels, or partake of*

*the benefits it can bestow, no harm can befall him, if he*

*alloweth nothing whatever to intervene between him and*

*God, for God hath ordained every good thing, whether*

*created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His*

*servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the*

*good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not*

*yourselves from His wondrous bounties. Render thanks*

*and praise unto Him, and be of them that are truly*

*thankful.”*

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 33

## Smoking tobacco

11. … there are … forbidden things which do not cause

immediate harm, and the injurious effects of which are

only gradually produced: such acts are also repugnant to

the Lord, and blameworthy in His sight, and repellent. The

absolute unlawfulness of these, however, hath not been

expressly set forth in the Text, but their avoidance is

necessary to purity, cleanliness, the preservation of

health, and freedom from addiction.

Among these latter is smoking tobacco, which is dirty,

smelly, offensive—an evil habit, and one the harmfulness

of which gradually becometh apparent to all. Every quali-

fied physician hath ruled—and this hath also been proven

by tests—that one of the components of tobacco is a deadly

poison, and that the smoker is vulnerable to many and

various diseases. This is why smoking hath been plainly

set forth as repugnant from the standpoint of hygiene ….

My meaning is that in the sight of God, smoking

tobacco is deprecated, abhorrent, filthy in the extreme;

and, albeit by degrees, highly injurious to health. It is also

a waste of money and time, and maketh the user a prey to a

noxious addiction. To those who stand firm in the Cove-

nant, this habit is therefore censured both by reason and

experience, and renouncing it will bring relief and peace of

mind to all men. Furthermore, this will make it possible to

have a fresh mouth and unstained fingers, and hair that is

free of a foul and repellent smell. On receipt of this missive,

the friends will surely, by whatever means and even over a

period of time, forsake this pernicious habit. Such is my

hope.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 147–48

12. … ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advised against the smoking of tobac-

co. While the Teachings strongly condemn its use, they do

not forbid it. To letters enquiring about this subject, the

beloved Guardian replied through his secretary that we had

no right to prevent anyone from smoking; that Bahá’ís were

free to smoke but it was preferable for them not to do so;

and, that this question should not be made an issue.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 4/8/65 to an individual believer,

in *Lights of Guidance* 271–72

## Alcohol

13. It is forbidden for an intelligent person to drink that

which depriveth him of his intelligence; it behooveth him

to engage in that which is worthy of man, not in the act of

every heedless doubter.

Bahá’u’lláh, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, in “Prohibition of Intoxicating Drinks” 1

14. O Son of Dust! Turn not away thine eyes from the

matchless wine of the immortal Beloved, and open them

not to foul and mortal dregs. Take from the hands of the

divine Cup-bearer the chalice of immortal life, that all

wisdom may be thine, and that thou mayest hearken unto

the mystic voice calling from the realm of the invisible. Cry

aloud, ye that are of low aim! Wherefore have ye turned

away from My holy and immortal wine unto evanescent

water?

Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* 43–44

15. Fear ye God, O people of the earth, and think not that

the wine We have mentioned in Our Tablet is the wine

which men drink, and which causeth their intelligence to

pass away, their human nature to be perverted, their light

to be changed, and their purity to be soiled. Our intention

is indeed that wine which intensifieth man’s love for God,

for His Chosen Ones and for His loved ones, and igniteth in

the hearts the fire of God and love for Him, and glorifica-

tion and praise of Him. So potent is this wine that a drop

thereof will attract him who drinketh it to the court of His

sanctity and nearness, and will enable him to attain the

presence of God, the King, the Glorious, the Most Beaute-

ous. It is a wine that blotteth out from the hearts of the

true lovers all suggestions of limitation, establisheth the

truth of the signs of His oneness and divine unity, and

leadeth them to the Tabernacle of the Well-Beloved, in the

presence of God, the Sovereign Lord, the Self-Subsisting,

the All-Forgiving, the All-Generous. We meant by this

Wine, the River of God, and His favor, the fountain of His

living waters, and the Mystic Wine and its divine grace,

even as it was revealed in the Qur’án, if ye are of those who

understand. He said, and how true is His utterance: “A wine

delectable to those who drink it.” And He had no purpose in

this but the wine We have mentioned to you, O people of

certitude!

Beware lest ye exchange the Wine of God for your own

wine, for it will stupefy your minds, and turn your faces away

from the Countenance of God, the All-Glorious, the Peerless,

the Inaccessible. Approach it not, for it hath been forbidden

unto you by the behest of God, the Exalted, the Almighty.

Bahá’u’lláh, in “Prohibition of Intoxicating Drinks” 1

16. Intellect and the faculty of comprehension are God’s

gifts whereby man is distinguished from other animals.

Will a wise man want to lose this Light in the darkness of

intoxication? No, by God! This will not satisfy him! He will,

rather, do that which will develop his powers of intelli-

gence and understanding, and not increase his negli-

gence, heedlessness and decline. This is an explicit text in

the perspicuous Book, wherein God hath set forth every

goodly virtue, and exposed every reprehensible act.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, tablet to an individual believer, in “Prohibition of Intoxicating

Drinks” 2

17. The drinking of wine is, according to the text of the

Most Holy Book, forbidden; for it is the cause of chronic

diseases, weakeneth the nerves, and consumeth the mind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, qtd. in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 33

18. With regard to your first question on alcohol and

drinking, Bahá’u’lláh, fully aware of the great misery that it

brings about, prohibits it as He expressly states that every-

thing that takes away the mind, or in other words makes one

drunk, is forbidden.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/15/26 to an individual believer, in

“Prohibition of Intoxicating Drinks” 2

19. Under no circumstances should Bahá’ís drink. It is so

unambiguously forbidden in the Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, that

there is no excuse for them even touching it in the form of a

toast, or in a burning plum pudding; in fact, in any way.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/3/57 to an individual believer, qtd.

in letter dated 12/21/72 from the Universal House of Justice to the National

Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Ecuador, in *Lights of Guidance* 259

20. Bahá’ís should not serve alcoholic drinks at parties

which they sponsor.

The Universal House of Justice, in *Lights of Guidance* 258

21. … on all occasions officially sponsored by Bahá’í

Institutions or where the host is acting as a representative of

the Cause alcohol should not be served. In private homes or

in the course of business or professional activity it is left to

the conscience of Bahá’ís themselves whether they serve

alcoholic drinks to non-Bahá’ís but the obligation is very

strong to observe the prohibition enjoined by Bahá’u’lláh.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2/8/68 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the British Isles, in *Lights of Guidance* 259

22. With regard to the question you have raised in connec-

tion with the sale of alcoholic liquors by the friends: he

wishes me to inform you that dealings with such liquors,

in any form, are highly discouraged in the Cause. The

believers should, therefore, consider it their spiritual obli-

gation to refrain from undertaking any business enter-

prise that would involve them in the traffic of alcoholic

drinks.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/6/35 to a National Spiritual

Assembly, in “Prohibition of Intoxicating Drinks” 3

23. With reference to your question whether those foods

which have been flavored with alcoholic liquors such as

brandy, rum, etc., should be classified under the same

category as the intoxicating drinks, and consequently be

avoided by the believers, the Guardian wished all the friends to

know that such foods, or beverages, are strictly prohibited.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1/9/39 to an individual believer, in

*Lights of Guidance* 259

Drugs: hashish, LSD, marijuana, opium,
peyote

24. As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us

from the punishment He inflicteth on the user. According

to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, it is forbidden,

and its use is utterly condemned. Reason showeth that

smoking opium is a kind of insanity, and experience

attesteth that the user is completely cut off from the

human kingdom. May God protect all against the perpetra-

tion of an act so hideous as this, an act which layeth in

ruins the very foundation of what it is to be human, and

which causeth the user to be dispossessed for ever and

ever. For opium fasteneth on the soul, so that the user’s

conscience dieth, his mind is blotted away, his perceptions

are eroded. It turneth the living into the dead. It quench-

eth the natural heat. No greater harm can be conceived

than that which opium inflicteth. Fortunate are they who

never even speak the name of it; then think how wretched

is the user.

O ye lovers of God! In this, the cycle of Almighty God,

violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and

all condemned. It is, however, mandatory that the use of

opium be prevented by any means whatsoever, that per-

chance the human race may be delivered from this most

powerful of plagues. And otherwise, woe and misery to

whoso falleth short of his duty to his Lord.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 148–49

25. … Bahá’ís should not use hallucinogenic agents, in-

cluding LSD, peyote and similar substances, except when

prescribed for medical treatment. Neither should they be-

come involved in experiments with such substances.

Although we have found no direct reference to marijuana

in the Bahá’í writings, since this substance is derived from

what is considered to be a milder form of cannabis, the

species used to produce ḥashísh, we can share with you a

translation from the Persian of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on

hashish:

Regarding ḥashísh, you had pointed out that some Persians

have become habituated to its use. Gracious God! This is the

worst of all intoxicants, and its prohibition is explicitly

revealed. Its use causeth the disintegration of thought and

the complete torpor of the soul. How could anyone seek this

fruit of the infernal tree, and by partaking of it, be led to

exemplify the qualities of a monster? How could one use this

forbidden drug, and thus deprive himself of the blessings of

the All-Merciful? …

Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit

acts of absurdity, but … this wicked ḥashísh extinguisheth

the mind, freezeth the spirit, petrifieth the soul, wasteth the

body and leaveth man frustrated and lost.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11/11/67 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the Hawaiian Islands, in *Lights of Guidance* 271

26. Concerning the so-called “spiritual” virtues of the

hallucinogens. … spiritual stimulation should come

from turning one’s heart to Bahá’u’lláh, and not through

physical means such as drugs and agents. From the descrip-

tion given in your letter it appears that hallucinogenic

agents are a form of intoxicant. As the friends, including the

youth, are required strictly to abstain from all forms of

intoxicants, and are further expected conscientiously to

obey the civil law of their country, it is obvious that they

should refrain from using these drugs.

A very great responsibility for the future peace and

well-being of the world is borne by the youth of today. Let the

Bahá’í youth by the power of the Cause they espouse be the

shining example for their companions.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 4/15/65 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *Lights of Guidance* 270

27. Anyone involved in the use of peyote should be told that

in the Bahá’í Faith spiritual stimulation comes from turning

one’s heart to Bahá’u’lláh and not through any physical

means. They should therefore be encouraged to give up the

use of peyote.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11/9/63 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *Lights of Guidance* 271

## Gambling and lotteries

28. The trials of man are of two kinds. (a) The consequen-

ces of his own actions. If a man eats too much, he ruins his

digestion; if he takes poison he becomes ill or dies. If a

person gambles he will lose his money; if he drinks too much

he will lose his equilibrium. All these sufferings are caused

by the man himself, it is quite clear therefore that certain

sorrows are the result of our own deeds …

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 49–50

29. Although we have not found any text which forbids the

owning of race horses, horse racing as a means of winning

the prize money and betting at race courses, we quote the

translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on horse racing:

Horse races and bettings are a pernicious disease. It

has been seen in Europe how these things have caused

distress. Thousands have become afflicted and bewildered.

The friends of God must engage in a work which is lawful

and conducive to blessing, so that God’s aid and bounty

may always surround them ….

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/20/72 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of India, in “Extracts from Letters of the Universal

House of Justice (on Lotteries and Gambling)” 1

30. Although we may have written to you previously com-

menting on the question as to whether lotteries and bet-

ting, such as betting on football games, bingo, etc., are

included under the prohibition of gambling, we repeat that

this is a matter that is to be considered in detail by the

Universal House of Justice. In the meantime, your Nation-

al Assembly should not make an issue of these matters and

should leave it to the consciences of the individual friends

who are to decide for themselves in each case.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9/27/72 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in “Extracts from Letters of the

Universal House of Justice (on Lotteries and Gambling)” 1

## Being distinguished for purity and sanctity

31. Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and

sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá, shall distinguish the people of Bahá; that in every

kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other

human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall

prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy,

refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be

leaders in the vanguard of those who know. And that by their

freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self-

control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the

wise.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 150

32. O Divine Providence! Bestow Thou in all things purity

and cleanliness upon the people of Bahá. Grant that they be

freed from all defilement, and released from all addictions.

Save them from committing any repugnant act, unbind

them from the chains of every evil habit, that they may live

pure and free, wholesome and cleanly, worthy to serve at Thy

Sacred Threshold and fit to be related to their Lord. Deliver

them from intoxicating drinks and tobacco, save them,

rescue them, from this opium that bringeth on madness,

suffer them to enjoy the sweet savors of holiness, that they

may drink deep of the mystic cup of heavenly love and know

the rapture of being drawn ever closer unto the Realm of the

All-Glorious. For it is even as Thou hast said: “All that thou

hast in thy cellar will not appease the thirst of my love

—bring me, O cup-bearer, of the wine of the spirit a cup full

as the sea!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 149–50

8 Interpersonal
relationships

## The relationship of children to parents

1. The fruits of the tree of existence are trustworthiness,

loyalty, truthfulness and purity. After the recognition of

the oneness of the Lord, exalted be He, the most important

of all duties is to have due regard for the rights of one’s

parents. This matter hath been mentioned in all the Books

of God.

Bahá’u’lláh, in *Family Life* 2

2. Say, O My people! Show honor to your parents and pay

homage to them. This will cause blessings to descend

upon you from the clouds of the bounty of your Lord, the

Exalted, the Great ….

Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the

hearts of your fathers and mothers. Follow ye the path of

Truth which indeed is a straight path. Should anyone give

you a choice between the opportunity to render a service to

Me and a service to them, choose ye to serve them, and let

such service be a path leading you to Me. This is My

exhortation and command unto thee. Observe therefore

that which thy Lord, the Mighty, the Gracious, hath

prescribed unto thee.

Bahá’u’lláh, in *Family Life* 4–5

3. It is seemly that the servant should, after each prayer,

supplicate God to bestow mercy and forgiveness upon his

parents. Thereupon God’s call will be raised: “Thousand

upon thousand of what thou hast asked for thy parents

shall be thy recompense!” Blessed is he who remembereth

his parents when communing with God. There is, verily,

no God but Him, the Mighty, the Well-Beloved.

The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* 94

4. If thou wouldst show kindness and consideration to thy

parents so that they may feel generally pleased, this would

also please Me, for parents must be highly respected and it

is essential that they should feel contented, provided they

deter thee not from gaining access to the Threshold of the

Almighty, nor keep thee back from walking in the way of

the Kingdom. Indeed it behooveth them to encourage and

spur thee on in this direction.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Family Life* 17

5. The son … must show forth the utmost obedience

towards his father, and should conduct himself as a hum-

ble and a lowly servant. Day and night he should seek

diligently to ensure the comfort and welfare of his loving

father and to secure his good-pleasure. He must forgo his

own rest and enjoyment and constantly strive to bring

gladness to the hearts of his father and mother, that

thereby he may attain the good-pleasure of the Almighty

and be graciously aided by the hosts of the unseen.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Family Life* 20–21

6. Also a father and mother endure the greatest troubles

and hardships for their children; and often when the

children have reached the age of maturity, the parents

pass on to the other world. Rarely does it happen that a

father and mother in this world see the reward of the care

and trouble they have undergone for their children. There-

fore, children, in return for this care and trouble, must

show forth charity and beneficence, and must implore

pardon and forgiveness for their parents. So you ought, in

return for the love and kindness shown you by your father,

to give to the poor for his sake, with greatest submission

and humility implore pardon and remission of sins, and

ask for the supreme mercy.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 231–32

7. The Guardian, in his remarks … about parents and

children, wives and husbands relations in America, meant

that there is a tendency in that country for children to be

too independent of the wishes of their parents and lacking

in the respect due to them.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/22/43 to an individual believer, in

*Family Life* 43–44

8. Although Bahá’í services should be undertaken with a

spirit of sacrifice, one cannot lose sight of the importance

given in our Holy Writings to the responsibilities placed on

parents in relationship to their children, as well as to the

duties of children towards their parents.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11/19/78 to an individual believ-

er, in *Family Life* 60

## The bond of marriage

### The relationship between husband and wife

9. And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence

to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed obser-

vances and created laws; among them He established the

law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and

salvation, and enjoined it upon us in that which was sent

down out of the heaven of sanctity in His Most Holy Book.

He saith, great is His glory: “Marry, O people, that from you

may appear he who will remember Me amongst My ser-

vants; this is one of My commandments unto you; obey it

as an assistance to yourselves.

Bahá’u’lláh, in *Bahá’í Prayers* 105

10. O peerless Lord! In Thine almighty wisdom Thou hast

enjoined marriage upon the peoples, that the generations

of men may succeed one another in this contingent world,

and that ever, so long as the world shall last, they may busy

themselves at the Threshold of Thy oneness with servitude

and worship, with salutation, adoration and praise.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Prayers* 105–06

11. Marriage, among the mass of the people, is a physical

bond, and this union can only be temporary, since it is

foredoomed to a physical separation at the close.

Among the people of Bahá, however, marriage must be a

union of the body and of the spirit as well, for here both

husband and wife are aglow with the same wine, both are

enamored of the same matchless Face, both live and move

through the same spirit, both are illumined by the same

glory. This connection between them is a spiritual one,

hence it is a bond that will abide forever. Likewise do they

enjoy strong and lasting ties in the physical world as well, for

if the marriage is based both on the spirit and the body, that

union is a true one, hence it will endure. If, however, the

bond is physical and nothing more, it is sure to be only

temporary, and must inexorably end in separation.

When, therefore, the people of Bahá undertake to marry,

the union must be a true relationship, a spiritual coming

together as well as a physical one, so that throughout every

phase of life, and in all the worlds of God, their union will

endure; for this real oneness is a gleaming out of the love of

God.

In the same way, when any souls grow to be true

believers, they will attain a spiritual relationship with one

another, and show forth a tenderness which is not of this

world. They will, all of them, become elated from a draught of

divine love, and that union of theirs, that connection, will

also abide forever. Souls, that is, who will consign their own

selves to oblivion, strip from themselves the defects of

humankind, and unchain themselves from human bondage,

will beyond any doubt be illumined with the heavenly splen-

dors of oneness, and will all attain unto real union in the

world that dieth not.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 117–18

12. It should, moreover, be borne in mind that although to

be married is highly desirable, and Bahá’u’lláh has strongly

recommended it, it is not the central purpose of life. If a

person has to wait a considerable period before finding a

spouse, or if ultimately, he or she must remain single, it does

not mean that he or she is thereby unable to fulfill his or her

life’s purpose.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2/6/73 to all National Spiritual

Assemblies, in *Messages from The Universal House of Justice* 110–11

13. Of course, under normal circumstances, every person

should consider it his moral duty to marry. And this is

what Bahá’u’lláh has encouraged the believers to do. But

marriage is by no means an obligation. In the last resort it is

for the individual to decide whether he wishes to lead a

family life or live in a state of celibacy.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/3/36 to an individual believer, qtd.

by the Universal House of Justice in a letter dated 2/6/73 to all National

Spiritual Assemblies, in *Messages from The Universal House of Justice*

109–10

14. A truly Bahá’í home is a true fortress upon which the

Cause can rely while planning its campaigns. If … and …

love each other and would like to marry, Shoghi Effendi does

not wish them to think that by doing so they are depriving

themselves of the privilege of service; in fact such a union

will enhance their ability to serve. There is nothing more

beautiful than to have young Bahá’ís marry and found truly

Bahá’í homes, the type Bahá’u’lláh wishes them to be. Please

give them both the Guardian’s loving greetings.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/6/32 to an individual believer, in

*Family Life* 33

15. O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He,

hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the

closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul.

They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should

be concerned about the welfare of each other.

If they live thus, they will pass through this world with

perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become

the object of divine grace and favor in the Kingdom of

heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out

their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for

death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm.

Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other

as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both

worlds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 122

### Choosing a spouse

16. Bahá’í marriage is the commitment of the two parties

one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and

heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to

become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the

other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie

that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to

become loving companions and comrades and at one with

each other for time and eternity ….

The true marriage of Bahá’ís is this, that husband and

wife should be united both physically and spiritually, that

they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and

may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of

God. This is Bahá’í marriage.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 118

17. As for the question regarding marriage under the Law

of God: first thou must choose one who is pleasing to thee,

and then the matter is subject to the consent of father and

mother. Before thou makest thy choice, they have no right

to interfere.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 118

18. Bahá’í law places the responsibility for ascertaining

knowledge of the character of those entering into the mar-

riage contract on the two parties involved, and on the

parents, who must give consent to the marriage.

The obligation of the Spiritual Assembly is to ascertain

that all requirements of civil and Bahá’í law have been

complied with, and, having done so, the Assembly may

neither refuse to perform the marriage ceremony nor delay

it.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3/30/67 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *Lights of Guidance* 276

19. O ye two who have believed in Him!

Your letter was received and its contents were noted. I

pray God that ye may at all times be in the utmost love and

harmony, and be a cause for the spirituality of the human

world. This union will unquestionably promote love and

affection between the black and the white, and will affect

and encourage others. These two races will unite and

merge together, and there will appear and take root a new

generation sound in health and beauteous in counte-

nance.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, newly translated tablet attached to letter dated 4/15/85 on

behalf of the Universal House of Justice to Bahá’í Publishing Trust of the

United States

20. He realizes your desire to get married is quite a natural

one, and he will pray that God will assist you to find a

suitable companion with whom you can be truly happy

and united in the service of the Faith. Bahá’u’lláh has

urged marriage upon all people as the natural and rightful

way of life. He has also, however, placed strong emphasis on

its spiritual nature, which, while in no way precluding a

normal physical life, is the most essential aspect of mar-

riage. That two people should live their lives in love and

harmony is of far greater importance than that they should

be consumed with passion for each other. The one is a great

rock of strength on which to lean in time of need; the other a

purely temporary thing which may at any time die out.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1/20/43 to John Stearns, in *Lights*

*of Guidance* 277

### Engagement

21. The law of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas that the lapse of time

between engagement and marriage should not exceed

ninety-five days is

binding on Persian believers wherever they reside, if both parties are

Persian. This law is not applicable, however, if one of the

parties is a western believer.

This law, as you know, has not yet been given to the

Bahá’ís of the west.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 11/7/72 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Germany, in *Lights of Guidance* 277

22. The Laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas regarding the period of

engagement have not been made applicable to believers in

the West, and therefore there is no requirement that the

parties to a marriage obtain consent of the parents before

announcing their engagement. However, there is no objec-

tion to informing the believers that it would be wise for them

to do so in order to avoid later embarrassment if consents are

withheld.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1/17/71 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Australia, in *Lights of Guidance* 276

### The law of consent

23. Bahá’u’lláh has clearly stated the consent of all living

parents is required for a Bahá’í marriage. This applies

whether the parents are Bahá’ís or non-Bahá’ís divorced for

years, or not. This great law He has laid down to strengthen

the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a

certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for

those who have given them life and sent their souls out on

the eternal journey towards their Creator. We Bahá’ís must

realize that in present-day society the exact opposite process

is taking place: young people care less and less for their

parents’ wishes, divorce is considered a natural right, and

obtained on the flimsiest and most unwarrantable and

shabby pretexts. People separated from each other, especial-

ly if one of them has had full custody of the children, are only

too willing to belittle the importance of the partner in

marriage also responsible as a parent for bringing those

children into this world. The Bahá’ís must, through rigid

adherence to the Bahá’í laws and teachings, combat these

corrosive forces which are so rapidly destroying home life

and the beauty of family relationships, and tearing down the

moral structure of society.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/25/47 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Bahá’í News*,

no. 202 (Dec. 1947) 2

24. It is perfectly true that Bahá’u’lláh’s statement that the

consent of all living parents is required for marriage places a

grave responsibility on each parent. When the parents are

Bahá’ís they should, of course, act objectively in withholding

or granting their approval. They cannot evade this responsi-

bility by merely acquiescing in their child’s wish, nor should

they be swayed by prejudice; but, whether they be Bahá’ís or

non-Bahá’ís, the parents’ decision is binding, whatever the

reason that may have motivated it. Children must recognize

and understand that this act of consenting is the duty of a

parent. They must have respect in their hearts for those who

have given them life, and whose good pleasure they must at

all times strive to win.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2/1/68 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *Lights of Guidance* 278

25. Regarding the question whether it is necessary to

obtain the consent of the parents of a non-Bahá’í partici-

pant in a marriage with a Bahá’í; as Bahá’u’lláh has stated

that the consent of the parents of both parties is required in

order to promote unity and avoid friction, and as the Aqdas

does not specify any exceptions to this rule, the Guardian

feels that under all circumstances the consent of the parents

of both parties is required ….

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 8/12/41 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Lights of*

*Guidance* 279

26. All too often nowadays … consent [of parents for

Bahá’í marriage] is withheld by non-Bahá’í parents for

reasons of bigotry or racial prejudice; yet we have seen

again and again the profound effect on those very parents of

the firmness of the children in the Bahá’í law, to the extent

that not only is the consent ultimately given in many cases,

but the character of the parents can be affected and their

relationship with their child greatly strengthened.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2/6/73 to all National Spiritual

Assemblies, in *Messages from The Universal House of Justice* 106–07

27. I notice that I have neglected to answer your question

concerning … consent to her daughter’s marriage: this

must be given in order to be a Bahá’í Marriage. Bahá’u’lláh

requires this and makes no provision about a parent chang-

ing his or her mind. So they are free to do so. Once the

written consent is given and the marriage takes place, the

parents have no right to interfere any more.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/15/54 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada, in *Messages to Canada* 47

### The ceremony

28. The pledge of marriage, the verse to be spoken individ-

ually by the bride and the bridegroom in the presence of at

least two witnesses acceptable to the Spiritual Assembly

is, as stipulated in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book):

“We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.”

*Bahá’í Prayers* 104

29. Bahá’í marriage should at present not be pressed into

any kind of a uniform mold. What is absolutely essential is

what Bahá’u’lláh stipulated in the Aqdas: the friends can

add to these selected writings if they please ….

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *Principles of Bahá’í Administration* 14

30. If a Bahá’í marries a non-Bahá’í who wishes to have the

religious ceremony of his own sect carried out, it must be

quite clear that, first, the Bahá’í partner is understood to be

a Bahá’í by religion, and not to accept the religion of the

other party to the marriage through having his or her

religious ceremony; and second, the ceremony must be of a

nature which does not commit the Bahá’í to any declaration

of faith in a religion other than his own.

Under these circumstances, the Bahá’í can partake of

the religious ceremony of his non-Bahá’í partner. The Bahá’í

should insist on having the Bahá’í ceremony carried out

before or after the non-Bahá’í one, on the same day.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/20/54 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *Lights of Guidance* 279

## Family relationships

### Having children

31. O ye my two beloved children! The news of your union,

as soon as it reached me, imparted infinite joy and grati-

tude. Praise be to God, those two faithful birds have

sought shelter in one nest. I beseech God that He may

enable them to raise an honored family, for the importance

of marriage lieth in the bringing up of a richly blessed

family, so that with entire gladness they may, even as

candles, illuminate the world. For the enlightenment of the

world dependeth upon the existence of man. If man did not

exist in this world, it would have been like a tree without

fruit. My hope is that you both may become even as one

tree, and may, through the outpourings of the cloud of

loving-kindness, acquire freshness and charm, and may

blossom and yield fruit, so that your line may eternally

endure.

Upon ye be the Glory of the Most Glorious.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 120

32. Both Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb emphasize the need of

children in marriage. The latter, for example, states that to

beget children is the highest physical fruit of man’s exis-

tence. But neither say whether the number of children

should be limited or not. Or if it is to be limited what is the

proper method to be used.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/3/32 to Mabel Hyde Paine, in

*Lights of Guidance* 260

33. As to the problem of birth control, neither Bahá’u’lláh

nor ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has revealed anything direct or explicit

regarding this question. But the Bahá’í Teachings, when

carefully studied imply that such current conceptions like

birth control, if not necessarily wrong and immoral in

principle, have nevertheless to be discarded as constituting a

real danger to the very foundations of our social life. For

Bahá’u’lláh explicitly reveals in His Book of Laws that the very

purpose of marriage is the procreation of children who,

when grown up, will be able to know God and to recognize

and observe His Commandments and Laws as revealed

through His Messengers. Marriage is thus, according to the

Bahá’í Teachings, primarily a social and moral act. It has a

purpose which transcends the immediate personal needs

and interests of the parties. Birth control, except in certain

exceptional cases, is therefore not permissible.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/14/35 to an individual believer, in

*Lights of Guidance* 261

34. As to the use of intrauterine devices, we understand

that there is a difference of professional opinion as to how

they work, i.e., whether they prevent conception or wheth-

er they prevent the fertilized ovum from attaching to the

wall of the uterus. However, the Guardian has stated that

the individual life begins at conception. In using such

devices, therefore, Bahá’ís will have to be guided by the best

professional advice available and their own consciences.

There is nothing in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, however, concerning

the placing of foreign materials in the body for preventing

birth.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12/31/73 to

an individual believer, in *Lights of Guidance* 264

35. We, as Bahá’ís, are not therefore in a position either to

condemn the practice of birth control or to confirm it.

Birth control, however, when exercised in order to delib-

erately prevent the procreation of any children is against the

Spirit of the Law of Bahá’u’lláh, which defines the primary

purpose of marriage to be the rearing of children and their

spiritual training in the Cause. The Universal House of

Justice will have to consider this issue and give its verdict

upon it.[1]

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/4/37 to an individual believer, qtd.

in enclosure to letter dated 7/31/70 from the Universal House of Justice to

individual believer, in *Lights of Guidance* 262

36. It is clear that to have a surgical operation merely to

avoid unwanted children is not acceptable. However, as in

the case of abortion, circumstances might exist in which

such an operation would be justified. Individual believers

called upon to make such a decision must be guided by the

Bahá’í principles involved, the best professional advice avail-

able to them and their own consciences. In arriving at a

decision the parties must also take into consideration the

availability, reliability and reversibility of all contraceptive

methods.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10/25/71 to

an individual believer, in *Lights of Guidance* 264

37. Abortion and surgical operations for the purpose of

preventing the birth of unwanted children are forbidden in

the Cause unless there are circumstances which justify

such actions on medical grounds, in which case the deci-

sion, at present, is left to the consciences of those con-

cerned who must carefully weigh the medical advice in the

light of the general guidance given in the Teachings.

Beyond this nothing has been found in the Writings

concerning specific methods or procedures to be used in

family planning. It should be pointed out, however, that

the Teachings state that the soul appears at conception,

and that therefore it would be improper to use such a

method, the effect of which would be to produce an abor-

tion after conception has taken place.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 5/23/75 to

an individual believer, in *Lights of Guidance* 264

1. The Universal House of Justice feels that the time has not yet arrived for

legislation on this matter, and that these instructions provide sufficient guidance

for the friends for the time being.

38. Basically the deliberate taking of human life is forbid-

den in the Cause, but the Sacred Text envisages certain

possible exceptions to this rule and allows for the Univer-

sal House of Justice to legislate upon them. One such

possible exception is the matter of abortion. It is clear that

it is absolutely forbidden for a woman to have an abortion

merely because she wants to have one, but there may be

circumstances in which an abortion might be justified.

However, at the present time we do not wish to legislate on

whether or in what circumstances abortion may be permit-

ted, and therefore the whole matter is left to the conscien-

ces of those concerned who must carefully weigh the

medical advice on the case in the light of the general

guidance given in the Teachings.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2/5/75 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in *Lights of Guidance* 255

39. We have not discovered any specific reference in the

texts to the problem of population explosion in its relation

to birth control. This question, of course, is a matter

which is currently a subject of concern and speculation by

many. A study of our teachings, however, indicates that in

the future there will no doubt be a general improvement of

standards of life and of health, but there will also be the

full exploitation of unused and as yet unsuspected re-

sources of the planet along with the control and tapping of

its sources of raw material, with a great increase in pro-

ductivity.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7/31/70 to an individual believer,

in *Lights of Guidance* 261

*Relationships among husband, wife,
and children*

40. According to the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh the family,

being a human unit, must be educated according to the

rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family.

The integrity of the family bond must be constantly consid-

ered, and the rights of the individual members must not be

transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother

—none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be

arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his

father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his

son. The mother, the sister and other members of the

household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights

and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the

family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be consid-

ered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all;

the honor of one, the honor of all.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 168

41. A family … is a very special kind of “community”.

The Research Department has not come across any state-

ments which specifically name the father as responsible for

the “security, progress and unity of the family” … but it

can be inferred from a number of the responsibilities

placed upon him, that the father can be regarded as the

“head” of the family. The members of a family all have

duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the

family as a whole, and these duties and responsibilities

vary from member to member because of their natural

relationships. The parents have the inescapable duty to

educate their children—but not vice versa; the children

have the duty to obey their parents—the parents do not

obey the children; the mother—not the father—bears the

children, nurses them in babyhood, and is thus their first

educator; hence daughters have a prior right to education

over sons and, as the Guardian’s secretary has written on

his behalf, “The task of bringing up a Bahá’í child, as

emphasized time and again in Bahá’í Writings, is the chief

responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is

indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be

most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare

and advancement. The training which a child first receives

through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for

his future development.” A corollary of this responsibility of

the mother is her right to be supported by her husband—a

husband has no explicit right to be supported by his wife.

This principle of the husband’s responsibility to provide for

and protect the family can be seen applied also in the law of

intestacy which provides that the family’s dwelling place

passes, on the father’s death, not to his widow, but to his

eldest son; the son at the same time has the responsibility to

care for his mother.

It is in this context of mutual and complementary duties,

and responsibilities that one should read the Tablet in which

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gives the following exhortation:

O Handmaids of the Self-Sustaining Lord! Exert your

efforts so that you may attain the honor and privilege

ordained for women. Undoubtedly the greatest glory of

women is servitude at His threshold and submissiveness at

His door; it is the possession of a vigilant heart, and praise

of the incomparable God; it is heartfelt love towards other

handmaids and spotless chastity; it is obedience to and

consideration for their husbands and the education and

care of their children; and it is tranquillity, and dignity,

perseverance in the remembrance of the Lord, and the

utmost enkindlement and attraction.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12/28/80 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of New Zealand, in *Family Life* 62–63

42. The education and training of children is among the

most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down

the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the

indispensable foundation of all human excellence and

alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding

glory. If a child be trained from his infancy, he will,

through the loving care of the Holy Gardener, drink in the

crystal waters of the spirit and of knowledge, like a young

tree amid the rilling brooks. And certainly he will gather to

himself the bright rays of the Sun of Truth, and through

its light and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden

of life.

…

If, in this momentous task, a mighty effort be exerted,

the world of humanity will shine out with other adornings,

and shed the fairest light. Then will this darksome place

grow luminous, and this abode of earth turn into Heaven.

The very demons will change to angels then, and wolves to

shepherds of the flock, and the wild-dog pack to gazelles

that pasture on the plains of oneness, and ravening beasts

to peaceful herds; and birds of prey, with talons sharp as

knives, to songsters warbling their sweet native notes.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Bahá’í Education* 30

43. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them

from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle

of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give

them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let

them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and

art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them

to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters

of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies

that will benefit mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 129

44. These are all relationships within the family, but there

is a much wider sphere of relationships between men and

women than in the home, and this too we should consider

in the context of Bahá’í society, not in that of past or present

social norms. For example, although the mother is the first

educator of the child, and the most important formative

influence in his development, the father also has the respon-

sibility of educating his children, and this responsibility is

so weighty that Bahá’u’lláh has stated that a father who fails

to exercise it forfeits his rights of fatherhood. Similarly,

although the primary responsibility for supporting the fami-

ly financially is placed upon the husband, this does not by

any means imply that the place of woman is confined to the

home. On the contrary, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has stated:

In this Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, the women go neck and

neck with the men. In no movement will they be left behind.

Their rights with men are equal in degree. They will enter all

the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all

such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of

the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs. (*Paris*

*Talks*, p. 182)

and again:

So it will come to pass that when women participate

fully and equally in the affairs of the world, enter confidently

and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will

cease; … (*The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Vol. II, p.

369 [1982 ed., p. 135])

In the Tablet of the World, Bahá’u’lláh Himself has envis-

aged that women as well as men would be breadwinners in

stating:

Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to

a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth

through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the

training and education of children, to be spent for this

purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of

Justice. (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 90)

A very important element in the attainment of such equali-

ty is Bahá’u’lláh’s provision that boys and girls must follow

essentially the same curriculum in schools.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12/28/80 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of New Zealand, in *Family Life* 65–66

### Fostering harmony in the family

45. Treat all thy friends and relatives, even strangers, with

a spirit of utmost love and kindliness.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Family Life* 18

46. When you love a member of your family or a compatriot,

let it be with a ray of the Infinite Love! Let it be in God, and

for God! Wherever you find the attributes of God love that

person, whether he be of your family or of another.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Paris Talks* 38

47. If love and agreement are manifest in a single family,

that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual;

but if enmity and hatred exist within it, destruction and

dispersion are inevitable.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 144–45

48. Note ye how easily, where unity existeth in a given

family, the affairs of that family are conducted; what

progress the members of that family make, how they

prosper in the world. Their concerns are in order, they

enjoy comfort and tranquillity, they are secure, their posi-

tion is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family

but addeth to its stature and its lasting honor, as day

succeedeth day.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 279

49. It is one of the essential teachings of the Faith that

unity should be maintained in the home. Of course this

does not mean that any member of the family has a right to

influence the faith of any other member; and if this is

realized by all the members, then it seems certain that

unity would be feasible.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/6/52 to an individual believer, in

*Family Life* 49

50. It made him very happy to know of the recent confirma-

tion of your … friend, and of her earnest desire to serve

and promote the Faith. He will certainly pray on her behalf

that she may, notwithstanding the opposition of her par-

ents and relatives, increasingly gain in knowledge and in

understanding of the Teachings, and become animated

with such a zeal as to arise, and bring into the Cause a

large number of her former coreligionists.

Under no circumstances, however, should she allow

her parents to become completely alienated from her, but it

is her bounden duty to strive, through patient, continued

and loving effort, to win their sympathy for the Faith, and

even, perhaps, to bring about their confirmation ….

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/6/38 to an individual believer, in

*Family Life* 36

51. She should certainly not grieve if she finds that her

family are not receptive to the teachings—for not every

soul is spiritually enlightened. Indeed, many members of

the families of the Prophets themselves have remained

unconverted even in face of the example and persuasion of

the Manifestation of God; therefore, the friends should not

be distressed by such things but rather leave the future of

those they love in the hand of God, and by their services

and devotion to the Faith, win the right to plead for their

ultimate spiritual rebirth.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/9/42 to an individual believer, in

*Family Life* 41

52. Deep as are family ties, we must always remember that

the spiritual ties are far deeper; they are everlasting and

survive death, whereas physical ties, unless supported by

spiritual bonds, are confined to this life. You should do all

in your power, through prayer and example, to open the

eyes of your family to the Bahá’í Faith, but do not grieve too

much over their actions.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter to Roan Orloff (received 7/31/42), in

*Bahá’í News*, no. 161 (Mar. 1943) 2

### Using consultation to foster harmony

53. 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, inas-

much as consultation is the lamp of guidance which

leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

Bahá’u’lláh, in *Consultation* 3

54. Man must consult on all matters, whether major or

minor, so that he may become cognizant of what is good.

Consultation giveth him insight into things and enableth

him to delve into questions which are unknown. The light

of truth shineth from the faces of those who engage in

consultation. Such consultation causeth the living waters

to flow in the meadows of man’s reality, the rays of ancient

glory to shine upon him, and the tree of his being to be

adorned with wondrous fruit. The members who are con-

sulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, har-

mony and sincerity towards each other. The principle of

consultation is one of the most fundamental elements of

the divine edifice. Even in their ordinary affairs the indi-

vidual members of society should consult.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Consultation* 8

55. Settle all things, both great and small, by consultation.

Without prior consultation, take no important step in your

own personal affairs. Concern yourselves with one anoth-

er. Help along one another’s projects and plans. Grieve

over one another. Let none in the whole country go in

need. Befriend one another until ye become as a single

body, one and all ….

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Consultation* 9

56. A Bahá’í who has a problem may wish to make his own

decision upon it after prayer and after weighing all the

aspects of it in his own mind; he may prefer to seek the

counsel of individual friends or of professional counselors

such as his doctor or lawyer so that he can consider such

advice when making his decision; or in a case where several

people are involved, such as a family situation, he may want

to gather together those who are affected so that they may

arrive at a collective decision.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3/19/73 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada, in *Family Life* 59

57. Bahá’u’lláh came to bring unity to the world, and a

fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, one must

believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family,

not weaken it, and one of the keys to the strengthening of

unity is loving consultation. The atmosphere within a Bahá’í

family as within the community as a whole should express

“the keynote of the Cause of God” which, the beloved Guardi-

an has stated, “is not dictatorial authority but humble

fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and

loving consultation.”

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12/28/80 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of New Zealand, in *Family Life* 61–62

## Chastity and sex

### A chaste and holy life

58. O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye

have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high

destiny. Suffer not your labors to be wasted through the

vain imaginations which certain hearts have devised. Ye

are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze

that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters

upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters

inscribed upon His sacred scroll.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 196

59. And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he

would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of

desire for her beauty. Such an one, indeed, is the creation

of spotless chastity. Thus instructeth you the Pen of the

Ancient of Days, as bidden by your Lord, the Almighty, the

All-Bountiful.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 118

60. … a chaste and holy life, with its implications of

modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-

mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of modera-

tion in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements,

and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily

vigilance in the control of one’s carnal desires and corrupt

inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous

conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often

misdirected pleasures. It requires total abstinence from all

alcoholic drinks, from opium, and from similar habit-

forming drugs. It condemns the prostitution of art and of

literature, the practices of nudism and of companionate

marriage, infidelity in marital relationships, and all man-

ner of promiscuity, of easy familiarity, and of sexual vices.

It can tolerate no compromise with the theories, the stan-

dards, the habits, and the excesses of a decadent age. Nay

rather it seeks to demonstrate, through the dynamic force

of its example, the pernicious character of such theories,

the falsity of such standards, the hollowness of such

claims, the perversity of such habits, and the sacrilegious

character of such excesses.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 30

61. It must be remembered, however, that the mainte-

nance of such a high standard of moral conduct is not to be

associated or confused with any form of asceticism, or of

excessive and bigoted puritanism. The standard inculcat-

ed by Bahá’u’lláh seeks, under no circumstances, to deny

anyone the legitimate right and privilege to derive the fullest

advantage and benefit from the manifold joys, beauties, and

pleasures with which the world has been so plentifully

enriched by an All-Loving Creator.

Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 33

62. Briefly stated the Bahá’í conception of sex is based on

the belief that chastity should be strictly practiced by both

sexes, not only because it is in itself highly commendable

ethically, but also due to its being the only way to a happy

and successful marital life. Sex relationships of any form,

outside marriage, are not permissible therefore, and whoso

violates this rule will not only be responsible to God, but will

incur the necessary punishment from society.

The Bahá’í Faith recognizes the value of the sex impulse,

but condemns its illegitimate and improper expression

such as free love, companionate marriage and others, all of

which it considers positively harmful to man and to the

society in which he lives. The proper use of the sex instinct is

the natural right of every individual, and it is precisely for

this very purpose that the institution of marriage has been

established. The Bahá’ís do not believe in the suppression of

the sex impulse but in its regulation and control.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/5/38 to an individual believer, qtd.

in letter from the Universal House of Justice to individual believer, in

“Obeying the Law of God in Our Own Lives” 2

63. Ye are forbidden adultery, homosexuality and unfaith-

fulness. Refrain therefrom, O concourse of those who have

set their faces towards Him. By the righteousness of God!

Ye have been created to purge the world from the defile-

ment of evil passions. This is what the Lord of all mankind

enjoineth upon you, could ye but perceive it. He who

relateth himself unto the All-Merciful and committeth

satanic deeds, verily he is not of Me. Unto this beareth

witness every atom, pebble, tree and fruit, and beyond

them this eloquent, truthful and trustworthy Tongue.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in letter dated 12/9/71 from the Universal House of Justice to

the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in “Extracts

from the Bahá’í Writings on Homosexuality” 1

64. The question you raise as to the place in one’s life that

a deep bond of love with someone we meet other than our

husband or wife can have is easily defined in view of the

teachings. Chastity implies both before and after marriage

an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely

chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one’s chosen

companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and

in deed.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/28/41 to an individual believer,

qtd. in letter from the Universal House of Justice to individual believer, in

“Obeying the Law of God in Our Own Lives” 2

65. What Bahá’u’lláh means by chastity certainly does not

include the kissing that goes on in modern society. It is

detrimental to the morals of young people, and often leads

them to go too far, or arouses appetites which they cannot

perhaps at the time satisfy legitimately through marriage,

and the suppression of which is a strain on them.

The Bahá’í standard is very high, more particularly

when compared with the thoroughly rotten morals of the

present world. But this standard of ours will produce health-

ier, happier, nobler people, and induce stabler marriages.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/19/47 to John Bernard Cornel, in *Bahá’í*

*News*, no. 202 (Dec. 1947) 3

66. In the teachings there is nothing against dancing, but

the friends should remember that the standard of Bahá’-

u’lláh is modesty and chastity. The atmosphere of modern

dance halls, where so much smoking and drinking and

promiscuity goes on, is very bad, but decent dances are not

harmful in themselves. There is certainly no harm in classi-

cal dancing or learning dancing in school. There is also no

harm in taking part in dramas. Likewise in cinema acting.

The harmful thing, nowadays, is not the art itself but the

unfortunate corruption which often surrounds these arts.

As Bahá’ís we need avoid none of the arts, but acts and the

atmosphere that sometimes go with these professions we

should avoid.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of India, in *Dawn of a New Day* 153

67. In considering the effect of obedience to the laws on

individual lives, one must remember that the purpose of

this life is to prepare the soul for the next. Here one must

learn to control and direct one’s animal impulses, not to be

a slave to them. Life in this world is a succession of tests

and achievements, of falling short and of making new

spiritual advances. Sometimes the course may seem very

hard, but one can witness, again and again, that the soul

who steadfastly obeys the law of Bahá’u’lláh, however hard

it may seem, grows spiritually, while the one who compro-

mises with the law for the sake of his own apparent happiness is

seen to have been following a chimera: he does not attain the

happiness he sought, he retards his spiritual advance and

often brings new problems upon himself.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2/6/73 to all National Spiritual

Assemblies, in *The Generation of the Half-Light* 34

68. The Guardian has urged over and over again, the

paramount necessity for Bahá’í Youth to exemplify the

Teachings, most particularly the moral aspect of them. If

they are not distinguished for their high conduct they

cannot expect other young people to take the Cause very

seriously.

He heartily agrees with you that unless we *practise* the

Teachings we cannot possibly expect the Faith to grow,

because the fundamental purpose of all religions—including

our own—is to bring man nearer to God, and to change his

character, which is of the utmost importance. Too much

emphasis is often laid on the social and economic aspects of

the Teachings; but the moral aspect cannot be over-

emphasized.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/6/46 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 8

69. He feels that the youth, in particular, must constantly

and determinedly strive to exemplify a Bahá’í life. In the

world around us we see moral decay, promiscuity, indecen-

cy, vulgarity, bad manners—the Bahá’í young people must

be the opposite of these things, and, by their chastity, their

uprightness, their decency, their consideration and good

manners, attract others, old and young, to the Faith. The

world is tired of words; it wants example, and it is up to the

Bahá’í youth to furnish it.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/19/46 to the Bahá’í youth

attending Green Acre Bahá’í Summer School, U.S.A., in *Bahá’í Youth* 7–8

70. … the young Bahá’ís in every city should make a point

of keeping in touch with local youth activities and clubs, and

endeavoring to make their views known to as many young

people in as many ways as possible. Above all they should set

a high example to them; chastity, politeness, friendliness,

hospitality, joyous optimism about the ultimate future hap-

piness and well-being of mankind, should distinguish them

and win over to them the love and admiration of their fellow

youth. The thing which is most conspicuously lacking in

modern life is a high standard of conduct and good charac-

ter; the young Bahá’ís must demonstrate both, if they hope

to seriously win over to the Faith members of their own

generation, so sorely disillusioned and so contaminated by

the laxity war gives rise to.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/20/45 to a National Youth

Committee, in *Bahá’í Youth* 7

71. We have considered your several letters and have noted

your questions, and your view that many Bahá’í youth in

America are confused, and are pleading for guidance in

simple clear language on how to meet daily situations,

particularly those involving sex.

It is neither possible nor desirable for the Universal

House of Justice to set forth a set of rules covering every

situation. Rather is it the task of the individual believer to

determine, according to his own prayerful understanding of

the Writings, precisely what his course of conduct should be

in relation to situations which he encounters in his daily life.

If he is to fulfill his true mission in life as a follower of the

Blessed Perfection, he will pattern his life according to the

Teachings. The believer cannot attain this objective merely

by living according to a set of rigid regulations. When his life

is oriented toward service to Bahá’u’lláh, and when every

conscious act is performed within this frame of reference, he

will not fail to achieve the true purpose of his life.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10/17/68 to individual believ-

er, qtd. in “Bahá’í Teachings on Chastity and Sex” 3

### Masturbation

72. We have found in the Holy Writings no explicit referen-

ces to masturbation, but there are a number of principles

and teachings which can guide a Bahá’í to the correct

attitude towards it. In a letter to an individual believer,

written by the Guardian’s secretary on his behalf, it is

pointed out that

The Bahá’í Faith recognizes the value of the sex impulse, but

condemns its illegitimate and improper expressions such as

free love, companionate marriage and others, all of which it

considers positively harmful to man and to the society in

which he lives. The proper use of the sex instinct is the

natural right of every individual, and it is precisely for this

very purpose that the institution of marriage has been estab-

lished. The Bahá’ís do not believe in the suppression of the

sex impulse but in its regulation and control.

In response to another letter enquiring if there were

any legitimate way in which a person could express the sex

instinct if, for some reason, he were unable to marry or if

outer circumstances such as economic factors were to

cause him to delay marriage, the Guardian’s secretary

wrote on his behalf:

Concerning your question whether there are any legitimate

forms of expression of the sex instinct outside of marriage:

according to the Bahá’í Teachings no sexual act can be

considered lawful unless performed between lawfully married

persons. Outside of marital life there can be no lawful or

healthy use of the sex impulse. The Bahá’í youth should, on

the one hand, be taught the lesson of self-control which, when

exercised, undoubtedly has a salutary effect on the develop-

ment of character and of personality in general, and on the

other should be advised, nay even encouraged, to contract

marriage while still young and in full possession of their

physical vigor. Economic factors, no doubt, are often a seri-

ous hindrance to early marriage but in most cases are only an

excuse, and as such should not be over stressed.

In another letter on the Guardian’s behalf, also to an

individual believer, the secretary writes:

Amongst the many other evils afflicting society in this

spiritual low water mark in history, is the question of

immorality, and overemphasis of sex ….

This indicates how the whole matter of sex and the

problems related to it have assumed far too great an

importance in the thinking of present-day society.

Masturbation is clearly not a proper use of the sex

instinct, as this is understood in the Faith. Moreover it

involves, as you have pointed out, mental fantasies, while

Bahá’u’lláh, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, has exhorted us not to

indulge our passions and in one of His well-known Tablets

‘Abdu’l-Bahá encourages us to keep our “secret thoughts

pure”. Of course many wayward thoughts come involuntarily

to the mind and these are merely a result of weakness and

are not blameworthy unless they become fixed or even worse,

are expressed in improper acts. In “The Advent of Divine

Justice”, when describing the moral standards that Bahá’ís

must uphold both individually and in their community life,

the Guardian wrote:

Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modes-

ty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness,

involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that

pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic

and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the

control of one’s carnal desires and corrupt inclinations.

Your problem, therefore, is one against which you

should continue to struggle, with determination and with

the aid of prayer. You should remember, however, that it is

only one of the many temptations and faults that a human

being must strive to overcome during his lifetime, and you

should not increase the difficulty you have by over-

emphasizing its importance. We suggest you try to see it

within the whole spectrum of the qualities that a Bahá’í

must develop in his character. Be vigilant against tempta-

tion, but do not allow it to claim too great a share of your

attention. You should concentrate, rather, on the virtues

that you should develop, the services you should strive to

render, and, above all, on God and His attributes, and devote

your energies to living a full Bahá’í life in all its many

aspects.

The Universal House of Justice, letter to an individual believer, copy of which

was sent to Helen Hornby with letter dated 3/8/81, in *Lights of Guidance*

268–70

### Homosexuality

73. Amongst the many other evils afflicting society in this

spiritual low-water mark in history, is the question of

immorality, and over-emphasis of sex. Homosexuality,

according to the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, is spiritually

condemned. This does not mean that people so afflicted

must not be helped and advised and sympathized with. It

does mean that we do not believe that it is a permissible way

of life; which, alas, is all too often the accepted attitude

nowadays.

We must struggle against the evils in society by spiritual

means, and by medical and social ones as well. We must be

tolerant and uncompromising, understanding but immova-

ble in our point of view.

The thing people need to meet this type of trouble, as

well as every other type, is greater spiritual understanding

and stability; and of course we Bahá’ís believe that ultimately

this can only be given to mankind through the Teachings of

the Manifestation of God for this Day.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/21/54 to an individual believer, in

*National Bahá’í Review* (Mar. 1968) 2

74. No matter how devoted and fine the love may be

between people of the same sex, to let it find expression in

sexual acts is wrong. … Immorality of every sort is really

forbidden by Bahá’u’lláh, and homosexual relationships He

looks upon as such, besides being against nature.

To be afflicted in this way is a great burden to a

conscientious soul.

But through the advice and help of doctors, through a

strong and determined effort, and through prayer, a soul can

overcome this handicap.

God judges each soul on its own merits. The Guardian

cannot tell you what the attitude of God would be towards a

person who lives a good life in most ways, but not in this

way. All he can tell you is that it is forbidden by Bahá’u’lláh,

and that one so afflicted should struggle and struggle again

to overcome it. We must be hopeful of God’s mercy but not

impose upon it.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/26/50 to an individual believer, in

*National Bahá’í Review* (Mar. 1968) 2

75. A number of sexual problems, such as homosexuality

and transsexuality can well have medical aspects, and in

such cases recourse should certainly be had to the best

medical assistance. But it is clear from the teaching of

Bahá’u’lláh that homosexuality is not a condition to which a

person should be reconciled, but is a distortion of his or her

nature which should be controlled and overcome. This may

require a hard struggle, but so also can be the struggle of a

heterosexual person to control his or her desires. The exer-

cise of self-control in this, as in so very many other aspects of

life, has a beneficial effect on the progress of the soul.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 2/6/73 to all National Spiritual

Assemblies, in *Messages from The Universal House of Justice* 110–11

76. Regarding the question you asked him about one of the

believers who seems to be flagrantly a homosexual,

—although to a certain extent we must be forbearing in

the matter of people’s moral conduct because of the terrible

deterioration in society in general, this does not mean that

we can put up indefinitely with conduct which is disgrac-

ing the Cause. This person should have it brought to his

attention that such acts are condemned by Bahá’u’lláh,

and that he must mend his ways, … which is corruptive for him

and bad for the Cause. If after a period of probation you do

not see an improvement, he should have his voting rights

taken away.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/20/53 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada, in *National Bahá’í Review* (Mar. 1968) 2

77. As the friends can clearly note, Bahá’u’lláh denounces

the person who engages in homosexual or other immoral

relations with the censure: “Verily, he is not of Me”—a form

of condemnation He applies to users of opium. In these days

when in the United States an inherently deficient moral code

tolerates and promotes indulgence in one’s passions and all

manner of sexual vices, the Bahá’ís should refuse to be

influenced by the perversity of their society and its corrup-

tion, and through determination, prayer and daily vigilance,

as well as active and wholehearted participation in Bahá’í

service, and when necessary, with the assistance of compe-

tent and expert advice, release themselves from the bondage

of their carnal desires and take refuge under the shadow of

God’s loving care and mercy.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9/9/71 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, in “Extracts from the Bahá’í

Writings on Homosexuality” 4

9 Social
relationships

## Our relationship to the old world order

### Obedience to government

1. In every country where any of this people reside, they

must behave towards the government of that country with

loyalty, honesty and truthfulness. This is that which hath

been revealed at the behest of Him Who is the Ordainer, the

Ancient of Days.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 22–23

2. The attitude of the Bahá’ís must be two-fold, com-

plete obedience to the government of the country they reside

in, and no interference *whatsoever* in political matters or

questions. What the Master’s statement really means is

obedience to a duly constituted government, whatever that

government may be in form. We are not the ones, as individ-

ual Bahá’ís, to judge our government as just or unjust—for

each believer would be sure to hold a different viewpoint, and

within our own Bahá’í fold a hotbed of dissension would

spring up and destroy our unity. We must build up our own

Bahá’í system, and leave the faulty systems of the world to go

their way. We cannot change them through becoming in-

volved in them; on the contrary, they will destroy us.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/3/48 to the National Teaching Committee for

Central America, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 215 (Jan. 1949) 1

3. Now, as the government of America is a republican form

of government, it is necessary that all the citizens shall

take part in the elections of officers and take part in the

affairs of the republic.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* 343

### Avoiding political affairs and activities

4. O ye the beloved of the one true God! Pass beyond the

narrow retreats of your evil and corrupt desires, and

advance into the vast immensity of the realm of God, and

abide ye in the meads of sanctity and of detachment, that

the fragrance of your deeds may lead the whole of mankind

to the ocean of God’s unfading glory. Forbear ye from

concerning yourselves with the affairs of this world and all

that pertaineth unto it, or from meddling with the activi-

ties of those who are its outward leaders.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 241

5. O handmaid of the Lord! Speak thou no word of politics;

thy task concerneth the life of the soul, for this verily

leadeth to man’s joy in the world of God. Except to speak

well of them, make thou no mention of the earth’s kings,

and the worldly governments thereof. Rather, confine

thine utterance to spreading the blissful tidings of the

Kingdom of God, and demonstrating the influence of the

Word of God, and the holiness of the Cause of God. Tell

thou of abiding joy and spiritual delights, and godlike

qualities, and of how the Sun of Truth hath risen above

the earth’s horizons: tell of the blowing of the spirit of life

into the body of the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 92–93

6. We should—every one of us—remain aloof, in heart and

in mind, in words and in deeds, from the political affairs

and disputes of the Nations and of Governments. We

should keep ourselves away from such thoughts. We should

have no political connection with any of the parties and

should join no faction of these different and warring sects.

Absolute impartiality in the matter of political parties

should be shown by words and by deeds, and the love of the

whole humanity, whether a Government or a nation,

which is the basic teaching of Bahá’u’lláh, should also be

shown by words and by deeds ….

According to the exhortations of the Supreme Pen and

the confirmatory explanations of the Covenant of God, Ba-

há’ís are in no way allowed to enter into political affairs

under any pretense of excuse; since such an action brings

about disastrous results and ends in hurting the Cause of

God and its intimate friends.

Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 140 (Dec. 1940) 2

### Nonparticipation, not indifference

7. It should be made unmistakably clear that such an

attitude [of nonparticipation in politics] implies neither

the slightest indifference to the cause and interests of their

own country, nor involves any insubordination on their

part to the authority of recognized and established govern-

ments. Nor does it constitute a repudiation of their sacred

obligation to promote, in the most effective manner, the

best interests of their government and people. It indicates

the desire cherished by every true and loyal follower of

Bahá’u’lláh to serve, in an unselfish, unostentatious and

patriotic fashion, the highest interests of the country to

which he belongs, and in a way that would entail no depar-

ture from the high standards of integrity and truthfulness

associated with the teachings of his Faith.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/21/32 to the Bahá’ís of the United States and

Canada, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 65

8. Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose

of the world-wide Law of Bahá’u’lláh. Far from aiming at the

subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to

broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner

consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can

conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine

essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of

a sane and intelligent patriotism in men’s hearts, nor to

abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the

evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not

ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of

ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and

tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples

and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a

larger aspiration than any that has animated the human

race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses

and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It

repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and dis-

claims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword

is unity in diversity ….

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/28/31, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*

41–42

### Violence and self-defense

9. Say: Fear God, O people, and refrain from shedding the

blood of any one. Contend not with your neighbor, and be

ye of them that do good. Beware that ye commit no

disorders on the earth after it hath been well ordered, and

follow not the footsteps of them that are gone astray.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* 277

10. … it is better to be killed than kill.

Bahá’u’lláh, qtd. in *God Passes By* 198

11. … vengeance, according to reason, is also blamewor-

thy, because through vengeance no good result is gained

by the avenger. So if a man strikes another, and he who is

struck takes revenge by returning the blow, what advan-

tage will he gain? Will this be a balm for his wound or a

remedy for his pain? No, God forbid! In truth the two

actions are the same: both are injuries; the only difference

is that one occurred first, and the other afterward. There-

fore, if he who is struck forgives, nay, if he acts in a

manner contrary to that which has been used toward him,

this is laudable. The law of the community will punish the

aggressor but will not take revenge. This punishment has

for its end to warn, to protect and to oppose cruelty and

transgression so that other men may not be tyrannical.

But if he who has been struck pardons and forgives, he

shows the greatest mercy. This is worthy of admiration.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 267

12. A hitherto untranslated Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá …

points out that in the case of attack by robbers and highway-

men, a Bahá’í should not surrender himself, but should try,

as far as circumstances permit, to defend himself, and later

on lodge a complaint with the government authorities. In a

letter written on behalf of the Guardian, he also indicates

that in an emergency when there is no legal force at hand to

appeal to, a Bahá’í is justified in defending his life. In

another letter the Guardian has further pointed out that the

assault of an irresponsible assailant upon a Bahá’í should be

resisted by the Bahá’í, who would be justified, under such

circumstances, in protecting his life.

The House of Justice does not wish at the present time to

go beyond the guidelines given in the above-mentioned

statements. The question is basically a matter of conscience,

and in each case the Bahá’í involved must use his judgment

in determining when to stop in self-defense lest his action

deteriorate into retaliation.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 5/26/69 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada, in *National Bahá’í Review*, no. 32 (Aug.

1970) 3

### War and military duty

13. O people! Spread not disorder in the land, and shed not

the blood of any one, and consume not the substance of

others wrongfully, neither follow every accursed prattler.

Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 25

14. Today there is no greater glory for man than that of

service in the cause of the Most Great Peace. Peace is light,

whereas war is darkness. Peace is life; war is death. Peace

is guidance; war is error. Peace is the foundation of God;

war is a satanic institution. Peace is the illumination of

the world of humanity; war is the destroyer of human

foundations. When we consider outcomes in the world of

existence, we find that peace and fellowship are factors of

upbuilding and betterment, whereas war and strife are the

causes of destruction and disintegration …. Consider

the restlessness and agitation of the human world today

because of war. Peace is health and construction; war is

disease and dissolution. When the banner of truth is

raised, peace becomes the cause of the welfare and ad-

vancement of the human world. In all cycles and ages war

has been a factor of derangement and discomfort, whereas

peace and brotherhood have brought security and consid-

eration of human interests.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 123

15. … Bahá’ís should continue to apply, under all circum-

stances, for exemption from any military duties that necessi-

tate the taking of life. There is no justification for any change

of attitude on our part at the present time.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 7/20/46 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 188 (Oct. 1946)

9

16. We have considered your letter of July 15, 1965

concerning Bahá’ís and military service. Reference is made

to the statements of your National Assembly as reported in

*Bahá’í News* for April, 1943:

The National Assembly records its understanding of the

Guardian’s instructions concerning the duty of Bahá’ís in

time of war as obligating each believer called under the draft

to apply for noncombatant status, in which status he gives

full obedience to the military authority of his country; that

this obligation does not mean he is a conscientious objector

who refuses obedience to military authority, but on the other

hand it makes it incumbent upon the Bahá’í to apply for and

maintain the noncombatant status without regard to its

consequences upon his personal safety, his convenience, the

type of activity he must discharge or the rank to which he may

be assigned.

With this statement in mind, we think that Bahá’ís

should be discouraged from seeking or continuing a career

in the military, and that in any event they must, in obedi-

ence to the Guardian’s clear instructions, apply for exemp-

tion from military duty which necessitates the taking of

human life.

When the law imposes an obligation upon citizens to

fulfill a term of military service, as the U.S. Selective Service

Act does, and a Bahá’í may fulfill this term of service by

enlisting, re-enlisting or by being commissioned as an offi-

cer, he may do so provided he does not in any way jeopardize

his right to “apply for and maintain the noncombatant

status” within the spirit of the above principle. We make no

judgment as to whether the law in fact permits him to do

this. This is for the believer to determine.[1]

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9/20/65 to the National Spiritual

Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States

17. It is still his firm conviction that the believers, while

expressing their readiness to unreservedly obey any direc-

tions that the authorities may issue in time of war, should

also, and while there is yet no outbreak of hostilities,

appeal to the government for exemption from active mili-

tary service in a combatant capacity, stressing the fact

that in doing so they are not prompted by any selfish

considerations but by the sole and supreme motive of

upholding the Teachings of their Faith, which makes it a

moral obligation for them to desist from any act that would

involve them in direct warfare with their fellow-humans of

any other race or nation. There are many other avenues

through which the believers can assist in times of war by

enlisting in services of a non-combatant nature—services

that do not involve the direct shedding of blood—such as

ambulance work, air raid precaution service, office and

1. Bahá’í youth living outside the United States should consult their own

National Spiritual Assemblies for specific guidance on serving in their countries’

armed forces.

administrative works, and it is for such types of national

service that they should volunteer.

It is immaterial whether such activities would still

expose them to dangers, either at home or in the front,

since their desire is not to protect their lives, but to desist

from any acts of willful murder.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*

95–96

18. A Bahá’í may enlist voluntarily in the armed forces of a

country in order to obtain a training in some trade or

profession provided he can do so without making himself

liable to undertake combatant service.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 12/29/80 to

an individual believer

19. The Universal House of Justice has considered your

letter of 8 July 1982 concerning the decision you have

taken in regard to service in the military, and the doubts

which are now troubling you about whether your enlist-

ment in the Army’s flight school is in violation of the

teachings of the Faith.

We are instructed to say that your action in requesting

guidance from your National Spiritual Assembly was cor-

rect. The National Assembly in its reply to you of 7 June

stated that it was up to you to decide whether or not to

enlist, keeping in mind the guidance already given in its

previous letter. Now that you have enlisted, the House of

Justice is confident that you will do all you can to ensure

that you are not required to undertake combatant status.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 7/27/82 to

an individual believer

*Membership in non-Bahá’í religious and
other organizations*

20. Concerning membership in non-Bahá’í religious asso-

ciations. The Guardian wishes to re-emphasize the general

principle already laid down in his communications to your

Assembly and also to the individual believers that no Bahá’í

who wishes to be a wholehearted and sincere upholder of the

distinguishing principles of the Cause can accept full mem-

bership in any non-Bahá’í ecclesiastical organization. For

such an act would necessarily imply only a partial accept-

ance of the Teachings and laws of the Faith, and an incom-

plete recognition of its independent status, and would thus

be tantamount to an act of disloyalty to the verities it

enshrines. For it is only too obvious that in most of its

fundamental assumptions the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh is com-

pletely at variance with outworn creeds, ceremonies and

institutions. To be a Bahá’í and at the same time accept

membership in another religious body is simply an act of

contradiction that no sincere and logically minded person

can possibly accept. To follow Bahá’u’lláh does not mean

accepting some of His teachings and rejecting the rest.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 6/15/35, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 93

(July 1935) 1

21. Generally speaking, the friends should not enter secret

societies. It is certainly much better for the believers to

dissociate themselves from such organizations ….

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter to National Spiritual Assemblies, qtd. in

letter dated 6/3/74 and written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice

to an individual believer

22. … here are a few general guidelines that individual

Bahá’ís should consider before joining any organization.

When in doubt they should consult their local Spiritual

Assembly or even the National Spiritual Assembly.

The Guardian did not elaborate on what is meant by

“secret organizations,” but the term certainly applies to all

those organizations whose aims and objects are not available

to everyone who wishes to know them and whose member-

ship is not open to all persons without regard to race or

religion. Furthermore, the organization must not engage in

partisan politics. Neither should it be one that would not be

acceptable anywhere in the world ….

As for fraternities and sororities, membership in these is

permissible provided membership does not exclude persons

because of race, religion, or social position.

Membership in the League of Women Voters is permissi-

ble unless and until it becomes involved in partisan politics.

Discussion of political issues in itself is not forbidden to

Bahá’ís but they cannot support any particular party.

As for membership in the Grange, we assume this is

permissible for Bahá’ís so long as it remains the educational

and social movement we understand it to be.

The chief criteria for membership in any organization

are: Are its aims or objects compatible with the Bahá’í laws

and principles? Is membership open to persons of all racial

and religious backgrounds? Is it free of partisan politics?

If any Bahá’í is in doubt about a particular organization,

he can consult the administrative institutions. In doing so

he should supply all possible information so that a decision

can be based on facts.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, “Criteria for

Membership in Non-Bahá’í Organizations,” in *Bahá’í News*, no. 108 (Mar.

1967), U.S. Supplement 2

### Associating with social movements

23. Fully aware of the repeated statements of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

that universality is of God, Bahá’ís in every land are ready,

nay anxious, to associate themselves by word and deed with

any association of men which, after careful scrutiny, they

feel satisfied is free from every tinge of partisanship and

politics and is wholly devoted to the interests of all mankind.

In their collaboration with such associations they would

extend any moral and material assistance they can afford,

after having fulfilled their share of support to those institu-

tions that affect directly the interests of the Cause. They

should always bear in mind, however, the dominating pur-

pose of such a collaboration which is to secure in time the

recognition by those with whom they are associated of the

paramount necessity and the true significance of the Bahá’í

Revelation in this day.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/20/27 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Bahá’í Administration* 125–26

24. Membership in non-political organisations … is, in-

deed, the best method of teaching indirectly the Message

by making useful and frequent contacts with well-known

and influential persons who, if not completely won to the

Faith, can at least become of some effective use to it.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 1/24/34, in *The Unfolding Destiny*

*of the British Bahá’í Community* 91

25. It is surely very necessary that the Friends should keep

in touch with the modern social movements, but their

main objective should be to draw more people to the spirit

and teachings of the Cause. They should learn from the

experience of others and not permit themselves to go (off)

at a tangent, and finally be so absorbed in other move-

ments as to forget the Cause of God.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter to Mrs. Harding Urbana (received on

12/25/31), in *Bahá’í News*, no. 64 (July 1932) 4

## Our relationship to the new world order

### Forging Bahá’í communities

26. It behooveth all the beloved of God to become as one, to

gather together under the protection of a single flag, to

stand for a uniform body of opinion, to follow one and the

same pathway, to hold fast to a single resolve. Let them

forget their divergent theories and put aside their conflict-

ing views since, God be praised, our purpose is one, our

goal is one. We are the servants of one Threshold, we all

draw our nourishment from the same one Source, we all

are gathered in the shade of the same high Tabernacle, we

all are sheltered under the one celestial Tree.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 230

27. … it is of the utmost importance that in accordance

with the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy

Book, in every locality, be it city or hamlet, where the

number of adult (21 years and above) declared believers

exceeds nine,[2] a local “Spiritual Assembly” be forthwith

established. To it all local matters pertaining to the Cause

must be directly and immediately referred for full consulta-

tion and decision. The importance, nay the absolute necessi-

ty of these local Assemblies is manifest when we realize that

in the days to come they will evolve into the local Houses of

Justice ….

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/12/23 to the Bahá’ís of America, Great Britain,

Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, and Australasia, in *Bahá’í*

*Administration* 37

28. It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step

without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must

assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be

submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered

and well arranged. Otherwise every person will act inde-

pendently and after his own judgment, will follow his own

desire, and do harm to the Cause.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, qtd. in letter from Shoghi Effendi dated 3/5/22, in *Bahá’í*

*Administration* 21

29. The divinely ordained institution of the Local Spiritual

Assembly operates at the first levels of human society and

is the basic administrative unit of Bahá’u’lláh’s World

Order. It is concerned with individuals and families whom it

must constantly encourage to unite in a distinctive Bahá’í

society, vitalized and guarded by the laws, ordinances and

principles of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. It protects the Cause

of God; it acts as the loving shepherd of the Bahá’í flock.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Naw-Rúz 1974 to Bahá’ís of the

world

### Supporting Bahá’í communities

30. The friends are called upon to give their whole-hearted

support and cooperation to the Local Spiritual Assembly,

2. When the number of believers is exactly nine, they constitute themselves as

the Local Spiritual Assembly by joint declaration.

first by voting for the membership and then by energetical-

ly pursuing its plans and programs, by turning to it in

time of trouble or difficulty, by praying for its success and

taking delight in its rise to influence and honor. This great

prize, this gift of God within each community must be

cherished, nurtured, loved, assisted, obeyed and prayed

for.

Such a firmly founded, busy and happy community life

as is envisioned when Local Spiritual Assemblies are truly

effective, will provide a firm home foundation from which

the friends may derive courage and strength and loving

support in bearing the Divine Message to their fellow-men

and conforming their lives to its benevolent rule.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Naw-Rúz 1974 to Bahá’ís of the

world

31. And now as I look into the future, I hope to see the

friends at all times, in every land, and of every shade of

thought and character, voluntarily and joyously rallying

round their local and in particular their national centers of

activity, upholding and promoting their interests with

complete unanimity and contentment, with perfect under-

standing, genuine enthusiasm, and sustained vigor. This

indeed is the one joy and yearning of my life, for it is the

fountainhead from which all future blessings will flow, the

broad foundation upon which the security of the Divine

Edifice must ultimately rest. May we not hope that now at

last the dawn of a brighter day is breaking upon our

beloved Cause?

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/24/24 to Bahá’ís throughout the continent of

America, in *Bahá’í Administration* 67

32. His brotherly advice to you, and to all loyal and ardent

young believers like you, is that you should deepen your

knowledge of the history and of the tenets of the Faith, not

merely by means of careful and thorough study, but also

through active, whole-hearted and continued participation

in all the activities, whether administrative or otherwise,

of your community. The Bahá’í community life provides you

with an indispensable laboratory where you can translate

into living and constructive action, the principles which you

imbibe from the teachings. By becoming a real part of that

living organism you can catch the real spirit which runs

throughout the Bahá’í teachings. To study the principles,

and to try to live according to them, are, therefore, the two

essential mediums through which you can insure the devel-

opment and progress of your inner spiritual life and of your

outer existence as well. May Bahá’u’lláh enable you to attain

this high station, and may He keep the torch of faith forever

burning in your hearts!

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/2/33 to an individual believer, in

*The Importance of Deepening* 36–37

33. Paralleling the growth of his inner life through prayer,

meditation, service, and study of the teachings, Bahá’í

youth have the opportunity to learn in practice the very

functioning of the Order of Bahá’u’lláh. Through taking part

in conferences and summer schools as well as Nineteen Day

Feasts, and in service on committees, they can develop the

wonderful skill of Bahá’í consultation, thus tracing new

paths of human corporate action.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/10/66 to Bahá’í youth in every

land, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 96

34. … youth may demonstrate the efficiency, the vigor,

the access of unity which arise from true consultation and,

by contrast, demonstrate the futility of partisanship, lob-

bying, debate, secret diplomacy, and unilateral action

which characterize modern affairs. Youth also take part in

the life of the Bahá’í community as a whole and promote a

society in which all generations—elderly, middle-aged,

youth, children—are fully integrated and make up an organ-

ic whole. By refusing to carry over the antagonisms and

mistrust between the generations which perplex and bedevil

modern society, they will again demonstrate the healing and

life-giving nature of their religion.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6/10/66 to Bahá’í youth in every

land, in *Wellspring of Guidance* 96–97

35. Wherever a Bahá’í community exists, whether large or

small, let it be distinguished for its abiding sense of security

and faith, its high standard of rectitude, its complete free-

dom from all forms of prejudice, the spirit of love among its

members and for the closely knit fabric of its social life. The

acute distinction between this and present day society will

inevitably arouse the interest of the more enlightened, and

as the world’s gloom deepens the light of Bahá’í life will shine

brighter and brighter until its brilliance must eventually

attract the disillusioned masses and cause them to enter the

haven of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh, Who alone can bring

them peace and justice and an ordered life.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8/68 to Hands of the Cause of

God and Bahá’ís at First Bahá’í Oceanic Conference, Palermo, Sicily, in

*Messages from The Universal House of Justice* 12

### Fostering unity in the community

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. This is your task.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 246

37. The great and fundamental teachings of Bahá’u’lláh are

the oneness of God and unity of mankind. This is the bond

of union among Bahá’ís all over the world. They become

united among themselves, then unite others. It is impossible

to unite unless united. Christ said, “Ye are the salt of the

earth; but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it

be salted?” This proves there were dissensions and lack of

unity among His followers. Hence His admonition to unity of

action.

Now must we, likewise, bind ourselves together in the

utmost unity, be kind and loving to each other, sacrificing

all our possessions, our honor, yea, even our lives for each

other. Then will it be proved that we have acted according to

the teachings of God, that we have been real believers in the

oneness of God and unity of mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 156

38. How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves of

light, if they stand together side by side in a firm unbroken

line. For now have the rays of reality from the Sun of the

world of existence, united in adoration all the worshipers

of this light; and these rays have, through infinite grace,

gathered all peoples together within this wide-spreading

shelter; therefore must all souls become as one soul, and

all hearts as one heart. Let all be set free from the multiple

identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the

oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 76

39. In their relations amongst themselves as fellow-

believers, let them not be content with the mere exchange

of cold and empty formalities often connected with the

organizing of banquets, receptions, consultative assem-

blies, and lecture-halls. Let them rather, as equal co-

sharers in the spiritual benefits conferred upon them by

Bahá’u’lláh, arise and, with the aid and counsel of their local

and national representatives, supplement these official func-

tions with those opportunities which only a close and

intimate social intercourse can adequately provide. In their

homes, in their hours of relaxation and leisure, in the daily

contact of business transactions, in the association of their

children, whether in their study-classes, their playgrounds,

and club-rooms, in short under all possible circumstances,

however insignificant they appear, the community of the

followers of Bahá’u’lláh should satisfy themselves that in the

eyes of the world at large and in the sight of their vigilant

Master they are the living witnesses of those truths which He

fondly cherished and tirelessly championed to the very end

of His days. If we relax in our purpose, if we falter in our

faith, if we neglect the varied opportunities given us from

time to time by an all-wise and gracious Master, we are not

merely failing in what is our most vital and conspicuous

obligation, but are thereby insensibly retarding the flow of

those quickening energies which can alone insure the vigor-

ous and speedy development of God’s struggling Faith.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4/12/27 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Bahá’í Administration* 130–31

40. What impressed him most in the account of your

services was the statement that the old and the young

Bahá’ís are firmly united and co-operating in bearing the

burdens of the Faith in that locality. Nothing will attract

God’s blessings and grace more than the unity of the friends,

and nothing is more destructive of their highest purpose

than divisions and misunderstandings. Cling therefore to

unity if you desire to succeed and abide by the will of your

Lord Bahá’u’lláh; for that is the true objective of His Mission

in this world.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/11/32 to the Spiritual Assembly of

the Bahá’ís of Teaneck, N. J., in *Bahá’í Youth* 21–22

41. … the believers have not yet fully learned to draw on

each other’s love for strength and consolation in time of

need. The Cause of God is endowed with tremendous

powers, and the reason the believers do not gain more from

it is because they have not learned to fully draw on these

mighty forces of love and strength and harmony generated

by the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/8/42 to Roan Orloff, in *Bahá’í News*, no. 217

(Mar. 1949) 4

42, As humanity plunges deeper into that condition of

which Bahá’u’lláh wrote, “to disclose it now would not be

meet and seemly,” so must the believers increasingly stand

out as assured, orientated, and fundamentally happy be-

ings, conforming to a standard which, in direct contrast to

the ignoble and amoral attitudes of modern society, is the

source of their honor, strength, and maturity. It is this

marked contrast between the vigor, unity, and discipline of

the Bahá’í community on the one hand, and the increasing

confusion, despair, and feverish tempo of a doomed society

on the other, which, during the turbulent years ahead, will

draw the eyes of humanity to the sanctuary of Bahá’u’lláh’s

world-redeeming Faith.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riḍván 1966, in *Wellspring of*

*Guidance* 79–80

### Supporting and strengthening Bahá’í youth

43. Give great attention and support to youth participation

in community life and to their teaching the Cause to their

own generation in high schools, colleges and elsewhere;

encourage and offer guidance to Bahá’í youth to plan their

lives to be of greatest service to the Faith, and provide means

whereby their offers of specific periods of teaching and other

service beyond normal teaching activities can be organized

and used to the best advantage.

The Universal House of Justice, in *Challenge* 11

44. The winds of test and trial have blown upon our Faith

more than once, and he strongly feels that old believers like

yourself should do everything in their power to protect the

younger Bahá’ís, to strengthen their faith, deepen them in

the Covenant, and enable them to take full refuge in the Will

and Testament of the beloved Master, that impregnable

fortress He built for our safety when He Himself should have

gone from our sight.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/26/41 to an individual believer, in

*Bahá’í Youth* 21

### Supporting the Bahá’í funds

45. … the institutions of the local and national Funds,

that are now the necessary adjuncts to all local and nation-

al spiritual assemblies, have not only been established by

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Tablets He revealed to the Bahá’ís of the

Orient, but their importance and necessity have been repeat-

edly emphasized by Him in His utterances and writings.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/27/29 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 6

46. All the friends of God … should contribute to the

extent possible, however modest their offering may be. God

doth not burden a soul beyond its capacity. Such contribu-

tions must come from all centers and all believers …. O

Friends of God! Be ye assured that in place of these

contributions, your agriculture, your industry, and your

commerce will be blessed by manifold increases, with

goodly gifts and bestowals. He who cometh with one goodly

deed will receive a tenfold reward. There is no doubt that

the living Lord will abundantly confirm those who expend

their wealth in His path.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *Words of God* 13

47. We must be like the fountain or spring that is continu-

ally emptying itself of all that it has and is continually

being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually

giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by fear

of poverty and reliant on the unfailing bounty of the

Source of all wealth and all good—this is the secret of right

living.

Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in *Lifeblood of the Cause* 12

48. As to material sacrifices towards the welfare of the

Cause he wishes you to understand that the general

interests of the Cause take precedence over the interests of

the particular individuals. For instance contributions to the

welfare of individuals are secondary to contributions to-

wards the National and Local Funds and that of the

Temple.

This is a general instruction. Of course helping the

individuals in case one is able to help, is also desirable and

merits appreciation.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/20/25 to an individual believer, in

*Lifeblood of the Cause* 4

49. Regarding the question you raised: in the first place

every believer is free to follow the dictates of his own

conscience as regards the manner in which he should

spend his own money. Secondly, we must always bear in

mind that there are so few Bahá’ís in the world, relative to

the world’s population, and so many people in need, that

even if all of us gave all we had, it would not alleviate more

than an infinitesimal amount of suffering. This does not

mean we must not help the needy, we should; but our

contributions to the Faith are the surest way of lifting once

and for all time the burden of hunger and misery from

mankind, for it is only through the system of Bahá’u’lláh

—Divine in origin—that the world can be gotten on its feet

and want, fear, hunger, war, etc., be eliminated. Non-

Bahá’ís cannot contribute to our work or do it for us; so

really our first obligation is to support our own teaching

work, as this will lead to the healing of the nations.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/8/47 to an individual believer, in

*Lifeblood of the Cause* 12–13

50. He wishes you … to stress the importance of the

institution of the National Bahá’í Fund, which, in these

early days of the administrative development of the Faith, is

the indispensable medium for the growth and expansion of

the Movement. Contributions to this fund constitute, in

addition, a practical and effective way whereby every believer

can test the measure and character of his faith, and prove

in deeds the intensity of his devotion and attachment to the

Cause.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 9/25/34 to chairman of the

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Cana-

da, in Lifeblood of the Cause 12

51. As to the idea of “giving what one can afford”: this does

by no means put a limit or even exclude the possibility of

self-sacrifice. There can be no limit to one’s contributions

to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is,

especially when such offerings necessitate the sacrifice of

other wants and desires on the part of the donor. The

harder the sacrifice the more meritorious will it be, of

course, in the sight of God. For after all it is not so much

the quantity of one’s offerings that matters, but rather the

measure of deprivation that such offerings entail. It is the

spirit, not the mere fact of contributing, that we should

always take into account when we stress the necessity for a

universal and whole-hearted support of the various funds

of the Cause.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 12/31/35 to an individual believer, in Lifeblood of

the Cause 10

52. Most urgently, may every believer give sacrificially of

his substance, each in accordance with his means, to the

funds of the Cause, local, national, continental and inter-

national, so that the material resources—the life-blood of

all activities—will be adequate to the tremendous work

that we have to perform in the months and years immedi-

ately ahead. It requires a concentration of effort, a unity of

purpose and a degree of self-sacrifice to match the heroic

exertions of the victors of past plans in the progress of the

Cause.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1/2/84 to the followers of Bahá’-

u’lláh in every land

Participation in social and economic
development

53. The administrative machinery of the Cause having

now sufficiently evolved, its aim and object fairly well

grasped and understood, and its method and working

made more familiar to every believer, I feel the time is ripe

when it should be fully and consciously utilized to further

the purpose for which it has been created. It should, I

strongly feel, be made to serve a twofold purpose. On one

hand, it should aim at a steady and gradual expansion of

the Movement along lines that are at once broad, sound

and universal; and on the other it should insure the

internal consolidation of the work already achieved. It

should both provide the impulse whereby the dynamic

forces latent in the Faith can unfold, crystallize, and shape

the lives and conduct of men, and serve as a medium for

the interchange of thought and the coordination of activi-

ties among the divers elements that constitute the Bahá’í

community.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 5/11/26 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Bahá’í Administration* 109

54. The matter of Teaching, its direction, its ways and

means, its extension, its consolidation, essential as they

are to the interests of the Cause, constitute by no means

the only issue which should receive the full attention of

these Assemblies. A careful study of Bahá’u’lláh’s and

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets will reveal that other duties, no less

vital to the interests of the Cause, devolve upon the elected

representatives of the friends in every locality ….

They must do their utmost to extend at all times the

helping hand to the poor, the sick, the disabled, the orphan,

the widow, irrespective of color, caste and creed.

They must promote by every means in their power the

material as well as the spiritual enlightenment of youth, the

means for the education of children, institute, whenever

possible, Bahá’í educational institutions, organize and su-

pervise their work and provide the best means for their

progress and development.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 3/12/23 to the Bahá’ís of America, Great Britain,

Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, and Australasia, *in Bahá’í*

*Administration* 37–38

55. The friends must never mistake the Bahá’í Administra-

tion for an end in itself. It is merely the instrument of the

spirit of the Faith. This Cause is a Cause which God has

revealed to humanity as a whole. It is designed to benefit the

entire human race, and the only way it can do this is to

re-form the community life of mankind, as well as seeking to

regenerate the individual. The Bahá’í administration is only

the first shaping of what in future will come to be the social

life and laws of community living.

On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 10/14/41 to an individual believer, in

*The Local Spiritual Assembly* 28

56. The soul-stirring events in Bahá’u’lláh’s native land and

the concomitant advance into the theater of world affairs of

the agencies of His Administrative Order have combined to

bring into focus new possibilities in the evolution of the

Bahá’í world community. Our Riḍván message this year

captured these implications in its reference to the opening

before us of a wider horizon in whose light can dimly be

discerned new pursuits and undertakings upon which we

must soon embark. These portend our greater involvement

in the development of the social and economic life of

peoples.

… although it has hitherto been impracticable for

Bahá’í institutions generally to emphasize development ac-

tivities, the concept of social and economic development is

enshrined in the sacred Teachings of our Faith. The beloved

Master, through His illuminating words and deeds, set the

example for the application of this concept to the reconstruc-

tion of society. Witness, for instance, what social and eco-

nomic progress the Iranian believers attained under His

loving guidance and, subsequently, with the unfailing en-

couragement of the Guardian of the Cause.

Now, after all the years of constant teaching activity, the

Community of the Greatest Name has grown to the stage at

which the processes of this development must be incorporat-

ed into its regular pursuits; particularly is action compelled

by the expansion of the Faith in Third World countries where

the vast majority of its adherents reside. The steps to be

taken must necessarily begin in the Bahá’í Community

itself, with the friends endeavoring, through their applica-

tion of spiritual principles, their rectitude of conduct and

the practice of the art of consultation, to uplift themselves

and thus become self-sufficient and self-reliant. Moreover,

these exertions will conduce to the preservation of human

honor, so desired by Bahá’u’lláh. In the process and as a

consequence, the friends will undoubtedly extend the bene-

fits of their efforts to society as a whole, until all mankind

achieves the progress intended by the Lord of the Age.

…

We go forward confident that the wholehearted involve-

ment of the friends in these activities will ensure a deeper

consolidation of the community at all levels. Our engage-

ment in the technical aspects of development should, howev-

er, not be allowed to supplant the essentials of teaching,

which remains the primary duty of every follower of Bahá’-

u’lláh.

Rather should our increased activities in the develop-

ment field be viewed as a reinforcement of the teaching work,

as a greater manifestation of faith in action. For, if expan-

sion of the teaching work does not continue, there can be no

hope of success for this enlarged dimension of the consolida-

tion process.

Ultimately, the call to action is addressed to the individ-

ual friends, whether they be adult or youth, veteran or

newly-enrolled. Let them step forth to take their places in the

arena of service where their talents and skills, their special-

ized training, their material resources, their offers of time

and energy and, above all, their dedication to Bahá’í princi-

ples, can be put to work in improving the lot of man.

May all derive enduring inspiration from the following

statement written in 1933 by the hand of our beloved

Guardian:

The problems which confront the believers at the pres-

ent time, whether social, spiritual, economic or administra-

tive will be gradually solved as the number and the re-

sources of the friends multiply and their capacity for service

and for the application of Bahá’í principles develops. They

should be patient, confident and active in utilizing every

possible opportunity that presents itself within the limits now

necessarily imposed upon them. May the Almighty aid them

to fulfill their highest hopes.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10/20/83 to Bahá’ís of the world

57. Bahá’í communities in many lands have attained a size

and complexity that both require and make possible the

implementation of a range of activities for their social and

economic development which will not only be of immense

value for the consolidation of these communities and the

development of their Bahá’í life, but will also benefit the

wider communities within which they are embedded and

will demonstrate the beneficial effects of the Bahá’í Message

to the critical gaze of the world.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 1/2/84 to followers of Bahá’-

u’lláh in every land

58. The upsurge of zeal throughout the Bahá’í world for

exploration of the new dimension of social and economic

development is both heartwarming and uplifting to all our

hopes. This energy within the community, carefully and

wisely directed, will undoubtedly bring about a new era of

consolidation and expansion, which in turn will attract

further widespread attention, so that both aspects of change

in the Bahá’í world community will be interactive and

mutually propelling.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riḍván 1984 to Bahá’ís of the

world

Achieving God’s holy purpose for
humanity

59. … the Ancient Beauty was ever, during His sojourn

in this transitory world, either a captive bound with

chains, or living under a sword, or subjected to extreme

suffering and torment, or held in the Most Great Prison.

Because of His physical weakness, brought on by His

afflictions, His blessed body was worn away to a breath; it

was light as a cobweb from long grieving. And His reason

for shouldering this heavy load and enduring all this

anguish, which was even as an ocean that hurleth its

waves to high heaven—His reason for putting on the heavy

iron chains and for becoming the very embodiment of utter

resignation and meekness, was to lead every soul on earth

to concord, to fellow-feeling, to oneness; to make known

amongst all peoples the sign of the singleness of God, so

that at last the primal oneness deposited at the heart of all

created things would bear its destined fruit, and the

splendor of “No difference canst thou see in the creation of

the God of Mercy,”[3] would cast abroad its rays.

Now is the time, O ye beloved of the Lord, for ardent

endeavor. Struggle ye, and strive. And since the Ancient

Beauty was exposed by day and night on the field of

martyrdom, let us in our turn labor hard, and hear and

ponder the counsels of God; let us fling away our lives, and

renounce our brief and numbered days. Let us turn our

eyes away from empty fantasies of this world’s divergent

forms, and serve instead this pre-eminent purpose, this

grand design.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 263

60. O ye believers of God! Be not concerned with the

smallness of your numbers, neither be oppressed by the

multitude of an unbelieving world. Five grains of wheat

will be endued with heavenly blessing, whereas a thou-

sand tons of tares will yield no results or effect. One

fruitful tree will be conducive to the life of society, whereas

a thousand forests of wild trees offer no fruits. The plain is

covered with pebbles, but precious stones are rare. One

pearl is better than a thousand wildernesses of sand,

especially this pearl of great price, which is endowed with

divine blessing. Erelong thousands of other pearls will be

born from it. When that pearl associates and becomes the

intimate of the pebbles, they also all change into pearls.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* 86–87

61. Humanity, torn with dissension and burning with

hate, is crying at this hour for a fuller measure of that love

which is born of God, that love which in the last resort will

prove the one solvent of its incalculable difficulties and

problems. Is it not incumbent upon us, whose hearts are

aglow with love for Him, to make still greater effort, to

3. Qur’án 67:3.

manifest that love in all its purity and power in our

dealings with our fellow-men? May our love of our beloved

Master, so ardent, so disinterested in all its aspects, find

its true expression in love for our fellow-brethren and

sisters in the faith as well as for all mankind. I assure you,

dear friends, that progress in such matters as these is

limitless and infinite, and that upon the extent of our

achievements along this line will ultimately depend the

success of our mission in life.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 2/23/24 to Bahá’ís throughout America, in

*Bahá’í Administration* 62

62. By the sublimity of their principles, the warmth of

their love, the spotless purity of their character, and the

depth of their devoutness and piety, let them demonstrate

to their fellow-countrymen the ennobling reality of a power

that shall weld a disrupted world.

We can prove ourselves worthy of our Cause only if in

our individual conduct and corporate life we sedulously

imitate the example of our beloved Master, Whom the

terrors of tyranny, the storms of incessant abuse, the

oppressiveness of humiliation, never caused to deviate a

hair’s breadth from the revealed Law of Bahá’u’lláh.

Such is the path of servitude, such is the way of holiness

He chose to tread to the very end of His life. Nothing short of

the strictest adherence to His glorious example can safely

steer our course amid the pitfalls of this perilous age, and

lead us on to fulfill our high destiny.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 4/12/27 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the

Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, in *Bahá’í Administration* 132

63. We are told by Shoghi Effendi that two great processes

are at work in the world: the great Plan of God, tumultuous

in its progress, working through mankind as a whole,

tearing down barriers to world unity and forging human-

kind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and

experience. This process will produce, in God’s due time,

the Lesser Peace, the political unification of the world.

Mankind at that time can be likened to a body that is

unified but without life. The second process, the task of

breathing life into this unified body—of creating true

unity and spirituality culminating in the Most Great Peace

—is that of the Bahá’ís, who are laboring consciously, with

detailed instructions and continuing divine guidance, to

erect the fabric of the Kingdom of God on earth, into which

they call their fellowmen, thus conferring upon them eternal

life.

The working out of God’s Major Plan proceeds mysteri-

ously in ways directed by Him alone, but the Minor Plan that

He has given us to execute, as our part in His grand design

for the redemption of mankind, is clearly delineated. It is to

this work that we must devote all our energies, for there is no

one else to do it.

The Universal House of Justice, qtd. in letter dated 7/7/76 and written on

behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, in *Bahá’í*

*National Review*, no. 101 (Sept. 1976) 2

64. Ours, dearly-beloved co-workers, is the paramount

duty to continue, with undimmed vision and unabated

zeal, to assist in the final erection of that Edifice the

foundations of which Bahá’u’lláh has laid in our hearts, to

derive added hope and strength from the general trend of

recent events, however dark their immediate effects, and to

pray with unremitting fervor that He may hasten the ap-

proach of the realization of that Wondrous Vision which

constitutes the brightest emanation of His Mind and the

fairest fruit of the fairest civilization the world has yet seen.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/28/31, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 48

65. The champion builders of Bahá’u’lláh’s rising World

Order must scale nobler heights of heroism as humanity

plunges into greater depths of despair, degradation, dissen-

sion and distress. Let them forge ahead into the future

serenely confident that the hour of their mightiest exertions

and the supreme opportunity for their greatest exploits

must coincide with the apocalyptic upheaval marking the

lowest ebb in mankind’s fast-declining fortunes.

Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 11/3/48 to the Bahá’ís of the United States, in

*Citadel of Faith* 58

66. You are a community of victors, you occupy the front

ranks of Bahá’u’lláh’s invincible army of light, indeed, you

must remain in the vanguard of its thrust. The soul-shaking

events transpiring at this very moment in the motherland of

our Faith make even more urgent than ever the necessity of

multiplying the size of your community on which rest

inescapable God-given responsibilities towards the world

community, no less than towards itself. All your accomplish-

ments proclaim your ability to excel in the fundamental goal

of expanding your membership. The progress of the Cause

in your country undoubtedly depends upon such expansion.

It is, of course, the individual believer who bears pri-

mary responsibility for securing this goal; therefore, it is

primarily to the individual believer “on whom,” as the

beloved Guardian averred, “in the last resort, depends the

fate of the entire community,” that our concern in this

instance is addressed. For it is the individual who possesses

the will to act as a teacher or not. No Spiritual Assembly, no

teaching committee, no group of well-intentioned Bahá’ís,

however much it exerts itself, may usurp the position occu-

pied by the individual in this fundamental activity. Recog-

nizing that the Spiritual Assemblies and their designated

committees have devoted much to proclaiming the Faith

through the mass media and sundry other means, that the

enormous resources poured into such proclamation repre-

sent an investment in the teaching work which paves the

way for the action of the individual teacher, and that publici-

ty, however much it may arouse public interest in the Cause,

is incapable of replacing personal teaching efforts, let the

individual Bahá’í renew his resolve to “arise and respond to

the call of teaching.” Let him, acting on Shoghi Effendi’s

advice, “survey the possibilities which the particular cir-

cumstances in which he lives offer him, evaluate their

advantages, and proceed intelligently and systematically to

utilize them for the achievement of the object he has in

mind.” Let him also strive to obtain adequate knowledge of

the Teachings and reflect the virtues of that knowledge in his

daily life. Finally, let him waste no time, forfeit no further

opportunity.

The Universal House of Justice, telex dated 3/23/84 to the Bahá’ís of the

United States

67. The rising sun of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation is having its

visible effect upon the world and upon the Bahá’í community

itself. Opportunities, long dreamed of for teaching, attended

by showering confirmations, now challenge in ever-

increasing numbers, every individual believer, every Local

and National Spiritual Assembly. The potent seeds sown by

‘Abdu’l-Bahá are beginning to germinate within the divinely-

ordained Order expounded and firmly laid by the beloved

Guardian. Humanity is beaten almost to its knees, bewil-

dered and shepherdless, hungry for the bread of life. This is

our day of service; we have that heavenly food to offer. The

peoples are disillusioned with deficient political theories,

social systems and orders; they crave, knowingly or unknow-

ingly, the love of God and reunion with Him. Our response to

this growing challenge must be a mighty upsurge of effective

teaching, imparting the divine fire which Bahá’u’lláh has

kindled in our hearts until a conflagration arising from

millions of souls on fire with His love shall at last testify that

the Day for which the Chief Luminaries of our Faith so

ardently prayed has at last dawned.

The Universal House of Justice, letter dated Riḍván 1982 to Bahá’ís of the

world

10 Youth can move
the world

Messages from the Universal House of
Justice to the Bahá’í youth of the world

### 3 January 1984

1. The designation of 1985 by the United Nations as

International Youth Year opens new vistas for the activities

in which the young members of our community are en-

gaged. The hope of the United Nations in thus focusing on

youth is to encourage their conscious participation in the

affairs of the world through their involvement in interna-

tional development and such other undertakings and rela-

tionships as may aid the realization of their aspirations for

a world without war.

These expectations reinforce the immediate, vast op-

portunities begging our attention. To visualize, however

imperfectly, the challenges that engage us now, we have

only to reflect, in the light of our sacred Writings, upon the

confluence of favorable circumstances brought about by

the accelerated unfolding of the Divine Plan over nearly five

decades, by the untold potencies of the spiritual drama

being played out in Iran, and by the creative energy stimu-

lated by awareness of the approaching end of the twentieth

century. Undoubtedly, it is within your power to contrib-

ute significantly to shaping the societies of the coming

century; youth can move the world.

…

How apt, indeed how exciting, that so portentous an

occasion should be presented to you, the young, eager

followers of the Blessed Beauty, to enlarge the scope of

your endeavors in precisely that arena of action in which

you strive so conscientiously to distinguish yourselves!

For in the theme proposed by the United Nations

—“Participation, Development, Peace”–can be perceived

an affirmation that the goals pursued by you, as Bahá’ís,

are at heart the very objects of the frenetic searchings of your

despairing contemporaries.

You are already engaged in the thrust of the Seven Year

Plan, which provides the framework for any further course of

action you may now be moved by this new opportunity to

adopt. International Youth Year will fall within the Plan’s

next phase; thus the activities you will undertake, and for

which you will wish to prepare even now, cannot but en-

hance your contributions to the vitality of that Plan, while at

the same time aiding the proceedings for the Youth Year. Let

there be no delay, then, in the vigor of your response.

A highlight of this period of the Seven Year Plan has been

the phenomenal proclamation accorded the Faith in the

wake of the unabating persecutions in Iran; a new interest in

its Teachings has been aroused on a wide scale. Simultane-

ously, more and more people from all strata of society

frantically seek their true identity, which is to say, although

they would not so plainly admit it, the spiritual meaning of

their lives; prominent among these seekers are the young.

Not only does this knowledge open fruitful avenues for

Bahá’í initiative, it also indicates to young Bahá’ís a particu-

lar responsibility so to teach the Cause and live the life as to

give vivid expression to those virtues that would fulfill the

spiritual yearning of their peers.

For the sake of preserving such virtues much innocent

blood has been shed in the past, and much, even today, is

being sacrificed in Iran by young and old alike. Consider, for

example, the instances in Shíráz last summer of the six

young women, their ages ranging from 18 to 25 years, whose

lives were snuffed out by the hangman’s noose. All faced

attempted inducements to recant their Faith; all refused to

deny their Beloved. Look also at the accounts of the astound-

ing fortitude shown over and over again by children and

youth who were subjected to the interrogations and abuses

of teachers and mullahs and were expelled from school for

upholding their beliefs. It, moreover, bears noting that

under the restrictions so cruelly imposed on their communi-

ty, the youth rendered signal services, placing their energies

at the disposal of Bahá’í institutions throughout the coun-

try. No splendor of speech could give more fitting testimony

to their spiritual commitment and fidelity than these pure

acts of selflessness and devotion. In virtually no other place

on earth is so great a price for faith required of the Bahá’ís.

Nor could there be found more willing, more radiant bearers

of the cup of sacrifice than the valiant Bahá’í youth of Iran.

Might it, then, not be reasonably expected that you, the

youth and young adults living at such an extraordinary time,

witnessing such stirring examples of the valor of your

Iranian fellows, and exercising such freedom of movement,

would sally forth, “unrestrained as the wind,” into the field

of Bahá’í action?

May you all persevere in your individual efforts to teach

the Faith, but with added zest, to study the Writings, but

with greater earnestness. May you pursue your education

and training for future service to mankind, offering as much

of your free time as possible to activities on behalf of the

Cause. May those of you already bent on your life’s work and

who may have already founded families, strive toward be-

coming the living embodiments of Bahá’í ideals, both in the

spiritual nurturing of your families and in your active

involvement in the efforts on the home front or abroad in the

pioneering field. May all respond to the current demands

upon the Faith by displaying a fresh measure of dedication to

the tasks at hand.

Further to these aspirations is the need for a mighty

mobilization of teaching activities reflecting regularity in the

patterns of service rendered by young Bahá’ís. The native

urge of youth to move from place to place, combined with

their abounding zeal, indicates that you can become more

deliberately and numerously involved in these activities as

traveling teachers. One pattern of this mobilization could be

short-term projects, carried out at home or in other lands,

dedicated to both teaching the Faith and improving the

living conditions of people. Another could be that, while still

young and unburdened by family responsibilities, you give

attention to the idea of volunteering a set period, say, one or

two years, to some Bahá’í service, on the home front or

abroad, in the teaching or development field. It would accrue

to the strength and stability of the community if such

patterns could be followed by succeeding generations of

youth. Regardless of the modes of service, however, youth

must be understood to be fully engaged, at all times, in all

climes and under all conditions. In your varied pursuits you

may rest assured of the loving support and guidance of the

Bahá’í institutions operating at every level.

Our ardent prayers, our unshakable confidence in your

ability to succeed, our imperishable love surround you in all

you endeavor to do in the path of service to the Blessed

Perfection.

The Universal House of Justice

### 8 May 1985

2. We extend our loving greetings and best wishes to all

who will meet in youth conferences yet to be held during

International Youth Year. So eager and resourceful have

been the responses of the Bahá’í youth in many countries to

the challenges of this special year that we are moved to

expressions of delight and high hope.

We applaud those youth who, in respect of this period,

have already engaged in some activity within their national

and local communities or in collaboration with their peers in

other countries, and call upon them to persevere in their

unyielding efforts to acquire spiritual qualities and useful

qualifications. For if they do so, the influence of their

high-minded motivations will exert itself upon world devel-

opments conducive to a productive, progressive and peaceful

future.

May the youth activities begun this year be a fitting

prelude to and an ongoing, significant feature throughout

the International Year of Peace, 1986.

The present requirements of a Faith whose responsibili-

ties rapidly increase in relation to its rise from obscurity

impose an inescapable duty on the youth to ensure that their

lives reflect to a marked degree the transforming power of

the new Revelation they have embraced. Otherwise, by what

example are the claims of Bahá’u’lláh to be judged? How is

His healing Message to be acknowledged by a skeptical

humanity if it produces no noticeable effect upon the young,

who are seen to be among the most energetic, the most

pliable and promising elements in any society?

The dark horizon faced by a world which has failed to

recognize the Promised One, the Source of its salvation,

acutely affects the outlook of the younger generations; their

distressing lack of hope and their indulgence in desperate

but futile and even dangerous solutions make a direct claim

on the remedial attention of Bahá’í youth, who, through

their knowledge of that Source and the bright vision with

which they have thus been endowed, cannot hesitate to

impart to their despairing fellow youth the restorative joy,

the constructive hope, the radiant assurances of Bahá’-

u’lláh’s stupendous Revelation.

The words, the deeds, the attitudes, the lack of preju-

dice, the nobility of character, the high sense of service to

others—in a word, those qualities and actions which distin-

guish a Bahá’í must unfailingly characterize their inner life

and outer behavior, and their interactions with friend or foe.

Rejecting the low sights of mediocrity, let them scale the

ascending heights of excellence in all they aspire to do. May

they resolve to elevate the very atmosphere in which they

move, whether it be in the school rooms or halls of higher

learning, in their work, their recreation, their Bahá’í activity

or social service.

Indeed, let them welcome with confidence the challenges

awaiting them. Imbued with this excellence and a corre-

sponding humility, with tenacity and a loving servitude,

today’s youth must move towards the front ranks of the

professions, trades, arts and crafts which are necessary to

the further progress of humankind—this to ensure that the

spirit of the Cause will cast its illumination on all these

important areas of human endeavor. Moreover, while aiming

at mastering the unifying concepts and swiftly advancing

technologies of this era of communications, they can, indeed

they must also guarantee the transmittal to the future of

those skills which will preserve the marvelous, indispensa-

ble achievements of the past. The transformation which is to

occur in the functioning of society will certainly depend to a

great extent on the effectiveness of the preparations the

youth make for the world they will inherit.

We commend these thoughts to your private contempla-

tion and to the consultations you conduct about your future.

And we offer the assurance of our prayerful remembran-

ces of you, our trust and confidence.

The Universal House of Justice

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