

Principles
Of
Spiritual Economics

Compiled by: Hooshmand Badee

Principles
Of
Spiritual Economics

A Compilation from the Writings of
Bahá'u'lláh, The Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
Shoghi Effendi,
and the Universal House of Justice.

With
An overview of Bahá'í perspective on economics

Principles of Spiritual Economics
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*Dedicated to:
The memory of the Hand of the Cause of God, Dr.
Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir,
who inspired me to compile the Writings of the
Bahá'í Faith on Economics*

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Foreword

An Overview of the Characteristics of Bahá'í Economics

Shoghi Effendi states: ‘...History, Economics or Sociology...cover subjects which our teachings cast an entirely new light upon.’¹ The exploration of the Bahá'í teachings on economics has occupied an important place in the Bahá'í scriptures, which in return has a vital effect on the Bahá'í community and society as a whole. Statements such as ‘The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and associated with the world of the heart and spirit’², and ‘readjustment and equalization of the economic standards of mankind’³ are mentioned in the Bahá'í writings. The phrase ‘spiritual solution to economic problems’ is repeatedly stated in the Bahá'í introductory books and pamphlets. However, these phrases may be unclear for some readers and require further explanation. Hopefully, this compilation from the Bahá'í Writings makes the

¹ Shoghi Effendi. quoted in Scholarship, Comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, p. 12.

² ‘Abdu'l-Bahá. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238.

³ *Ibid.* p. 107.

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concept more pleasing and clearer. It is vital to know that any Bahá'í principle, including that on Bahá'í economics, should not be looked at in isolation. Hence, in this compilation, the readers will become familiar with those Bahá'í teachings that directly or indirectly contribute to the economic development of individuals, communities and the wider society.

Economic ideas are continuously and closely a product of time and place. Thus, economics is an important feature of the Bahá'í Faith because Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of this Faith, appeared in a time of global economic integration. Hence, there are more materials in Bahá'í writings on this subject than in other major faiths. At the same time, it is important to note that the Bahá'í Faith is not an economic system, and the central figures of this faith never claimed to be technical economists. The main focus of the Bahá'í scriptures is the application of spiritual teachings to solve economic problems. The Bahá'í writings provide a framework that is considered a guideline for the design of the economic system of the future.

Understanding the concept of spirituality is central to discussing issues related to Bahá'í economics. The term 'spiritual' has been associated with many meanings, religious and non-religious. There is no agreement between theologians and social scientists such as economists about the precise

meaning of these terms. Some economists keep their distance from phrases such as ‘spiritual capital’, and ‘divine economy’⁴. However, in any discussion about Bahá’í economics, the word ‘spirituality’ plays a central role. Although the terms ‘spirituality’ and ‘religion’ are commonly used interchangeably, it is important to note that the term ‘spirituality’ refers to the higher nature of man, which Bahá’ís believe is innate in a person and needs to be developed. The term ‘divine economy’ is stated in the writings of Shoghi Effendi, and he associates it with the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh. According to the view of the Universal House of Justice, the concept of divine economy does not refer to a particular economic system but rather a general system of organisation. Bahá’í scholar William Hatcher defines spirituality as: ‘...the process of the full, adequate, proper, and harmonious development of one’s spiritual capacities.’⁵ A relationship exists between spirituality, morality and human action. Hatcher’s view is: ‘...that which fosters and advances the process of spiritual development is good, and that which tends to inhibit it is bad. Every law, counsel or behavioural norm contained in the writings of the Bahá’í Faith can be understood in large

⁴ The term ‘Divine Economy’ is used in the writings of Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, pp. 19-20, p. 22, p. 24, and p. 61.

⁵ Hatcher, W. ‘The Concept of Spirituality’, *Bahá’í World*, vol. 18, 1979-1983, Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre Publications, p. 935.

measure from this perspective.⁶ Whilst pinning spirituality down to an agreed definition seemed impossible to some social scientists, they can recognise it as a unifying factor when they come face to face with it. In a Tablet to August Forel, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to this ‘higher nature of human being’⁷ as an ‘all-unifying agency.’⁸ For a Bahá’í, the ‘all-unifying agency’ is knowing that the purpose of life is not just satisfaction of one’s own needs and enjoyment of material pleasures, but also other objectives such as service to their community and the wider society.

A working definition of spirituality has been developed to reconcile the viewpoints of theologians, social scientists and secular thinkers, having been inspired by the Bahá’í writings. The definition includes not only the material side of life but also the higher nature of human beings. It acts as a unifying factor in resolving conflicts and divisions and is concerned with the ultimate purpose of life. Therefore, *spirituality is the art of unifying, developing and interconnecting our life with the material world, other people, other places, and the future beyond ourselves.*

Any discussion on spirituality should also emphasise how to attain it; otherwise, its worth and application will be challenged. Bahá’ís try to

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Tablet to August Forel*, p. 13.

⁸ Ibid.

progress spiritually in several ways, such as observing obligatory prayers, fasting, meditation, and reading the Holy Scriptures every morning and evening, as inculcated by the Founder of the Faith. Another way is through community-orientated development, which occurs through activities such as service and skill learning and economically being a productive member of society. Hence, the Bahá'í view is that we are not created in a spiritual perfection; we must identify ways and means to grow spiritually. Hatcher exposes the process of achieving spirituality: 'An important component of spiritual philosophy is the notion that spirituality is not the naturally given condition of the human being, but must be achieved as a result of a developmental process. In other words, we are not created in a state of spiritual perfection, but rather with the potential for achieving spirituality. Without this potential, spirituality would be an impossible ideal rather than a realistically achievable goal. The process of achieving spirituality is called spiritual development or spiritual growth.'⁹

Also, a distinction is made between 'spirituality' and 'morality', although they remain interconnected. Spiritual qualities such as purity, devotion, contentment and cleanliness govern our behaviour about God and are private or personal, thus independent of others. Other qualities, like

⁹ Hatcher, W. *Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, p. 935.

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compassion, justice and kindness, are moral qualities and values that form our behaviour toward others and, therefore, depend on reciprocal action. Thus, if we define the market as a place where buyers and sellers come into contact and exchange commodities profitably, then human relationships become a requirement in the market. Or, if globalisation is about integrating people, communities and nations, then creating an effective human relationship is crucial for its success. Similarly, the two concepts of spirituality and morality prepare individuals to have a good relationship with all the planet's creatures and ecology. For an effective relationship between all participants in the market, morality becomes a key principle for the operation of a prosperous economy.

To Bahá'ís, the principle of unity of humankind is the distinguishing characteristic of an approach to human well-being and globalisation. Bahá'u'lláh states that 'The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens', or 'The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch'¹⁰, are clearly in line with the recognition of the entire world as one community. This goal is possible because, at this time, the means to attain the unity of humankind are at

¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 218.

hand. For example, revolutionary and world-embracing means of global interrelatedness, such as communication, transportation, information technology, and international financial interdependency, are available to unify nations. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that ‘In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of mankind could not have been achieved.’¹¹ This is because means of coming into contact, which are currently available, were not within reach during the past dispensation. Thus, ‘... association and interchange of thought were wellnigh impossible.’¹² Concerning the above two statements, it is possible to list three features of meaningful globalisation - oneness, association, and interchange of thoughts - which could be realised through advanced information and technology such as the internet. (Chapter 1)

‘World citizenship’¹³ is a practical strategy for achieving the economic goals of globalisation. Thus, world citizenship should be promoted at all levels of society and considered a prerequisite for a sustainable society; it should be taught in every school and promoted at local, national and international levels. The universality of Bahá’í economics requires that economic problems, like

¹¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selected from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 31.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ For ‘world citizenship’, see: Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 37, p. 39, p. 41, and p. 163.

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all major difficulties facing humanity, be resolved on a world-encompassing scale. Global issues such as environmental degradation, financial crisis and poverty require global solutions. The Bahá'í view is that this is an organic process: we have been through the evolutionary stages of infancy and childhood, culminating in a period of adolescence and a long-awaited coming of age. The process of global integration, already in the realms of business, finance and communications, is beginning to materialise in the political arena. Thus, Bahá'í economics is rooted in the notion that we are all part of one human family. The belief is that the earth is our home, that we all belong to one world family and that we all should work to promote the well-being of the entire human race. As a result, every individual feels responsible for matters that affect the well-being of all citizens, protecting the environment, and respecting future generations. (Chapters 1 and 3)

The Bahá'í writings indicate that the remedy to social and economic crisis consists of removing the Old Order and reconstructing the new World Order. 'Soon,' Bahá'u'lláh's own words proclaim, 'will the present day Order be rolled up, and a new one be spread out in its stead.'¹⁴ The new spirit infused into the whole creation makes the new World Order possible. (Chapter 2)

¹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 163.

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An important issue to be borne in mind is that it is as yet too soon for us to envisage the nature and the character of a Bahá'í new World Order and the 'Bahá'í World Commonwealth'¹⁵, of which the Bahá'í economic system of the future is a part. Shoghi Effendi has stated that the structure, implications, benefits, and possibilities of the new World Order cannot be understood at present and that it will only be possible over time for us to discern them. He has stated that only the new World Order's underlying principles can be described. He also noted that the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh cannot be compared with any of the defective and fatally flawed systems we see today. Suppose at times Bahá'ís compare the Bahá'í Faith with existing systems. In that case, this is only on account of our proximity to, and familiarity with, these systems, and because, in demonstrating the superiority of the Divine teachings over systems made by humans and ideologies, we are obliged to draw comparisons between them, and to contrast their different aspects. (Chapters 2 and 3)

¹⁵ The term 'Bahá'í World Commonwealth' has been mentioned in the *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 8 times (p. 40, 98, 146, 152, 168, 193, 203, 204); in *God Passes By*, twice (p. 26, 316); in *The Advent of Divine Justice of Divine* (p. 12); *Bahá'í Administration* (p. 135); *Promised Day is Come* (p. 122); *Bahá'í World* (vol. XI, p. 138, p. 26); and *messages to America* (p. 81) where Shoghi Effendi talks about welding the society into '...a single, organically-united, unshatterable world commonwealth ...'. Also, the term is used 5 times in a letter from the Universal House of Justice dated 27 April 1995.

Shoghi Effendi discusses the need for a ‘world super state’¹⁶ to be developed in the future, which would be given the authority by all the nations to impose taxation and maintain armaments for international protection. However, each country would continue to maintain and support its internal order. These nations would willingly yield every claim of war in favour of this ‘world super-state’, which would have an international executive with the capacity to ‘enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; and world parliament’. Shoghi Effendi describes the formation of this ‘world parliament’ through election by people in each country, with the respective governments’ confirmation and a supreme tribunal. He envisages a world community with no economic barriers, and the interdependence of capital and labour is well appreciated and understood.’ (Chapters 1 and 2)

The state's role in promoting the general welfare of a global society is expressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He emphasises that appropriate legislation is required to protect the poor. He considers the role of governments as a crucial factor: ‘The governments... establishing just legislation and economics so that all humanity may enjoy a full measure of welfare and privilege; but this will

¹⁶ For ‘world super state’ see Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 39, p. 40, and p. 164.

always be according to legal protection and procedure.¹⁷ There is a need for governments to intervene in economic activities and to provide a series of plans for just social welfare. Thus, government performance needs to be judged not only by economic growth rates but also by the effect of policies on social welfare such as the environment, employment, health, education and transport. Governments should not be limited to collecting taxes and providing subsidies but extend to improving the quality of life of all citizens in a country. (Chapter 5)

A feature of Bahá'í economics is its flexibility and adaptability to market fluctuations. In the Bahá'í writings, the details of economics are not given, and it is left to future institutions, under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, to design a flexible, universal, fair system according to time and place. Other Bahá'í institutions at local and national levels will carry out activities in their own jurisdiction. These institutions are charged with stimulating, unifying and coordinating the activities of the Faith in their particular jurisdiction. The operation of socio-economic development projects in the Bahá'í communities worldwide is an example of adaptability and dealing with fluctuations. (Chapter 6)

¹⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238.

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In the Bahá'í view, the economic teachings of Bahá'u'lláh claim to have a divine origin since the human being is also divine in origin and purpose. Bahá'u'lláh has very clearly made provisions to safeguard His divine teachings from revisionism and the like, for there is no fallibility in His teachings and precepts. Consequently, when people understand the perfection and beauty of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, they will not only give full support for their complete implementation but also unity will be preserved in the Bahá'í community. (Chapters 7 and 8)

A current economic assumption is that human happiness can be achieved merely by increasing the wealth of the individual members of society. The underlying assumption is that all human beings are motivated by selfishness and greed and that the more any particular economic policy caters for these base motivations, the more successful it will be. The self is primarily seen as someone who seeks to maximise utility, often through maximising consumption opportunity. The root idea flowing from self-interest is consumer sovereignty and utility maximisation. The rationale is that consumers know their interests best and can act to advance them through exchange. For many, prosperity lies in increasing consumption, and each consumer will pursue their opportunities until the marginal cost of a transaction exceeds its benefits. Each person maximises utility or happiness subject to several

constraints, including income. Thus, economic theory mainly considers the monetary aspects of life and ignores other factors, such as values essential for creating relationships among people and protecting the environment. (Chapter 9)

Bahá'í economics considers the dual nature of the human being, both spiritual and material. A balance is required. We are not simply 'economic man' or 'machine'. We have a higher purpose in life, and that is the acquisition of spiritual attributes. We have a soul, and our soul has a capacity to love. Our soul is interested in attracting God's attributes. These attributes are necessary for carrying out a virtuous life in this world. At the same time, we are social beings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said '...no matter how much material civilization advances, it cannot attain to perfection except through the uplift of spiritual civilization.'¹⁸ Thus, we are both material and spiritual beings – we need proper education to create a balance between the two. The principle of material and spiritual coherence advocates that there must be a balance between the material and spiritual aspects of life. The material part is necessary for development but not sufficient on its own. Real growth and development take place when there is coherence between the two. (Chapters 7 and 11)

¹⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 109.

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Further, the writings of the Faith refer to materialism as the root cause of many social illnesses, including the creation of a culture of consumerism. The Universal House of Justice refers to the destructive forces of materialism rooted in the West and now spread to every corner of the planet. It is vital to realise the difference between genuine needs and unessential wants. There is much more involved in self-realisation than the satisfaction of material hunger. Bahá'u'lláh has warned that if material civilization is ‘...carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil.’¹⁹ Many characteristics of present society would seem to fit this prediction. Shoghi Effendi refers to such a world as ‘A world spiritually destitute, morally bankrupt, politically disrupted, socially convulsed, economically paralyzed.’²⁰ (Chapter 11)

One of the economic teachings discussed in Bahá'í literature is the importance of cooperation rather than competition. The principles of interconnectedness and reciprocity underlie the Bahá'í understanding of both the operations of the universe and the responsibilities of humankind in a global society. In the following passages, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá asserts the importance of such reciprocity and considers it an ‘essential characteristic in the

¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 216.

²⁰ Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 16.

unified body of the world of being.’²¹ The argument favouring cooperation in the Bahá’í writings goes behind the scope of the market and the economy. The Bahá’í writings emphasise that cooperation and not competition is the cause of life in society, just as the life of an organism is maintained by the cooperation of the various elements of which it is composed. Another aspect of cooperation in Bahá’í literature is increasing resource utilisation and value through coordination and organisation of economic activities. In many areas, competition is encouraged in the Bahá’í writings, for example, in areas such as education, service to humanity, philanthropic and humanitarian services, charitable activities, pioneering, and service to the cause of God. (Chapters 12 and 13)

A feature of new globalisation is that our world is interdependent and interrelated in every aspect: socially, politically, economically, environmentally, and morally. In Bahá’í literature, the analogy of the human body is used to express the interdependency of nations and peoples of the world. Pain in one part of the human body is the cause of discomfort in the rest of the body. The recent global economic crises indicate that people and nations are interdependent. The existing conflicts and other crises signal that we must see the world as one unit, one body and one globe.

²¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a *Compilation on Huqúqu’lláh*, p. 22.

Therefore, the global crises require global solutions. Thus, any future economic system should consider the interdependence and interrelationship of different countries. Shoghi Effendi states: 'The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth ... already an accomplished fact.'²² (Chapter 14)

Knowledge and information have a significant place in the Bahá'í writings. The Bahá'í belief is that a human being is the crown of creation because he possesses intellectual capability over other creatures. Thus, the human soul and intellectual capability persuade humans to be skilful at working and willing to learn. His mind can guide him to choose the right skill and line of work and make the right decisions. (Chapter 15)

Appropriate education and training have proved to be the most effective way of increasing the production level and productivity scale. Firms recognise the lack of it as a significant obstacle in the labour market. The principle of universal and compulsory education is an effective way to deal with the economic challenges of our time. On the one hand, education and training are vital to increasing the level of production, and on the other hand, they are conducive to personal growth and the transformation of society. Children are the future workforce, and Bahá'í parents are given a

²² Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 122.

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great responsibility towards the education of their children. Similarly, the selection of inappropriate technology, or the absence of technology or innovation, may reduce the quantity of output or result in poor-quality commodities. These aspects can adversely affect the performance of the economy or cause wastage. Using appropriate knowledge, information technology, and innovation helps firms organize, develop and control their resources more efficiently and engage in ecologically sound production processes. The Bahá'í writings encourage the exploitation and constructive use of modern technology. (Chapters 15 and 16)

The Bahá'í writings recognise the equality of women and men in the social and economic equation. In numerous places, women's participation is emphasised in all aspects of community life. It is stated that women in the past did not have the opportunity to participate in the affairs of society. The writings also confirm that a woman's lack of progress and proficiency has been due to her need for equal education and opportunity. Had she been allowed this equality, there is no doubt she would have been the counterpart of man in ability and capacity. At the heart of all activities, the role and development of Local Spiritual Assemblies are crucial in coordinating activities, including the spiritual, intellectual and community life of the Bahá'ís. The Universal House of Justice describes these

responsibilities as developing a deeper understanding of Bahá'í family life and children's education. They emphasise the need to hold regular children's classes and go as far as suggesting the establishment of tutorial schools and even primary schools where necessary. The Local Spiritual Assemblies are also responsible for encouraging women to exercise their privileges and responsibilities in the community's life. (Chapter 18)

The Bahá'í view is that development is an organic process in which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, ...the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material.'²³ In our increasingly interdependent world, development efforts must be animated by universal values and guided by a vision of world community. Creating a peaceful global society fostering individual and collective well-being is at the heart of the Bahá'í vision of the future. An important feature of Bahá'í economic development is that it must respond to both material and spiritual needs in a balanced way. The Bahá'í literature considers human beings essentially as spiritual, and happiness and well-being will be satisfied if the spiritual aspects of their nature are fulfilled and developed alongside the material. A tangible expression of Bahá'í efforts to promote constructive change in the life of society is found in the various social and economic activities of

²³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 8.

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Bahá'í communities around the world. These activities are primarily elementary initiatives at the grassroots level. The activities are used to unlock the moral and creative capabilities of individuals and communities. The grassroots initiatives carried out by small groups of individuals in towns and villages have an important effect in the long run. As these initiatives evolve, some become more substantial programs with permanent administrative structures. Yet very few can be compared with the complex development projects promoted and funded by government agencies and large multilateral organisations. (Chapters 5, 18, 19 and 20)

Developmental activities are organized by Bahá'í administrative institutions or initiated by individuals and groups. All the barriers are broken down by working together through the Bahá'í method of decision-making, consultation, and other aspects of community building through the act of service, participation and self-expression. These activities contribute to a global learning process about a Bahá'í approach to social and economic development. Following are some examples of Bahá'í activities in various socio-economic development projects: education; learning skills; agriculture; health care projects; improvement in the status of women; environment; Bahá'í family life; service to the community; and rural development programs such

as sanitation, educational radio stations, and teacher training programs. There are six main development processes identified by the Bahá'í International Community that form the basis of a pattern of action by Bahá'í communities around the world: organic growth, capacity building, learning, development of human resources, contributing to the advancement of society, and integration. Increased prosperity in rural areas is only possible through educating rural children. To contribute to their societies, children require knowledge, experience, skills, and the inculcation of universal ethical values to develop various capacities. The main focus of Bahá'í development projects is to provide the necessary knowledge and education to increase their income-earning capacity and build their personality. (Chapters 19 and 20)

The concept of 'work' has a special place in the Bahá'í writings. In numerous places, the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith have addressed the concept and meaning of work as worship; it is stated, 'Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship.'²⁴ Work for a Bahá'í is a means to serve others and is conducive to human upliftment and exaltation. But 'work is worship' does not mean any kind of work: examples from the original Bahá'í writings include the pursuit of professions such as agriculture, arts and science,

²⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Cited in *Compilation on Education*, p. 47.

technology, education and health, and social services. There is a close correlation between the concept of 'work is worship' and 'spirit of service'. The impression from studying the Bahá'í writings is that we unfold spiritually through the process of living life. It is through fulfilling our natural duties in life, honestly and to the best of our ability that we make spiritual progress because work puts us in situations where we interact with other people and, as a result, gradually deepen our understanding, improve our behaviour and become a more spiritual person. In a spiritual sense, work becomes meaningful when it provides service to others. Henceforth, service and worship become aspects of the same thing. (Chapter 21)

The Bahá'í writings advocate using advanced technology, innovation, and training and education for improving working conditions and achieving high performance in producing goods and services. However, the Bahá'í perspective of economics also includes the belief that the progress of advanced technology should neither reduce work nor stop people from acquiring knowledge and skills. Shoghi Effendi states that work is a natural part of our lives, and it should not be ceased, even with the advancement of technology. Progress is attained through struggle; therefore, for Bahá'ís, work is necessary for progress. Recognizing the essential nobility of human beings is a motivating factor to increase the talent and capacity of individuals. Such

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recognition would empower the workforce and become a source of social good. This signifies that there must be a positive correlation between the advancement of technology, the kind of innovation, and what has been produced, which should be befitting human dignity. (Chapters 15 and 21)

According to the Bahá'í writings, Bahá'ís are forbidden to beg under any circumstances. All have been enjoined to earn a living, and as for those who are incapable of doing so, it is incumbent on the Deputies of God (Bahá'í institutions) and on the wealthy to make adequate provision for them. Begging is considered a social ill and, therefore, not only should it be discouraged but also entirely wiped out from the face of society. However, there must be a separation between the ill, disabled, disadvantaged and other deserving poor from the able individuals who, according to the Bahá'í writings, resorted to begging out of idleness and had to be forced to work. A distinction must be made between giving to those who beg professionally and those who are poor because they are incapable of working or their earnings are not sufficient for an adequate living. The Bahá'í writings support charity for assisting those considered deserving poor. Giving to charity is highly praised and encouraged. Bahá'ís are encouraged to become the cause of well-being and advantage to others and to be a source of social goods. (Chapter 21)

There are several references in the writings about providing those items associated with human livelihood. For example, special places should be established to offer services to those in need. One such place is the Mashriq'l-Adhkár or the Bahá'í House of Worship or the Bahá'í temple. The practical demonstration of religious unity in the Bahá'í Faith is presented in the institution of 'the Bahá'í Houses of Worship'. In addition to the temple itself, dedicated to worship, several dependencies would be devoted to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits. Anticipating the future development of this institution, Shoghi Effendi envisages that the House of Worship and its dependencies '...shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant.'²⁵ These temples are unique places that welcome members of all faiths to 're-unite' with them. There will be Bahá'í Houses of Worship in every town and city in the future. (Chapter 22)

In Bahá'í economics, agriculture is a vital matter. The commitment of the Central Figure of the Bahá'í Faith to agriculture is evidenced by their agricultural endeavours and extensive discourse on the topic. In His writings, Bahá'u'lláh has paid

²⁵ Shoghi Effendi. *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Notes, pp. 190-191.

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‘special regard’²⁶ to agriculture because, as He acknowledged ‘unquestionably, it precedes the other principles in importance.’ Why this ‘special regard’ for agriculture? Why should it precede other principles, such as promoting international peace, human fellowship or universal education? An obvious comment is that food is the prerequisite of human development. An adequate diet is perhaps the most fundamental factor in attaining human dignity. It would not be easy to accomplish peace and security or even fellowship among human beings while masses of people starve. Education is hardly possible when children are malnourished. In all these situations, food is an essential factor and a human right, and the primary source of food is agriculture. A strong Bahá’í emphasis on the importance of agriculture suggests that renewable resources will be the primary basis of future civilization. Agriculture is recognised as the foundation of society, and it fits well with the importance of renewable resources for any sustainable civilization. Also, agricultural occupations will have a high status. (Chapters 23 and 24)

The Bahá’í teachings on economics consider the social security and welfare of the entire society. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that ‘Every human being has the right to live; they have a right to rest and to a

²⁶ Bahá’u’lláh. *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 90.

certain amount of well-being.²⁷ Other teachings include the creation of a number of insurance such as providing the basic needs of all, providing work for all, establishing special places for needy people, and establishing moral and educational institutions with special regard to health and safety. (Chapter 25)

An outstanding feature of Bahá'í economics is that the entire society should be prosperous, and individual members live moderately. The emphasis is on the importance of the social function of wealth. 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes the benefits that material wealth can bring to society through the efforts of individuals: 'Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy.'²⁸ The Bahá'í writings do not consider acquiring wealth as immoral. Wealth to a Bahá'í is praised if acquired legitimately and through honest work and used sensibly. Bahá'ís are encouraged to be productive community members and to spend the income earned on philanthropic activities. Knowing that human beings are spiritual in nature, material well-being alone cannot guarantee human happiness. People will be happier if the spiritual aspects of their lives are fulfilled and developed alongside the material. Bahá'u'lláh metaphorically describes the human station about wealth in the following words: 'I

²⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 134.

²⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 25.

created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty?’²⁹ Although the main facet in this passage is the moral aspect of human beings, it can also be applied to the material side. Also, there is a direct relationship between unity and wealth redistribution. It is prescribed that acquiring wealth is acceptable to the extent that it serves as a means for achieving higher ends and knowing that the ultimate goal for a Bahá’í is the achievement of unity of humankind. For example, how can one enjoy wealth while more than a billion people live in absolute poverty? In the following statement by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, he envisions that in the future ‘...the rich shall most willingly extend assistance to the poor ...’³⁰ (Chapters 1 and 27)

Like any other organisation, the Bahá’í community has expenditures that are paid by the general participation and support of Bahá’ís only. One of the distinguishing features of the Bahá’í Faith is its principle of non-acceptance of financial contributions for its activities from non-Bahá’ís. In this way, as Shoghi Effendi states, the Bahá’í institutions can best function and be maintained ‘...by the support of those who are fully conscious of, and are unreservedly submissive to, the claims inherent in the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh.’ The Bahá’í view is that the act of contribution is a spiritual obligation with the implication that every

²⁹ Bahá’u’lláh. *Arabic Hidden Words*, number 13.

³⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 239.

Bahá'í is bound by conscience to give voluntarily from their earnings towards the Bahá'í Fund. Thus, the amount contributed is private, confidential and voluntary, and no compulsion should be attached. The Bahá'í principle of voluntary sharing of one's wealth effectively reduces or eliminates extremes of wealth and poverty. Voluntary sharing of one's wealth is considered more effective because it is a matter of free choice rather than giving by force. (Chapter 27)

A distinctive principle on economics stated in the Bahá'í scriptures, for the redistribution of income and wealth, is the law of 'Huqúqu'lláh' or 'Right of God'. The law states that if an individual's net income is equal to or over one hundred mithqals³¹ of gold, 19% should be given to the head of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice. The unique role of this principle is transforming a society centred on self to one focused on the well-being of humanity. Although observing and paying the 'Right of God' is limited to Bahá'ís, it can be expended for the benefit of all by sponsoring worldwide socio-economic development projects. (Chapter 28 E)

³¹ Mithqal is a unit of weight. The weight of the traditional Mithqal used in the Middle East is equivalent to 24 nakhuds. However, the Mithqal used by the Bahá'ís consists of 19 nakhuds, 'in accordance with the specification of the Bayan'. The weight of 9 of these Mithqals equals 32.775 grammes or 1.05374 troy ounces. (*The Kitab-Aqdas*, notes 78)

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The Bahá'í economic system advocates a progressive income tax to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. It offers one of the most straightforward means of achieving equitable distribution of income and wealth by marginally redistributing income from top to bottom. The rationale for these methods is that a guaranteed minimum income should be sufficient to lift everyone above a realistic poverty line. This type of tax is now universally accepted as a fair and justified method of taxation and is practised by most governments to raise revenue for their expenditures. (Chapter 28 C)

Another feature of wealth redistribution recommended in the Bahá'í writings and considered a method for reducing the gap between the rich and the poor is the technique of profit sharing. It is a share of the profit given to workers from the organisation's net profit. This share is separate from the regular wage employees receive and directly relates to the company's profit. 'Abdu'l-Bahá suggests allocating a share in the fourth or fifth part of the profits. In most organisations practising this technique, the amount shared is determined either by an established formula or entirely at the discretion of the management or owners, based on a set of objectives. The percentage of profit shared among the workers should be sufficient to achieve these objectives. (Chapter 28 B)

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The increasing size and scale of the operation of a business organisation may become a barrier to using and benefitting from resources more efficiently and ethically and in terms of social mobility. In modern times, many firms have expanded in size and dominated the market. The main objectives of these organisations are related to profit maximisation. Profit is important in satisfying and attracting more shareholders to the business. Thus, these firms need to win the competition and control the market. For some firms, this condition may lead to higher prices, lower quality, inefficiency, waste of resources, and offering fewer choices to consumers. This state of affairs is a serious obstacle for smaller firms to survive or for new businesses entering the market. The recent experience of the free-market economy provides clear evidence and a warning that the entire market has suffered as several large organisations failed. Thus, there is a need to limit the growth. The Bahá'í writings endorse that the Bahá'í economic system of the future will maintain the right balance between the two systems of free market economy and planned economy. In 1936, Shoghi Effendi wrote that the free market economy must be controlled, regulated, and restricted. (Chapter 29)

Sustainability and sustainable development are characteristics of any viable economic system. It is defined as a kind of development that does not destroy or undermine the ecological, economic or

social basis on which continued development depends. It is about using resources, keeping them safe for future generations, and preserving the ecology. Thus, sustainable development is an ethical concept that maintains fairness for this generation and future generations. Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. The future generation is entitled to a healthy and prosperous living in harmony with nature. One factor that significantly contributes to the loss of human life and the wastage and demolition of rare earth resources is war and all kinds of internal conflicts and violence within each country. Destruction of resources causes a setback to increased production of essential commodities. Waste of resources is the most concerning issue, and the Bahá'í writings denounce all actions that cause the wastage of human and physical resources. (Chapter 31)

The three social principles of universal and compulsory education, harmonisation of science and religion, and independent investigation of truth inspire Bahá'ís to do their utmost to make the right decision about their choice of commodities and about how much should be consumed. Consumer education can provide people with the knowledge to differentiate the advantages and disadvantages of commodities from each other or to distinguish between truthful and false advertisements. Knowledge and information, and the extent of their accuracy, are

important in helping people make the right judgment when purchasing products and to consider alternative choices that may be available. At the same time, they are critical determinants of market efficiency. Therefore, the quality of information one uses to make decisions directly affects producers and the ability of the market to meet society's collective material needs. Successful organisations are those that respond positively to acceptable demands. The principle of harmony between science and religion helps consumers to appreciate and become conscious of the benefits commodities provide not only to individuals and families but also their effects on the environment; the consciousness and realisation of the oneness of humankind make it possible for Bahá'ís to work individually and collectively 'to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.' The independent investigation of truth persuades Bahá'ís to use the right product and not to be influenced by false media impressions and false advertisement and promotional activities. (Chapters 15 and 31)

Inadequate decision-making methods in the market, particularly in the labour market, are a barrier that adversely affects the production level. In modern working practices, organisations encouraging workers' participation in decision-making are positioned with a better image in the marketplace. Similarly, managers have learned that to affect production levels positively, the workforce must be included in the decision-

making process. Workers are entitled to be involved in activities that affect their lives, within and outside the workplace. Through a consultative decision-making method, workers find a sense of belonging to the organisation, which improves productivity and, consequently, the production level. The principle of consultation constitutes a significant part of Bahá'í literature. It is practised with great success in the Bahá'í administrative system. It states that the consultation principle should be applied to all parts of life. (Chapter 32)

Any Bahá'í-inspired model must consider the relationship of human behaviour and economic variables as vital components. The central issue in Bahá'í economics is that religion and economics are partners, not enemies, necessitating reconciliation. Thus, any definition of economics must include the essentials of justice and fairness. Economic justice issues are among the key factors discussed in the Bahá'í writings concerning contemporary economic principles. If economics is defined as 'the best use of resources' and justice as 'giving to each one what he or she is due', then the two principles of economics and justice are both functionally and morally partners. (Chapters 33)

Moderation is another core spiritual principle associated with Bahá'í economics. A Bahá'í view of moderation can be expressed as eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty. It is such an important principle that we can call the Bahá'í

Faith a religion of moderation. Bahá'u'lláh states: 'In all matters moderation is desirable.'³² Thus, moderation should be incorporated in all aspects of life to create a balanced economy. This principle maintains a balance in individuals' material and spiritual lifestyles. On the other hand, it can remedy unsustainable societal problems. The practice of moderation in the broader community requires it to become a norm and a part of the culture, which must be built on trust. We should distinguish between a moderated way of life, simple living, and asceticism. Voluntary simplicity is, at one level, an entire philosophy for life. Of course, simple living is distinct from forced poverty, as it is a voluntary lifestyle choice. In the Bahá'í view, simple living is not living in seclusion or practicing asceticism. It is stated by Bahá'u'lláh that 'Living in seclusion or practising asceticism is not acceptable in the presence of God.'³³ Asceticism is not encouraged in Bahá'í literature, and contentment in basic human needs requires careful decision-making. (Chapter 33 A)

A feature of Bahá'í economics is that equity is preferred to equality. Absolute equality would be an obstacle to life, welfare, order, and the peace of humanity. This view's underlying principle and rationale is that human talents, capabilities and natural abilities are different, and full equality in

³² Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 69.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 70.

income and wealth distribution will not be fair. The Bahá'í writings emphasise that individuals' skills, abilities and talents are different and, therefore, remuneration must be different. Also, education and other motivational factors lead to wage differentials. Therefore, income and wealth among individuals will be different; however, excessive income and wealth will be controlled and regulated. It is stated that people are different in ability and should, therefore, be different in their social and economic standing. Thus, equity is preferred to equality. Perfect equality is not fair, not possible and not practical. The government and financial institutions must prioritise social justice and equitable growth. In particular, the banking system must be assigned a significant role in achieving the objective of equitable distribution of wealth among citizens through financial inclusion. Banks must act as prime movers in the planned development process with the objectives of economic growth and social justice. The banking system, as mobilisers of savings and suppliers of credit, should act as a catalyst to bring about increased output through capital formation. Banks should be engaged in acts of service to the community and participate in various poverty alleviation programmes by offering a moderate rate of interest. (Chapter 33 B)

It is religion, the generator of the light of altruistic emanations and the heart of spiritual perfections that makes it possible for any form of collective

economic activity to flourish. Withdraw the elements of morality and spirituality from any form of collective economic activity, system, or organization, and the desired symmetry and reciprocity are lost, leaving the parties at opposite poles, as witnessed by the prevailing economic conditions of the present world. Bahá'u'lláh states: 'In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world...'³⁴ (Chapter 35)

In Bahá'í view, all that goes in the name of problems and difficulties are. Still, the signs and symptoms of the spiritual disease called disunity afflicting the body of mankind, resulting from the absence of moral and spiritual aspects of our society. Bahá'u'lláh states, 'How long,' He, in the same Tablet, exclaims, 'will humanity persist in its waywardness? How long will injustice continue? How long is chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate the face of society? The winds of despair are blowing from every direction, and the strife that divides and afflicteth the human race is increasing daily.'³⁵ These illuminating words of Bahá'u'lláh point to the 'strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race' as the root cause of all our problems and difficulties. These intermittent crises that 'convulse present-day society' are primarily due to

³⁴ Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 125.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 171.

the divisive forces acting on humanity. The remedy for the ills of our times is, in essence, moral and spiritual. In a Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh states 'Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.'³⁶ (Chapter 32, 33)

One of the central concepts in the Bahá'í Faith is the view that social structures are constantly changing so no single economic theory will always be suitable for the whole world. Farzam Arbab's view is that humanity has reached a level of maturity and can face these challenges. He argues that economies with different logics are entirely possible, and the only choices open to humanity are not the capitalist and socialist modes of production, both of which are products of two or three hundred years in the history of the European people. He believes that mature humanity can develop an economy with a new logic not based on greed or false precepts of absolute equality, that allows reasonable freedom yet promotes and safeguards justice.³⁷ Thus, Shoghi Effendi feels there is a need to regulate and control the present free market economy to shape the future global economy. The missing part is a network of human

³⁶ Bahá'u'lláh. quoted in Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 3.

³⁷ See: Farzam Arbab, 'Development - A Challenge to Bahá'í Scholars', *Bahá'í Studies Review*, Association for Bahá'í Studies of North America, pp. 1-18, 1984.

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values centred mainly on economic justice to eliminate imbalances in the global market.

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Revised - 2025

1. Social and economic challenges of our time

The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. Behold the disturbances which, for many a long year, have afflicted the earth, and the perturbation that hath seized its peoples. It hath either been ravaged by war, or tormented by sudden and unforeseen calamities. Though the world is encompassed with misery and distress, yet no man hath paused to reflect what the cause or source of that may be. . . No two men can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united. The evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony and union.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp.163-164)

2. The world is in great turmoil, and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions. He, verily is the All-Possessing, the Most High.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 97-98)

3. The world is in travail, and its agitation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned towards waywardness and unbelief. Such shall be its plight, that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly. Its perversity will long continue. And

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when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake. Then, and only then, will the Divine Standard be unfurled, and the Nightingale of Paradise warble its melody.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 118-119)

4. The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His whole some medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it?

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 200)

5. The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day affliction can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.

We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.

Incline your ears to the sweet melody of this Prisoner. Arise, and lift up your voices, that haply they that are fast asleep may be awakened. Say: O ye who are as dead! The

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Hand of Divine bounty profereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. Whoso hath been reborn in this Day, shall never die; whoso remaineth dead, shall never live. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 213)

6. How long will humanity persist in its waywardness? How long will injustice continue? How long is chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate the face of society? ... The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 216)

7. Regard the world as the human body, which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sicknesses waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if, at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 254-255)

8. Today no state in the world is in a condition of peace or tranquillity, for security and trust have vanished from among the people. Both the governed and the governors are alike in danger.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selection from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 293)

9. The world is wrapped in the thick darkness of open revolt and swept by a whirlwind of hate. It is the fires of

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malevolence that have cast up their flames to the clouds of heaven, it is a blood-drenched flood that rolleth across the plains and down the hills, and no one on the face of the earth can find any peace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selection from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 318)

10. Know this that hardships and misfortunes shall increase day by day, and the people shall be distressed... The doors of joy and happiness shall be closed on all sides. Terrible wars shall happen. Disappointment and the frustration of hopes shall surround the people from every direction until they are obliged to turn to God. Then the lights of great happiness shall enlighten the horizons...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, p. 248)

11. For the world is dark with discord and selfishness, hearts are negligent, souls are bereft of God and His heavenly bestowals. Man is submerged in the affairs of this world. His aims, objects and attainments are mortal, whereas God desires for him immortal accomplishments. In his heart there is no thought of God. He has sacrificed his portion and birthright of divine spirituality. Desire and passion, like two unmanageable horses, have wrested the reins of control from him and are galloping madly in the wilderness. This is the cause of the degradation of the world of humanity. This is the cause of its retrogression into the appeties and passions of the animal kingdom. Instead of divine advancement we find sensual capacity and debasement of heavenly virtues of the soul.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 184)

12. Mankind is submerged in the sea of materialism and occupied with the affairs of this world. They have no thought beyond earthly possessions and manifest no desire save the passions of this fleeting, mortal existence. Their utmost

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purpose is the attainment of material livelihood, physical comforts and worldly enjoyments such as constitute the happiness of the animal world rather than the world of man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 335)

13. We see amongst us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones, who starve with nothing ...This condition of affairs is wrong and must be remedied.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 156)

14. The passionate and violent happenings that have, in recent years, strained to almost the point of complete breakdown the political and economic structure of society are too numerous and complex to attempt, within the limitations of this general survey, to arrive at an adequate estimate of their character. Nor have these tribulations, grievous as they have been, seemed to have reached their climax, and exerted the full force of their destructive power. The whole world, wherever and however we survey it, offers us the sad and pitiful spectacle of a vast, an enfeebled, and moribund organism, which is being torn politically and strangulated economically by forces it has ceased to either control or comprehend. The Great Depression, the aftermath of the severest ordeals humanity had ever experienced, the disintegration of the Versailles system, the recrudescence of militarism in its most menacing aspects, the failure of vast experiments and new-born institutions to safeguard the peace and tranquillity of peoples, classes and nations, have bitterly disillusioned humanity and prostrated its spirits. Its hopes are, for the most part, shattered, its vitality is ebbing, its life strangely disordered, its unity severely compromised.... Every system, short of the unification of the human race, has been tried, repeatedly tried, and been found wanting. Wars again and again have been fought, and

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conferences without number have met and deliberated. Treaties, pacts and covenants have been painstakingly negotiated, concluded and revised. Systems of government have been patiently tested, have been continually recast and superseded. Economic plans of reconstruction have been carefully devised, and meticulously executed. And yet crisis has succeeded crisis, and the rapidity with which a perilously unstable world is declining has been correspondingly accelerated. A yawning gulf threatens to involve in one common disaster both the satisfied and dissatisfied nations, democracies and dictatorships, capitalists and wage-earners, Europeans and Asiatics, Jew and Gentile, white and colored. An angry Providence, the cynic might well observe, has abandoned a hapless planet to its fate, and fixed irrevocably its doom. Sore-tried and disillusioned, humanity has no doubt lost its orientation, and would seem to have lost as well its faith and hope. It is hovering, unshepherded and visionless, on the brink of disaster. A sense of fatality seems to pervade it. An ever-deepening gloom is settling on its fortunes as she recedes further and further from the outer fringes of the darkest zone of its agitated life and penetrates its very heart.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 188-190)

15. A world spiritually destitute, morally bankrupt, politically disrupted, socially convulsed, economically paralyzed, writhing, bleeding and breaking up beneath the avenging rod of God ... A world that has lost its bearings, in which the bright flame of religion is fast dying out, in which the forces of a blatant nationalism and racialism have usurped the rights and prerogatives of God Himself, in which a flagrant secularism - the direct offspring of irreligion - has raised its triumphant head and is protruding its ugly features ... and in which the virus of prejudice and corruption is eating

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into the vitals of an already gravely disordered society.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, pp. 16-17)

16. In a world the structure of whose political and social institutions is impaired, whose vision is befogged, whose conscience is bewildered, whose religious systems have become anemic and lost their virtue, this healing Agency, this leavening Power, this cementing Force, intensely alive and all-pervasive, has been taking shape, is crystallizing into institutions, is mobilizing its forces, and is preparing for the spiritual conquest and the complete redemption of mankind. Though the society which incarnates its ideals be small, and its direct and tangible benefits as yet inconsiderable, yet the potentialities with which it has been endowed, and through which it is destined to regenerate the individual and rebuild a broken world, are incalculable.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 195)

17. The condition that the world is in is bringing many issues to a head. It would be perhaps impossible to find a nation or people not in a state of crisis today. The materialism, the lack of true religion and the consequent baser forces in human nature which are being released, have brought the whole world to the brink of probably the greatest crisis it has ever faced or will have to face.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of United States, dated 19 July 1956)

18. When such a crisis sweeps over the world no person should hope to remain intact. We belong to an organic unit and when one part of the organism suffers all the rest of the body will feel its consequence. This is in fact the reason why Bahá'u'lláh calls our attention to the unity of mankind. But as Bahá'ís we should not let such hardships weaken our hope in the future.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 14 April 1932)

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19. That the unrest and suffering afflicting the mass of mankind are in no small measure the direct consequences of the World War and are attributable to the unwisdom and shortsightedness of the framers of the Peace Treaties only a biased mind can refuse to admit. That the financial obligations contracted in the course of the war, as well as the imposition of a staggering burden of reparations upon the vanquished, have, to a very great extent, been responsible for the maldistribution and consequent shortage of the world's monetary gold supply, which in turn has, to a very great measure, accentuated the phenomenal fall in prices and thereby relentlessly increased the burdens of impoverished countries, no impartial mind would question. That intergovernmental debts have imposed a severe strain on the masses of the people in Europe, have upset the equilibrium of national budgets, have crippled national industries, and led to an increase in the number of the unemployed, is no less apparent to an unprejudiced observer.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 35)

20. The gross materialism that engulfs the entire nation at the present hour; the attachment to worldly things that enshrouds the souls of men; the fear 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 obstacles that stand in the path of every would-be warrior in the service of Bahá'u'lláh, obstacles which he must battle against the surmount in his crusade for the redemption of his own countrymen.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Citadel of Faith*, p. 149)

21. Indeed, the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is the lack of spirituality. The materialistic civilization

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of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind that people in general do no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. There is not sufficient demand for things that we should call spiritual to differentiate them from the needs and requirements of our physical existence.

The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its causes. The spirit of the age, taken on the whole, is irreligious. Man's outlook on life is too crude and materialistic to enable him to elevate himself into the higher realms of the spirit.

It is this condition, so sadly morbid, into which society has fallen, that religion seeks to improve and transform.
(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 8 December 1943)

22. The recrudescence of religious intolerance, of racial animosity, and of patriotic arrogance; the increasing evidences of selfishness, of suspicion, of fear and of fraud; the spread of terrorism, of lawlessness, of drunkenness and of crime; the unquenchable thirst for, and the feverish pursuit after, earthly vanities, riches and pleasures; the weakening of family solidarity; the laxity in parental control; the lapse into luxurious indulgence; the irresponsible attitude towards marriage and the consequent rising tide of divorce; the degeneracy of art and music, the infection of literature, and the corruption of the press; the extension of the influence and activities of those "prophets of decadence" who advocate companionate marriage, who preach the philosophy of nudism, who call modesty an intellectual fiction, who refuse to regard the procreation of children as the sacred and primary purpose of marriage, who denounce religion as an opiate of the people, who would, if given free rein, lead back the human race to barbarism, chaos, and ultimate extinction—these appear as the outstanding

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characteristics of a decadent society, a society that must either be reborn or perish.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 187-188)

23. A world spiritually destitute, morally bankrupt, politically disrupted, socially convulsed, economically paralyzed, writhing, bleeding and breaking up beneath the avenging rod of God.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 16)

24. It exposed, as it moved toward its climax, and in hardly less striking a manner, the cowardice, the want of discipline and the degradation of a spiritually bankrupt foe.

(Shoghi Effendi. *God Passes By*, p. 43)

25. There is so much suffering, such a great and desperate need for a true remedy and the Bahá'ís should realize their sacred obligation is to deliver the Message to their fellowmen at once, and on as large a scale as possible. If they fail to do so, they are really partly responsible for prolonging the agony of humanity.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 18 December 1943)

26. For reasons, which are only too obvious, the Bahá'í philosophy of social and political organization cannot be fully reconciled with the political doctrines and conception that are current and much in vogue to-day. The wave of nationalism, so aggressive and so contagious in its effects, which has swept not only over Europe but over a large part of mankind is, indeed, the very negation of the gospel of peace and of brotherhood proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. The actual trend in the political world is, indeed, far from being in the direction of the Bahá'í Teachings. The world is drawing nearer and nearer to a universal catastrophe, which will mark the end of a bankrupt and of a fundamentally defective civilization.

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From such considerations we can well conclude that we as Bahá'ís can in no wise identify the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with man-made creeds and conceptions, which by their very nature are important to save the world from the dangers with which it is being so fiercely and so increasingly assailed.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated February 11, 1934)

27. Chaos and confusion are daily increasing in the world. They will attain such intensity as to render the frame of mankind unable to bear them. Then will men be awakened and become aware that religion is the impregnable stronghold and the manifest light of the world, and its laws, exhortations and teachings the source of life on earth.

Every discerning eye clearly sees that the early stages of this chaos have daily manifestations affecting the structure of human society; its destructive forces are uprooting time-honored institutions which were a heaven and refuge for the inhabitants of the earth in bygone days and centuries and around which revolved all human affairs. The same destructive forces are also deranging the political, economic, scientific, literary, and, moral equilibrium of the world and are destroying the fairest fruits of the present civilization. Political machinations of those in authority have placed the seal of obsolescence upon the root-principles of the world's order. Greed and passion, deceit, hypocrisy, tyranny, and pride are dominating features afflicting human relations. Discoveries and inventions, which are the fruit of scientific and technological advancements, have become the means and tools of mass extermination and destruction and are in the hands of the ungodly. Even music, art, and literature, which are to represent and inspire the noblest sentiments and highest aspirations and should be a source of comfort and tranquility for troubled souls, have strayed from the straight path and are now the mirrors of the soiled hearts of this confused unprincipled and disordered age. Perversions

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such as these shall result in the ordeals which have been prophesied by the Blessed Beauty in the following words: 'Every day a new calamity will seize the earth and a fresh tormenting trial will appear'. The day is approaching when its (civilization's) flame will devour the cities.

In such an afflicted time when mankind is bewildered and the wisest of men are perplexed as to the remedy, the people of Bahá who have confidence in His unfailing Grace and Divine Guidance are assured that each of these tormenting trials has a cause, a purpose, and a definite result and all are essential instrument for the establishment of the immutable Will of God on earth. In other words on the one hand humanity is struck by the scourge of His chastisement which will inevitably bring together the scattered and vanquished tribes of the earth; and on the other, the weak few whom He has nurtured under the protection of His loving guidance are, in this formative age and period of transition, continuing to build amidst these tumultuous waves an impregnable stronghold which will be the sole remaining refuge for those lost multitudes. Therefore, the dear friends of God who have such a broad and clear vision before them are not perturbed by such events, nor are they panic-stricken by such thundering sounds, nor will they face such convulsions with fear and trepidation, nor will they be deterred, even for a moment, from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities.

One of their sacred responsibilities is to exemplify in their lives those attributes which are acceptable at His Sacred Threshold.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 10 February 1980)

28. Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behavior or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the

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earth. At this critical juncture when the intractable problems confronting nations have been fused into one common concern for the whole world, failure to stem the tide of conflict and disorder would be unconscionably irresponsible. (Universal House of Justice. *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 1)

29. The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. (Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 10)

30. The pitiful plight of masses of humanity, suffering and in turmoil, hungering after righteousness, but 'bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His Melody with their own ears'. They must be fed. Vision must be restored where hope is lost, confidence built where doubt and confusion are rife... (Universal House of Justice. Letter dated June 1988)

31. The economic crises so widely reported seem destined to grow even worse, but neither the economic nor other pressing problems confronting humanity will ultimately be resolved unless the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is given due regard by nations and peoples... (Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1993)

32. In the current state of society, children face a cruel fate. Millions and millions in country after country are dislocated socially. Children find themselves alienated by parents and other adults whether they live in conditions of wealth or poverty. This alienation has its roots in a selfishness that is born of materialism that is at the core of the godlessness seizing the hearts of people everywhere. The social dislocation of children in our time is a sure mark of a society in decline; this condition is not, however, confined to any race, class, nation or economic condition—it cuts across them

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all. It grieves our hearts to realize that in so many parts of the world children are employed as soldiers, exploited as labourers, sold into virtual slavery, forced into prostitution, made the objects of pornography, abandoned by parents centred on their own desires, and subjected to other forms of victimization too numerous to mention. Many such horrors are inflicted by the parents themselves upon their own children. The spiritual and psychological damage defies estimation. Our worldwide community cannot escape the consequences of these conditions. This realization should spur us all to urgent and sustained effort in the interests of children and the future.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2000)

2. Unity of humankind

The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth, and that the seal, “the Kingdom is God’s”, may be stamped upon the brow of all its peoples.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 11)

2. The incomparable Creator hath created all men from one same substance, and hath exalted their reality above the rest of His creatures. Success or failure, gain or loss, must, therefore, depend upon man's own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 81-82)

3. Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 95)

4. He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 214)

5. The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love

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and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 215)

6. O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. Then will the effulgence of the world's great Luminary envelop the whole earth, and its inhabitants become the citizens of one city, and the occupants of one and the same throne. This Wronged One hath, ever since the early days of His life, cherished none other desire but this, and will continue to entertain no wish except this wish. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 217)

7. O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 218)

8. O rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions. Beware lest ye disregard the counsel of the All-Knowing, the Faithful.

Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 254)

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9. The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 286)

10. In these days it is incumbent upon everyone to adhere tenaciously unto unity and concord and to labour diligently in promoting the Cause of God, that perchance the wayward souls may attain that which will lead unto abiding prosperity.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 59)

11. O Children of Men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Arabic Hidden Words*, number 68)

12. We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem Us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment.... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled -- what harm is there in this?... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come.... Yet do We see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind.... These strifes and this bloodshed

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and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family.... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind....

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*)

13. So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth...

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Quoted in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 203)

14. No power can exist except through unity.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Cited Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 1)

15. Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banners of unity, to intone, in the assemblages of the world, the verses of friendship and love and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one. Thus will the tabernacles of holiness be upraised on the summits of the earth, gathering all peoples into the protective shadow of the World of Oneness. This great bounty will dawn over the world at the time when the lovers of God shall arise to carry out His Teachings, and to scatter far and wide the fresh, sweet scents of universal love.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 20)

16. Whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 88)

17. O ye beloved of God! Know ye, verily, that the happiness of mankind lieth in the unity and the harmony of the human race, and that spiritual and material developments are conditioned upon love and amity among all men.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 286)

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18. Today the world of humanity is in need of international unity and conciliation. To establish these great fundamental principles a propelling power is needed. It is self-evident that the unity of the human world and the Most Great Peace cannot be accomplished through material means. They cannot be established through political power, for the political interests of nations are various and the policies of peoples are divergent and conflicting. They cannot be founded through racial or patriotic power, for these are human powers, selfish and weak. The very nature of racial differences and patriotic prejudices prevents the realization of this unity and agreement. Therefore, it is evidenced that the promotion of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity, which is the essence of the teachings of all the Manifestations of God, is impossible except through the divine power and breaths of the Holy Spirit. Other powers are too weak and are incapable of accomplishing this.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 11-12)

19. There is perfect brotherhood underlying humanity, for all are servants of one God and belong to one family under the protection of divine providence. The bond of fraternity exists in humanity because all are intelligent beings. ...There is brotherhood potential in humanity because all inhabit this earthly globe under the one canopy of heaven... There is brotherhood intended in humanity because all are waves of one sea, leaves and fruit of one tree. This is physical fellowship which ensures material happiness in the human world. The stronger it becomes, the more will mankind advance and the circle of materiality be enlarged.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 129)

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20. Consort with all the people, kindreds, and religions of the world with utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 455)

21. Your efforts must be lofty. Exert yourselves with heart and soul so that, perchance, through your efforts the light of universal peace may shine and this darkness of estrangement and enmity may be dispelled from amongst men, that all men may become as one family and consort together in love and kindness, that the East may assist the West and the West give help to the East, for all are the inhabitants of one planet, the people of one original native land and the flocks of one Shepherd.

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

22. It is certain that the greatest of instrumentalities for achieving the advancement and the glory of man, the supreme agency for the enlightenment and the redemption of the world, is love and fellowship and unity among all the members of the human race. Nothing can be effected in the world, not even conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 73)

23. All the divine Manifestations have proclaimed the oneness of God and the unity of mankind. They have taught that men should love and mutually help each other in order that they might progress. Now if this conception of religion be true, its essential principle is the oneness of humanity. The fundamental truth of the Manifestations is peace. This underlies all religion, all justice. The divine purpose is that men should live in unity, concord and agreement and should love one another.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 245)

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24. ...a unity ... will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in *the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 39)

25. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind—the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh revolve—is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and goodwill among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claim greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present—day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds—creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world—a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and

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finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.

It represents the consummation of human evolution — an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations.

The principle of the Oneness of Mankind, as proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, carries with it no more and no less than a solemn assertion that attainment to this final stage in this stupendous evolution is not only necessary but inevitable, that its realization is fast approaching, and that nothing short of a power that is born of God can succeed in establishing it.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 42-43)

26. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 163-164)

27. The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the coming of age of the entire human race. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelation, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic

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cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet. ...That mystic, all-pervasive, yet indefinable change, which we associate with the stage of maturity inevitable in the life of the individual and the development of the fruit must, if we would correctly apprehend the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh, have its counterpart in the evolution of the organization of human society. A similar stage must sooner or later be attained in the collective life of mankind, producing an even more striking phenomenon in world relations, and endowing the whole human race with such potentialities of well-being as shall provide, throughout the succeeding ages, the chief incentive required for the eventual fulfillment of its high destiny. Such a stage of maturity in the process of human government must, for all time, if we would faithfully recognize the tremendous claim advanced by Bahá'u'lláh, remain identified with the Revelation of which He was the Bearer.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 202)

(Note: The Bahá'í view of progressive revelation is that the major religions have been founded by Manifestations of God and that the Manifestations succeed one another, each bringing a greater measure of divine truth to humanity. (Cited in <https://bahai-library.com/winters_bahai_glossary>)

28. It is to unity that the Guardian has been continually calling the friends. For where a united will exists, nothing can effectively oppose and hamper the forces of constructive development.

(Shoghi Effendi. A Compilation on *Local Spiritual Assembly*, p. 73)

29. For the first time in history it is possible for everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 1)

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30. Unbridled nationalism, as distinguished from a sane and legitimate patriotism, must give way to a wider loyalty, to the love of humanity as a whole. Bahá'u'lláh's statement is: 'The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.'

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 11)

31. Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, pp. 13-14)

32. Unity is not, that is, merely a condition resulting from a sense of mutual goodwill and common purpose, however profound and sincerely held such sentiments may be, any more than an organism is a product of some fortuitous and amorphous association of various elements. Unity is a phenomenon of creative power, whose existence becomes apparent through the effects that collective action produces and whose absence is betrayed by the impotence of such efforts. However, handicapped it often has been by ignorance and perversity, this force has been the primary influence driving the advancement of civilization, generating legal codes, social and political institutions, artistic works, technological achievements without end, moral breakthroughs, material prosperity, and long periods of public peace whose afterglow lived in the memories of subsequent generations as imagined 'golden ages'.

(Universal House of Justice. *Century of Light*, p. 41)

33. We rejoice at the spirit of unity which is evident in its steady consolidation through the workings of the Administrative Order to which the Covenant has given the birth. Our cumulated experience has clearly demonstrated the efficacy of the Covenant. The genuine unity it induces

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greatly encourages our expectation that all of humanity can and will be united.

(Universal House of Justice. Worldwide Satellite Broadcast, 26 November 1992)

34. Disunity is the crux of the problems which so severely afflict the planet. It permeates attitudes in all departments of life. It is at the heart of all major conflicts between nations and peoples. More serious still, disunity is common in the relations between religions and within religions, vitiating the very spiritual and moral influence which it is their primary purpose to exert.

(Universal House of Justice. Worldwide Satellite Broadcast, 26 November 1992)

35. The world of humanity is moving inexorably towards its as-yet elusive destiny of unity and peace. Indeed, during the Holy Year, we were transported on the wings of the spirit to a summit from which we have seen the fast-approaching glory of the Lord's immemorial promise that all humankind will one day be united.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1993)

36. You [*the youth*], however, are aware of your part in a mighty, transforming process that will yield, in time, a global civilization reflecting the oneness of humankind.

(Universal House of Justice. 1 July 2013, to the participants of 114 youth conferences)

37. O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou are their Helper and their Lord.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'í Prayers, Bahá'u'lláh Publishing Trust, Wilmette IL, 2002, p. 238)

38. O Thou kind Lord! Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock. Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household. In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants, and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle; all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty; all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all. Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties, and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

O God! Establish the Most Great Peace.

Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance. Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence.

Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í Prayers*, Bahá’í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, IL, pp. 113-115)

3. The new World Order

*It is towards this goal—the goal of a new World Order—
that a harassed humanity must strive...*

Shoghi Effendi

1. Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 7)

2. The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 136)

3. The Great Being, wishing to reveal the prerequisites of the peace and tranquillity of the world and the advancement of its peoples, hath written: The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for

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the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation. We fain would hope that the kings and rulers of the earth, the mirrors of the gracious and almighty name of God, may attain unto this station, and shield mankind from the onslaught of tyranny. ...The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script. When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home. These things are obligatory and absolutely essential. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.... That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 248)

4. Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh. and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán.

(The Báb. Quoted in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 189)

(Note: The Bayán ("Exposition, explanation, lucidity, eloquence, utterance") is the title given by The Bab to two of His major works, one in Persian, the other in Arabic, His Books of Laws. It is also used sometimes to denote the entire body of His Writings. The Persian Bayán is the major doctrinal work and principal repository of the laws ordained by the Báb. The Arabic Bayán is parallel in content but smaller and less weighty. References in the annotations to subjects found in both the Persian Bayán and the Arabic Bayán are identified by use of the term "Bayán" without further qualification.

Reference: Jonah Winters (2010). Glossary of Bahá'í terms. Cited in <https://bahai-library.com/winters_bahai_glossary>

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5. True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns - the shining exemplars of devotion and determination - shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking - the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world - should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 64)

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6. The world of humanity shall become the manifestation of the lights of Divinity, and the bestowals of God shall surround all. From the standpoints of both material and spiritual civilization extraordinary progress and development will be witnessed. In this present cycle there will be an evolution in civilization unparalleled in the history of the world. The world of humanity has, heretofore, been in the stage of infancy; now it is approaching maturity. Just as the individual human organism, having attained the period of maturity, reaches its fullest degree of physical strength and ripened intellectual faculties so that in one year of this ripened period there is witnessed an unprecedented measure of development, likewise the world of humanity in this cycle of its completeness and consummation will realize an immeasurable upward progress, and that power of accomplishment whereof each individual human reality is the depository of God -- that outworking Universal Spirit -- like the intellectual faculty, will reveal itself in infinite degrees of perfection.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 37)

7. Few will fail to recognize that the Spirit breathed by Bahá’u’lláh upon the world, and which is manifesting itself with varying degrees of intensity through the efforts consciously displayed by His avowed supporters and indirectly through certain humanitarian organizations, can never permeate and exercise an abiding influence upon mankind unless and until it incarnates itself in a visible Order, which would bear His name, wholly identify itself with His principles, and function in conformity with His laws.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 19)

8. That the Cause associated with the name of Bahá’u’lláh feeds itself upon those hidden springs of celestial strength

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which no force of human personality, whatever its glamour, can replace...

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 51)

8. The onrushing forces so miraculously released through the agency of two independent and swiftly successive Manifestations are now under our very eyes and through the care of the chosen stewards of a far-flung Faith being gradually mustered and disciplined. They are slowly crystallizing into institutions that will come to be regarded as the hall-mark and glory of the age we are called upon to establish and by our deeds immortalize.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 98)

10. To what else if not to the power and majesty which this Administrative Order—the rudiments of the future all-enfolding Bahá'í Commonwealth—is destined to manifest, can these utterances of Bahá'u'lláh allude: “The world’s equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind’s ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.”

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 146)

11. This new World Order, whose promise is enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. whose fundamental principles have been enunciated in the writings of the Centre of His Covenant, involves no less than the complete unification of the entire human race. This unification should conform to such principles as would directly harmonize with the spirit that animates, and the laws that govern the operation of, the institutions that already constitute the structural basis of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 162)

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12. The Most Great Peace, on the other hand, as conceived by Bahá'u'lláh — a peace that must inevitably follow as the practical consequence of the spiritualization of the world and the fusion of all its races, creeds, classes and nations — can rest on no other basis, and can be preserved through no other agency, except the divinely appointed ordinances that are implicit in the World Order that stands associated with His Holy Name.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 162)

13. As we view the world around us, we are compelled to observe the manifold evidences of that universal fermentation which, in every continent of the globe and in every department of human life, be it religious, social, economic or political, is purging and reshaping humanity in anticipation of the Day when the wholeness of the human race will have been recognized and its unity established. A twofold process, however, can be distinguished, each tending, in its own way and with an accelerated momentum, to bring to a climax the forces that are transforming the face of our planet. The first is essentially an integrating process, while the second is fundamentally disruptive. The former, as it steadily evolves, unfolds a System which may well serve as a pattern for that world polity towards which a strangely — disordered world is continually advancing; while the latter, as its disintegrating influence deepens, tends to tear down, with increasing violence, the antiquated barriers that seek to block humanity's progress towards its destined goal. The constructive process stands associated with the nascent Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and is the harbinger of the new World Order that Faith must ere long establish. The destructive forces that characterize the other should be identified with a civilization that has refused to answer to the expectation of a new age, and is consequently falling into chaos and decline.

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A titanic, a spiritual struggle, unparalleled in its magnitude yet unspeakably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is being waged as a result of these opposing tendencies, in this age of transition through which the organized community of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh and mankind as a whole are passing.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 170)

14. A mechanism of world intercommunication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization... A world language... A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 203)

15. ... the century that has seen this Spirit burst forth upon the world, as well as the initial stages of its subsequent incarnation in a System that must evolve into an Order designed to embrace the whole of mankind, and capable of fulfilling the high destiny that awaits man on this planet.

(Shoghi Effendi. *God Passes By*, p. xii)

16. ... a Revelation which, flowing out, in that extremely perilous hour, from His travailing soul, pierced the gloom that had settled upon that pestilential pit, and, bursting through its walls, and propagating itself as far as the ends of the earth, infused into the entire body of mankind its boundless potentialities, and is now under our very eyes, shaping the course of human society?

(Shoghi Effendi. *God Passes By*, p. 93)

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17. The Golden Age of the Faith itself that must witness the unification of all the peoples and nations of the world, the establishment of the Most Great Peace, the inauguration of the Kingdom of the Father upon earth, the coming of age of the entire human race and the birth of a world civilization, 412 inspired and directed by the creative energies released by Bahá'u'lláh's World Order, shining in its meridian splendor, is still unborn and its glories unsuspected.

(Shoghi Effendi. *God Passes By*, p. 411)

18. We Bahá'ís are one the world over; we are seeking to build up a new World Order, divine in origin... The best way for a Bahá'í to serve his country and the world is to work for the establishment of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order, which will gradually unite all men and do away with divisive political systems and religious creeds.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 31)

19. As the administrative processes expand, as their operation steadily improves, as their necessity is more fully and strikingly demonstrated, and their beneficent influence correspondingly grows more apparent and evident, so will the blessings, the strength and guidance bestowed by Him Who animates and directs these processes be more abundantly vouchsafed to those who have been called upon to utilize them, in this age, for the execution of God's Purpose and for the ultimate redemption of a sore-stricken travailing humanity. Many will be the setbacks, the shocks and the disturbances, which the commotions of a convulsive age must produce; yet no force, however violent and world-wide in its range and catastrophic in its immediate consequences, can either halt these processes or deflect their appointed course.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to America*, pp. 41-42)

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20. The Bahá'ís are a part of the world. They too feel the great pressures which are brought to bear upon all people today, whoever and wherever they may be. On the other hand, the Divine Plan, which is the direct method of working toward the establishment of peace and World Order, has perforce reached an important and challenging point in its unfoldment; because of the desperate needs of the world, the Bahá'ís find themselves, even though so limited in numbers, in financial strength and in prestige, called upon to fulfil a great responsibility.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 19 July 1956)

21. It is towards this goal—the goal of a new World Order, Divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, equitable in principle, challenging in its features — that a harassed humanity must strive...

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 274)

22. The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh encompasses all units of human society; integrates the spiritual, administrative and social processes of life; and canalizes human expression in its varied forms towards the construction of a new civilization.

(Universal House of Justice. Message dated 27 August 1989)

23. Among the favorable signs are the steadily growing strength of the steps towards world order taken initially near the beginning of this century in the creation of the League of Nations, succeeded by the more broadly based United Nations Organization; the achievement since the Second World War of independence by the majority of all the nations on earth, indicating the completion of the process of nation building, and the involvement of these fledgling nations with older ones in matters of mutual concern; the consequent vast increase in cooperation among hitherto isolated and antagonistic peoples and groups in international

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undertakings in the scientific, educational, legal, economic and cultural fields; the rise in recent decades of an unprecedented number of international humanitarian organizations; the spread of women's and youth movements calling for an end to war; and the spontaneous spawning of widening networks of ordinary people seeking understanding through personal communication.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, pp. 1-2)

24. That materialistic ideals have, in the light of experience, failed to satisfy the needs of mankind calls for an honest acknowledgment that a fresh effort must now be made to find the solutions to the agonizing problems of the planet.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 8)

25. The tentative steps towards world order, especially since World War II, give hopeful signs. The increasing tendency of groups of nations to formalize relationships which enable them to cooperate in matters of mutual interest suggests that eventually all nations could overcome this paralysis. The Association of South East Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community and Common Market, the Central American Common Market, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the European Communities, the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the South Pacific Forum—all the joint endeavors represented by such organizations prepare the path to world order.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 9)

26. World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm...

Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and

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administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, pp. 13-14)

27. Still today, can anyone claim to have glimpsed anything but an intimation, distant and indistinct, of the future society to which the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is destined to give rise? For let none suppose that the civilization towards which the divine teachings impel humankind will follow merely from adjustments to the present order. Far from it. In a talk delivered some days after He laid the cornerstone of the Mother Temple of the West, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that 'among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form,' that 'the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs'. These, and countless other utterances of the Master to which the Bahá'í community is turning time and again in this centennial period, raise awareness of the distance that separates society as it is now arranged from the stupendous vision His Father gifted to the world.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

4. Bahá'í World Commonwealth of the future

The Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future ... is, both in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems.

Shoghi Effendi

1. What else could these weighty words signify if they did not point to the inevitable curtailment of unfettered national sovereignty as an indispensable preliminary to the formation of the future Commonwealth of all the nations of the world? Some form of a world super-state must needs be evolved, in whose favor all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an international executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a world parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a supreme tribunal whose judgment will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration. A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labor definitely recognized; in which the clamor of religious fanaticism and

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strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law — the product of the considered judgment of the world's federated representatives — shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; ... shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 40-41)

2. For upon our present-day efforts, and above all upon the extent to which we strive to remodel our lives after the pattern of sublime heroism associated with those gone before us, must depend the efficacy of the instruments we now fashion—instruments that must erect the structure of that blissful Commonwealth which must signalize the Golden Age of our Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 98)

3. A word should now be said regarding the theory on which this Administrative Order is based and the principle that must govern the operation of its chief institutions. It would be utterly misleading to attempt a comparison between this unique, this divinely-conceived Order and any of the diverse systems which the minds of men, at various periods of their history, have contrived for the government of human institutions. Such an attempt would in itself betray a lack of complete appreciation of the excellence of the handiwork of its great Author. How could it be otherwise when we remember that this Order constitutes the very pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Bahá'u'lláh is designed to establish upon earth? The divers and ever-shifting systems of human polity, whether past or present, whether originating in the East or in the West, offer no adequate criterion wherewith to estimate the potency of

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its hidden virtues or to appraise the solidity of its foundations.

The Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, of which this vast Administrative Order is the sole framework, is, both in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems. No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of the recognized types of theocracy, whether it be the Hebrew Commonwealth, or the various Christian ecclesiastical organizations, or the Imamate or the Caliphate in Islám—none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 152)

4. Into such a period we are now steadily and irresistibly moving. Amidst the shadows which are increasingly gathering about us we can faintly discern the glimmerings of Bahá'u'lláh's unearthly sovereignty appearing fitfully on the horizon of history. To us, the "generation of the half-light," living at a time which may be designated as the period of the incubation of the World Commonwealth envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh. has been assigned a task whose high privilege we can never sufficiently appreciate, and the arduousness of which we can as yet but dimly recognize. We may well believe, we who are called upon to experience the operation of the dark forces destined to unloose a flood of agonizing afflictions, that the darkest hour that must precede the dawn of the Golden Age of our Faith has not yet struck. Deep as is the gloom that already encircles the world, the afflictive ordeals which that world is to suffer are still in preparation, nor can their blackness be as yet imagined. We stand on the

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threshold of an age whose convulsions proclaim alike the death-pangs of the old order and the birth-pangs of the new. Through the generating influence of the Faith announced by Bahá'u'lláh this New World Order may be said to have been conceived. We can, at the present moment, experience its stirrings in the womb of a travailing age—an age waiting for the appointed hour at which it can cast its burden and yield its fairest fruit.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 168)

5. This historic step, however, is but a faint glimmer in the darkness that envelops an agitated humanity. It may well prove to be no more than a mere flash, a fugitive gleam, in the midst of an ever-deepening confusion. The process of disintegration must inexorably continue, and its corrosive influence must penetrate deeper and deeper into the very core of a crumbling age. Much suffering will still be required ere the contending nations, creeds, classes and races of mankind are fused in the crucible of universal affliction, and are forged by the fires of a fierce ordeal into one organic commonwealth, one vast, unified, and harmoniously functioning system. Adversities unimaginably appalling, undreamed of crises and upheavals, war, famine, and pestilence, might well combine to engrave in the soul of an unheeding generation those truths and principles which it has disdained to recognize and follow. A paralysis more painful than any it has yet experienced must creep over and further afflict the fabric of a broken society ere it can be rebuilt and regenerated.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 193)

6. The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the

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autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate. A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue. A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop. The press will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether

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private or public, and will be liberated from the influence of contending governments and peoples. The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 203)

7. It is with the Golden Age of His Dispensation that the consummation of this process will be forever associated. It is the structure of His New World Order, now stirring in the womb of the administrative institutions He Himself has created, that will serve both as a pattern and a nucleus of that world commonwealth which is the sure, the inevitable destiny of the peoples and nations of the earth.

Just as the organic evolution of mankind has been slow and gradual, and involved successively the unification of the family, the tribe, the city-state, and the nation, so has the light vouchsafed by the Revelation of God, at various stages in the evolution of religion, and reflected in the successive Dispensations of the past, been slow and progressive. Indeed, the measure of Divine Revelation, in every age, has been adapted to, and commensurate with, the degree of social progress achieved in that age by a constantly evolving humanity.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 118)

8. To the general character, the implications and features of this world commonwealth, destined to emerge, sooner or later, out of the carnage, agony, and havoc of this great world convulsion, I have already referred in my previous communications. Suffice it to say that this consummation will, by its very nature, be a gradual process, and must, as Bahá'u'lláh has Himself anticipated, lead at first to the establishment of that Lesser Peace which the nations of the

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earth, as yet unconscious of His Revelation and yet unwittingly enforcing the general principles which He has enunciated, will themselves establish. This momentous and historic step, involving the reconstruction of mankind, as the result of the universal recognition of its oneness and wholeness, will bring in its wake the spiritualization of the masses, consequent to the recognition of the character, and the acknowledgment of the claims, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—the essential condition to that ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations which must signalize the emergence of His New World Order.

Then will the coming of age of the entire human race be proclaimed and celebrated by all the peoples and nations of the earth. Then will the banner of the Most Great Peace be hoisted. Then will the worldwide sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh—the Establisher of the Kingdom of the Father foretold by the Son, and anticipated by the Prophets of God before Him and after Him—be recognized, acclaimed, and firmly established. Then will a world civilization be born, flourish, and perpetuate itself, a civilization with a fullness of life such as the world has never seen nor can as yet conceive. Then will the Everlasting Covenant be fulfilled in its completeness. Then will the promise enshrined in all the Books of God be redeemed, and all the prophecies uttered by the Prophets of old come to pass, and the vision of seers and poets be realized. Then will the planet, galvanized through the universal belief of its dwellers in one God, and their allegiance to one common Revelation, mirror, within the limitations imposed upon it, the effulgent glories of the sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh. shining in the plenitude of its splendor in the Abhá Paradise, and be made the footstool of His Throne on high, and acclaimed as the earthly heaven, capable of fulfilling that ineffable destiny fixed for it, from time immemorial, by the love and wisdom of its Creator.

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Not ours, puny mortals that we are, to attempt, at so critical a stage in the long and checkered history of mankind, to arrive at a precise and satisfactory understanding of the steps which must successively lead a bleeding humanity, wretchedly oblivious of its God, and careless of Bahá'u'lláh, from its calvary to its ultimate resurrection. Not ours, the living witnesses of the all-subduing potency of His Faith, to question, for a moment, and however dark the misery that enshrouds the world, the ability of Bahá'u'lláh to forge, with the hammer of His Will, and through the fire of tribulation, upon the anvil of this travailing age, and in the particular shape His mind has envisioned, these scattered and mutually destructive fragments into which a perverse world has fallen, into one single unit, solid and indivisible, able to execute His design for the children of men.

Ours rather the duty, however confused the scene, however dismal the present outlook, however circumscribed the resources we dispose of, to labor serenely, confidently, and unremittingly to lend our share of assistance, in whichever way circumstances may enable us, to the operation of the forces which, as marshaled and directed by Bahá'u'lláh, are leading humanity out of the valley of misery and shame to the loftiest summits of power and glory.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, pp. 123-124)

9. This present Crusade, on the threshold of which we now stand, will, moreover, by virtue of the dynamic forces it will release and its wide repercussions over the entire surface of the globe, contribute effectually to the acceleration of yet another process of tremendous significance which will carry the steadily evolving Faith of Bahá'u'lláh through its present stages of obscurity, of repression, of emancipation and of recognition - stages one or another of which Bahá'í national communities in various parts of the world now find themselves in - to the stage of establishment, the stage at

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which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will be recognized by the civil authorities as the state religion, similar to that which Christianity entered in the years following the death of the Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Bahá'í state itself, functioning, in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy, the Mother-Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, a stage which, in the fullness of time, will culminate in the establishment of the World Bahá'í Commonwealth, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, and which will signalize the long-awaited advent of the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth - the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh - mirroring however faintly upon this humble handful of dust the glories of the Abha Kingdom.

This final and crowning stage in the evolution of the plan wrought by God Himself for humanity will, in turn, prove to be the signal for the birth of a world civilization, incomparable in its range, its character and potency, in the history of mankind - a civilization which posterity will, with one voice, acclaim as the fairest fruit of the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. and whose rich harvest will be garnered during future dispensations destined to succeed one another in the course of the five thousand century Bahá'í Cycle. [May 4, 1953]

(Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to the Baha'i World* - 1950-1957, p. 155)

10. The Declaration of Trust, the provisions of which you have so splendidly conceived, and formulated with such assiduous care, marks yet another milestone on the road of progress along which you are patiently and determinedly advancing. Clear and concise in its wording, sound in principle, and complete in its affirmations of the fundamentals of Bahá'í administration, it stands in its final form as a worthy and faithful exposition of the constitutional basis of Bahá'í communities in every land, foreshadowing the

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final emergence of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 135)

11. It should be noted, in this connection, that in the third Vahid of this Book there occurs a passage which, alike in its explicit reference to the name of the Promised One, and in its anticipation of the Order which, in a later age, was to be identified with His Revelation, deserves to rank as one of the most significant statements recorded in any of the Báb's writings. "Well is it with him," is His prophetic announcement, "who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh. and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán." It is with that self-same Order that the Founder of the promised Revelation, twenty years later—incorporating that same term in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas — identified the System envisaged in that Book, affirming that "this most great Order" had deranged the world's equilibrium, and revolutionized mankind's ordered life. It is the features of that self-same Order which, at a later stage in the evolution of the Faith, the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant and the appointed Interpreter of His teachings, delineated through the provisions of His Will and Testament. It is the structural basis of that self-same Order which, in the Formative Age of that same Faith, the stewards of that same Covenant, the elected representatives of the world-wide Bahá'í community, are now laboriously and unitedly establishing. It is the superstructure of that self-same Order, attaining its full stature through the emergence of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth — the Kingdom of God on earth— which the Golden Age of that same Dispensation must, in the fullness of time, ultimately witness.

(Shoghi Effendi. *God Passes By*, pp. 25-26)

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12. ... a civilization destined as it unfolds to derive its initial impulse from the spirit animating the very institutions which, in their embryonic state, are now stirring in the womb of the present Formative Age of the Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to the Bahá'í World – 1950-1957*, p. 75)

13. A world executive, backed by an international force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 27 April 1995)

14. And as the Bahá'í Faith permeates the masses of the peoples of East and West, and its truth is embraced by the majority of the peoples of a number of the Sovereign States of the world, will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power, and exercise, as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth, all the rights, the duties, and responsibilities incumbent upon the world's future super state.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 27 April 1995)

15. This present Crusade, on the threshold of which we now stand, will, moreover, by virtue of the dynamic forces it will release and its wide repercussions over the entire surface of the globe, contribute effectually to the acceleration of yet another process of tremendous significance which will carry the steadily evolving Faith of Bahá'u'lláh through its present stages of obscurity, of repression, of emancipation and of recognition stages one or another of which Bahá'í national communities in various parts of the world now find themselves [in] to the stage of establishment, the stage at which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will be recognized by the civil authorities as the State Religion, similar to that which Christianity entered in the years following the death of the

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Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Baha'i state itself, functioning, in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy, the Mother Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, a stage which, in the fullness of time, will culminate in the establishment of the World Bahá'í Commonwealth, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, and which will signalize the long awaited advent of the Christ promised Kingdom of God on earth the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh mirroring however faintly upon this humble handful of dust the glories of the Abhá Kingdom.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 30 April 1953 to the All-America Intercontinental Teaching Conference – Quoted by the Universal House of Justice, letter dated 27 April 1995)

5. World Citizenship

... the consciousness of world citizenship ... must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era.

Shoghi Effendi

1. Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own selves.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 250)

2. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 250)

3. ... a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh. an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 40-41)

4. The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture - all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era - should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a

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consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 163)

(Note: Bahá'í Era denotes the nineteen-month Badi' calendar, which is reckoned from 21 March 1844, the year of the Báb's declaration of His mission. Cited in <https://bahai-brary.com/winters_bahai_glossary>)

5. The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture — all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era — should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 202)

6. The love of one's country, instilled and stressed by the teaching of Islam, as 'an element of the Faith of God,' has not, through this declaration, this clarion-call of Bahá'u'lláh. been either condemned or disparaged. It should not, indeed it cannot, be construed as a repudiation, or regarded in the light of a censure, pronounced against a sane and intelligent patriotism, nor does it seek to undermine the allegiance and loyalty of any individual to his country, nor does it conflict with the legitimate aspirations, rights, and duties of any individual state or nation. All it does imply and proclaim is the insufficiency of patriotism, in view of the fundamental changes effected in the economic life of society and the interdependence of the nations, and as the consequence of the contraction of the world, through the revolution in the means of transportation and communication — conditions that did not and could not exist either in the days of Jesus Christ or of Muhammad. It calls for a wider loyalty, which should not, and indeed does not, conflict with lesser loyalty.

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It instills a love which, in view of its scope, must include and not exclude the love of one's own country. It lays, through this loyalty which it inspires, and this love which it infuses, the only foundation on which the concept of world citizenship can thrive, and the structure of world unification can rest. It does insist, however, on the subordination of national considerations and particularistic interests to the imperative and paramount claims of humanity as a whole, inasmuch as in a world of interdependent nations and peoples the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 122)

7. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard education of every child.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 12)

8. The concept of world citizenship is a direct result of the contraction of the world into a single neighbourhood through scientific advances and of the indisputable interdependence of nations. Current international activities in various fields which nurture mutual affection and a sense of solidarity among peoples need greatly to be increased.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 11)

9. Peace will emerge in stages, through which the unifying effects of a growing consciousness of world citizenship will become manifest.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván message 1996 to the Bahá'ís of the World)

6. Sound Governance

The governments ... establishing just legislation and economics in order that all humanity may enjoy a full measure of welfare and privilege.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. ...a republican form of government profiteth all the peoples of the world ...

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 28)

2. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 70)

3. Hoping that his reign will rival the glorious past, he has sought to establish equity and righteousness and to foster education and the processes of civilization throughout this noble land, and to translate from potentiality into actuality whatever will insure its progress. Not until now had we seen a monarch, holding in his capable hands the reins of affairs, and on whose high resolve the welfare of all his subjects depends, exerting as it would befit him, like a benevolent father, his efforts toward the training and cultivation of his people, seeking to insure their well-being and peace of mind, and exhibiting due concern for their interests; this Servant and those like Him have therefore remained silent. Now, however, it is clear to the discerning that the Shah has of his

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own accord determined to establish a just government and to secure the progress of all his subjects.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilisation*, p. 11)

4. Would the setting up of just legislation, in accord with the Divine laws which guarantee the happiness of society and protect the rights of all mankind and are an impregnable proof against assault - would such laws, insuring the integrity of the members of society and their equality before the law, inhibit their prosperity and success?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 14)

5. ...no government would need continually to pile up the weapons of war, nor feel itself obliged to produce ever new military weapons with which to conquer the human race. A small force for the purposes of internal security, the correction of criminal and disorderly elements and the prevention of local disturbances, would be required - no more. In this way the entire population would, first of all, be relieved of the crushing burden of expenditure currently imposed for military purposes, and secondly, great numbers of people would cease to devote their time to the continual devising of new weapons of destruction - those testimonials of greed and bloodthirstiness, so inconsistent with the gift of life - and would instead bend their efforts to the production of whatever will foster human existence and peace and well-being, and would become the cause of universal development and prosperity. Then every nation on earth will reign in honor, and every people will be cradled in tranquillity and content.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 65)

6. There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are

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framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved.

The government of the countries should conform to the Divine Law which gives equal justice to all. This is the only way in which the deplorable superfluity of great wealth and miserable, demoralizing, degrading poverty can be abolished. Not until this is done will the Law of God be obeyed.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 159)

7. Today the human world is in need of a great power by which these glorious principles and purposes may be executed. The cause of peace is a very great cause; it is the Cause of God, and all the forces of the world are opposed to it. Governments, for instance, consider militarism as the step to human progress, that division among men and nations is the cause of patriotism and honor, that if one nation attack and conquer another, gaining wealth, territory and glory thereby, this warfare and conquest, this bloodshed and cruelty are the cause of that victorious nation's advancement and prosperity. This is an utter mistake.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 156)

8. The Bahá’í Cause covers all economic and social questions under the heading and ruling of its laws ...The governments will enact these laws, establishing just legislation and economics in order that all humanity may enjoy a full measure of welfare and privilege; but this will always be according to legal protection and procedure. Without legislative administration, rights and demands fail, and the welfare of the commonwealth cannot be realized.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238)

9. ... all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 31-32.)

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10. Two calls to success and prosperity are being raised from the heights of the happiness of mankind, awakening the slumbering, granting sight to the blind, causing the heedless to become mindful, bestowing hearing upon the deaf, unloosing the tongue of the mute and resuscitating the dead.

The one is the call of civilization, of the progress of the material world. This pertaineth to the world of phenomena, promoteth the principles of material achievement, and is the trainer for the physical accomplishments of mankind. It compriseth the laws, regulations, arts and sciences through which the world of humanity hath developed; laws and regulations which are the outcome of lofty ideals and the result of sound minds, and which have stepped forth into the arena of existence through the efforts of the wise and cultured in past and subsequent ages. The promulgator and executive power of this call is just government.

The other is the soul-stirring call of God, Whose spiritual teachings are safeguards of the everlasting glory, the eternal happiness and illumination of the world of humanity, and cause attributes of mercy to be revealed in the human world and the life beyond.

This second call is founded upon the instructions and exhortations of the Lord and the admonitions and altruistic emotions belonging to the realm of morality which, like unto a brilliant light, brighten and illumine the lamp of the realities of mankind. Its penetrative power is the Word of God. (*‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. p. 283*)

11. Laws and regulations should be enacted which would grant that the workers both a daily wage and share in a fourth or fifth of the profits of the factory in accordance with its means, or which would have the workers equitably share in some other way in the profits with the owners.

(*‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Some Answered Questions, p. 317*)

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12. Ye who are the sincere well-wishers of the state, who are the dutiful and compliant subjects of the government, should occupy yourselves in constant service. Anyone who entereth the employ of the government should show forth in all his deeds and actions the highest degree of rectitude and honesty, of temperance and self-discipline, of purity and sanctity, of justice and equity. If, God forbid, he should be guilty of the least breach of trust, or approach his duties in a slack or desultory fashion, or extort so much as a farthing from the populace, or seek to further his own selfish interests and personal gain--then it is certain that he shall be deprived of the outpourings of God's grace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Compilation on *Trustworthiness*, number 53, p. 15)

13. Those persons who are selected to serve the public, or are appointed to administrative positions, should perform their duties in a spirit of true servitude and ready compliance. That is to say, they should be distinguished by their goodly disposition and virtuous character, content themselves with their allotted remuneration, and act with trustworthiness in all their doings. They should keep themselves aloof from unworthy motives, and be far removed above covetous designs; for rectitude, probity and righteousness are among the most potent means for attracting the grace of God and securing both the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people. Glory and honour for man are not to be found in fortunes and riches, least of all in those which have been unlawfully amassed through extortion, embezzlement and corruption practised at the expense of an exploited populace. Supreme honour, nobility and greatness in the human world, and true felicity in this life and the life to come--all consist in equity and uprightness, sanctity and detachment. If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision,

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seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fair-mindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Compilation on Trustworthiness*, number 56, pp. 15-16)

14. Those souls who are employed in government departments should approach their duties with entire detachment, integrity and independence of spirit, and with complete consecration and sanctity of purpose. Content with the wages they are receiving, they should see that they do not stain their fair character through acts of bribery and fraud. Were one of the friends in this day to misappropriate so much as a single penny, the sacred mantle of God's Cause would become sullied by his action and the shame of it would attach to the whole community. Heaven forbid! Nay, rather, the government and people should come to repose such trust in the Bahá'ís as to wish to commit all affairs of state throughout the provinces into the chaste, pure hands of God's well-beloved.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Compilation on Trustworthiness*, number 59, p. 17)

15. All government employees, whether of high or low rank, should, with perfect integrity, probity and rectitude, content themselves with the modest stipends and allowances that are theirs. They should keep their hands unsullied and preserve their fair name from blemish.... If a man deal faithlessly with a just government he shall have dealt faithlessly with God; and if he render it faithful service he shall have rendered that service to God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Compilation on Trustworthiness*, number 60, p. 17)

7. Application of Bahá'í teachings on economics

The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists of the application of spiritual principles to our present-day economic system.

(Shoghi Effendi)

1. O Son of Being! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Arabic *Hidden Words*, number 31)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 168-169)

3. O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your

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words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 137-138)

4. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 166)

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

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 35)

6. For everything, however, God has created a sign and symbol, and established standards and tests by which it may be known. The spiritually learned must be characterized by both inward and outward perfections; they must possess a good character, an enlightened nature, a pure intent, as well as intellectual power, brilliance and discernment, intuition, discretion and foresight, temperance, reverence, and a heartfelt fear of God. For an unlit candle, however great in diameter and tall, is no better than a barren palm tree or a pile of dead wood.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 33-34)

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7. Regarding your questions concerning the Bahá'í attitude on various economic problems, such as the problem of ownership, control and distribution of capital, and of other means of production, the problems of trusts and monopolies, and such economic experiments as social cooperatives; the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá do not provide specific and detailed solutions to all such economic questions which mostly pertain to the domain of technical economics, and as such do not concern directly the Cause. True, there are certain guiding principles in Bahá'í Sacred Writings on the subject of economics, but these do by no means cover the whole field of theoretical and applied economics, and are mostly intended to guide future Bahá'í economic writers and technicians to evolve an economic system which would function in full conformity with the spirit, and the exact provisions of the Cause on this and similar subjects. The International House of Justice will have, in consultation with economic experts, to assist in the formulation and evolution of the Bahá'í economic system of the future.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 10 June 1930)

8. ...the time has not yet come for any believer to bring about such a fundamental change in the economic structure of our society, however restricted may be the field for such an experiment. The economic teachings of the Cause, though well known in their main outline, have not as yet been sufficiently elaborated and systematized to allow anyone to make an exact and thorough application of them even on a restricted scale.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 22 May 1935)

9. As to your fourth question, Shoghi Effendi believes that it is preferable not to confuse the methods explained by the Master with present systems. They may have many

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resemblances but also many points of difference. Moreover, these general statements we have in the teachings have to be explained and applied by the House of Justice before we can really appreciate their significance.

(Shoghi Effendi. From a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer dated 21 October 1932)

10. The primary consideration is the spirit that has to permeate our economic life and this will gradually crystallize itself into definite institutions and principles that will help to bring about the ideal condition foretold by Bahá'u'lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 19)

11. There are practically no technical teachings on economics in the Cause, such as banking, the price system, and others. The Cause is not an economic system, nor its Founders be considered as having been technical economists. ...The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists of the application of spiritual principles to our present-day economic system. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Bahá'í economists in establishing such institutions which will adjust the economic relationships of the world...

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 25 January 1936)

12. Bahá'u'lláh did not bring a complete system of economics to the world.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 19)

13. As regards the activities of the economic committee of the National Spiritual Assembly; Shoghi Effendi fully sympathizes with the desire of some of the members to see the committee find ways and means to put into practice the economic teachings of the Cause, as explained in some of the recorded writings and sayings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master.

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But he believes that the time is not yet ripe for such activities. First, we have to study the economic teachings in the light of modern problems more thoroughly so that we may advocate what the Founders of the Faith say and not what we conjecture from their writings. There is a great difference between sounding a great general principle and finding its application to actual prevailing conditions.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 11 January 1933)

14. ...History, Economics or Sociology...cover subjects which our teachings cast an entirely new light upon.

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in *Scholarship*, p. 12)

15. The solution, then, to prevailing economic difficulties is to be sought as much in the application of spiritual principles as in the implementation of scientific methods and approaches.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 April 2010 to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

8. Humans are spiritual in nature

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

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. He it is who perceived a unique, a tempered, and a pervasive nature in things, bearing the closest likeness to the human spirit, and he discovered this nature to be distinct from the substance of things in their refined form.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 146)

2. This "mysterious and ethereal Being", the Manifestation of God, has a human nature which pertains to "the world of matter" and a spiritual nature "born of the substance of God Himself". He is also endowed with a "double station": The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself... The second station is the human station, exemplified by the following verses: "I am but a man like you." "Say, praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?"

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 66.)

3. Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of the substance of God Himself.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 66)

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4. O Son of Spirit! I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I moulded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Arabic Hidden Words*, number 13)

5. By nature, is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things. And these realities of things, though in the utmost diversity, are yet intimately connected one with the other. For these diverse realities, an all-unifying agency is needed that shall link them all one to the other. For instance, the various organs and members, the parts and elements, that constitute the body of man, though at variance, are yet all connected one with the other by that all-unifying agency known as the human soul, that causeth them to function in perfect harmony and with absolute regularity, thus making the continuation of life possible. The human body, however, is utterly unconscious of that all-unifying agency, and yet acteth with regularity and dischargeth its functions according to its will

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Tablet to August Forel*, p. 13)

6. When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all Creation; because man, being the culmination of all that went before and thus superior to all previous evolutions, contains all the lower world within himself. Illumined by the spirit through the instrumentality of the soul, man’s radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-point of Creation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 97)

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7. Know that there are two natures in man: the material and the spiritual. The material nature is inherited from Adam, while the spiritual nature is inherited from the Reality of the Word of God, which is the spirituality of Christ. The material nature is born of Adam, but the spiritual nature is born of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The material nature is the source of every imperfection, and the spiritual nature is the source of all perfection.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 132)

8. Man is intelligent, instinctively and consciously intelligent; nature is not. Man is fortified with memory; nature does not possess it. Man is the discoverer of the mysteries of nature; nature is not conscious of those mysteries herself. It is evident, therefore, that man is dual in aspect: as an animal he is subject to nature, but in his spiritual or conscious being he transcends the world of material existence.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 81)

9. Just as the animal is more noble than the vegetable and mineral, so man is superior to the animal. The animal is bereft of ideality -- that is to say, it is a captive of the world of nature and not in touch with that which lies within and beyond nature; it is without spiritual susceptibilities, deprived of the attractions of consciousness, unconscious of the world of God and incapable of deviating from the law of nature.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 240)

10. In man, there are two expressions: One is the expression of nature; the other, the expression of the spiritual realm. The world of nature is defective. Look at it clearly, casting aside all superstition and imagination. If you should leave a man uneducated and barbarous in the wilds of Africa, would there be any doubt about his remaining ignorant? God has

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never created an evil spirit; all such ideas and nomenclature are symbols expressing the mere human or earthly nature of man. It is an essential condition of the soil of earth that thorns, weeds and fruitless trees may grow from it. Relatively speaking, this is evil; it is simply the lower state and baser product of nature.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 294)

11. For everything, however, God has created a sign and symbol, and established standards and tests by which it may be known. The spiritually learned must be characterized by both inward and outward perfections; they must possess a good character, an enlightened nature, a pure intent, as well as intellectual power, brilliance and discernment, intuition, discretion and foresight, temperance, reverence, and a heartfelt fear of God. For an unlit candle, however great in diameter and tall, is no better than a barren palm tree or a pile of dead wood.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 33)

12. Know, O thou possessors of insight, that true spirituality is like unto a lake of clear water which reflects the divine.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 107)

13. I will specially request them to proclaim in their written representations to the authorities concerned their absolute repudiation of whatever ulterior motive or political design may be imputed to them by their malignant adversaries, and to reaffirm in unmistakable terms the purely humanitarian and spiritual nature of the work in which Bahá’ís in every land and of every race are unitedly engaged.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 163)

14. No wonder, therefore, that when, as a result of human perversity, the light of religion is quenched in men's hearts, and the divinely appointed Robe, designed to adorn the

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human temple, is deliberately discarded, a deplorable decline in the fortunes of humanity immediately sets in, bringing in its wake all the evils which a wayward soul is capable of revealing. The perversion of human nature, the degradation of human conduct, the corruption and dissolution of human institutions, reveal themselves, under such circumstances, in their worst and most revolting aspects. Human character is debased, confidence is shaken, the nerves of discipline are relaxed, the voice of human conscience is stilled, the sense of decency and shame is obscured, conceptions of duty, of solidarity, of reciprocity and loyalty are distorted, and the very feeling of peacefulness, of joy and of hope is gradually extinguished.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 186)

9. Bahá'í approach to economic questions is divine in nature

When the love of God is established, everything else will be realized. This is the true foundation of all economics.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá'í teachings, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized ... When the love of God is established, everything else will be realized. This is the true foundation of all economics. Reflect upon it. Endeavor to become the cause of the attraction of souls rather than to enforce minds. Manifest true economics to the people. Show what love is, what kindness is, what true severance is and generosity ... Economic questions will not attract hearts. The love of God alone will attract them. Economic questions are most interesting; but the power which moves, controls and attracts the hearts of men is the love of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 238-239)

2. Every business company should be established on divine principles.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in *Compilation on Trustworthiness* No. 51)

3. ‘All economic problems may be solved by the application of the Science of the Love of God’. That is to say: If the Rule

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called golden and treated as if it were leaden (Worse: For lead has its uses but so far as one may determine, the Golden Rule has been laid on a shelf whose dust is seldom disturbed)—if that Rule were actually applied to the world's economic problems, which if not solved bid fair to destroy us, and the love of God, the sort of love which makes a home life happy, were used as a scientific measurement to regulate our international and national affairs; to settle all relations between labor and capital, between rich and poor, to regulate all coinage and commerce, can there be any doubt that the results would be far more conducive to human welfare than our present policies have produced?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in *Portals of Freedom*, p. 156)

4. He (Bahá’u’lláh) as well as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 19)

5. Only those who have already recognized the supreme station of Bahá’u’lláh. only those whose hearts have been touched by His love, and have become familiar with the potency of His spirit, can adequately appreciate the value of this Divine Economy — His inestimable gift to mankind.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. pp. 23-24)

6. Who, contemplating the helplessness, the fears and miseries of humanity in this day, can any longer question the necessity for a fresh revelation of the quickening power of God's redemptive love and guidance? Who, witnessing on one hand the stupendous advance achieved in the realm of human knowledge, of power, of skill and inventiveness, and viewing on the other the unprecedented character of the sufferings that afflict, and the dangers that beset, present-day society, can be so blind as to doubt that the hour has at last

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struck for the advent of a new Revelation, for a restatement of the Divine Purpose, and for the consequent revival of those spiritual forces that have, at fixed intervals, rehabilitated the fortunes of human society? Does not the very operation of the world-unifying forces that are at work in this age necessitate that He Who is the Bearer of the Message of God in this day should not only reaffirm that self-same exalted standard of individual conduct inculcated by the Prophets gone before Him, but embody in His appeal, to all governments and peoples, the essentials of that social code, that Divine Economy, which must guide humanity's concerted efforts in establishing that all-embracing federation which is to signalize the advent of the Kingdom of God on this earth?

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 60-61)

7. By the statement 'the economic solution is divine in nature' is meant that religion alone can, in the last resort, bring in man's nature such a fundamental change as to enable him to adjust the economic relationships of society. It is only in this way that man can control the economic forces that threaten to disrupt the foundations of his existence, and thus assert his mastery over the forces of nature.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 26 December 1935)

8. ... it appears that the Guardian uses the term divine economy not as a reference to a specific system of economics, but to something broader and more general.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 4 June 2013)

10. True happiness and prosperity

Until all nations and peoples become united ... true progress, prosperity and lasting happiness will not be attained by man.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. GOD, the True One, testifieth and the Revealers of His names and attributes bear witness that Our sole purpose in raising the Call and in proclaiming His sublime Word is that the ear of the entire creation may, through the living waters of divine utterance, be purged from lying tales and become attuned to the holy, the glorious and exalted Word which hath issued forth from the repository of the knowledge of the Maker of the Heavens and the Creator of Names. Happy are they that judge with fairness.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 21)

2. Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men.

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

3. The American continent gives signs and evidences of very great advancement; its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far-reaching, and it will lead all nations spiritually. The flag of freedom and banner of liberty have been unfurled here, but the prosperity and

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advancement of a city, the happiness and greatness of a country depend upon its hearing and obeying the call of God. ('Abdu'l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 104)

4. Until all nations and peoples become united by the bonds of the Holy Spirit in this real fraternity, until national and international prejudices are effaced in the reality of this spiritual brotherhood, true progress, prosperity and lasting happiness will not be attained by man.

('Abdu'l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 142)

5. America has arisen to spread the teachings of peace, to increase the illumination of humankind and bestow happiness and prosperity upon the children of men. These are the principles and evidences of divine civilization. America is a noble nation, the standard-bearer of peace throughout the world, shedding light to all regions. Foreign nations are not untrammelled and free from intrigues and complications like the United States; therefore, they are not able to bring about universal harmony. But America - praise be to God! - is at peace with all the world and is worthy of raising the flag of brotherhood and international agreement. When this is done, the rest of the world will accept. All nations will join in adopting the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revealed more than fifty years ago. In His Epistles He asked the parliaments of the world to send their wisest and best men to an international world conference which should decide all questions between the peoples and establish universal peace. This would be the highest court of appeal, and the parliament of man so long dreamed of by poets and idealists would be realized. Its accomplishment would be more far-reaching than The Hague tribunal.

('Abdu'l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 388)

6. Bahá'u'lláh declares that all forms of prejudice among mankind must be abandoned and that until existing

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prejudices are entirely removed, the world of humanity will not and cannot attain peace, prosperity and composure.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 434)

7. The happiness and greatness, the rank and station, the pleasure and peace, of an individual have never consisted in his personal wealth, but rather in his excellent character, his high resolve, the breadth of his learning, and his ability to solve difficult problems.

We must now highly resolve to arise and lay hold of all those instrumentalities that promote the peace and well-being and happiness, the knowledge, culture and industry, the dignity, value and station, of the entire human race. Thus, through the restoring waters of pure intention and unselfish effort, the earth of human potentialities will blossom with its own latent excellence and flower into praiseworthy qualities, and bear and flourish until it comes to rival that rose garden of knowledge which belonged to our forefathers.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 4)

8. All the peoples of Europe, notwithstanding their vaunted civilization, sink and drown in this terrifying sea of passion and desire, and this is why all the phenomena of their culture come to nothing. Let no one wonder at this statement or deplore it. The primary purpose, the basic objective, in laying down powerful laws and setting up great principles and institutions dealing with every aspect of civilization, is human happiness; and human happiness consists only in drawing closer to Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race; and the supreme agencies for accomplishing these two objectives are the excellent qualities with which humanity has been endowed.

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A superficial culture, unsupported by a cultivated morality, is as “a confused medley of dreams,” and external lustre without inner perfection is “like a vapor in the desert which the thirsty dreameth to be water.” For results which would win the good pleasure of God and secure the peace and well-being of man, could never be fully achieved in a merely external civilization.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 60-61)

9. ...man’s supreme honor and real happiness lie in self-respect, in high resolves and noble purposes, in integrity and moral quality, in immaculacy of mind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 19)

10. The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 109)

11. O Thou, my Lord! Kindle the light of Thy love in every heart, breathe into men's souls the spirit of Thy knowledge, gladden their breasts with the verses of Thy oneness. Call Thou to life those who dwell in their tombs, warn Thou the prideful, make happiness world-wide, send down Thy crystal waters, and in the assemblage of manifest splendours, pass round that cup which is 'tempered at the camphor fountain. [Qur'an 76:5]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 254)

12. Two calls to success and prosperity are being raised from the heights of the happiness of mankind, awakening the

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slumbering, granting sight to the blind, causing the heedless to become mindful, bestowing hearing upon the deaf, unloosing the tongue of the mute and resuscitating the dead. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 282)

13. In this world we are influenced by two sentiments, Joy and Pain.

Joy gives wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. But when sadness visits us we become weak, our strength leaves us, our comprehension is dim and our intelligence veiled. The actualities of life seem to elude our grasp, the eyes of our spirits fail to discover the sacred mysteries, and we become even as dead beings.

There is no human being untouched by these two influences; but all the sorrow and the grief that exist come from the world of matter — the spiritual world bestows only the joy!

If we suffer it is the outcome of material things, and all the trials and troubles come from this world of illusion.

For instance, a merchant may lose his trade and depression ensues. A workman is dismissed and starvation stares him in the face. A farmer has a bad harvest, anxiety fills his mind. A man builds a house which is burnt to the ground and he is straightway homeless, ruined, and in despair.

All these examples are to show you that the trials which beset our every step, all our sorrow, pain, shame and grief, are born in the world of matter; whereas the spiritual Kingdom never causes sadness. A man living with his thoughts in this Kingdom knows perpetual joy. The ills all flesh is heir to do not pass him by, but they only touch the surface of his life, the depths are calm and serene.

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Today, humanity is bowed down with trouble, sorrow and grief, no one escapes; the world is wet with tears; but, thank God, the remedy is at our doors. Let us turn our hearts away from the world of matter and live in the spiritual world! It alone can give us freedom! If we are hemmed in by difficulties we have only to call upon God, and by His Great Mercy we shall be helped.

If sorrow and adversity visit us, let us turn our faces to the Kingdom and heavenly consolation will be outpoured.

If we are sick and in distress let us implore God's healing, and He will answer our prayer.

When our thoughts are filled with bitterness of this world, let us turn our eyes to the sweetness of God's compassion and He will send us heavenly calm! If we are imprisoned in the material world, our spirit can soar into the Heavens and we shall be free indeed!

When our days are drawing to a close let us think of the eternal worlds, and we shall be full of joy!

You see all round you proofs of the inadequacy of material things — how joy, comfort, peace and consolation are not to be found in the transitory things of the world. Is it not then foolishness to refuse to seek these treasures where they may be found? The doors of the spiritual Kingdom are open to all, and without is absolute darkness.

Thank God that you in this assembly have this knowledge, for in all the sorrows of life you can obtain supreme consolation. If your days on earth are numbered, you know that everlasting life awaits you. If material anxiety envelops you in a dark cloud, spiritual radiance lightens your path. Verily, those whose minds are illumined by the Spirit of the Most High have supreme consolation.

I myself was in prison forty years — one year alone would have been impossible to bear — nobody survived that imprisonment more than a year! But, thank God, during all those forty years I was supremely happy! Every day, on

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waking, it was like hearing good tidings, and every night infinite joy was mine. Spirituality was my comfort, and turning to God was my greatest joy. If this had not been so, do you think it possible that I could have lived through those forty years in prison?

Thus, spirituality is the greatest of God's gifts, and 'Life Everlasting' means 'Turning to God.' May you, one and all, increase daily in spirituality, may you be strengthened in all goodness, may you be helped more and more by the Divine consolation, be made free by the Holy Spirit of God, and may the power of the heavenly Kingdom live and work among you.

This is my earnest desire, and I pray to God to grant you this favour.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 110-113)

14. Until all nations and peoples become united by the bonds of the Holy Spirit in this real fraternity, until national and international prejudices are effaced in the reality of this spiritual brotherhood, true progress, prosperity and lasting happiness will not be attained by man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith* – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, p. 227)

15. ...readjustment of the social economic is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it insures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 240)

16. Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 288)

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17. In the contingent world there are many collective centers which are conducive to association and unity between the children of men. For example, patriotism is a collective center; nationalism is a collective center; identity of interests is a collective center; political alliance is a collective center; the union of ideals is a collective center, and the prosperity of the world of humanity is dependent upon the organization and promotion of the collective centers.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 419)

18. In the contingent world there are many collective centers which are conducive to association and unity between the children of men. For example, patriotism is a collective center; nationalism is a collective center; identity of interests is a collective center; political alliance is a collective center; the union of ideals is a collective center, and the prosperity of the world of humanity is dependent upon the organization and promotion of the collective centers.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 419)

19. Happiness consisteth of two kinds: physical and spiritual. The physical happiness is limited; its utmost duration is one day, one month, one year. It hath no result. Spiritual happiness is eternal and unfathomable. This kind of happiness appeareth in one’s soul with the love of God and suffereth one to attain to the virtues and perfections of the world of humanity. Therefore, endeavor as much as thou art able in order to illumine the lamp of thy heart by the light of love.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 673-674)

20. Know thou that there are two kinds of happiness, spiritual and material. As to material happiness, it never exists; nay, it is but imagination, an image reflected in mirrors, a specter and shadow. Consider the nature of

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material happiness. It is something which but slightly removes one's afflictions; yet the people imagine it to be joy, delight, exultation and blessing. All the material blessings, including food, drink, etc., tend only to allay thirst, hunger and fatigue. They bestow no delight on the mind nor pleasure on the soul; nay they furnish only the bodily wants. So, this kind of happiness has no real existence.

As to spiritual happiness, this is the true basis of the life of man, for life is created for happiness, not for sorrow; for pleasure, not for grief. Happiness is life; sorrow is death. Spiritual happiness is life eternal. This is a light which is not followed by darkness. This is an honor which is not followed by shame. This is a life that is not followed by death. This is an existence that is not followed by annihilation. This great blessing and precious gift is obtained by man only through the guidance of God...

This happiness is the fundamental basis from which man is created, worlds are originated, the contingent beings have existence and the world of God appears like unto the appearance of the sun at mid-day.

This happiness is but the love of God.

Were it not for this happiness the world of existence would not have been created.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Divine Art of Living*, pp. 17-18)

21. The honor and exaltation of every existing being depends upon causes and circumstances. The excellency, the adornment and the perfection of the earth is to be verdant and fertile through the bounty of the clouds of springtime. Plants grow; flowers and fragrant herbs spring up; fruit-bearing trees become full of blossoms and bring forth fresh and new fruit. Gardens become beautiful, and meadows adorned; mountains and plains are clad in a green robe, and gardens, fields, villages and cities are decorated. This is the prosperity of the mineral world.

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The height of exaltation and the perfection of the vegetable world is that a tree should grow on the bank of a stream of fresh water, that a gentle breeze should blow on it, that the warmth of the sun should shine on it, that a gardener should attend to its cultivation, and that day by day it should develop and yield fruit. But its real prosperity is to progress into the animal and human world, and replace that which has been exhausted in the bodies of animals and men.

The exaltation of the animal world is to possess perfect members, organs and powers, and to have all its needs supplied. This is its chief glory, its honor and exaltation. So the supreme happiness of an animal is to have possession of a green and fertile meadow, perfectly pure flowing water, and a lovely, verdant forest. If these things are provided for it, no greater prosperity can be imagined. For example, if a bird builds its nest in a green and fruitful forest, in a beautiful high place, upon a strong tree, and at the top of a lofty branch, and if it finds all its needs of seeds and water, this is its perfect prosperity.

But real prosperity for the animal consists in passing from the animal world to the human world, like the microscopic beings that, through the water and air, enter into man and are assimilated, and replace that which has been consumed in his body. This is the great honor and prosperity for the animal world; no greater honor can be conceived for it.

Therefore, it is evident and clear that this wealth, this comfort and this material abundance form the complete prosperity of minerals, vegetables and animals. No riches, wealth, comfort or ease of the material world is equal to the wealth of a bird; all the areas of these plains and mountains are its dwelling, and all the seeds and harvests are its food and wealth, and all the lands, villages, meadows, pastures, forests and wildernesses are its possessions. Now, which is the richer, this bird, or the most wealthy man? for no matter

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how many seeds it may take or bestow, its wealth does not decrease.

Then it is clear that the honor and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches. Material comforts are only a branch, but the root of the exaltation of man is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornments of his reality. These are the divine appearances, the heavenly bounties, the sublime emotions, the love and knowledge of God; universal wisdom, intellectual perception, scientific discoveries, justice, equity, truthfulness, benevolence, natural courage and innate fortitude; the respect for rights and the keeping of agreements and covenants; rectitude in all circumstances; serving the truth under all conditions; the sacrifice of one's life for the good of all people; kindness and esteem for all nations; obedience to the teachings of God; service in the Divine Kingdom; the guidance of the people, and the education of the nations and races. This is the prosperity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the world! This is eternal life and heavenly honor!

(Abdu'l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 88-90)

22. In Iran, spiritual and moral advancement, teaching activities, the creation of schools and clinics, the building of administrative institutions, and the encouragement of initiatives aimed at economic self-sufficiency and prosperity - all had been from an early stage inseparable features of one organically unified process of development. Now - in Africa, in Latin America, and parts of Asia -- the same challenges and opportunities had re-emerged.

(Universal House of Justice. *Century of Light*, p. 103)

23. The relative prosperity enjoyed by the Bahá'ís of Iran in the past can be attributed to a culture that lays great emphasis on education and learning and which recognizes as

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an act of worship the assiduous and honest pursuit of a useful trade or profession, undertaken in the spirit of service.
(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 April 2010, to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

11. Uplifting the betterment of the world

We must all be in the greatest happiness and comfort.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth... It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 250)

2. O people of God! Be not occupied with yourselves. Be intent on the betterment of the world and the training of nations.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 133)

3. O son of man! If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 64)

4. 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 93-94)

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5. Great is the station of men. Great must also be his endeavours for the rehabilitation of the world and the well-being of nations.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 174)

6. This Wronged One testifieth that the purpose for which mortal man have, from utter nothingness, stepped into the realm of being, is that they may work for the betterment of the world and live together in concord and harmony.

(Bahá'u'lláh. A Compilation on *Trustworthiness*, p. 5)

7. We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 31)

8. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Cited Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 1)

9. God is kind to all. The good pleasure of God consists in the welfare of all the individual members of mankind.

The purport is this that we are all inhabiting one globe of earth. In reality we are one family and each one of us is a member of this family. We must all be in the greatest happiness and comfort...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 41-42)

10. We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts

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in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, p. 43)

11. In every dispensation, there hath been the commandment of fellowship and love, but it was a commandment limited to the community of those in mutual agreement, not to the dissident foe. In this wondrous age, however, praised be God, the commandments of God are not delimited, not restricted to any one group of people, rather have all the friends been commanded to show forth fellowship and love, consideration and generosity and loving kindness to every community on earth. Now must the lovers of God arise to carry out these instructions of His: Let them be kindly fathers to the children of the human race, and compassionate brothers to the youth, and self-denying offspring to those bent with years. The meaning of this is that ye must show forth tenderness and love to every human being, even to your enemies, and welcome them all with unalloyed friendship, good cheer, and loving-kindness.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 20-21)

12. Regarding the economic prejudice, it is apparent that whenever the ties between nations become strengthened and the exchange of commodities accelerated, and any economic principle is established in one country, it will ultimately affect the other countries and universal benefits will result.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp.299-300)

13. If long-cherished ideals and time-honoured institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten

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doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 42)

14. As we survey the Bahá'í world, we see a greatly strengthened community, internally sound and notably reinforced. Its achievements in reaching the general public, governments and organizations of civil society and in winning trust in all these circles are striking. Agencies specialized in external affairs, following a well-defined strategy, have broadened the range of the Faith's influence nationally and internationally, and projects of social and economic development, which seek the spiritual and material upliftment of entire communities, are penetrating society at the grassroots.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 26 November 1999)

12. Material and spiritual coherence

Only when material and spiritual civilization are linked and coordinated will happiness be assured.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus, warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful, ye cannot, if ye be of them who judge fairly. The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty. What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Erelong, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead.
(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 40)

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2. O Son of My Handmaid! Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, "In truth ye are the poor," and the holy words, "God is the all-possessing," shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover's heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 51)

3. How sad if any man were, in this Day, to rest his heart on the transitory things of this world.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 316)

4. The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality. Set not your affections upon it ... Verily I say, the world is like the vapor in a desert, which the thirsty dreameth to be water and striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 328)

5. The honor of man is through the attainment of the knowledge of God; his happiness is from the love of God; his joy is in the glad tidings of God; his greatness is dependent upon his servitude to God, The highest development of man is his entrance into the divine Kingdom, and the outcome of this human existence is the nucleus and essence of eternal life. If man is bereft of the divine bestowals and if his enjoyments and happiness are restricted to his material inclinations, what distinction or difference is there between the animal and himself? In fact, the animal's happiness is

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greater, for its wants are fewer and its means of livelihood easier to acquire. Although it is necessary for man to strive for material needs and comforts, his real need is the acquisition of the bounties of God. If he is bereft of divine bounties, spiritual susceptibilities and heavenly glad tidings, the life of man in this world has not yielded any worthy fruit. While possessing physical life, he should lay hold of the life spiritual, and together with bodily comforts and happiness, he should enjoy divine pleasures and content. Then is man worthy of the title man; then will he be after the image and likeness of God, for the image of the Merciful consists of the attributes of the heavenly Kingdom. If no fruits of the Kingdom appear in the garden of his soul, man is not in the image and likeness of God, but if those fruits are forthcoming, he becomes the recipient of ideal bestowals and is enkindled with the fire of the love of God. If his morals become spiritual in character, his aspirations heavenly and his actions conformable to the will of God, man has attained the image and likeness of his Creator; otherwise, he is the image and likeness of Satan. Therefore, Christ hath said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Divine Art of Living*, pp. 16-17)

6. Until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfection, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained. For although, on the one hand, material achievements and the development of the physical world produce prosperity, which exquisitely manifests its intended aims, on the other hand dangers, severe calamities and violent afflictions are imminent.

Consequently, when you lookest at the orderly pattern of kingdoms, cities and villages ... thou wouldst conclude that

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civilization conduceth to the happiness and the progress of the human world. Yet shouldst thou turn thine eye to the discovery of destructive and infernal machines, to the development of forces of demolition and the invention of fiery implements, which uproot the tree of life, it would become evident and manifest unto thee that civilization is conjoined with barbarism. Progress and barbarism go hand in hand, unless material civilization be confirmed by Divine Guidance, by the revelations of the All-Merciful and by godly virtues, and be reinforced by spiritual conduct, by the ideals of the Kingdom and by the outpourings of the Realm of Might.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 283-284)

7. For man two wings are necessary. One wing is physical power and material civilization; the other is spiritual power and divine civilization. With one wing only, flight is impossible. Two wings are essential. Therefore, no matter how much material civilization advances, it cannot attain to perfection except through the uplift of spiritual civilization.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 12)

8. Man has two powers; and his development, two aspects. One power is connected with the material world, and by it he is capable of material advancement. The other power is spiritual, and through its development his inner, potential nature is awakened. These powers are like two wings. Both must be developed, for flight is impossible with one wing. Praise be to God! Material advancement has been evident in the world, but there is need of spiritual advancement in like proportion. We must strive unceasingly and without rest to accomplish the development of the spiritual nature in man, and endeavor with tireless energy to advance humanity toward the nobility of its true and intended station. For the body of man is accidental; it is of no importance. The time of

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its disintegration will inevitably come. But the spirit of man is essential and, therefore, eternal. It is a divine bounty. It is the effulgence of the Sun of Reality and, therefore, of greater importance than the physical body.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 60)

9. Material civilization is likened to the body, whereas divine civilization is the spirit in that body. A body not manifesting the spirit is dead; a fruitless tree is worthless.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 104)

10. No matter how far the material world advances, it cannot establish the happiness of mankind. Only when material and spiritual civilization are linked and coordinated will happiness be assured. Then material civilization will not contribute its energies to the forces of evil in destroying the oneness of humanity, for in material civilization good and evil advance together and maintain the same pace. For example, consider the material progress of man in the last decade. Schools and colleges, hospitals, philanthropic institutions, scientific academies and temples of philosophy have been founded, but hand in hand with these evidences of development, the invention and production of means and weapons for human destruction have correspondingly increased...

All this is the outcome of material civilization; therefore, although material advancement furthers good purposes in life, at the same time it serves evil ends ... If the moral precepts and foundations of divine civilization become united with the material advancement of man, there is no doubt that the happiness of the human world will be attained and that from every direction the glad tidings of peace upon earth will be announced. Then humankind will achieve extraordinary progress, the sphere of human intelligence will be immeasurably enlarged, wonderful inventions will appear,

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and the spirit of God will reveal itself; all men will consort in joy and fragrance, and eternal life will be conferred upon the children of the Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 109-110)

11. In the western world material civilization has attained the highest point of development, but divine civilization was founded in the land of the East. The East must acquire material civilization from the West, and the West must receive spiritual civilization from the East. This will establish a mutual bond. When these two come together, the world of humanity will present a glorious aspect, and extra ordinary progress will be achieved. This is clear and evident; no proof is needed. The degree of material civilization in the Occident cannot be denied; nor can anyone fail to confirm the spiritual civilization of the Orient, for all the divine foundations of human uplift have appeared in the East. This, likewise, is clear and evident. Therefore, you must assist the East in order that it may attain material progress. The East must, likewise, promulgate the principles of spiritual civilization in the western world. By this commingling and union the human race will attain the highest degree of prosperity and development. Material civilization alone is not sufficient and will not prove productive. The physical happiness of material conditions was allotted to the animal. Consider how the animal has attained the fullest degree of physical felicity. A bird perches upon the loftiest branch and builds there its nest with consummate beauty and skill. All the grains and seeds of the meadows are its wealth and food; all the fresh water of mountain springs and rivers of the plain are for its enjoyment. Truly, this is the acme of material happiness, to which even a human creature cannot attain. This is the honor of the animal kingdom. But the honor of the human kingdom is the attainment of spiritual happiness in the human world, the acquisition of the knowledge and love of God. The honor

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allotted to man is the acquisition of the supreme virtues of the human world. This is his real happiness and felicity. But if material happiness and spiritual felicity be conjoined, it will be “delight upon delight” as the Arabs say. ... We pray that God will unite the East and the West in order that these two civilizations may be exchanged and mutually enjoyed. I am sure it will come to pass, for this is the radiant century. This is an age for the outpouring of divine mercy upon the exigency of this new century — the unity of the East and the West. It will surely be accomplished.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 165-166)

12. The world of humanity cannot advance through mere physical powers and intellectual attainments; nay, rather, the Holy Spirit is essential. The divine Father must assist the human world to attain maturity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 182)

13. No matter how much the world of humanity advances in material civilization, it is nevertheless in need of the spiritual development mentioned in the Gospel ...

The material must be correlated with the spiritual. The material may be likened to the body, but divine virtues are the breathings of the Holy Spirit itself. The body without spirit is not capable of real accomplishment. Although it may be in the utmost condition of beauty and excellence, it is, nevertheless, in need of the spirit. The chimney of the lamp ... is in need of the light. Without the light, the lamp or candle is not illuminating. Without the spirit, the body is not productive.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 205)

14. Material development may be likened to the glass of a lamp, whereas divine virtues and spiritual susceptibilities are the light within the glass. The lamp chimney is worthless

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without the light; likewise, man in his material condition requires the radiance and vivification of the divine graces and merciful attributes.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 288)

15. From the time of the creation of Adam to this day there have been two pathways in the world of humanity; one the natural or materialistic, the other the religious or spiritual. The pathway of nature is the pathway of the animal realm. The animal acts in accordance with the requirements of nature, follows its own instincts and desires. Whatever its impulses and proclivities may be it has the liberty to gratify them; yet it is a captive of nature. It cannot deviate in the least degree from the road nature has established. It is utterly minus spiritual susceptibilities, ignorant of divine religion and without knowledge of the Kingdom of God. The animal possesses no power of ideation or conscious intelligence; it is a captive of the senses and deprived of that which lies beyond them. It is subject to what the eye sees, the ear hears, the nostrils sense, the taste detects and touch reveals. These sensations are acceptable and sufficient for the animal. But that which is beyond the range of the senses, that realm of phenomena through which the conscious pathway to the Kingdom of God leads, the world of spiritual susceptibilities and divine religion, of these the animal is completely unaware, for in its highest station it is a captive of nature.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 68)

16. Although material civilization is one of the means for the progress of the world of mankind, yet until it becomes combined with Divine civilization, the desired result, which is the felicity of mankind, will not be attained.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 289)

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17. In these days the East is in need of material progress and the West is in want of a spiritual idea. It would be well for the West to turn to the East for illumination, and to give in exchange its scientific knowledge. There must be this interchange of gifts. The East and the West must unite to give to each other what is lacking. This union will bring about a true civilization, where the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material.

Receiving thus the one from the other the greatest harmony will prevail, all people will be united, a state of great perfection will be attained, there will be a firm cementing, and this world will become a shining mirror for the reflection of the attributes of God.

We all, the Eastern with the Western nations, must strive day and night with heart and soul to achieve this high ideal, to cement the unity between all the nations of the earth. Every heart will then be refreshed, all eyes will be opened, the most wonderful power will be given, the happiness of humanity will be assured.

... This will be the paradise which is to come on earth, when all mankind will be gathered together under the tent of unity in the Kingdom of Glory.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 8-9)

18. In man there are two natures; his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his Divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature. Every good habit, every noble quality belongs to man's spiritual nature, whereas all his imperfections and

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sinful actions are born of his material nature. If a man's Divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 60)

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

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

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

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

When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all Creation; because man, being the culmination of all that went before and thus superior to all previous evolutions, contains all the lower world within himself. Illumined by the spirit through the instrumentality of the soul, man's radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-point of Creation.

But on the other hand, when man does not open his mind and heart to the blessing of the spirit, but turns his soul towards the material side, towards the bodily part of his nature, then is he fallen from his high place and he becomes inferior to the inhabitants of the lower animal kingdom. In this case the man is in a sorry plight! For if the spiritual qualities of the soul, open to the breath of the Divine Spirit, are never used, they become atrophied, enfeebled, and at last incapable; whilst the soul's material qualities alone being exercised, they become terribly powerful -- and the unhappy, misguided man, becomes more savage, more unjust, more vile, more cruel, more malevolent than the lower animals themselves. All his aspirations and desires being

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strengthened by the lower side of the soul's nature, he becomes more and more brutal, until his whole being is in no way superior to that of the beasts that perish. Men such as this, plan to work evil, to hurt and to destroy; they are entirely without the spirit of Divine compassion, for the celestial quality of the soul has been dominated by that of the material. If, on the contrary, the spiritual nature of the soul has been so strengthened that it holds the material side in subjection, then does the man approach the Divine; his humanity becomes so glorified that the virtues of the Celestial Assembly are manifested in him; he radiates the Mercy of God, he stimulates the spiritual progress of mankind, for he becomes a lamp to show light on their path.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 97)

20. Material progress alone does not tend to uplift man. On the contrary, the more he becomes immersed in material progress, the more does his spirituality become obscured.

... Material progress and spiritual progress are two very different things, and that only if material progress goes hand in hand with spirituality can any real progress come about.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 107)

22. Reflect on the divine forces. What has assembled us together? It is not a material but a spiritual force which has created this bond between our hearts, this attraction and affection for one another, - a power stronger than reason, a power which founds nations, creates human unity and makes us renounce the world to discover sciences and organize laws which work through all creatures. Man, the victim of a mosquito, by his spiritual intelligence is conqueror, for by spirit he is completed; he stands upright and gives well-being to humanity. We must care for man’s two natures; for as the material man makes certain demands for food and raiment

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and if not looked after suffers, even so his spiritual reality suffers without care. This is why the divine messengers come to the rescue -- to care for the reality, that man's thoughts may unfold and his aims become realized, that he may inherit a new field of progress, for the spiritual side should be cared for as much as the corporeal; the help that comes is through the resuscitating breath of the Holy Spirit.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Divine Philosophy*, p. 95)

22. When the material world and the divine world are well correlated, when the hearts become heavenly and the aspirations pure, perfect connection shall take place. Then shall this power produce a perfect manifestation. Physical and spiritual diseases will then receive absolute healing.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. vol. II, p. 309)

23. It is indeed a good and praiseworthy thing to progress materially, but in so doing, let us not neglect the more important spiritual progress, and close our eyes to the Divine light shining in our midst.

Only by improving spiritually as well as materially can we make any real progress and become perfect beings. It was in order to bring this spiritual life and light into the world that all the great Teachers have appeared. They came so that the Sun of Truth might be manifested, and shine in the hearts of men, and that through its wondrous power men might attain unto Everlasting Light.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 63)

24. A good Bahá'í, therefore, is the one who so arranges his life as to devote time both to his material needs and also to the service of the Cause.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 21 February 1933)

25. And as the progress and execution of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of

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absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of Local as well as National Spiritual Assemblies, a Bahá'í Fund be established.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 12 March 1933)

26. Every Bahá'í, no matter how poor, must realize what a grave responsibility he has to shoulder in this connection, and should have confidence that his spiritual progress as a believer in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh will largely depend upon the measure in which he proves, in deeds, his readiness to support materially the Divine Institutions of His Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 17 July 1937)

27. The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and the ultimate goal of His Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth.

(Universal House of Justice. Message dated 20 October 1983)

13. The spirit of cooperation

Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. As preordained by the Fountainhead of Creation, the temple of the world hath been fashioned after the image and likeness of the human body. In fact each mirroreth forth the image of the other, wert thou but to observe with discerning eyes. By this is meant that even as the human body in this world which is outwardly composed of different limbs and organs, is in reality a closely integrated, coherent entity, similarly the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together.

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.

Consider for instance how one group of created things constituteth the vegetable kingdom, and another the animal kingdom. Each of these two maketh use of certain elements in the air on which its own life dependeth, while each increaseth the quantity of such elements as are essential for the life of the other. In other words, the growth and

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development of the vegetable world is impossible without the existence of the animal kingdom, and the maintenance of animal life is inconceivable without the cooperation of the vegetable kingdom. Of like kind are the relationships that exist among all created things. Hence it was stated that cooperation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.

In surveying the vast range of creation thou shalt perceive that the higher a kingdom of created things is on the arc of ascent, the more conspicuous are the signs and evidences of the truth that cooperation and reciprocity at the level of a higher order are greater than those that exist at the level of a lower order. For example, the evident signs of this fundamental reality are more discernible in the vegetable kingdom than in the mineral, and still more manifest in the animal world than in the vegetable.

And thus when contemplating the human world thou beholdest this wondrous phenomenon shining resplendent from all sides with the utmost perfection, inasmuch as in this station acts of cooperation, mutual assistance and reciprocity are not confined to the body and to things that pertain to the material world, but for all conditions, whether physical or spiritual, such as those related to minds, thoughts, opinions, manners, customs, attitudes, understandings, feelings or other human susceptibilities. In all these thou shouldst find these binding relationships securely established. The more this interrelationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success.

Now consider, if among the people who are merely the manifestations of the world of being this significant matter is of such importance, how much greater must be the

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spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance among those who are the essences of the world of creation, who have sought the sheltering shadow of the heavenly Tree, and are favoured by the manifestations of divine grace; and how the evidences of this spirit should, through their earnest endeavour, their fellowship and concord, become manifest in every sphere of their inner and outer lives, in the realm of the spirit and divine mysteries and in all things related to this world and the next. Thus, there can be no doubt that they must be willing even to offer up their lives for each other.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu’lláh*, pp. 22-23)

2. O ye Friends of the East and the West!

One of the greatest foundations of the religion of God, the significance of the Word of God and the duty of the believers of God is mutual assistance and cooperation. For the world of humanity, nay, rather, all the infinite beings exist by this law of mutual action and helpfulness. Should this law of joint interchange of forces be removed from the arena of life, the existence would be entirely destroyed.

When we ponder deeply upon the connection and interdependence of beings, we clearly realize that the life of every being draws benefit and sustenance from all the other innumerable existences. This mutual helpfulness is realized either directly or through mediation, and if, for the twinkling of an eye, this confirmation and assistance does not descend upon the living being, that one will become non-existent, for all the existing things are linked together and draw help from each other. Therefore, the greatest foundation of the world of existence is this cooperation and mutuality.

Liken the world of existence to the temple of man. All the limbs and organs of the human body assist each other; therefore, life continues. When, in this wonderful organism, there is a disconnection, life is changed into death and the parts of the body disintegrate. Likewise, among the parts of

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existence, there is a wonderful connection and interchange of forces, which is the cause of the life of the world and the continuation of these countless phenomena....

From this illustration, one can see the base of life is this mutual aid and helpfulness; and the cause of destruction and non-existence would be the interruption of this mutual assistance.

The more the world aspires to civilization, the more this most important matter of cooperation and assistance becomes manifest. Therefore, in the world of humanity, one sees this matter of helpfulness attain to a high degree of efficiency; so much so, that the continuance of humanity entirely depends upon this interrelation. The believers of God must especially fortify the foundation of this reality among themselves, so that all may help each other under all circumstances, whether in the degree of truth and significances or in the stations of this world of matter and, especially, in founding public institutions which shall benefit all the people, and, still more, the founding of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, which is the greatest of the divine foundations.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Star of the West*, vol. 6, number 17, pp. 138-139)

3. Human brotherhood and dependence exist because mutual helpfulness and cooperation are the two necessary principles underlying human welfare.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, p. 14)

4. It seems as though all creatures can exist singly and alone. For example, a tree can exist solitary and alone on a given prairie or in a valley or on the mountainside. An animal upon a mountain or a bird soaring in the air might live a solitary life. They are not in need of cooperation or solidarity. Such animated beings enjoy the greatest comfort and happiness in their respective solitary lives.

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On the contrary, man cannot live singly and alone. He is in need of continuous cooperation and mutual help. For example, a man living alone in the wilderness will eventually starve. He can never, singly and alone, provide himself with all the necessities of existence. Therefore, he is in need of cooperation and reciprocity.

... Regarding reciprocity and cooperation: each member of the body politic should live in the utmost comfort and welfare because each individual member of humanity is a member of the body politic and if one member of the members be in distress or be afflicted with some disease all the other members must necessarily suffer. For example, a member of the human organism is the eye. If the eye should be affected that affliction would affect the whole nervous system. Hence, if a member of the body politic becomes afflicted, in reality, from the standpoint of sympathetic connection, all will share that affliction since this (one afflicted) is a member of the group of members, a part of the whole. Is it possible for one member or part to be in distress and the other members to be at ease? It is impossible! Hence God has desired that in the body politic of humanity each one shall enjoy perfect welfare and comfort.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 38-39)

5. There is brotherhood natal in mankind because all are elements of one human society subject to the necessity of agreement and cooperation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 129)

6. 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 tranquility, they are secure, their position is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family but addeth to its

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stature and its lasting honour, as day succeedeth day. And if we widen out the sphere of unity a little to include the inhabitants of a village who seek to be loving and united, who associate with and are kind to one another, what great advances they will be seen to make, how secure and protected they will be. Then let us widen out the sphere a little more, let us take the inhabitants of a city, all of them together: if they establish the strongest bonds of unity among themselves, how far they will progress, even in a brief period and what power they will exert. And if the sphere of unity be still further widened out, that is, if the inhabitants of a whole country develop peaceable hearts, and if with all their hearts and souls they yearn to cooperate with one another and to live in unity, and if they become kind and loving to one another, that country will achieve undying joy and lasting glory. Peace will it have, and plenty, and vast wealth.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 279)

7. All development and progress are fruits of the lights of virtue, cooperation and concord.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 288)

8. You should not attach much importance to your numerical strength but should always try to foster among you the spirit of unity, of cooperation and of selfless service. For these alone constitute the true standard according to which your activities should be judged and estimated.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 10 August 1933)

9. ‘Regard the world as the human body,’ wrote Bahá’u’lláh to Queen Victoria. We can surely regard the Bahá’í world, the army of God, in the same way. In the human body, every cell, every organ, every nerve has its part to play. When all do so the body is healthy, vigorous, radiant, ready for every call made upon it. No cell, however humble,

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lives apart from the body, whether in serving it or receiving from it. This is true of the body of mankind in which God 'has endowed each humble being with ability and talent,' and is supremely true of the body of the Bahá'í world community, for this body is already an organism, united in its aspirations, unified in its methods, seeking assistance and confirmation from the same Source, and illumined with the conscious knowledge of its unity. Therefore, in this organic, divinely guided, blessed, and illumined body the participation of every believer is of the utmost importance, and is a source of power and vitality as yet unknown to us. For extensive and deep as has been the sharing in the glorious work of the Cause, who would claim that every single believer has succeeded in finding his or her fullest satisfaction in the life of the Cause? The Bahá'í world community, growing like a healthy new body, develops new cells, new organs, new functions and powers as it presses on to its maturity, when every soul, living for the cause of God, will receive from that Cause, health, assurance, and the overflowing bounties of Bahá'u'lláh which are diffused through His divinely ordained Order.

...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 together, 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.

(Universal House of Justice. *Wellspring of Guidance*, pp. 37-39)

10. The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its entrenched pattern of conflict, can change to a world in which harmony and cooperation will prevail. (Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 13)

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11. The source of the optimism we feel is a vision transcending the cessation of war and the creation of agencies of international cooperation.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 18)

12. We anticipate a time when competition among the nations may be a phenomenon chiefly witnessed in the sporting arena, whereas interactions on the global stage will be dominated by cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual support. We pray that this present occasion will redound to the honour of the great nation of Brazil as hosts and that the event will inspire not only passing fellowship but lasting solidarity among all who participate and the countless millions who spectate.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 6 June 2014 to Her Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil)

14. The aspect of competition

*Vie ye with each other in the service of God
and of His Cause.*

Bahá'u'lláh

1. Consider that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'an exalted is His Word: "Some of them injure themselves through evil deeds, others follow a middle course, and others vie with each other in charitable works" Indeed any benefits arising from praiseworthy deeds shall fall to the individuals that compete with each other in benevolent works...

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, p. 13)

2. Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause. This is indeed what profiteth you in this world, and in that which is to come...

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in the *Advent of Devine Justice*, p. 83)

3. Help them through Thy strengthening grace, I beseech Thee, O my God, to suffer patiently in their love for thee, and unveil to their eyes what Thou hast decreed for them behind the Tabernacle of Thine unfailing protection, so that they may rush forward to meet what is preordained for them in Thy path, and may vie in hasting after tribulation in their love towards Thee...

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 158-159)

4. It is incumbent upon Bahá'í children to surpass other children in the acquisition of sciences and arts, for they have

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been cradled in the grace of God. Whatever other children learn in a year, let Bahá'í children 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 attainments. 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*. p. 141)

5. 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*. p. 150)

6. I hope that while you are studying in this college you may so excel all other students in the various branches of knowledge taught therein that all of them may testify that the Bahá'í students have another power, are inspired with another effort, are imbued with a nobler ambition, are stimulated by higher motives and make wider and deeper exertions than others. If you do not surpass the others, then what distinction will there remain for you? Therefore, you must strive to be superior to them, so that everyone may bear testimony to this fact. You are now like the tender plants that are trained according to the knowledge and wisdom of the gardener. From now on, you must strive to beautify the moral aspect of your lives. Advise one another with utmost consideration, characterize yourselves with divine ideals.

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(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Star of the West*, vol. IX, number 9, pp. 98-99)

7. Spiritual Competition galvanizing organized followers Bahá’u’lláh East West waxes keener as first Bahá’í century speeds to close. (Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to America*, p. 53)

8. There is no time to lose. The newly launched Plan demands a vigilance, an expenditure of effort and resources on a scale unprecedented in Indian Bahá’í history. Bahá’í communities in East and West, embarked on a similar Crusade, are vying with one another and with your Assembly in the world-wide field of Bahá’í pioneering. The glory of the prizes to be won, the benefits that will accrue to all participants are unimaginable...

(Shoghi Effendi. *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 159)

(Note: Bahá’ís who leave their hometown or country to reside elsewhere for the purpose of serving humanity and teaching the Bahá’í Faith.)

9. I earnestly appeal to all Bahá’í communities, and in particular to their national elected representatives in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Australia to brace themselves and vie with one another in emulating the example of their African sister communities ranking among the youngest in the Bahá’í world...

(Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to the Bahá’í World 1950-1957*, p. 73)

10. In the pacific area, where Bahá’í exploits bid fair to outshine the feats achieved in any other ocean, and indeed in every continent of the globe, now competing for the palm of victory with the African continent itself, preliminary measures have been undertaken for the formation of no less than three of the thirteen national and regional spiritual assemblies which are to be established in the course of this year’s Ridván festivities...

(Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to the Bahá’í World 1950-1957*, p. 111)

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(Note: Ridván. In Bahá'í terminology the word denotes both "garden", and "paradise"; however, it has also been used to denote God's good-pleasure and His divine acceptance. The Ridván Festival, the holiest and most significant of all Bahá'í festivals, commemorates Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His mission to His companions in the Garden of Ridván in Baghdad in 1863. It is a twelve-day period celebrated annually, 21 April - 2 May. It is also called the Most Great Festival. During each Ridván Festival Local and National Spiritual Assemblies are elected, and, once every five years, the Universal House of Justice is elected.)

(Reference: Jonal Winters (2010). Glossary of Bahá'í terms. Cited in <https://bahai-library.com/winters_bahai_glossary>)

11. The remaining sister National Assemblies are now vying in a spiritual race to complete assignments in their respective continents.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950-1957*, p. 163)

12. Both at home and in distant outposts of the Empire, the opposition which those responsible for its development and consolidation will encounter from those in authority, whether civil or ecclesiastic, will progressively hamper their efforts. The competition from its own sister communities, in various regions of the globe and in the course of the systematic prosecution of the same world-embracing task will, in the meantime, grow keener.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 339-340)

13. It is with deep concern indeed that he has learned of the difficulties you have encountered in your business, and he was particularly grieved to hear of the bitter competition you are meeting from... who seem determined to ruin and force you out of business, despite the fact that you have shown them kindness, and refused to deal with them harshly. Though the Guardian would advise that you continue keeping such a true Bahá'í attitude of forbearance, he wishes you at the same time not to give way, and not to allow any threat on their part to discourage or demoralize you. However unethical the methods they may employ, it should be your firm conviction that such malicious devices cannot in

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the long run succeed, and that the most effective way of counteracting them is for you to maintain unreservedly the one true standard of business conduct inculcated in the Teachings.

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in a Compilation on *Trustworthiness*, p. 16)

14. The Indian believers have a great opportunity to compete with both the American and British Bahá'ís in pioneer services; they already have a record to be proud of, and are first among the countries of the East in the record they hold of achievements in this field. He hopes they will go on from victory to victory, and vindicate the high hopes he cherishes for their future.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 119)

15. When competition is a striving for excellence, it becomes a challenge. For example, in study, sport, the promotion of courage, endurance and so on, the individual's endeavour can lead to personal development and is praiseworthy. If, however, the advantage is won by causing direct loss to others, such competition produces negative results and is undesirable. To assist you in your study of this subject and as you consider the excerpts included in the compilation on Vying in Service the House of Justice draws your attention to the following passage in *The Priceless Pearl*:

The example set through the achievements of the first Seven Year Plan inspired other communities to dare greatly. The increasing awareness of the glorious possibilities of service opening before the Bahá'í world in the second century of its own era was constantly fanned into flame by the Guardian's messages to various National Assemblies. He frequently Quoted Bahá'u'lláh's admonition "Vie ye with each other in the service of God and of His Cause" and openly encouraged a competitive spirit in its noblest form. His use of statistics was one example of the way he did this, his own

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words another: ‘Spiritual competition’, he cabled America in 1941, ‘galvanizing organized followers Bahá’u’lláh Fast West waxes keener as first Bahá’í Century speeds to its close. ‘Still more illuminating was what followed for he acclaimed this as a sign of Bahá’í solidarity in the five continents of the globe – like the horses of a Roman chariot, each trying to get its neck forward by all pulling together. It would be lacking in respect to say he called for bids – but he never hesitated to tell his warriors there was a golden fleece to be won; who would get to it first? No doubt it was all divinely inspired, but it was also warm and human, vibrant and stimulating!

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 3 June 1987)

15. The interdependence of peoples and nations

*The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny.
The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the
earth...is already an accomplished fact.*

Shoghi Effendi

1. Reflect upon the inner realities of the universe, the secret wisdoms involved, the enigmas, the interrelationships, the rules that govern all. For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 157)

2. All the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 39)

3. It would be well for the West to turn to the East for illumination, and to give in exchange its scientific knowledge ... The East and the West must unite to give to each other what is lacking. This union will bring about a true civilization.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 8-9)

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4. The races of mankind are not isolated as in former days. Now, in order to be in close relationship with all countries it is necessary to be able to speak their tongues. A universal language would make intercourse possible with every nation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 161)

5. The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny. The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth, whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 122)

6. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 43)

7. It represents the consummation of human evolution—an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 43)

8. A mechanism of world intercommunication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization... A world language ... A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal

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system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 203)

9. With the simultaneous development of communications at the speed of light and transportation at the speed of sound, the world has contracted into a mere neighbourhood in which people are instantly aware of each other's affairs and have immediate access to each other.

(Universal House of Justice. Worldwide Satellite Broadcast, 26 November 1992)

16. Universal and compulsory education

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 therefrom.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction if he be wealthy and, if not, the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My glory, My loving-kindness, My mercy, that have compassed the world.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 48)

2. It is permissible to study sciences and arts, but such sciences as are useful and would redound to the progress and advancement of the people.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 26)

3. 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 acquired 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. Unto

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this beareth witness the Mother Book on the day of His return. Happy are those possessed of a hearing ear. 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*. pp. 51-52)

4. That which hath streamed forth from the Most Exalted Pen is conducive to the glory, the advancement and education of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Indeed it is the sovereign remedy for every disease, could they but comprehend and perceive it.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 73)

5. The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 169)

6. Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education 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 therefrom.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 259-260)

7. Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree had ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for

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he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá'í Education*, p. 3)

8. The purpose of learning should be the promotion of the welfare of the people, and this can be achieved through crafts. It hath been revealed and is now repeated that the true worth of artists and craftsmen should be appreciated, for they advance the affairs of mankind. Just as the foundations of religion are made firm through the Law of God, the means of livelihood depend upon those who are engaged in arts and crafts. True learning is that which is conducive to the well-being of the world, not to pride and self-conceit, or to tyranny, violence and pillage.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá'í Education*, p. 4)

9. It is incumbent upon the children to exert themselves to the utmost in acquiring the art of reading and writing. Writing skills that will provide for urgent needs will be enough for some; and then it is better and more fitting that they should spend their time in studying those branches of knowledge which are of use.

As for what the Supreme Pen hath previously set down, the reason is that in every art and skill, God loveth the highest perfection.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá'í Education*, p. 5)

10. We prescribe unto all men that which will lead to the exaltation of the Word of God amongst His servants, and likewise, to the advancement of the world of being and the uplift of souls. To this end, the greatest means is education of the child. To this must each and all hold fast.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I, p.246)

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11. There are many things which will, if neglected, be wasted, and come to nothing. How often in this world do we see a child who has lost his parents and who, unless attention be devoted to his education and training, can produce no fruit. And better off dead than alive is he who produceth no fruit.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I, pp. 247-248)

12. The question of training the children and looking after the orphans is extremely important, but most important of all is the education of girl children, for these girls will one day be mothers, and the mother is the first teacher of the child. In whatever way she reareth the child, so will the child become, and the results of that first training will remain with the individual throughout his entire life, and it would be most difficult to alter them. And how can a mother, herself ignorant and untrained, educate her child? It is therefore clear that the education of girls is of far greater consequence than that of boys. This fact is extremely important, and the matter must be seen to with the greatest energy and dedication.

God sayeth in the Qur'án that they shall not be equals, those who have knowledge and those who have it not. Ignorance is thus utterly to be blamed, whether in male or female; indeed, in the female its harm is greater. I hope, therefore, that the friends will make strenuous efforts to educate their children, sons and daughters alike. This is verily the truth, and outside the truth there is manifestly naught save perdition.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I, p. 286)

13. In this new cycle, education and training are recorded in the Book of God as obligatory and not voluntary. That is, it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son, to nurse them from the breast of knowledge and to rear them in the

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bosom of sciences and arts. Should they neglect this matter, they shall be held responsible and worthy of reproach in the presence of the stern Lord.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 126-127)

14. It is incumbent upon the father and mother to train their children both in good conduct and the study of books; study, that is, to the degree required, so that no child, whether girl or boy, will remain illiterate.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 127)

15. The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favour 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 lights and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden of life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 129-130)

16. According to explicit Holy Texts, every child must be taught crafts and arts, to the degree that is needful. Wherefore, in every city and village, schools must be established and every child in that city or village is to engage in study to the necessary degree.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 134-135)

17. The best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 139)

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18. And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the promotion of education. Every child must be instructed in sciences as much as is necessary. If the parents are able to provide the expenses of this education, it is well, otherwise the community must provide the means for the teaching of that child.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 30)

19. It has now been clearly and irrefutably shown that the importation from foreign countries of the principles and procedures of civilization, and the acquisition from them of sciences and techniques—in brief, of whatsoever will contribute to the general good - is entirely permissible. This has been done to focus public attention on a matter of such universal advantage, so that the people may arise with all their energies to further it...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 31-32)

20. The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 109)

21. Observe carefully how education and the arts of civilization bring honour, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 111)

22. But education is of three kinds: material, human, and spiritual. Material education aims at the growth and development of the body, and consists in securing its

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sustenance and obtaining the means of its ease and comfort. This education is common to both man and animal.

Human education, however, consists in civilization and progress, that is, sound governance, social order, human welfare, commerce and industry, arts and sciences, momentous discoveries, and great undertakings, which are the central features distinguishing man from the animal.

As to divine education, it is the education of the Kingdom and consists in acquiring divine perfections. This is indeed true education, for by its virtue man becomes the focal centre of divine blessings and the embodiment of the verse "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."¹ This is the ultimate goal of the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 9)

23. Science is the first emanation from God toward man. All created beings embody the potentiality of material perfection, but the power of intellectual investigation and scientific acquisition is a higher virtue specialized to man alone. Other beings and organisms are deprived of this potentiality and attainment. God has created or deposited this love of reality in man. The development and progress of a nation is according to the measure and degree of that nation's scientific attainments. Through this means its greatness is continually increased, and day by day the welfare and prosperity of its people are assured.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 49)

24. The fact which is to be considered, however, is that woman, having formerly been deprived, must now be allowed equal opportunities with man for education and training.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 76)

25. Among other teachings and principles Bahá’u’lláh counsels the education of all members of society. No

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individual should be denied or deprived of intellectual training, although each should receive according to capacity. None must be left in the grades of ignorance, for ignorance is a defect in the human world. All mankind must be given a knowledge of science and philosophy — that is, as much as may be deemed necessary. All cannot be scientists and philosophers, but each should be educated according to his needs and deserts.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 108)

26. Bahá’u’lláh has announced that inasmuch as ignorance and lack of education are barriers of separation among mankind, all must receive training and instruction. Through this provision the lack of mutual understanding will be remedied and the unity of mankind furthered and advanced. Universal education is a universal law.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 300)

27. That is to say, man is rescued from the exigencies of nature by training and culture; consequently, education is necessary, obligatory. But education is of various kinds. There is a training and development of the physical body which ensures strength and growth. There is intellectual education or mental training for which schools and colleges are founded. The third kind of education is that of the spirit. Through the breaths of the Holy Spirit man is uplifted into the world of moralities and illumined by the lights of divine bestowals. The moral world is only attained through the effulgence of the Sun of Reality and the quickening life of the divine spirit.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 330)

28. ... according to the Divine commandments, every child must learn reading and writing, and acquire such branches of knowledge as are useful and necessary, as well as learning an art or skill. The utmost care must be devoted to these

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matters; any neglect of them, any failure to act on them, is not permissible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, p. 16)

29. O loving friends! Exert every effort to acquire the various branches of knowledge and true understanding. Strain every nerve to achieve both material and spiritual accomplishments.

Encourage the children from their earliest years to master every kind of learning, and make them eager to become skilled in every art — the aim being that through the favouring grace of God, the heart of each one may become even as a mirror disclosing the secrets of the universe, penetrating the innermost reality of all things; and that each may earn worldwide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, p. 20)

30. ...Once they have become skilled in these fundamentals, let them go on to learning the elements of other branches of knowledge, and once they have completed this study, let each one who is able and has a keen desire for it, enroll in higher institutions of learning and study advanced courses in the sciences and arts.

Not all, however, will be able to engage in these advanced studies. Therefore, such children must be sent to industrial schools where they can also acquire technical skills, and once the child becometh proficient in such a skill, then let consideration be given to the child’s own preferences and inclinations. If the child hath a liking for commerce, then let him choose commerce; if for industry, then industry; if for higher education, then the advancement of knowledge; if for some other of the responsibilities of humankind, then that. Let him be placed in that field for which he hath an inclination, a desire and a talent.

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But the indispensable basis of all is that he should develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration. If a person be unlettered, and yet clothed with Divine excellence, and alive in the breaths of the Spirit, that individual will contribute to the welfare of society, and his inability to read and write will do him no harm. And if a person be versed in the arts and every branch of knowledge, and not live a religious life, and not take on the characteristics of God, and not be directed by a pure intent, and be engrossed in the life of the flesh—then he is harm personified and nothing will come of all his learning and intellectual accomplishments but scandal and torment.

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

Blessed is he who attaineth this exalted station.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, p. 32)

31. The education of each child is compulsory ...In addition to this widespread education each child must be taught a profession, art, or trade, so that every member of the community will be enabled to earn his own livelihood.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, p. 47)

32. Religion and science are the two wings upon which man’s intelligence can soar into the heights, with which the human soul can progress. It is not possible to fly with one wing alone! Should a man try to fly with the wing of religion alone he would quickly fall into the quagmire of superstition, whilst on the other hand, with the wing of science alone he

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would also make no progress, but fall into the despairing slough of materialism.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 143)

33. Among the sacred obligations devolving upon the Spiritual Assemblies is the promotion of learning, the establishing of schools and creation of the necessary academic equipment and facilities for every boy and girl.

Every child without exception must from his earliest years make a thorough study of the art of reading and writings, and according to his own tastes and inclinations and the degree of his capacity and powers, devote extreme diligence to the acquisition of learning, beneficial arts and skills, various languages, speech, and contemporary technology.

To assist the children of the poor in the attainment of these accomplishments, and particularly in learning the basic subjects, is incumbent upon the members of the Spiritual Assemblies, and is accounted as one of the obligations laid upon the conscience of the trustees of God in every land.

‘He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My Glory, My loving-kindness, My Mercy, that have compassed the world.’

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, pp. 49-50)

34. The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, p. 57)

35. There can be no improvement unless the girls are brought up in schools and centres of learning, unless they are taught the sciences and other branches of knowledge, and unless they acquire the manifold arts, as necessary, and are

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divinely trained. For the day will come when these girls will become mothers. Mothers are the first educators of children, who establish virtues in the child's inner nature. They encourage the child to acquire perfections and goodly manners, warn him against unbecoming qualities, and encourage him to show forth resolve, firmness, and endurance under hardship, and to advance on the high road to progress. Due regard for the education of girls is, therefore, necessary. This is a very important subject, and it should be administered and organized under the aegis of the Spiritual Assembly.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 20)

36. Bahá'u'lláh considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the program of the Bahá'í youth all over the world.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 9 July 1931)

37. It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning the means of his livelihood.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 74)

38. 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.

(Universal House of Justice. *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 95)

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39. The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every Faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principle reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability to many nations to fulfil this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities.

(Universal House of Justice. *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 12)

40. Our children need to be nurtured spiritually and to be integrated into the life of the Cause. They should not be left to drift in a world so laden with moral dangers.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 2000)

41. Spiritual education of children and junior youth are of paramount importance to the further progress of the community. It is therefore imperative that this deficiency be remedied. Institutes must be certain to include in their programmes the training of teachers of children's classes, who can make their services available to local communities. But although providing spiritual and academic education for children is essential, this represents only a part of what must go into developing their characters and shaping their personalities. The necessity exists, too, for individuals and the institutions at all levels, which is to say the community as a whole, to show a proper attitude towards children and to take a general interest in their welfare. Such an attitude should be far removed from that of a rapidly declining order.

Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children. They are

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a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behaviour toward them—these are all among the vital aspects of the requisite attitude. Love demands discipline, the courage to accustom children to hardship, not to indulge their whims or leave them entirely to their own devices. An atmosphere needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share in its purpose. They must lovingly but insistently be guided to live up to Bahá'í standards, to study and teach the Cause in ways that are suited to their circumstances.

Among the young ones in the community are those known as junior youth, who fall between the ages of, say, 12 and 15. They represent a special group with special needs as they are somewhat in between childhood and youth when many changes are occurring within them. Creative attention must be devoted to involving them in programmes of activity that will engage their interests, mold their capacities for teaching and service, and involve them in social interaction with older youth. The employment of the arts in various forms can be of great value in such activity.

And now we wish to address a few words to parents who bear the primary responsibility for the upbringing of their children. We appeal to them to give constant attention to the spiritual education of their children. Some parents appear to think that this is the exclusive responsibility of the community; others believe that in order to preserve the independence of children to investigate truth, the Faith should not be taught to them. Still others feel inadequate to take on such a task. None of this is correct. The beloved Master has said that “it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son,” adding that, “should they neglect this matter, they shall be held responsible and worthy of reproach

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in the presence of the stern Lord.” Independent of the level of their education, parents are in a critical position to shape the spiritual development of their children. They should not ever underestimate their capacity to mold their children’s moral character. For they exercise indispensable influence through the home environment they consciously create by their love of God, their striving to adhere to His laws, their spirit of service to His Cause, their lack of fanaticism, and their freedom from the corrosive effects of backbiting. Every parent who is a believer in the Blessed Beauty has the responsibility to conduct herself or himself in such a way as to elicit the spontaneous obedience to parents to which the Teachings attach so high a value. Of course, in addition to the efforts made at home, the parents should support Baha’i children’s classes provided by the community. It must be borne in mind, too, that children live in a world that informs them of harsh realities through direct experience with the horrors already described or through the unavoidable outpourings of the mass media. Many of them are thereby forced to mature prematurely, and among these are those who look for standards and discipline by which to guide their lives. Against this gloomy backdrop of a decadent society, Bahá’í children should shine as the emblems of a better future.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 2000)

17. Harmony of science and religion

There is no contradiction between true religion and science.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. Religion and Science are inter-twined with each other and cannot be separated. These are the two wings with which humanity must fly. One wing is not enough. Every religion which does not concern itself with Science is mere tradition, and that is not the essential. Therefore science, education and civilization are most important necessities for the full religious life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, pp. 28-29)

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

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

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

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 141)

3. Consider what it is that singles man out from among created beings, and makes of him a creature apart. Is it not his reasoning power, his intelligence? Shall he not make use

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of these in his study of religion? I say unto you: weigh carefully in the balance of reason and science everything that is presented to you as religion. If it passes this test, then accept it, for it is truth! If, however, it does not so conform, then reject it, for it is ignorance!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 144)

4. God made religion and science to be the measure, as it were, of our understanding. Take heed that you neglect not such a wonderful power. Weigh all things in this balance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 145)

5. We may think of science as one wing and religion as the other; a bird needs two wings for flight, one alone would be useless. Any religion that contradicts science or that is opposed to it, is only ignorance - for ignorance is the opposite of knowledge.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp.130-131)

6. Science is the first emanation from God toward man. All created beings embody the potentiality of material perfection, but the power of intellectual investigation and scientific acquisition is a higher virtue specialized to man alone. Other beings and organisms are deprived of this potentiality and attainment. God has created or deposited this love of reality in man. The development and progress of a nation is according to the measure and degree of that nation's scientific attainments. Through this means its greatness is continually increased, and day by day the welfare and prosperity of its people are assured.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 49)

18. Human Resource Development

A function of Bahá'í Institutions is to arise and maintain a process of developing human resources, ...training institutes is critical to such effort.

Universal House of Justice

1. Towards ensuring an orderly evolution of the community, a function of Bahá'í institutions is to arise and maintain a process of developing human resources whereby Bahá'ís, new and veteran alike, can acquire the knowledge and capacity to sustain a continuous expansion and consolidation of the community. The establishment of training institutes is critical to such effort, since they are centres through which large numbers of individuals can acquire and improve their ability to teach and administer the Faith. Their existence underscores the importance of knowledge of the Faith as a source of power for invigorating the life of the Bahá'í community and of the individuals who compose it.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1998)

2. As your community grows, you will find that its needs in terms of human resources will increase and diversify commensurately. Your permanent institute will have to design courses of various durations to train believers to carry out a wide range of activities... The development of such courses, whether based on materials already available or newly elaborated ones, is an indispensable component in an ongoing consolidation process. The content and duration of each course can best be determined in actual practice and should be the result of constant reflection on the

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effectiveness of your institute programs in developing the capabilities of the friends to serve the Cause.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 25 September 1994)

3. With the growth in the number of enrollments, it has become apparent that such occasional courses of instruction and the informal activities of community life, though important, are not sufficient as a means of human resource development, for they have resulted in only a relatively small band of active supporters of the Cause. These believers, no matter how dedicated, no matter how willing to make sacrifices, cannot attend to the needs of hundreds, much less thousands, of fledgling local communities. Systematic attention has to be given by Bahá'í institutions to training a significant number of believers and assisting them in serving the Cause according to their God-given talents and capacities.

The development of human resources on a large scale requires that the establishment of institutes be viewed in a new light.

(Universal House of Justice. Four Year Plan, sections 1.13, 1.14)

4. Your past exploits were largely the result of the incessant labors of a comparatively few consecrated believers who devoted their time and resources to the spread of the Cause in locality after locality. If you are to sustain rapid expansion and consolidation in the coming years, it is imperative that far greater numbers of dedicated and committed souls arise to promote these twin processes. Training courses — widespread, regular and well-organized — constitute the most effective means to mobilize believers on the scale required.

(Universal House of Justice. Four Year Plan, section 10.9)

5. As the term "institute" has assumed various uses in the Bahá'í community, a word of clarification is needed. The next

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four years will represent an extraordinary period in the history of our Faith, a turning point of epochal magnitude.

What the friends throughout the world are now being asked to do is to commit themselves, their material resources, their abilities and their time to the development of a network of training institutes on a scale never before attempted. These centers of Bahá'í learning will have as their goal one very practical outcome, namely, the raising up of large numbers of believers who are trained to foster and facilitate the process of entry by troops with efficiency and love.

(Universal House of Justice. Four Year Plan, section 3.8)

5. Training programs, with which many of your communities have considerable experience, constitute a most potent instrument for the accomplishment of such a vast mobilization. We call upon you, then, to support the work of the training institutes in your countries, the more experienced among you giving generously of their time as teachers so that courses can be offered widely and consistently. As you acquire new knowledge and skills through these programs, you will be able to put into practice with enthusiasm and zeal what you have learned, and arise to shoulder the manifold responsibilities that accelerated expansion and consolidation demand.

(Universal House of Justice. Four Year Plan, section 6.4)

7. The will and determination needed to sustain large-scale expansion and consolidation can be created through a consistent and widespread institute program aimed at exposing growing contingents of believers to the Creative Word, thus enhancing their spiritual capacities to diffuse the light of the Faith and to further the development of its institutions.

(Universal House of Justice. Four Year Plan, section 11.7)

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8. As an agency of the National Spiritual Assembly, the training institute should be charged with the task of developing human resources in all or part of a country. The requirements of expansion and consolidation in the country or region will dictate the complexity of its organization. In some instances, the institute may consist of a group of dedicated believers with a well-defined program and some administrative arrangement that enables it to offer regular training courses. In many cases, in addition to a group of teachers associated with it, the institute will require part - and full-time staff, for whom assistance from the funds of the Faith may be necessary. The institute needs access to some physical facilities in which it can conduct courses and, at some stage of its development, may require a building of its own.... The complexity and number of courses offered by an institute, as well as the size of its staff and the pool of teachers from which it draws, may call for the appointment of a board to direct its affairs. When the region under the influence of an institute is large, it may have branches serving specific areas, each with its own administration...

(Universal House of Justice. Four Year Plan, sections 1.16, 1.19)

9. In many regions, it has become imperative to create institutes as organizational structures dedicated to systematic training. The purpose of such training is to endow ever-growing contingents of believers with the spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills needed to carry out the many tasks of accelerated expansion and consolidation, including the teaching and deepening of a large number of people-adults, youth and children. This purpose can best be achieved through well-organized, formal programs consisting of courses that follow appropriately designed curricula...

(Universal House of Justice. Four Year Plan, sections 1.15, 1.19)

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10. What the friends throughout the world are now being asked to do is to commit themselves, their material resources, their abilities and their time to the development of a network of training institutes on a scale never before attempted.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1996)

11. Three developments brighten our expectations. One is in the solid results being produced wherever training institutes are in operation. Tens of thousands of individuals have over the last two years completed at least one institute course. The immediate effects upon them have been a greatly strengthened faith, a more conscious spiritual identity, and a deepened commitment to Bahá'í service. The second pertains to the notable improvement in the conditions affecting the establishment and renewal of Local Spiritual Assemblies. ...The third is that a new confidence in teaching is stirring the friends, yielding impressive results in various regions. The potential for a steady and ever-expanding influx of new believers has always been great, and we are able to say with assurance that the capacity to actualize it is methodically being developed more than ever before with the prosecution of the current Plan.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1998)

12. The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh marches on resistlessly, quickened by the increasing application of an approach to the development and use of human resources that is systematic. The further creation of national and regional training institutes, now numbering 344, has pressed this development forward, with the result that, apart from North America and Iran where numerous courses have been given, some 70,000 individuals have already completed at least one institute course. All of this is contributing to a growing body of confirmed, active supporters of the Cause. ...

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Understanding of the necessity for systematization in the development of human resources is everywhere taking hold.

The ever-expanding work in social and economic development is also benefiting from the operation of those training institutes that give attention to such subjects as literacy, primary health care and the advancement of women. The more widespread efforts of the Office of Social and Economic Development to promote a global process of learning about relevant Bahá'í principles are enhanced by the work of these institutes, as well as by the rise of Bahá'í - inspired organizations scattered throughout the planet. Clearly, then, the institutional capacity to administer development programmes is gaining in strength. This is apparent in projects sponsored by Bahá'í institutions or initiated by individuals through the inspiration of the Faith. (Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1999)

13. Reports indicate that the number of believers benefiting directly from training courses has climbed to nearly 100,000. Without question, the capacity of the worldwide community to develop its human resources has been distinctly enhanced. The effects of this systematic approach to human resource development are making themselves felt in the lives of all three protagonists of the Plan — the individual believer, the institutions, and the local community. There has been an upsurge in teaching activities undertaken at the initiative of the individual. Spiritual Assemblies, Councils, and committees have grown in their ability to guide the believers in their individual and collective endeavours. And community life has flourished, even in localities long dormant, as new patterns of thought and behaviour have emerged.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 26 November 1999)

14. During the second half of the Five Year Plan, the

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society-building power of the Faith must be released within thousands of clusters where programs of growth need to be initiated, reinforced, or extended. The challenge for Bahá'í institutions and their agencies will be to furnish the means to accompany all those who cherish a pure and earnest desire for a better world, whatever their degree of involvement in the process of spiritual education so far, and help them translate that desire into the practical steps that day by day and week by week accrete to build vibrant, flourishing communities.

(Universal House of Justice. 5 December 2013 to Bahá'ís of the World)

19. The role of family in economics

Family ... as an economic unit it can play a significant part in alleviating a variety of problems born of the economic inequalities so prevalent in the world today.

Universal House of Justice

1. The fruits that best befit the tree of human life are trustworthiness and godliness, truthfulness and sincerity; but greater than all, after recognition of the unity of God, praised and glorified be He, is regard for the rights that are due to one's parents.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 106)

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

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

3. 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 position is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family but addeth to its stature and its lasting honour, as day succeedeth day. And if we widen out the sphere of unity a little to include the inhabitants of a village who seek to be loving and united, who associate with and are kind to one another, what great

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advances they will be seen to make, how secure and protected they will be. Then let us widen out the sphere a little more, let us take the inhabitants of a city, all of them together: if they establish the strongest bonds of unity among themselves, how far they will progress, even in a brief period and what power they will exert. And if the sphere of unity be still further widened out, that is, if the inhabitants of a whole country develop peaceable hearts, and if with all their hearts and souls they yearn to cooperate with one another and to live in unity, and if they become kind and loving to one another, that country will achieve undying joy and lasting glory. Peace will it have, and plenty, and vast wealth.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 279)

4. 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. This is, likewise, true of a city. If those who dwell within it manifest a spirit of accord and fellowship, it will progress steadily and human conditions become brighter, whereas through enmity and strife it will be degraded and its inhabitants scattered. In the same way, the people of a nation develop and advance toward civilization and enlightenment through love and accord and are disintegrated by war and strife. Finally, this is true of humanity itself in the aggregate. When love is realized and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men, the whole human race will be uplifted, the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant and the happiness and tranquillity of mankind be immeasurably increased. Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and universal peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree. This is the happiness and felicity of

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humankind. This is the illumination of man, the eternal glory and everlasting life; this is the divine bestowal. I desire this station for you, and I pray God that the people of America may achieve this great end in order that the virtue of this democracy may be ensured and their names be glorified eternally. May the confirmations of God uphold them in all things and their memories become revered throughout the East and the West. May they become the servants of the Most High God, near and dear to Him in the oneness of the heavenly Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 144-145)

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

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

6. Today the world of humanity is walking in darkness because it is out of touch with the world of God. That is why we do not see the signs of God in the hearts of men. The power of the Holy Spirit has no influence. When a divine spiritual illumination becomes manifest in the world of humanity, when divine instruction and guidance appear,

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...Then will the justice of God become manifest, all humanity will appear as the members of one family, and every member of that family will be consecrated to cooperation and mutual assistance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 305)

7. 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. Shed the light of a boundless love on every human being whom you meet, whether of your country, your race, your political party, or of any other nation, colour or shade of political opinion. Heaven will support you while you work in this in-gathering of the scattered peoples of the world beneath the shadow of the almighty tent of unity.

(Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 38)

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

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

9. Is it possible for one member of a family to be subjected to the utmost misery and to abject poverty and for the rest of the family to be comfortable? It is impossible unless those members of the family be senseless, atrophied, inhospitable, unkind. Then they would say, “Though these members do belong to our family — let them alone. Let us look after ourselves. Let them die. So long as I am comfortable, I am honored, I am happy — this my brother — let him die. If he be in misery let him remain in misery, so long as I am comfortable. If he is hungry let him remain so; I

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am satisfied. If he is without clothes, so long as I am clothed, let him remain as he is. If he is shelterless, homeless, so long as I have a home, let him remain in the wilderness.”

Such utter indifference in the human family is due to lack of control, to lack of a working law, to lack of kindness in its midst. If kindness had been shown to the members of this family surely all the members thereof would have enjoyed comfort and happiness.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 38-39)

10. The purport is this that we are all inhabiting one globe of earth. In reality, we are one family and each one of us is a member of this family. We must all be in the greatest happiness and comfort, under a just rule and regulation which is according to the good pleasure of God, thus causing us to be happy, for this life is fleeting.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 38-39)

11. Consider the harmful effects of discord and dissension in a family; then reflect upon the favours and blessings which descend upon that family when unity exists among its various members. What incalculable benefits and blessings would descend upon the great human family if unity and brotherhood were established! In this century when the beneficent results of unity and the ill effects of discord are so clearly apparent, the means for the attainment and accomplishment of human fellowship have appeared in the world. His Holiness Baha'u'llah has proclaimed and provided the way by which hostility and dissension may be removed from the human world. He has left no ground or possibility for strife and disagreement. First, He has proclaimed the oneness of mankind and specialized religious teachings for existing human conditions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 230)

12. It is highly important for man to raise a family. So long

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

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

13. 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 considered, 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 considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 168)

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14. It represents the consummation of human evolution—an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 43)

15. The ages of its infancy and childhood are past, never again to return, while the Great Age, the consummation of all ages, which must signalize the coming of age of the entire human race, is yet to come. The convulsions of this transitional and most turbulent period in the annals of humanity are the essential prerequisites, and herald the inevitable approach, of that Age of Ages, "the time of the end," in which the folly and tumult of strife that has, since the dawn of history, blackened the annals of mankind, will have been finally transmuted into the wisdom and the tranquility of an undisturbed, a universal, and lasting peace, in which the discord and separation of the children of men will have given way to the worldwide reconciliation, and the complete unification of the divers elements that constitute human society. This will indeed be the fitting climax of that process of integration which, starting with the family, the smallest unit in the scale of human organization, must, after having called successively into being the tribe, the city-state, and the nation, continue to operate until it culminates in the unification of the whole world, the final object and the crowning glory of human evolution on this planet. It is this stage which humanity, willingly or unwillingly, is resistlessly approaching.... Just as the organic evolution of mankind has been slow and gradual, and involved successively the unification of the family, the tribe, the city-state, and the nation, so has the light vouchsafed by the Revelation of God, at various stages in the evolution of religion, and reflected in the successive Dispensations of the past, been slow and

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progressive. Indeed, the measure of Divine Revelation, in every age, has been adapted to, and commensurate with, the degree of social progress achieved in that age by a constantly evolving humanity.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 117)

16. With regard to your question whether mothers should work outside the home, it is helpful to consider the matter from the perspective of the concept of a Bahá'í family. This concept is based on the principle that the man has primary responsibility for the financial support of the family, and the woman is the chief and primary educator of the children. This by no means implies that these functions are inflexibly fixed and cannot be changed and adjusted to suit particular family situations, nor does it mean that the place of the woman is confined to the home. Rather, while primary responsibility is assigned, it is anticipated that fathers would play a significant role in the education of the children and women could also be breadwinners. As you rightly indicated, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged women to 'participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world'.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated August 9, 1984 to an individual believer)

17. The organic growth of the Cause of God, indicated by recent significant development in its life, becomes markedly apparent in the light of the main objectives and expectations of the Six Year Plan; a vast expansion of the numerical and financial resources of the Cause; enlargement of its status in the world; a worldwide increase in the production, distribution and use of Bahá'í literature; a firmer and worldwide demonstration of the Bahá'í way of life requiring special consideration of the Bahá'í education of children and youth, the strengthening of Bahá'í family life and attention to universal participation and the spiritual enrichment of individual life; further acceleration in the process of the

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maturity of local and national Bahá'í communities and a dynamic consolidation of the unity of the two arms of the Administrative Order; an extension of the involvement of the Bahá'í world community in the needs of the world around it; and the pursuit of social and economic development in well-established Bahá'í communities.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 6 January 1986)

18. A community is of course more than the sum of its membership; it is a comprehensive unit of civilization composed of individuals, families and institutions that are originators and encouragers of systems, agencies and organizations working together with a common purpose for the welfare of people both within and beyond its own borders; it is a composition of diverse, interacting participants that are achieving unity in an unremitting quest for spiritual and social progress. Since Bahá'ís everywhere are at the very beginning of the process of community building, enormous effort must be devoted to the tasks at hand.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 1996 to the Bahá'ís of the World, p. 6)

19. In our Letter to you of 24 November 2009, we addressed the subject of the family and its role in the advancement of civilization, drawing attention to the need to rear children that see their own welfare as inseparable from the welfare of others. While stressing the importance of family solidarity, particularly as it pertains to social progress, we called for caution in this respect, lest devotion to family interests diminish one's commitment to justice and compassion for all or provide an excuse for perpetuating a harmful mentality of "us and them". Many, indeed, are the ways in which the family can contribute to the life of society—for example, as an economic unit it can play a significant part in alleviating a variety of problems born of the economic

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inequalities so prevalent in the world today.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 April 2010 to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

20. The family unit offers an ideal setting within which can be shaped those moral attributes that contribute to an appropriate view of material wealth and its utilization.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 April 2010 to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

20. Equality between man and woman

Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. ... force is losing its weight and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine, and more permeated with the feminine ideals— or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 13)

2. The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized, humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 20)

3. ... there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 37)

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4. ... it is well established in history that where woman has not participated in human affairs the outcomes have never attained a state of completion and perfection. On the other hand, every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 37)

5. ...as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 39)

6. ... recognition of equality in the social and economic equation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 39)

7. ... it is incumbent upon the girls of this glorious era to be fully versed in the various branches of knowledge, in sciences and the arts and all the wonders of this pre-eminent time, that they may then educate their children and train them from their earliest days in the ways of perfection.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 49)

8. In this wondrous Dispensation the favours of the Glorious Lord are vouchsafed unto the handmaidens of the Merciful. Therefore, they should, like unto men, seize the prize and excel in the field, so that it will be proven and made manifest that the penetrative influence of the Word of God in this new Dispensation hath caused women to be equal with men, and that in the arena of tests they will outdo others...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, p. 49)

9. From the beginning of existence until the present day, in any of the past cycles and dispensations, no assemblies for women have ever been established and classes for the

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purpose of spreading the teachings were never held by them. This is one of the characteristics of this glorious Dispensation and this great century. Ye should, most certainly, strive to perfect this assemblage and increase your knowledge of the realities of heavenly mysteries, so that, God willing, in a short time, women will become the same as men; they will take a leading position amongst the learned, will each have a fluent tongue and eloquent speech, and shine like unto lamps of guidance throughout the world. In some respects, women have astonishing capacities; they hasten in their attraction to God, and are intense in their fiery ardour for Him.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Women*, pp. 49-50)

10. Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible. Even granted that woman is inferior to man in some degree of capacity or accomplishment, this or any other distinction would continue to be productive of discord and trouble. The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification....

And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 76-77)

11. ... the principle of religion has been revealed by Bahá’u’lláh that woman must be given the privilege of equal education with man and full right to his Prerogatives. That is to say, there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its

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ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind. Inasmuch as human society consists of two parts, the male and female, each the complement of the other, the happiness and stability of humanity cannot be assured unless both are perfected. Therefore, the standard and status of man and woman must become equalized.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 108)

12. The conditions in past centuries were due to woman’s lack of opportunity. She was denied the right and privilege of education and left in her undeveloped state. Naturally, she could not and did not advance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 133)

13. So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 135)

14. In proclaiming the oneness of mankind, He taught that men and women are equal in the sight of God and that there is no distinction to be made between them. The only difference between them now is due to lack of education and training. If woman is given equal opportunity of education, distinction and estimate of inferiority will disappear. The world of humanity has two wings, as it were: One is the female; the other is the male. If one wing be defective, the strong perfect wing will not be capable of flight. The world of

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humanity has two hands. If one be imperfect, the capable hand is restricted and unable to perform its duties. God is the Creator of mankind. He has endowed both sexes with perfections and intelligence, given them physical members and organs of sense, without differentiation or distinction as to superiority; therefore, why should woman be considered inferior? This is not according to the plan and justice of God. He has created them equal; in His estimate there is no question of sex. The one whose heart is purest, whose deeds are most perfect, is acceptable to God, male or female...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 174)

15. When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never be willing to sanction it. Mothers will not give their sons as sacrifices upon the battlefield after twenty years of anxiety and loving devotion in rearing them from infancy, no matter what cause they are called upon to defend. There is no doubt that when women obtain equality of rights, war will entirely cease among mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p.175)

16. Woman’s lack of progress and proficiency has been due to her need of equal education and opportunity. Had she been allowed this equality, there is no doubt she would be the counterpart of man in ability and capacity. The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 182)

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17. Woman must especially devote her energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences, seeking to assist mankind in that which is most needful. By this means she will demonstrate capability and ensure recognition of equality in the social and economic equation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 283)

18. Woman must receive the same education as man and all inequality be adjusted. Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 375)

19. There can be no improvement unless the girls are brought up in schools and centres of learning, unless they are taught the sciences and other branches of knowledge, and unless they acquire the manifold arts, as necessary, and are divinely trained. For the day will come when these girls will become mothers.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 375)

20. Women have equal rights with men upon earth; in religion and society they are a very important element. As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 133)

21. God's Bounty is for all and gives power for all progress. When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights! One of the principles then of Bahá'u'lláh is the equality of sex.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p.163)

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22. The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, pp. 11-12)

23. We take much pleasure in announcing the decision to establish an office for the Advancement of Women, which, as an agency of the Bahá'í International Community, will promote the principles of the Faith through its interaction with international entities concerned with matters affecting the rights, status and well-being of women. It will also advise National Spiritual Assemblies regarding programs and projects in which the involvement of the community can encourage efforts towards the realization of the equality of men and women.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 10 December 1992 to all National Spiritual assemblies)

24. The decision-making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 12)

21. Process of growth and development

*The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing
like a living being.*

Universal House of Justice

1. Promote ye the development of the cities of God and His countries, and glorify Him therein in the joyous accents of His well-favoured ones. In truth, the hearts of men are edified through the power of the tongue, even as houses and cities are built up by the hand and other means. We have assigned to every end a means for its accomplishment; avail yourselves thereof, and place your trust and confidence in God, the Omniscient, the All-Wise.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 160)

2. ... that which hath streamed forth from the Most Exalted Pen is conducive to the glory, the advancement and education of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Indeed it is the sovereign remedy for every disease, could they but comprehend and perceive it.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 73)

3. O people of God! Give ear unto that which, if heeded, will ensure the freedom, well-being, tranquillity, exaltation and advancement of all men.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 92)

4. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquility of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts,

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offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind.

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

5. Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 68)

6. All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 215)

7. ...no matter how much the physical body of man is trained and developed, there will be no real progression in human station unless the mind correspondingly advances.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 302)

8. We must also render service to the world of intellectuality in order that the minds of men may increase in power and become keener in perception, assisting the intellect of man to attain its supremacy so that the ideal virtues may appear.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 325-326)

9. The greatest bestowal of God in the world of humanity is religion, for assuredly the divine teachings of religion are above all other sources of instruction and development to man. Religion confers upon man eternal life and guides his footsteps in the world of morality. It opens the doors of unending happiness and bestows everlasting honor upon the

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human kingdom. It has been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 361)

10. The world of existence is progressive. It is subject to development and growth. Consider how great has been the progress in this radiant century. Civilization has unfolded. Nations have developed. Industrialism and jurisprudence have expanded. Sciences, inventions and discoveries have increased. All of these show that the world of existence is continuously progressing and developing; and therefore, assuredly, the virtues characterizing the maturity of man must, likewise, expand and grow.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 378)

11. ...divine manifestations of God confer general education upon humanity. They arise to bestow universal moral training. For example, Moses was a universal Teacher. He trained and disciplined the people of Israel, enabled them to rescue themselves from the lowest abyss of despair and ignorance and caused them to attain an advanced degree of knowledge and development.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 400-401)

12. Praise be to God, throughout succeeding centuries and ages the call of civilization hath been raised, the world of humanity hath been advancing and progressing day by day, various countries have been developing by leaps and bounds, and material improvements have increased, until the world of existence obtained universal capacity to receive the spiritual teachings and to hearken to the Divine Call. The suckling babe passeth through various physical stages, growing and developing at every stage, until its body reacheth the age of maturity. Having arrived at this stage it acquireth the capacity to manifest spiritual and intellectual perfections. The lights of comprehension, intelligence and

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knowledge become perceptible in it and the powers of its soul unfold. Similarly, in the contingent world, the human species hath undergone progressive physical changes and, by a slow process, hath scaled the ladder of civilization, realizing in itself the wonders, excellencies and gifts of humanity in their most glorious form, until it gained the capacity to express the splendours of spiritual perfections and divine ideals and became capable of hearkening to the call of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 285)

13. ...From the beginning of existence in the womb of the terrestrial globe, man gradually grew and developed like the embryo in the womb of its mother, and passed from one shape and form to another until he appeared with this beauty and perfection, this power and constitution. It is certain that initially he did not possess such loveliness, grace, and refinement, and that he has only gradually attained such form, disposition, comeliness, and grace. There is no doubt that, like the embryo in the womb of the mother, the embryo of humankind did not appear all at once in this form and become the embodiment of the words “Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators!” Rather, it gradually attained various conditions and assumed divers forms until it attained this appearance and beauty, this perfection, refinement, and grace. It is therefore clear and evident that the growth and development of man on this planet unto his present completeness, even as the growth and development of the embryo in the womb of the mother, has been by degrees and through passing from state to state, and from one shape and form to another, for this is according to the requirements of the universal order and the divine law.

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

14. All created things have their degree or stage of maturity. The period of maturity in the life of a tree is the

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time of its fruit bearing ... the animal attains a stage of full growth and completeness, and in the human kingdom man reaches his maturity when the light of his intelligence attains its greatest power and development ... Similarly, there are periods and stages in the collective life of humanity. At one time it was passing through its stage of childhood, at another its period of youth, but now it has entered its long predicted phase of maturity, the evidences of which are everywhere apparent ... That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race can neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day, this period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former state of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities. New bounties, perfect bestowals, are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and blessings of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity.

(Abdu'l-Bahá. Quoted in *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 164-165)

15. The development and progress of a nation is according to the measure and degree of that nation's scientific attainments. Through this means, its greatness is continually increased and day by day the welfare and prosperity of its people are assured ... 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 impossible.

(Abdu'l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 60-61)

16. It is to unity that the Guardian has been continually calling the friends. For where a united will exists, nothing

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can effectively oppose and hamper the forces of constructive development.

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in a Compilation on *Local Spiritual Assembly*, p. 10)

17. They (Local Spiritual Assemblies) 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 supervise their work and provide the best means for their progress and development.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 38)

18. Both the spirit and the form are essential to the safe and speedy development of the Administration. To maintain full balance between them is the main and unique responsibility of the administrators of the Cause.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 10 December 1933)

19. Let there be no mistake. The Principle of the Oneness of Mankind — the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve—is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope.... It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 42)

20. The human race, as a distinct, organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 3)

21. As the Bahá'í community grows it will acquire experts in numerous fields ...As these experts bring their knowledge

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and skill to the service of the community and, even more, as they transform their various disciplines by bringing to bear upon them the light of the Divine Teachings, problem after problem now disrupting society will be answered.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 21 August 1977)

22. The role of youth in development must receive the careful attention of the National Spiritual Assemblies, so that this valuable source of idealism and energy may be directed to the service of mankind.

(Universal House of Justice. Office of Social and Economic Development, dated 12 November 1983)

23. Bahá'í institutions began to be identified as important contributors to international development, while the Bahá'í administrative network was seen as a potent force for coordinating development activities within a global framework.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 72)

24. Many communities, especially those with permanent programs, began taking steps to ensure that effective development activities would continue even if external sources of support were to be withdrawn.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, pp. 72-73)

25. A community is of course more than the sum of its membership; it is a comprehensive unit of civilization composed of individuals, families and institutions that are originators and encouragers of systems, agencies and organizations working together with a common purpose for the welfare of people both within and beyond its own borders; it is a composition of diverse, interacting

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participants that are achieving unity in an unremitting quest for spiritual and social progress.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1996)

26. The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing like a living being.

(Universal House of Justice. *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 89)

27. Armed with the strength of action and the cooperation of the individual believers composing it, the community as a whole should endeavor to establish greater stability in the patterns of its development, locally and nationally, through sound, systematic planning and execution of its work.

(Universal House of Justice. Seminar on Bahá'í social and economic development, Office of social and economic development, p. 14)

28. In clusters where the demands created by the scale and intensity of activity are most acutely felt, more complex schemes of coordination are emerging through a gradual and patient process of learning. In certain regions of the world where the institutions are overseeing special initiatives, an influx of eager pioneers is helping to strengthen the foundations of sustained growth and broaden the scope of what can be achieved by a community. The work of expansion and consolidation is advancing through the unflagging labours of countless devoted souls who have, in numerous ways, followed 'Abdu'l-Bahá in treading the plane of sacrifice.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 5 December 2013 to the Bahá'ís of the World)

22. Pattern of social and economic development

*To be a Bahá'í simply means to love all the world;
to love humanity and try to serve it.*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. One indeed is a man who, today, dedicated himself to the service of the entire human race.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 250)

2. Be ye loving fathers to the orphan, and a refuge to the helpless, and a treasury for the poor, and a cure for the ailing. Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 3)

3. Those souls who are of the kingdom eagerly wish to be of service to the poor, to sympathize with them, to show kindness to the miserable and to make their lives fruitful. Happy art thou that hast such a wish.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 115-116)

4. ...the honor and distinction of the individual consist 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 happiness and advantage to

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his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 2-3)

5. How excellent, how honourable is man if he arises to fulfil his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man’s, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilization and justice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 4)

6. You must consider all His servants as your own family and relations. Direct your whole effort toward the happiness of those who are despondent, bestow food upon the hungry, clothe the needy, and glorify the humble. Be a helper to every helpless one, and manifest kindness to your fellow creatures in order that ye may attain the good pleasure of God. This is conducive to the illumination of the world of humanity and eternal felicity for yourselves.

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

7. If thou seekest eternal glory, let thyself be humble and meek in the presence of the beloved of God; make thyself the servant of all, and serve all alike. The service of the friends belongeth to God, not to them. Strive to become a source of harmony, spirituality and joyfulness to the hearts of the friends ...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 61-62)

8. There are, at the present time, many villages in India, the Philippines, Africa, Latin America, etc., where the Bahá’ís form a majority or even the entire population of the village. One of the goals of the Five-Year Plan, as you will recall, is to

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develop the characteristics of Bahá'í community life, and it is, above all, to such villages that the goal is directed. The Local Spiritual Assemblies of such villages must gradually widen the scope of their activities, not only to develop every aspect of the spiritual life of the believers within their jurisdiction, but also, through Bahá'í consultation, and through such Bahá'í principles as harmony between science and religion, the importance of education, and work as a form of worship, to promote the standards of agriculture and other skills in the life of the people. For this they will need the assistance of Bahá'í experts from other lands. This is a major undertaking, and is being started gradually wherever and whenever possible.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 27 July 1976)

9. At the heart of all activities, the spiritual, intellectual and community life of the believers must be developed and fostered, requiring: the prosecution with increased vigour of the development of Local Spiritual Assemblies so that they may exercise their beneficial influence and guidance on the life of Bahá'í communities; the nurturing of a deeper understanding of Bahá'í family life; the Bahá'í education of children, including the holding of regular Bahá'í classes and, where necessary, the establishment of tutorial schools for the provision of elementary education; the encouragement of Bahá'í youth in study and service; and the encouragement of Bahá'í women to exercise to the full their privileges and responsibilities in the work of the community....

(Universal House of Justice. Naw-Ruz 1979)

10. The soul-stirring events in Bahá'u'lláh's native land and the concomitant advance into the theatre 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 Ridván message this year

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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.

From the beginning of His stupendous mission, Bahá'u'lláh urged upon the attention of nations the necessity of ordering human affairs in such a way as to bring into being a world unified in all the essential aspects of its life. In unnumbered verses and tablets, He repeatedly and variously declared the “progress of the world” and the “development of nations” as being among the ordinances of God for this day. The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of His Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth. The indispensability of this coherence is unmistakably illustrated in His ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the spiritual centre of every Bahá'í community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind. Thus, we can readily appreciate that although it has hitherto been impracticable for Bahá'í institutions generally to emphasize development activities, 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 reconstruction of society. Witness, for instance, what social and economic progress the Iranian believers attained under His loving guidance and, subsequently, with the unflinching encouragement 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 incorporated into its regular pursuits; particularly is action

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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 endeavouring, through their application 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 honour, so desired by Bahá'u'lláh. In the process and as a consequence, the friends will undoubtedly extend the benefits of their efforts to society as a whole, until all mankind achieves the progress intended by the Lord of the Age.

It is indeed propitious that systematic attention be given to this vital sphere of Bahá'í endeavour. We are happy, therefore, to announce the establishment at the World Centre of the Office of Social and Economic Development, which is to assist the Universal House of Justice to promote and coordinate the activities of the friends throughout the world in this new field.

The International Teaching Centre and, through it, the Continental Boards of Counsellors are poised for the special responsibilities which devolve upon them to be alert to possibilities for extending the development of social and economic life both within and outside the Bahá'í Community, and to advise and encourage the Assemblies and friends in their strivings.

We call now upon National Spiritual Assemblies to consider the implications of this emerging trend for their respective communities, and to take well-conceived measures to involve the thought and actions of Local Spiritual Assemblies and individuals in the devising and implementing of plans, within the constraints of existing circumstances and available resources. Progress in the development field will largely depend on natural stirrings at the grass roots, and it

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should receive its driving force from those sources rather than from an imposition of plans and programs from the top. The major task of National Assemblies, therefore, is to increase the local communities' awareness of needs and possibilities, and to guide and coordinate the efforts resulting from such awareness. Already in many areas the friends are witnessing the confirmations of their initiatives in such pursuits as the founding of tutorial schools, the promotion of literacy, the launching of rural development programs, the inception of educational radio stations, and the operation of agricultural and medical projects. As they enlarge the scope of their endeavours other modes of development will undoubtedly emerge.

This challenge evokes the resourcefulness, flexibility and cohesiveness of the many communities composing the Bahá'í world. Different communities will, of course, perceive different approaches and different solutions to similar needs. Some can offer assistance abroad, while, at the outset, others must of necessity receive assistance; but all, irrespective of circumstances or resources, are endowed with the capacity to respond in some measure; all can share; all can participate in the joint enterprise of applying more systematically the principles of the Faith to upraising the quality of human life. The key to success is unity in spirit and in action.

We go forward confident that the wholehearted involvement of the friends in these activities will ensure a deeper consolidation of the community at all levels. Our engagement in the technical aspects of development should, however, 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 development field be viewed as a reinforcement of the teaching work, as a greater manifestation of faith in action. For, if expansion of the teaching work does not continue,

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there can be no hope of success for this enlarged dimension of the consolidation process.

Ultimately, the call to action is addressed to the individual 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 specialized training, their material resources, their offers of time and energy and, above all, their dedication to Bahá'í principles, 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 present time, whether social, spiritual, economic or administrative will be gradually solved as the number and the resources 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 fulfil their highest hopes.

(Universal House of Justice. Statement dated 20 October 1983)

11. The relationship between teaching and social and economic development needs to be considered both in terms of certain fundamental principles and in the context of the processes which characterize the growth of the Bahá'í community. You are well aware of the relevant principles, which include the following: Bahá'ís should give liberally and unconditionally the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to humanity so that people may apply them to pressing social issues and uplift themselves materially and spiritually; in their dealings with society at large, the friends should be upright and avoid any trace of deception; social and economic development projects should not be used as an inducement to conversion;

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and funds from non-Bahá'í should not be utilized for strictly Bahá'í purposes. None of these diminishes the importance of the sacred obligation to teach the Cause. Teaching should remain the dominating passion of the life of every individual believer, and growth a major concern of the Bahá'í community.

As the Bahá'í community has moved from one stage to the next, the range of activities that it has been able to undertake has increased. Its growth has been organic in nature and has implied gradual differentiation in functions. When the Bahá'í community was small in size, all of its interactions with society at large easily fitted together under the designation of direct and indirect teaching. But, over time, new dimensions of work appeared - involvement in civil society, highly organized diplomatic work, social action, and so on - each with its own aims, methods and resources. In a certain sense, it is possible to refer to all of these activities as teaching, since their ultimate purpose is the diffusion of the divine fragrances, the offering of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation to humankind, and service to society. But, in practice, it seems more fruitful to treat them as distinct but complementary lines of action. For example, simply designating certain social and economic development endeavors indirect teaching may cause confusion in at least two ways: On the one hand, it may give the impression that development activities should have as their primary and immediate objective the recruitment of new believers, which is, of course, not the case. On the other, it may suggest to some friends that they are fulfilling their obligation to teach merely by participating in social action.

Social and economic development is an important area of activity in and of itself. Its justification should not be sought in its ability to produce enrollments; it complements teaching and also contributes to it. Naturally, when endeavors in the development field are successful, they increase the public's interest in the Faith and create new

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teaching opportunities for the Bahá'í community, opportunities which the friends should seize upon through their expansion and consolidation activities.

(Universal House of Justice. Seminar on Bahá'í social and economic development, Office of Social and Economic Development, p. 7)

12. The worldwide Bahá'í community, as an organic whole, transcends divisions prevalent in society today, such as “North” and “South”, “developed” and “underdeveloped”. Social and economic development efforts are undertaken by Bahá'ís, irrespective of the degree of material prosperity achieved by their nations, as they strive to apply the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to the gradual process of building a new civilization. Every follower of Bahá'u'lláh is a member of this worldwide community and can rightfully offer to contribute to a specific endeavor in any country. As the friends gain experience in social and economic development, and as they advance in their studies of various branches of learning or in their professional fields, individuals arise in every continent who have expertise in some aspect of development work and who wish to offer their services to projects at home or abroad. If their energies are not channeled effectively, and they are not given a realistic picture of Bahá'í development efforts, these friends will later become frustrated when they realize that the capacity of projects overseas to utilize their talents and services is limited.

For this reason, it is important that conferences, seminars and promotional materials not reinforce an image of “development projects” as understood by society at large. Bahá'í efforts in this field generally take the form of grassroots initiatives carried out by small groups of believers in the towns and villages where they reside. As these initiatives are nurtured, some grow into more substantial programs with permanent administrative structures. Yet very

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few can be compared with the kind of complex projects promoted and funded by government agencies and large nongovernmental organizations.

(Universal House of Justice. Seminar on Bahá'í social and economic development, Office of Social and Economic Development, p. 11)

13. Suggestions for projects for development are welcome from whatever source they spring but ideally they should emanate from the local communities and receive support of the Local and National Assemblies; it should not be necessary to send people to countries to solicit projects. However, if a community has the desire to plan a special project, it is free to call upon people with experience in the planning, design and implementation of the scheme.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter to the International Teaching Centre, dated 1 November 1983)

14. The success of our projects will depend upon the degree to which we bring the spiritual teachings of our Faith to reflect upon all aspects of the selected project, its objectives, design, implementation, personnel, and evaluation. While we must take notice of what is current in development, we should be careful to avoid the danger of indiscriminate imitation.

(Universal House of Justice. Office of Social and Economic Development Memorandum, dated 12 November 1983)

15. The vast majority of Bahá'í projects will be primarily generated at the grass roots, and, initially as required, will receive help from Bahá'í sources, in terms of finances and manpower. The projects will, as you have surmised, be non-profit making, concerned mainly with activities closely related to education, health and hygiene, agriculture and simple community development activities. It is hoped that all these types of projects will reflect the strength of the spiritual principles enshrined in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

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It is important that our undertakings be modest in their scope at the present time. Then, as we gain in confidence and experience and as our resources increase, our work will encompass expanded objectives, and the friends will explore new areas of social and economic activity.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 22 December 1983)

16. The suggestions (concerning possible development projects) are now referred to you so that you may initiate consultation at the grass roots level of the local Bahá'í communities, involving Local Spiritual Assemblies of that area. In addition to projecting Counsellor's broad ideas, you should seek the suggestions of the believers regarding local needs and initiatives. Your Assembly is also asked to consider the practicability of such projects and conduct a survey of the localities, indicating which of these would be able to host the projects. Among the criteria of capacity would be the following:

I. Strength of the community and its ability to benefit from projects spiritually as well as materially, including the beneficial effects of collective action upon the community and its participants.

II. Willingness of the local believers to participate, collaborate and support the projects.

III. Degree and dimension of the local contributions to the projects in terms of manpower (labour), materials and resources.

IV. Presence of able people to manage the human resources and direct the energies of the friends, including strong liaison between volunteers (international and national) and local believers.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 9 November 1983)

17. There are two principles which the House of Justice feels are fundamental to the generality of such projects of

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social and economic development, although, of course, there will be exceptions. The first is that they must be built on a substructure of existing, sufficiently strong local Bahá'í communities. The second is that the long-term conduct of the project should aim at self-sufficiency and not be dependent upon continuing financial support from outside.

The first principle implies that the projects of social and economic development now to be undertaken are a natural stage of the growth of the Bahá'í community and are needed by the community itself although they will, of course, benefit a much wider segment of society...

The second principle must take into account that any project started by the Cause should be designed to grow soundly and steadily, and not to collapse from attrition. In other words, external assistance and funds, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, may be used for capital acquisitions, to make surveys, to initiate activities, to bring in expertise, but the aim should be for each project to be able to continue and to develop on the strength of local Bahá'í labour, funds and enthusiasm even if all external aid should be cut off.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 8 May 1984)

18. The powers released by Bahá'u'lláh match the needs of the times. We may therefore be utterly confident that the new throb of energy now vibrating throughout the Cause will empower it to meet the oncoming challenges of assisting, as maturity and resources allow the development of the social and economic life of peoples, of collaborating with the forces leading towards the establishment of order in the world, of influencing the exploitation and constructive uses of modern technology, and in all these ways enhancing the prestige and progress of the Faith and uplifting the conditions of the generality of mankind.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1983)

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19. Bahá'í projects of social and economic development have greatly multiplied and brought much credit to the community in the examples of the power of group initiative and voluntary consultative action that have been set in numerous places. Activities in this respect involved more than one thousand projects in the areas of education, agriculture, health, literacy, the environment and improvement of the status of women. In a number of instances the projects benefited from collaboration with or assistance from governments and international non-governmental organizations, as, for example, the projects for the improvement of the status of women undertaken by five National Spiritual Assemblies with the financial assistance of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and those projects in other fields receiving assistance from the Canadian, Indian, German and Norwegian governments. Some projects have been so distinguished in their achievements as to be given public notice through the citations and awards of governments and international non-governmental agencies.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message 1992)

20. The dramatic worldwide expansion of Bahá'í social and economic development activities since the October 1983 message by the Universal House of Justice contributed in no small measure to the emergence of the Bahá'í community from obscurity and of the distinguishing characteristics of the development of the Cause of God in the past decade. The virtually exponential expansion achieved in the number of development activities during the Seven Year Plan (1979-1986) became more gradual during the Six Year Plan as Bahá'í communities strengthened existing programs to ensure that new ventures proceeded from a strong foundation. Bahá'ís worldwide now generally possess a much clearer understanding of the unique Bahá'í approach to

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development and have gained invaluable experience in developing the art of applying spiritual concepts to the practical challenges of daily life.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 72)

21. Many communities developed their consultative skill in order to more effectively identify feasible projects, formulate the necessary plans, and guide the resulting undertakings.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p.72)

22. The importance of both preventive and curative health care is clearly stated in the Writings. When the Universal House of Justice released its message on social and economic development in 1983, there was only one modest Bahá'í health care project in operation; by the end of the Six Year Plan, there were fifty-six, and health had become an important aspect of the worldwide Bahá'í program for social and economic development. This is especially true in the field of health education and community health worker training. Bahá'í communities in a growing number of developing countries used this niche in the existing public health delivery system in order to provide valuable services which in turn strengthened the infrastructure of the Bahá'í community.

(Universal House of Justice. Six-Year Plan, summary of achievements, pp. 76-77)

23. A few Bahá'í communities and individuals constructed small rural hospitals or clinics to serve areas with limited access to medical care. In such areas the provision of curative care as well as preventive health measures contributed significantly to the level of health of the communities which they served.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 78)

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24. Youth around the world provided much of the energy, enthusiasm and spirit of service animating Bahá'í development programs by participating in a broad range of community service activities, and especially as tutorial school or children's class teachers.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 81)

25. The accomplishments of the Bahá'í community in the area of social and economic development during the Six Year Plan reflect great audacity and commitment to service. The believers worked to apply spiritual principles to practical needs. The good will towards the Cause generated by their services has created countless opportunities for the future. The friends have seen that their endeavors in the path of service, no matter how modest, have set in motion processes which will long continue to produce beneficial effects.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 84)

26. ...the projects of social and economic development now to be undertaken are a natural stage of growth of the Bahá'í community and are needed by the community itself although they will, of course, benefit a much wider segment of society. The Bahá'í world is in no position financially or from the point of view of manpower, to launch undertakings for the economic and social development of populations in areas where there are but few believers. The greatest need of all peoples is for the Faith itself, so that they may know the destiny towards which they as individuals and as members of society must strive, and will learn from the teachings those virtues and methods which will enable them to work together in harmony, forbearance and trustworthiness ... First comes the illumination of hearts and minds by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and then the grassroots stirring of the believers wishing to apply these teachings to the daily life of their community. (Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 8 May 1984)

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27. The Bahá'í world community will expand its endeavours in both social and economic development and external affairs, and thus continue to collaborate directly with the forces leading towards the establishment of order in the world. By improving its coordinating capacity, the Office of Social and Economic Development will assist in building, as resources and opportunity permit, on the progress already made with hundreds of development projects around the world.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 1996)

28. Present social and economic conditions in Iran, combined with the restrictions so unjustly imposed on you in recent years by some authorities, have made it difficult for you to gain access to higher education, to secure steady employment, and to serve the wider community. We take pleasure in knowing that, despite such obstacles, you are striving to pass on to your children the culture which has so distinguished your community. Without doubt, the social and economic development of your nation will require, especially among its younger generations, a fundamental shift in perspective, one that changes the way in which certain essential concepts are viewed—the true purpose of life, the nature of progress, the meaning of true happiness and well-being, and the place that material pursuits should assume in one's individual and family life.

It is our hope that ... you will find yourselves increasingly able to contribute to the social and economic development of your country and to the welfare and prosperity of all. We will offer prayers in the Holy Shrines for the progress of the noble people of Iran and for the continued success of your endeavours.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 April 2010 to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

23. Bahá'í work ethics

Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. O people of Bahá! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation - such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God. Reflect, O people, on the grace and blessings of your Lord, and yield Him thanks at eventide and dawn. Waste not your hours in idleness and sloth, but occupy yourselves with what will profit you and others. Thus hath it been decreed in this Tablet from whose horizon hath shone the day-star of wisdom and utterance. The most despised of men in the sight of God are they who sit and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of means and place your trust in God, the Provider of all means.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 33)

2. It is unlawful to beg, and it is forbidden to give to him who beggeth. All have been enjoined to earn a living, and as for those who are incapable of doing so, it is incumbent on the Deputies of God and on the wealthy to make adequate provision for them. Keep ye the statutes and commandments of God; nay, guard them as ye would your very eyes, and be not of those who suffer grievous loss.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 147)

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4. Man must bring forth fruit. One who yieldeth no fruit is, in the words of the Spirit (Jesus Christ) like unto a fruitless tree, and a fruitless tree is fit but for the fire.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 60)

5. To engage in some profession is highly commendable, for when occupied with work one is less likely to dwell on the unpleasant aspects of life. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 175)

6. O My servants! Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus, it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 80)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 81)

8. 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. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 82)

9. Please God, the poor may exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood. This is a duty which, in this most great Revelation, hath been prescribed unto every one, and is accounted in the sight of God as a goodly deed.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleaning from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 202)

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10. Mendicancy is forbidden and that giving charity to people who take up begging as their profession is also prohibited ... The object is to uproot mendicancy altogether. However, if a person is incapable of earning a living, is stricken by dire poverty or becometh helpless, then it is incumbent on the wealthy or the Deputies to provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence... By 'Deputies' is meant the representatives of the people, that is to say the members of the House of Justice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 162)

11. Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, p. 47)

12. In this universal dispensation man’s wondrous craftsmanship is reckoned as worship of the Resplendent Beauty. Consider what a bounty and blessing it is that craftsmanship is regarded as worship.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 145)

13. Be occupied always in mentioning the Lord and display effort to complete thy profession. Thou must endeavour greatly so that thou mayest 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.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 145-146)

14. We must never live on others like a parasitic plant. Every person must have a profession, whether it be literary or manual, and must live a clean, manly, honest life, an example of purity to be imitated by others.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 2, p. 18)

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15. In the Bahá'í Cause arts, sciences and all crafts are (counted as) worship. The man who makes a piece of notepaper to the best of his ability, conscientiously, concentrating all his forces on perfecting it, is giving praise to God. Briefly, all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 189)

16. If the believers could properly evaluate the work they are doing they would be astonished at its importance, but they are in the position of not being able to see the forest for the trees; they are too close to it to realize its true import.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 47)

17. With reference to Bahá'u'lláh's command concerning the engagement of the believers in some sort of profession; the teachings are most emphatic on this matter, particularly the statement in the Aqdas to this effect which makes it quite clear that idle people who lack the desire to work can have no place in the new World Order. As a corollary of this principle, Bahá'u'lláh further states that mendicity should not only be discouraged but entirely wiped out from the face of society. It is the duty of those who are in charge of the organization of society to give every individual the opportunity of acquiring the necessary talent in some kind of profession, and also the means of utilizing such a talent, both for its own sake and for the sake of earning the means of his livelihood. Every individual, no matter how handicapped and limited he may be, is under the obligation of engaging in some work or profession, for work, especially when performed in the spirit of service, is, according to Bahá'u'lláh, a form of worship. It has not only a utilitarian purpose, but

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has a value in itself, because it draws us nearer of God, and enables us to better grasp His purpose for us in this world. It is obvious, therefore, that the inheritance of wealth cannot make anyone immune from daily work. (Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 47)

18. Whatever the progress of the machinery may be, man will have always to toil in order to earn his living. Effort is an inseparable part of man's life. It may take different forms with the changing conditions of the world, but it will be always present as a necessary element in our earthly existence. Life is after all a struggle. Progress is attained through struggle, and without such a struggle life ceases to have a meaning; it becomes even extinct. The progress of machinery has not made effort unnecessary. It has given it a new form, a new outlet.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 26 December 1935)

24. Material and spiritual aspects of the Bahá'í House of Worship

*... the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth ...
is ... illustrated in ...the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the spiritual
center of every Bahá'í community ...'*

Shoghi Effendi

1. O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 31)

2. Let the friends recall and ever bear in mind the repeated exhortations and glowing promises of our beloved Master with reference to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the crowning institution in every Bahá'í community.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 108)

3. The seat round which its spiritual, its humanitarian and administrative activities will cluster are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its Dependencies.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 156-157)

4. The oneness of mankind ...implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical

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requirements of life on earth. The indispensability of this coherence is unmistakably illustrated in His ordination of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the spiritual center of every Bahá'í community...

(Shoghi Effendi. *Messages to America*, pp. 23-24)

5. The Temple (the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár) is the most great foundation of the world of humanity and it hath many branches. Although the Temple is the place of worship, with it is connected a hospital, pharmacy, pilgrims' house, school for the orphans, and a university for the study of high sciences. ...The Temple is not only a place for worship; nay, it is perfect in every way. ...I hope that all the beloved of God, collectively, in the continent of America, men and women, will strive night and day until the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár be erected in the utmost solidity and beauty.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá. *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 414-419)

6. Although to outward seeming the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a material structure, yet it hath a spiritual effect. It forgoeth bonds of unity from heart to heart; it is a collective centre for men's souls. Every city in which, during the days of the Manifestation, a temple was raised up, hath created security and constancy and peace, for such buildings were given over to the perpetual glorification of God, and only in the remembrance of God can the heart find rest. Gracious God! The edifice of the House of Worship hath a powerful influence on every phase of life. Experience hath, in the east, clearly shown this to be a fact. Even if, in some small village, a house was designated as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, it produced a marked effect; how much greater would be the impact of one especially raised up.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*. pp. 95-6)

7. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is one of the most vital institutions in the world, and it hath many subsidiary

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branches. Although it is a House of Worship, it is also connected with a hospital, a drug dispensary, a traveller's hospice, a school for orphans, and a university for advanced studies. Every Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is connected with these five things. My hope is that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will now be established in America, and that gradually the hospital, the school, the university, the dispensary and the hospice, all functioning according to the most efficient and orderly procedures, will follow. Make these matters known to the beloved of the Lord, so that they will understand how very great is the importance of this 'Dawning-Point of the Remembrance of God.' The Temple is not only a place for worship; rather, in every respect is it complete and whole.

(Abdu'l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. pp. 99-100)

8. The auxiliary buildings of the House of Worship should likewise be erected there: the hospital, the schools and university, the elementary school, the refuge for the poor and indigent; also, the haven for orphans and the helpless, and the travelers' hospice.

(Abdu'l-Bahá. *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 20)

9. The House of Worship forms the central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (the Dawning-place of the Praise of God), a complex which, as it unfolds in the future, will comprise in addition to the House of Worship a number of dependencies dedicated to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 184)

10. [*The House of Worship*] shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant. [emphasis added] (Shoghi Effendi. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Notes, pp. 190-191)

11. Nor will the exertions, no matter how disinterested and

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strenuous, of those who within the precincts of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be engaged in administering the affairs of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, fructify and prosper unless they are brought into close and daily communion with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Nothing short of direct and constant interaction between the spiritual forces emanating from this House of Worship centering in the heart of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and the energies consciously displayed by those who administer its affairs in their service to humanity can possibly provide the necessary agency capable of removing the ills that have so long and so grievously afflicted humanity. ... And of all the institutions that stand associated with His Holy Name, surely none save the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can most adequately provide the essentials of Bahá'í worship and service, both so vital to the regeneration of the world. Therein lies the secret of the loftiness, of the potency, of the unique position of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as one of the outstanding institutions conceived by Bahá'u'lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 186)

12. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until translated and transfused into that dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity which it is the supreme privilege of the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to facilitate and promote.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 185)

13. With regard to your first query concerning the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, as you know, it is envisioned that a House of Worship and its dependencies will eventually be established in every locality. The upraising of the Temple, the central edifice and spiritual heart of the

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community, is to be followed by the erection and functioning of the various dependencies dedicated to the social and economic upliftment of the community. However, long before a Bahá'í community reaches the stage of building its own Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, this process begins in an embryonic way. Even the first local centre that a Bahá'í community acquires can begin to serve not only as the spiritual and administrative centre and gathering place of the community, but also as the site for other aspects of community life. Clearly, then, social and economic development projects need not await the building of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and are, themselves, worthy pursuits, provided that the community has the capacity to initiate and sustain such activity. Some of the entities created in this process may even later become dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár once it is built. What is important to remember is that, as is the case with the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, central to the development process are the spiritual illumination of hearts and the enlightenment of minds.

(Universal House of Justice. Department of the Secretariat at the Bahá'í World Centre, dated 15 February 1994)

14. As we have said in an earlier message, the flourishing of the community, especially at the local level, demands a significant enhancement in patterns of behaviour: those patterns by which the collective expression of the virtues of the individual members and the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly are manifest in the unity and fellowship of the community and the dynamism of its activity and growth. This calls for the integration of the component elements — adults, youth and children — in spiritual, social, educational and administrative activities; and their engagement in local plans of teaching and development. It implies a collective will and sense of purpose to perpetuate the Spiritual Assembly through annual elections. It involves the practice of collective

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worship of God. Hence, it is essential to the spiritual life of the community that the friends hold regular devotional meetings in local Bahá'í centres, where available, or elsewhere, including the homes of believers.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message, 1996.)

15. It was as if the House of Worship, yet unbuilt, was fulfilling the wishes of the Master, expressed on the eve of the ceremony, for every such edifice: "that humanity might find a place of meeting" and "that the proclamation of the oneness of mankind shall go forth from its open courts of holiness".

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

16. With exceeding joy we now announce that national Mashriqu'l-Adhkár are to be raised up in two countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Papua New Guinea. In these, the criteria we set are demonstrably met, and the response of their peoples to the possibilities created by the current series of Plans has been nothing short of remarkable. With the construction of the last of the continental temples in Santiago under way, the initiation of projects for building national Houses of Worship offers yet another gratifying evidence of the penetration of the Faith of God into the soil of society. One more step is possible. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "one of the most vital institutions of the world", weds two essential, inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. The union of these two is also reflected in the coherence that exists among the community-building features of the Plan, particularly the burgeoning of a devotional spirit that finds expression in gatherings for prayer and an educational process that builds capacity for service to humanity. The correlation of worship and service is especially pronounced in those clusters around the world where Baha'i communities have significantly grown in size and vitality, and where engagement in social action is

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apparent. Some of these have been designated as sites for the dissemination of learning so as to nurture the friends' ability to advance the junior youth programme in associated regions. The capacity to sustain this programme, as we have recently indicated, also fuels the development of study circles and children's classes. Thus, beyond its primary purpose, the learning site fortifies the entire scheme of expansion and consolidation. It is within these clusters that, in the coming years, the emergence of a local *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* can be contemplated.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

17. The *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, the spiritual centre of every Bahá'í community round which must flourish dependencies dedicated to the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific advancement of mankind.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

18. These undertakings [*the construction in Santiago, Chile, of the last of the continental Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*], inextricably linked to the development of community life now being fostered everywhere through acts of devotion and service, are further steps in the sublime task entrusted to humanity by Bahá'u'lláh to build Houses of Worship "throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions"- centres in which souls may gather "harmoniously attuned one to another" to hear the divine verses and to offer supplications, and from which "the voices of praise may rise to the Kingdom" and the "fragrance of God" be diffused.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 August 2014, to the Bahá'ís of the world)

25. Importance of agriculture

Special regard must be paid to agriculture.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. Special regard must be paid to agriculture. Although it hath been mentioned in the fifth place, unquestionably it precedeth the others.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 90)

2. The fundamental basis of the community is agriculture, tillage of the soil.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 217)

3. First and foremost is the principle that to all the members of the body politics shall be given the greatest achievements of the world of humanity. Each one shall have the utmost welfare and well-being. To solve this problem we must begin with the farmer; there will we lay a foundation for system and order because the peasant class and the agricultural class exceed other classes in the importance of their service.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, p. 39)

4. The question of economics must commence with the farmer and then be extended to the other classes in as much as the number of farmers is greater than all other classes, many many times greater. Therefore, it is fitting that the economic problem be first solved with the farmer, for the farmer is the first active agent in the body politic. In brief, from among the wise men in every village a board should be

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organized and the affairs of that village should be under the control of that board.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Tablet to an individual believer, dated 4 October 1912)

5. 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 to 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 engages with all his power in the acquisition of a science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he has been worshipping God in the 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*. pp. 144-145)

6. The solution begins with the village, and when the village is reconstructed, then the cities will be also. The idea is this that in each village will be erected a storehouse. In the language of Religion, it is called the House of Finance. That is a universal storehouse, which is commenced in the village. Its administration is through a Committee of the wise ones of the community, and with the approval of that committee all the affairs are directed.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World*, vol. IV, p. 450)

7. The farmer is the primary factor in the body politics.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. by H. M. Balyuzi, p. 239)

8. The Local Spiritual Assemblies of such villages must gradually widen the scope of their activities, not only to

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develop every aspect of the spiritual life of the believers... but also, ...to promote the standards of agriculture and other skills in the life of the people.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 27 July 1976)

26. Public finance

*...if there were no prospect for gaining interest,
the affairs of men would suffer collapse or dislocation.*

Bahá'u'lláh

1. As to thy question concerning interest and profit on gold and silver: Some years ago the following passage was revealed from the heaven of the All-Merciful in honour of the one who beareth the name of God, entitled Zaynu'l-Muqarrabeín — upon him be the glory of the Most Glorious. He — exalted be His Word — saith: Many people stand in need of this. Because if there were no prospect for gaining interest, the affairs of men would suffer collapse or dislocation. One can seldom find a person who would manifest such consideration towards his fellowman, his countryman or towards his own brother and would show such tender solicitude for him as to be well-disposed to grant him a loan on benevolent terms. Therefore, as a token of favour towards men We have prescribed that interest on money should be treated like other business transactions that are current amongst men. Thus, now that this lucid commandment hath descended from the heaven of the Will of God, it is lawful and proper to charge interest on money, that the people of the world may, in a spirit of amity and fellowship and with joy and gladness, devotedly engage themselves in magnifying the Name of Him Who is the Well-Beloved of all mankind. Verily He ordaineth according to His Own choosing. He hath now made interest on money lawful,

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even as He had made it unlawful in the past. Within His grasp He holdeth the kingdom of authority. He doeth and ordaineth. He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-knowing.

... However, this is a matter that should be practised with moderation and fairness. Our Pen of Glory hath, as a token of wisdom and for the convenience of the people, desisted from laying down its limit. Nevertheless We exhort the loved ones of God to observe justice and fairness, and to do that which would prompt the friends of God to evince tender mercy and compassion towards each other. He is in truth the Counsellor, the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful. God grant that all men may be graciously aided to observe that which the Tongue of the One true God hath uttered.

... Nevertheless the conduct of these affairs hath been entrusted to the men of the House of Justice that they may enforce them according to the exigencies of the time and the dictates of wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 132-134)

2. ... Likewise a general storehouse should be founded with the appointment of a secretary. At time of the harvest, with the approval of the members of that board, a determined percentage of the entire harvest should be appropriated for the storehouse.

The storehouse is to have seven revenues: Tithes, taxes on animals, wealth without inheritors, all things found whose owners cannot be discovered, a third of all treasures (money) found in the earth, a third of the mines, and voluntary contributions.

On the other hand, there are seven expenditures:

1. General running expenses of the institution-salaries, etc., and the administration of public safety, including the department of hygiene.
2. Tithes to the general government (State).
3. Taxes on animals for the State.

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4. Support of an orphanage.
 5. Support of cripples and the incurable.
 6. Support of educational institutions.
 7. Supplying any deficiency for the expenses of the poor.
- (‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Extract from a Tablet dated 4 October 1912)

3. First, whatever contributions are necessary, they obtain from the bank at interest. For instance, they borrow from the bank at three percent and loan to the public at four percent. Any farmer who is in need of implements, they supply and give him all his necessities. When the crop is harvested, it will be the first income of the storehouse. The first revenue is this. But this revenue is not equally distributed. For instance, a person may have a crop of one thousand kilos and this is only sufficient for his wants and living. From him nothing will be taken because he needs it all. If something is taken from him, he will remain hungry. But again, there may be one whose needs require one thousand kilos and his income is two thousand kilos. From him one-tenth is taken. Again, one needs two thousand kilos, but his income is ten thousand kilos. From him two-tenths will be taken. He needs two thousand kilos. If two thousand are taken from him he still has six thousand remaining.

One has fifty thousand kilos, from him one-third is taken. One may have ten thousand kilos expenses, but has one hundred thousand kilos income. One half is taken. The greater the income, the greater is the ratio of taxation.

Second: It is also the same with the cattle. They take proportionately the revenue from the cattle. For example, if a man has two cows necessary for his wants, nothing is taken from him. The more he has, the more is taken from him. This is the second revenue.

The third revenue of the storehouse comes from one who dies without heirs.

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The fourth revenue comes from mines. If a mine is found upon the land of a person, one-third of it belongs to him and the remainder to the storehouse.

The fifth revenue is hidden treasure. If a person finds a hidden treasure in the earth, he takes half of it, and the other half goes to the storehouse.

The sixth revenue. If it (treasure) is found on the way, also half of it belongs to the storehouse.

The seventh revenue is voluntary contributions to the storehouse. Of their own free will and with utmost willingness, the people will give.

These are the seven revenues, but there are seven fixed expenditures.

The first expenditure: The storehouse ought to give one-tenth to the Government, to the public treasury for the public expenses.

The second expenditure is for the poor. The poor who are in need, those who are exempt, not those who are idle. For instance, if a person's crop is burned or he has a loss in his business, and for this reason has become poor, these poor people are to be taken care of.

Third, the infirm, who come to want and cannot work.

Fourth, the orphans. To them also help must be given.

Fifth, the schools. The schools must be organized for the education of the children.

Sixth, for the deaf and blind.

Seventh, public health. Whatever is necessary for the public health must be arranged. Swamps should be filled in, water should be brought in; whatever is necessary for the public health.

If there is something left over (after these expenditures) it should be given to the Great House of Justice. And thus there will be no want in the village. The

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people will not remain hungry, they will not remain naked.
All will be in the utmost welfare and comfort.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World*, vol. IV, pp. 450-451)

27. The Bahá'í writings on food

*Eat ye, O people, of the good things which
God hath allowed you...*

Bahá'u'lláh

1. Say: O concourse of priests and monks! Eat ye of that which God hath made lawful unto you and do not shun meat. God hath, as a token of His grace, granted you leave to partake thereof save during a brief period.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 80)

2. 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 276)

3. Looking after one's health is done with two intentions. Man may take good care of his body for the purpose of satisfying his personal wishes. Or, he may look after his health with the good intention of serving humanity and of living long enough to perform his duty toward mankind. The latter is most commendable.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 18, p. 230)

4. The food of the future will be fruit and grains. The time will come when meat is no longer eaten. Medical science is yet only in its infancy, but it has shown that our natural diet is that which grows out of the ground. The people will gradually develop up to the condition of taking only this

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natural food.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Lights of Guidance*, p. 296)

5. As humanity progresses, meat will be used less and less, for the teeth of man are not carnivorous. For example, the lion is endowed with carnivorous teeth, which are intended for meat, and if meat be not found, the lion starves. The lion cannot graze; its teeth are of different shape. The digestive system of the lion is such that it cannot receive nourishment save through meat. The eagle has a crooked beak, the lower part shorter than the upper. It cannot pick up grain; it cannot graze; therefore, it is compelled to partake of meat. The domestic animals have herbivorous teeth formed to cut grass, which is their fodder. The human teeth, the molars, are formed to grind grain. The front teeth, the incisors, are for fruits, etc. It is, therefore, quite apparent according to the implements for eating that man's food is intended to be grain and not meat. When mankind is more fully developed, the eating of meat will gradually cease.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 170)

6. Regarding the eating of animal flesh and abstinence therefrom, ...he [man] is not in need of meat, nor is he obliged to eat it. Even without eating meat he would live with the utmost vigour and energy ...Truly, the killing of animals and the eating of their meat is somewhat contrary to pity and compassion, and if one can content oneself with cereals, fruit, oil and nuts, such as pistachios, almonds and so on, it would undoubtedly be better and more pleasing.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Compilation on Conservation of the Earth's Resources*, p.11)

7. The Supper of the Lord which His Highness the Spirit ate with the apostles was a heavenly supper and not one of material bread and water, for material objects have no connection with spiritual objects. As at that time material

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food was also present, therefore the leaders of the religion of Christ thought that it was material food which was changed into spiritual food.

The proof that it was not material food is this: The apostles upon many occasions partook of material food with His Highness Christ, yet the supper of that night became designated as the "Lord's Supper." From this designation it is plain and evident that they ate heavenly food at that supper. That heavenly food consisted of the love of God, the knowledge of God, the mysteries of God and the bestowal of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 390)

28. Social security

The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war.

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1. They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 2)

3. O ye rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst are My trust, guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 54)

4. They who are possessed of riches, however, must have the utmost regard for the poor, for great is the honor destined by God for those poor who are steadfast in patience. By My life! There is no honor, except what God may please to bestow, that can compare to this honor. Great is the blessedness awaiting the poor that endure patiently and conceal their sufferings, and well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 202)

5. Allow not the abject to rule over and dominate them who are noble and worthy of honor, and suffer not the high-

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mindeth to be at the mercy of the contemptible and worthless, for this is what We observed upon Our arrival in the City (Constantinople), and to it We bear witness. We found among its inhabitants some who were possessed of an affluent fortune and lived in the midst of excessive riches, while others were in dire want and abject poverty. This ill beseemeth thy sovereignty, and is unworthy of thy rank.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 235)

6. Compose your differences, and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lightened, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquilized. Heal the dissensions that divide you, and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of your cities and territories demandeth.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 250-251)

7. We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples ... Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 253-254)

8. O ye rich ones of the earth! Flee not from the face of the poor that lieth in the dust, nay rather befriend him and suffer him to recount the tale of the woes with which God's inscrutable Decree hath caused him to be afflicted. By the righteousness of God! Whilst ye consort with him, the Concourse on high will be looking upon you, will be interceding for you, will be extolling your names and glorifying your action.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 314-315)

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9. The fifth Taráz concerneth the protection and preservation of the stations of God's servants. One should not ignore the truth of any matter, rather should one give expression to that which is right and true. The people of Bahá should not deny any soul the reward due to him, should treat craftsmen with deference, and, unlike the people a foretime, should not defile their tongues with abuse.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 38)

10. Religion is verily the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world and of tranquillity amongst its peoples... the greater the decline of religion, the more grievous the waywardness of the ungodly. This cannot but lead in the end to chaos and confusion.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 63-64)

11. O ye men of wisdom among nations! Shut your eyes to estrangement, then fix your gaze upon unity. Cleave tenaciously unto that which will lead to the well-being and tranquillity of all mankind.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 67)

12. We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 69-70)

13. It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the

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earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 89)

14. The friends of God must be adorned with the ornament of justice, equity, kindness and love. As they do not allow themselves to be the object of cruelty and transgression, in like manner they should not allow such tyranny to visit the handmaidens of God. He, verily, speaketh the truth and commandeth that which benefitteth His servants and handmaidens. He is the Protector of all in this world and the next.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a *Compilation on Women*, p. 27)

15. The benefits accruing from benevolent works shall fall to the individuals concerned. In such matters only a word would suffice. Should anyone offer Huqúq with utmost joy and radiance, manifesting a spirit of resignation and content, his offering shall be acceptable before God, otherwise He can dispense with all the peoples of the earth... Well is it with them that have fulfilled that which is prescribed in the Book of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to observe that which God hath purposed, for whatsoever hath been set forth in the Book by the Pen of Glory is an effective means for the purging, the purification and sanctification of the souls of men and a source of prosperity and blessing.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol II, p. 502)

16. The fourth principle or teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the readjustment and equalization of the economic standards of mankind. This deals with the question of human livelihood. It is evident that under present systems and conditions of government the poor are subject to the greatest need and distress while others more fortunate live in luxury and plenty

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far beyond their actual necessities ... That there is need of an equalization and apportionment by which all may possess the comforts and privileges of life is evident. The remedy must be legislative readjustment of conditions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 107)

17. The readjustment of the economic laws for the livelihood of man must be effected in order that all humanity may live in the greatest happiness according to their respective degrees.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 170)

18. Bahá’u’lláh set forth principles of guidance and teaching for economic readjustment. Regulations were revealed by Him which ensure the welfare of the commonwealth. As the rich man enjoys his life surrounded by ease and luxuries, so the poor man must, likewise, have a home and be provided with sustenance and comforts commensurate with his needs. This readjustment of the social economy is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it ensures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 181-182)

19. What could be better before God than thinking of the poor? For the poor are beloved by our heavenly Father. When Christ came upon the earth, those who believed in Him and followed Him were the poor and lowly, showing that the poor were near to God. When a rich man believes and follows the Manifestation of God, it is a proof that his wealth is not an obstacle and does not prevent him from attaining the pathway of salvation. After he has been tested and tried, it will be seen whether his possessions are a hindrance in his religious life. But the poor are especially beloved of God. Their lives are full of difficulties, their trials continual, their hopes are in God alone. Therefore, you must assist the poor

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as much as possible, even by sacrifice of yourself. No deed of man is greater before God than helping the poor. Spiritual conditions are not dependent upon the possession of worldly treasures or the absence of them. When one is physically destitute, spiritual thoughts are more likely. Poverty is a stimulus toward God. Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase of poverty. The greatest means for prevention is that whereby the laws of the community will be so framed and enacted that it will not be possible for a few to be millionaires and many destitute. One of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is the adjustment of means of livelihood in human society. Under this adjustment there can be no extremes in human conditions as regards wealth and sustenance. For the community needs financier, farmer, merchant and laborer just as an army must be composed of commander, officers and privates. All cannot be commanders; all cannot be officers or privates. Each in his station in the social fabric must be competent — each in his function according to ability but with justness of opportunity for all.

Lycurgus, King of Sparta, who lived long before the day of Christ, conceived the idea of absolute equality in government. He proclaimed laws by which all the people of Sparta were classified into certain divisions. Each division had its separate rights and function. First, farmers and tillers of the soil. Second, artisans and merchants. Third, leaders or grandees. Under the laws of Lycurgus, the latter were not required to engage in any labour or vocation, but it was incumbent upon them to defend the country in case of war and invasion. Then he divided Sparta into nine thousand equal parts or provinces, appointing nine thousand leaders or grandees to protect them. In this way the farmers of each province were assured of protection, but each farmer was compelled to pay a tax to support the grandee of that

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province. The farmers and merchants were not obliged to defend the country. In lieu of labor the grandees received the taxes. Lycurgus, in order to establish this forever as a law, brought nine thousand grandees together, told them he was going upon a long journey and wished this form of government to remain effective until his return. They swore an oath to protect and preserve his law. He then left his kingdom, went into voluntary exile and never came back. No man ever made such a sacrifice to ensure equality among his fellowmen. A few years passed, and the whole system of government he had founded collapsed, although established upon such a just and wise basis.

Difference of capacity in human individuals is fundamental. It is impossible for all to be alike, all to be equal, all to be wise. Bahá'u'lláh has revealed principles and laws which will accomplish the adjustment of varying human capacities. He has said that whatsoever is possible of accomplishment in human government will be effected through these principles. When the laws He has instituted are carried out, there will be no millionaires possible in the community and likewise no extremely poor.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 216-217)

20. The Bahá'í Cause covers all economic and social questions under the heading and ruling of its laws. The essence of the Bahá'í spirit is that, in order to establish a better social order and economic condition, there must be allegiance to the laws and principles of government ...The governments will enact these laws, establishing just legislation and economics in order that all humanity may enjoy a full measure of welfare and privilege; but this will always be according to legal protection and procedure. Without legislative administration, rights and demands fail, and the welfare of the commonwealth cannot be realized. Today the method of demand is the strike and resort to force,

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which is manifestly wrong and destructive of human foundation. Rightful privilege and demand must be set forth in laws and regulations.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238)

21. Is there a greater blessing than this? Freedom! Liberty! Security! These are the great bestowals of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, p. 20)

22. Although the body politic is one family yet because of lack of harmonious relations some members are comfortable and some in direct misery, some members are satisfied and some are hungry, some members are clothed in most costly garments and some families are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family lacks the necessary reciprocity and symmetry. This household is not well arranged. This household is not living under a perfect law. All the laws which are legislated do not ensure happiness. They do not provide comfort. Therefore, a law must be given to this family by means of which all the members of this family will enjoy equal well-being and happiness.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 38-39)

23. His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh has given instructions regarding every one of the questions confronting humanity. He has given teachings and instructions with regard to every one of the problems with which man struggles. Among them are (the teachings) concerning the question of economics that all the members of the body politic may enjoy through the working out of this solution the greatest happiness, welfare and comfort without any harm or injury attacking the general order of things. Thereby no difference or dissension will occur. No sedition or contention will take place.

God is not partial and is no respecter of persons. He has made provision for all. The harvest comes forth for everyone. The rain showers upon everybody and the heat of

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the sun is destined to warm everyone. The verdure of the earth is for everyone. Therefore, there should be for all humanity the utmost happiness, the utmost comfort, the utmost well-being.

But if conditions are such that some are happy and comfortable and some in misery; some are accumulating exorbitant wealth and others are in dire want — under such a system it is impossible for man to be happy and impossible for him to win the good pleasure of God.

A Persian king was one night in his palace, living in the greatest luxury and comfort. Through excessive joy and gladness, he addressed a certain man, saying: “Of all my life this is the happiest moment. Praise be to God, from every point prosperity appears and fortune smiles! My treasury is full and the army is well taken care of. My palaces are many; my land unlimited; my family is well off; my honour and sovereignty are great. What more could I want!”

The poor man at the gate of his palace spoke out, saying: “O kind king! Assuming that you are from every point of view so happy, free from every worry and sadness — do you not worry for us? You say that on your own account you have no worries — but do you never worry about the poor in your land? Is it becoming or meet that you should be so well off and we in such dire want and need? In view of our needs and troubles how can you rest in your palace, how can you even say that you are free from worries and sorrows? As a ruler you must not be so egoistic as to think of yourself alone but you must think of those who are your subjects. When we are comfortable then you will be comfortable; when we are in misery how can you, as a king, be in happiness?”

The purport is this that we are all inhabiting one globe of earth. In reality we are one family and each one of us is a member of this family. We must all be in the greatest happiness and comfort, under a just rule and regulation

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which is according to the good pleasure of God, thus causing us to be happy, for this life is fleeting.

If man were to care for himself only he would be nothing but an animal for only the animals are thus egoistic. If you bring a thousand sheep to a well to kill nine hundred and ninety-nine the one remaining sheep would go on grazing, not thinking of the others and worrying not at all about the lost, never bothering that its own kind had passed away, or had perished or been killed. To look after one's self only is therefore an animal propensity. It is the animal propensity to live solitary and alone. It is the animal proclivity to look after one's own comfort. But man was created to be a man — to be fair, to be just, to be merciful, to be kind to all his species, never to be willing that he himself be well off while others are in misery and distress — this is an attribute of the animal and not of man. Nay, rather, man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order that others may enjoy wealth; he should enjoy trouble for himself that others may enjoy happiness and well-being. This is the attribute of man. This is becoming of man. Otherwise man is not man — he is less than the animal.

The man who thinks only of himself and is thoughtless of others is undoubtedly inferior to the animal because the animal is not possessed of the reasoning faculty. The animal is excused; but in man there is reason, the faculty of justice, the faculty of mercifulness. Possessing all these faculties he must not leave them unused. He who is so hard-hearted as to think only of his own comfort, such an one will not be called man.

Man is he who forgets his own interests for the sake of others. His own comfort he forfeits for the well-being of all. Nay, rather, his own life must he be willing to forfeit for the life of mankind. Such a man is the honour of the world of humanity. Such a man is the glory of the world of mankind. Such a man is the one who wins eternal bliss. Such a man is

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near to the threshold of God. Such a man is the very manifestation of eternal happiness. Otherwise, men are like animals, exhibiting the same proclivities and propensities as the world of animals. What distinction is there? What prerogatives, what perfections? None whatever! Animals are better even — thinking only of themselves and negligent of the needs of others.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 39-43)

24. Every human being has the right to live; they have a right to rest, and to a certain amount of well-being. As a rich man is able to live in his palace surrounded by luxury and the greatest comfort, so should a poor man be able to have the necessaries of life. Nobody should die of hunger; everybody should have sufficient clothing; one man should not live in excess while another has no possible means of existence.

Let us try with all the strength we have to bring about happier conditions, so that no single soul may be destitute.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 134-135)

25. The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, that everyone, as far as possible, according to his rank and position, shall share in comfort and well-being.

We see amongst us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones who starve with nothing; those who possess several stately palaces, and those who have not where to lay their head. Some we find with numerous courses of costly and dainty food; whilst others can scarce find sufficient crusts to keep them alive. Whilst some are clothed in velvets, furs and fine linen, others have insufficient, poor and thin garments with which to protect them from the cold.

This condition of affairs is wrong, and must be remedied. Now the remedy must be carefully undertaken. It

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cannot be done by bringing to pass absolute equality between men.

Equality is a chimera! It is entirely impracticable! Even if equality could be achieved it could not continue — and if its existence were possible, the whole order of the world would be destroyed. The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. Heaven has so decreed in the creation of man.

Some are full of intelligence, others have an ordinary amount of it, and others again are devoid of intellect. In these three classes of men there is order but not equality. How could it be possible that wisdom and stupidity should be equal? Humanity, like a great army, requires a general, captains, under-officers in their degree, and soldiers, each with their own appointed duties. Degrees are absolutely necessary to ensure an orderly organization. An army could not be composed of generals alone, or of captains only, or of nothing but soldiers without one in authority. The certain result of such a plan would be that disorder and demoralization would overtake the whole army.

King Lycurgus, the philosopher, made a great plan to equalize the subjects of Sparta; with self-sacrifice and wisdom was the experiment begun. Then the king called the people of his kingdom, and made them swear a great oath to maintain the same order of government if he should leave the country, also that nothing should make them alter it until his return. Having secured this oath, he left his kingdom of Sparta and never returned. Lycurgus abandoned the situation, renouncing his high position, thinking to achieve the permanent good of his country by the equalization of the property and of the conditions of life in his kingdom. All the self-sacrifice of the king was in vain. The great experiment failed. After a time, all was destroyed; his carefully thought-out constitution came to an end.

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The futility of attempting such a scheme was shown and the impossibility of attaining equal conditions of existence was proclaimed in the ancient kingdom of Sparta. In our day any such attempt would be equally doomed to failure.

Certainly, some being enormously rich and others lamentably poor, an organization is necessary to control and improve this state of affairs. It is important to limit riches, as it is also of importance to limit poverty. Either extreme is not good. To be seated in the mean is most desirable. If it be right for a capitalist to possess a large fortune, it is equally just that his workman should have a sufficient means of existence.

A financier with colossal wealth should not exist whilst near him is a poor man in dire necessity. When we see poverty allowed to reach a condition of starvation it is a sure sign that somewhere we shall find tyranny. Men must bestir themselves in this matter, and no longer delay in altering conditions which bring the misery of grinding poverty to a very large number of the people. The rich must give of their abundance, they must soften their hearts and cultivate a compassionate intelligence, taking thought for those sad ones who are suffering from lack of the very necessities of life.

There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved.

The government of the countries should conform to the Divine Law which gives equal justice to all. This is the only way in which the deplorable superfluity of great wealth and miserable, demoralizing, degrading poverty can be abolished. Not until this is done will the Law of God be obeyed. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 156-159)

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26. Gracious God! How can one see one's fellow men hungry, destitute, and deprived, and yet live in peace and comfort in one's splendid mansion? How can one see others in the greatest need and yet take delight in one's fortune? That is why it has been decreed in the divine religions that the wealthy should offer up each year a portion of their wealth for the sustenance of the poor and the assistance of the needy.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 319)

27. Regarding your question concerning helping the poor: The Bahá'ís should not go so far as to refrain from extending charity to the needy, if they are able and willing to do so. However, in this, as in many other things, they should exert moderation. The greatest gift that we can give to the poor and the down-trodden is to aid to build up the divine institutions inaugurated in this day by Bahá'u'lláh as these institutions, and this World Order when established, will eliminate the causes of poverty and the injustices which afflict the poor. We should, therefore, do both, support our Bahá'í Fund, and also be kind and generous to the needy.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 11 March 1942)

28. Throughout the world Bahá'í communities operated programs offering compassionate assistance to people in need: suffers from substance abuse, orphans and homeless people, the elderly and handicapped, persons with material difficulties, refugees and victims of disasters.

(Universal House of Justice. *Six Year Plan*, summary of achievements, p. 76)

29. Elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty

*There must be special laws made,
dealing with these extremes of riches and of want.*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, and that everyone as far as possible, according to his position and rank, shall be comfortable. Whilst the nobles and others in high rank are in easy circumstances, the poor also should be able to get their daily food and not be brought to the extremities of hunger. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 29)

2. All the peoples of the world will enjoy like interests, and the poor shall possess a portion of the comforts of life. ...the poor will have at least their comfortable and pleasant places of abode; ...the needy shall have their necessities and no longer live in poverty. In short, a readjustment of the economic order will come about... (‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 102)

3. Bahá’u’lláh set forth principles of guidance and teaching for economic readjustment. Regulations were revealed by Him which ensure the welfare of the commonwealth. As the rich man enjoys his life surrounded by ease and luxuries, so the poor man must, likewise, have a home and be provided with sustenance and comforts commensurate with his needs. This readjustment of the social economy is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it

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ensures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 181)

4. One of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings is the adjustment of means of livelihood in human society. Under this adjustment there can be no extremes in human conditions as regards wealth and sustenance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 216)

5. We see amongst us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones who starve with nothing; those who possess several stately palaces, and those who have not where to lay their head. Some we find with numerous courses of costly and dainty food; whilst others can scarce find sufficient crusts to keep them alive. Whilst some are clothed in velvets, furs and fine linen, others have insufficient, poor and thin garments with which to protect them from the cold. This condition of affairs is wrong, and must be remedied.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 151)

6. There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. ...The government of the countries should conform to the Divine Law which gives equal justice to all. This is the only way in which the deplorable superfluity of great wealth and miserable, demoralizing, degrading poverty can be abolished. Not until this is done will the Law of God be obeyed.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 159)

7. Now, the root cause of these difficulties lies in the law of nature that governs present-day civilization, for it results in a handful of people accumulating vast fortunes that far exceed their needs, while the greater number remain naked, destitute, and helpless. This is at once contrary to justice, to

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humanity, and to fairness; it is the very height of inequity and runs counter to the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful...

... It is preferable, then, that some measure of moderation be achieved, and by moderation is meant the enactment of such laws and regulations as would prevent the unwarranted concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and satisfy the essential needs of the many.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 315-316)

8. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has developed in various of His talks, which you will find in different compilations, the principles upon which the Bahá’í economic system would be based. A system that prevents among others the gradual control of wealth in the hands of a few and the resulting state of both extremes, wealth and poverty.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter dated 28 October 1927)

9. ...economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 204)

10. It is evident that the subject of the suffering poor and the pampered rich has been, and will continue to be, discussed by the world's scholars and philosophers, but so far they have not found a solution to this difficult problem. Whatever you witness in this world, such as evidences of mighty upheavals and omens of future events, all revolve around this pivot, that is, the groaning and the agitation of the poor on the one hand, and the excessive wealth and affluence of the rich on the other. This conflict and clash of interests will remain unchanged until such time as the laws and commandments revealed by the Pen of the Most High in this regard are executed and enforced, and the solution of the economic problems based on spiritual principles becomes

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possible. Then will there be peace between the rich and the poor, or between the forces of capital and labour. Then will the poor gain their legitimate right of having their necessary and essential needs satisfied, and the rich will be able to spend their wealth as they please, free of fear for their lives and property.

The intent is not, however, to say that all the poor will become rich and they will become equal. Such a concept is like saying that all the ignorant and the illiterate will become the sages of the age and the learned of the learned. Rather, when education becomes compulsory and universal, ignorance and illiteracy will decrease and there will remain no one deprived of education. But, as the basis for distinction is in the person's capacity and ability, and differences are related to the degree of his intelligence and mental powers, therefore, all the people will not be equal in their knowledge, learning and understanding. The intent is to say that the world of creation calls for distinctions in people's stations, and degrees in the differences existing among them, so that the affairs of the world may become organized and ordered. Diversity in all created things, whether in kind, in physical appearance, or in station, is the means for their protection, their permanence, unity and harmony. Each part complements the other.

Concerning the point that the poor are always in hardship and trouble and in need of everything, this we can acknowledge. However, it is doubtful whether the rich have peace of mind and true comfort, they should be quietly asked about this, and their response is dependent upon their conscience.

This should not be understood to mean that poverty is cherished and riches and wealth are blameworthy. All are

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called upon, nay, rather, commanded and required by the Pen of the Most High, to engage in a trade or profession.

(Shoghi Effendi: 22 May 1928 -- translated from the Persian. Quoted in economics, agriculture and related subjects. Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice)

11. The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this situation. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made. It is an issue that is bound up not only with the necessity for eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty but also with those spiritual verities the understanding of which can produce a new universal attitude. Fostering such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, pp. 10-11)

12. As the twentieth century draws to a close, it is no longer possible to maintain the belief that the approach to social and economic development to which the materialistic conception of life has given rise is capable of meeting humanity's needs. Optimistic forecasts about the changes it would generate have vanished into the ever-widening abyss that separates the living standards of a small and relatively diminishing minority of the world's inhabitants from the poverty experienced by the vast majority of the globe's population.

(Universal House of Justice. *Prosperity of Humankind*, p. 2)

30. Importance of wealth and wealth redistribution

Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. O children of Dust! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

(Bahá’u’lláh. Persian *Hidden Words*, number 49)

2. O ye that pride yourselves on mortal riches! Know ye in truth that wealth is a mighty barrier between the seeker and his desire, the lover and his beloved. The rich, but for a few, shall in no wise attain the court of His presence nor enter the city of content and resignation. Well is it then with him, who, being rich, is not hindered by his riches from the eternal kingdom, nor deprived by them of imperishable dominion. By the Most Great Name! The splendour of such a wealthy man shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth!

(Bahá’u’lláh. Persian *Hidden Words*, number 53)

3. O SON OF MAN! Should prosperity befall thee, rejoice not, and should abasement come upon thee, grieve not, for both shall pass away and be no more.

(Bahá’u’lláh. Arabic *Hidden Words*, number 52)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 34-35)

5. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavors be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 138)

6. The beginning of magnanimity is when man expendeth his wealth on himself, on his family and on the poor among his brethren in his Faith.

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The essence of wealth is love for Me; whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 156)

7. What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasuries, on the diversity and the cost of the ornaments with which ye deck yourselves? If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty. In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye possess. From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches. Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory! Would that ye could perceive it!

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 252-253)

8. Should a man 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 276)

9. Whosoever comes with one good act, God will give him tenfold. There is no doubt that the living Lord shall assist and confirm the generous soul.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. 6, number 17, p. 139)

10. Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be

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expended for philanthropic purposes. Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor — in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society — its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 24-25)

11. Can we maintain that it is contrary to the fundamentals of the Faith to encourage the acquisition of useful arts and of general knowledge, to inform oneself as to the truths of such physical sciences as are beneficial to man, and to widen the scope of industry and increase the products of commerce and multiply the nation’s avenues of wealth? Would it conflict with the worship of God to establish law and order in the cities and organize the rural districts, to repair the roads and build railroads and facilitate transportation and travel and thus increase the people’s well-being? Would it be inconsistent with the Divine commands and prohibitions if we were to work the abandoned mines which are the greatest source of the nation’s wealth, and to build factories, from which come the entire people’s comfort, security and affluence? Or to stimulate the creation of new

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industries and to promote improvement in our domestic products?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 101-102)

12. Consider how the greatest men in the world — whether among prophets or philosophers—all have forfeited their own comfort, have sacrificed their own pleasure for the well-being of humanity. They have sacrificed their own lives for the body politic. They have sacrificed their own wealth for that of the general welfare. They have forfeited their own honor for the honor of mankind. Therefore, it becomes evident that this is the highest attainment for the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 39-43)

13. If wealth and prosperity become the means of service at God’s Threshold, it is highly meritorious; otherwise it would be better to avoid them.

(Universal House of Justice. *Messages 1963 - 1986*, p. 437)

14. Referring to the exigencies of the material world, Bahá’u’lláh has affirmed that to every end has been assigned a means for its accomplishment. A natural conclusion to be drawn from reflection on this fundamental principle [*acquisition of wealth*] is that vigilance must be exercised in distinguishing “means” from “ends”; otherwise, what is intended as a mere instrument could easily become the very goal of an individual’s life.

The acquisition of wealth is a case in point; it is acceptable and praiseworthy to the extent that it serves as a means for achieving higher ends — for meeting one’s basic necessities, for fostering the progress of one’s family, for promoting the welfare of society, and for contributing to the establishment of a world civilization. But to make the accumulation of wealth the central purpose of one’s life is unworthy of any human being.

An idea closely related to the above, and well in

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accord with the spirit of the Bahá'í teachings, is that the end does not serve to justify the means. However constructive and noble the goal, however significant to one's life or to the welfare of one's family, it must not be attained through improper means. Regrettably, a number of today's leaders — political, social, and religious — as well as some of the directors of financial markets, executives of multinational corporations, chiefs of commerce and industry, and ordinary people who succumb to social pressure and ignore the call of their conscience, act against this principle; they justify any means in order to achieve their goals.

The legitimacy of wealth depends, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has indicated, on how it is acquired and on how it is expended. In this connection, He has stated that "wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, crafts and industry", if the measures adopted by the individual in generating wealth serve to "enrich the generality of the people", and if the wealth thus obtained is expended for "philanthropic purposes" and "the promotion of knowledge", for the establishment of schools and industry and the advancement of education, and in general for the welfare of society.

Reflect on the significance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words, at once complex and subtle. Quite apart from the already formidable obstacles to employment and service that certain fanatical elements have placed in your path, a host of negative forces, generated by the materialism and corruption so widespread in the world, present yet a further challenge in upholding the Bahá'í standard of conduct with respect to financial affairs. Nevertheless, following in the footsteps of your spiritual forebears, you remain undaunted, striving sincerely to reinforce within your families, particularly in your children, attitudes towards material wealth founded on Divine guidance.

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The members of the younger generation would do well to ponder the above statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in which He conditions the acquisition of wealth on diligent work and the grace of God. Let them weigh carefully in their hearts and minds the difference between gaining wealth through earnest effort in fields such as agriculture, commerce, the arts, and industry, on the one hand, and, on the other, obtaining it without exertion or through dishonourable means. Let them consider the consequences of each for the spiritual development of the individual, as well as the progress of society, and ask themselves what possibilities exist for generating income and acquiring wealth that will draw down confirmations from on high. It will surely become evident, as they do so, that what will attract God’s blessings and ensure true happiness both in this world and in the next is the development of spiritual qualities, such as honesty, trustworthiness, generosity, justice, and consideration for others, and the recognition that material means are to be expended for the betterment of the world.

Many would readily acknowledge that the acquisition of wealth should be governed by the requirements of justice, which, as a principle, can be expressed to varying degrees, on different levels. An employer and employee, for example, are bound by the laws and conventions that regulate their work, and each is expected to carry out his or her responsibilities with honesty and integrity. At another level, however, if the deeper implications of justice are to be realized, the other two preconditions to the legitimate acquisition of wealth mentioned above must be taken into account, and prevailing norms reassessed in their light. Here, the relationship between minimum wage and the cost of living merits careful evaluation—this, especially in light of the contribution workers make to a company’s success and their entitlement, as noted by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to a fair share of the profits. The wide margin, often unjustifiable, between the production

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costs of certain commodities and the price at which they are sold likewise requires attention, as does the question of the generation of wealth through measures that “enrich the generality of the people”. What such reflection and inquiry will no doubt make abundantly clear is that certain approaches to obtaining wealth — so many of which involve the exploitation of others, the monopolization and manipulation of markets, and the production of commodities that promote violence and immorality — are unworthy and unacceptable.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 April 2010 to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

15. The key to resolving these social ills [materialism and the culture of consumerism] rests in the hands of a youthful generation convinced of the nobility of human beings; eagerly seeking a deeper understanding of the true purpose of existence; able to distinguish between divine religion and mere superstition; clear in the view of science and religion as two independent yet complementary systems of knowledge that propel human progress; conscious of and drawn to the beauty and power of unity in diversity; secure in the knowledge that real glory is to be found in service to one's country and to the peoples of the world; and mindful that the acquisition of wealth is praiseworthy only insofar as it is attained through just means and expended for benevolent purposes, for the promotion of knowledge and toward the common good. Thus must our precious youth prepare themselves to shoulder the tremendous responsibilities that await them. And thus will they prove immune to the atmosphere of greed that surrounds them and press forward unwavering in the pursuit of their exalted goals.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 2 April 2010 to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

A. Voluntary Giving

16. To state the matter briefly, the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh advocate voluntary sharing, and this is a greater thing than the equalization of wealth. For equalization must be imposed from without, while sharing is a matter of free choice.

Man reacheth perfection through good deeds, voluntarily performed, not through good deeds the doing of which was forced upon him. And sharing is a personally chosen righteous act: that is, the rich should extend assistance to the poor, they should expend their substance for the poor, but of their own free will, and not because the poor have gained this end by force. For the harvest of force is turmoil and the ruin of the social order. On the other hand, voluntary sharing, the freely-chosen expending of one's substance, leadeth to society's comfort and peace. It lighteth up the world; it bestoweth honour upon humankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 115)

17. And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is voluntary sharing of one's property with others among mankind. This voluntary sharing is greater than (legally imposed) equality, and consists in this, that man should not prefer oneself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others. But this should not be introduced by coercion so that it becomes a law and man is compelled to follow it. Nay, rather, man should voluntarily and of his own choice sacrifice his property and life for others, and spend willingly for the poor, just as is done in Persia among the Bahá'ís.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 302)

18. The spending of money for the help of another brings a great blessing...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 1, p. 6)

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19. The rich too must be merciful to the poor, contributing from willing hearts to their needs without being forced or compelled to do so.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 117)

20. Hearts must be so cemented together, love must become so dominant that the rich shall most willingly extend assistance to the poor and take steps to establish these economic adjustments permanently. If it is accomplished in this way, it will be most praiseworthy because then it will be for the sake of God and in the pathway of His service.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 239)

21. ...man must sacrifice the qualities and attributes of the world of nature for the qualities and attributes of the world of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 451-452)

22. Should a wealthy man choose to bequeath, upon his death, a portion of his wealth to the poor and needy, perchance this action will bring about divine pardon and forgiveness and result in his progress in the Kingdom of the All-Merciful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 267)

23. The time will come in the near future when humanity will become so much more sensitive than at present that the man of great wealth will not enjoy his luxury, in comparison with the deplorable poverty about him. He will be forced, for his own happiness, to expend his wealth to procure better conditions for the community in which he lives.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 1, pp. 4-5)

24. But in the Divine Teachings equality is brought about through a ready willingness to share. It is commanded as regards wealth that the rich among the people, and the

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aristocrats should by their own free will and for the sake of their own happiness, concern themselves with and care for the poor. This equality is the result of the lofty characteristics and noble attributes of mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 1, p. 231)

25. We must be like the fountain or Spring that is continually 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 the 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.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 95)

26. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá’u’lláh who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 41-42)

27. I feel urged to remind you of the necessity of ever bearing in mind the cardinal principle that all contributions to the Fund are to be purely and strictly voluntary in character. It should be made clear and evident to everyone that any form of compulsion, however slight and indirect, strikes at the very root of the principle underlying the formation of the Fund ever since its inception.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 101)

B. Industrial Profit sharing

28. You have asked about strikes. Great difficulties have arisen and will continue to arise from this issue. The origin of these difficulties is twofold: One is the excessive greed and rapacity of the factory owners, and the other is the gratuitous demands, the greed, and the intransigence of the workers. One must therefore seek to address both.

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Now, the root cause of these difficulties lies in the law of nature that governs present-day civilization, for it results in a handful of people accumulating vast fortunes that far exceed their needs, while the greater number remain naked, destitute, and helpless. This is at once contrary to justice, to humanity, and to fairness; it is the very height of inequity and runs counter to the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful.

This disparity is confined to the human race: Among other creatures, that is, among the animals, a certain kind of justice and equality prevails. Thus, there is equality within a shepherd's flock, or within a herd of deer in the wilderness, or among the songbirds that dwell in the mountains, plains, and orchards. The animals of every species enjoy a measure of equality and do not differ greatly from one another in their means of existence, and thus they live in perfect peace and joy.

It is quite otherwise with the human race, where the greatest oppression and injustice are to be found. Thus you can observe, on the one hand, a single person who has amassed a fortune, made an entire country his personal dominion, acquired immense wealth, and secured an unceasing flow of gains and profits, and, on the other, a hundred thousand helpless souls—weak, powerless, and wanting even a mouthful of bread. There is neither equality here nor benevolence. Observe how, as a result, general peace and happiness have become so wanting, and the welfare of humanity so undermined, that the lives of a vast multitude have been rendered fruitless! For all the wealth, power, commerce, and industry are concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, while all others toil under the burden of endless hardships and difficulties, are bereft of advantages and benefits, and remain deprived of comfort and peace. One must therefore enact such laws and regulations as will moderate the excessive fortunes of the few and meet the basic needs of the myriad millions of the poor, that a degree

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of moderation may be achieved.

However, absolute equality is just as untenable, for complete equality in wealth, power, commerce, agriculture, and industry would result in chaos and disorder, disrupt livelihoods, provoke universal discontent, and undermine the orderly conduct of the affairs of the community. For unjustified equality is also fraught with peril. It is preferable, then, that some measure of moderation be achieved, and by moderation is meant the enactment of such laws and regulations as would prevent the unwarranted concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and satisfy the essential needs of the many. For instance, the factory owners reap a fortune every day, but the wage the poor workers are paid cannot even meet their daily needs: This is most unfair, and assuredly no just man can accept it. Therefore, laws and regulations should be enacted which would grant the workers both a daily wage and a share in a fourth or fifth of the profits of the factory in accordance with its means, or which would have the workers equitably share in some other way in the profits with the owners. For the capital and the management come from the latter and the toil and labour from the former. The workers could either be granted a wage that adequately meets their daily needs, as well as a right to a share in the revenues of the factory when they are injured, incapacitated, or unable to work, or else a wage could be set that allows the workers to both satisfy their daily needs and save a little for times of weakness and incapacity.

If matters were so arranged, neither would the factory owners amass each day a fortune which is absolutely of no use to them—for should one's fortune increase beyond measure, one would come under a most heavy burden, become subject to exceeding hardships and troubles, and find the administration of such an excessive fortune to be most difficult and to exhaust one's natural powers—nor would the workers endure such toil and hardship as to

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become incapacitated and to fall victim, at the end of their lives, to the direst need.

It is therefore clearly established that the appropriation of excessive wealth by a few individuals, notwithstanding the needs of the masses, is unfair and unjust, and that, conversely, absolute equality would also disrupt the existence, welfare, comfort, peace, and orderly life of the human race. Such being the case, the best course is therefore to seek moderation, which is for the wealthy to recognize the advantages of moderation in the acquisition of profits and to show regard for the welfare of the poor and the needy, that is, to fix a daily wage for the workers and also to allot them a share of the total profits of the factory.

In brief, insofar as the mutual rights of the factory owners and the workers are concerned, laws must be enacted that would enable the former to make reasonable profits and the latter to be provided with their present necessities and their future needs, so that if they become incapacitated, grow old, or die and leave behind small children, they or their children will not be overcome by dire poverty but will receive a modest pension from the revenues of the factory itself.

For their part, the workers should not make excessive demands, be recalcitrant, ask for more than they deserve, or go on strike. They should obey and comply and make no demands for exorbitant wages. Rather, the mutual and equitable rights of both parties should be officially fixed and established according to the laws of justice and compassion, and any party that violates them should be condemned after a fair hearing and be subject to a definitive verdict enforced by the executive branch, so that all affairs may be appropriately ordered and all problems adequately resolved.

The intervention of the government and the courts in the problems arising between owners and workers is fully warranted, since these are not such particular matters as are ordinary transactions between two individuals, which do not

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concern the public and in which the government should have no right to interfere. For problems between owners and workers, though they may appear to be a private matter, are detrimental to the common good, since the commercial, industrial, and agricultural affairs, and even the general business of the nation, are all intimately linked together: An impairment to one is a loss to all. And since the problems between owners and workers are detrimental to the common good, the government and the courts have therefore the right to intervene.

Even in the case of differences that arise between two individuals with regard to particular rights, a third party, namely the government, is needed to resolve the dispute. How, then, can the problem of strikes, which entirely disrupt the country—whether they arise from the inordinate demands of the workers or the excessive greed of the factory owners—remain neglected?

Gracious God! How can one see one's fellow men hungry, destitute, and deprived, and yet live in peace and comfort in one's splendid mansion? How can one see others in the greatest need and yet take delight in one's fortune? That is why it has been decreed in the divine religions that the wealthy should offer up each year a portion of their wealth for the sustenance of the poor and the assistance of the needy. This is one of the foundations of the religion of God and is an injunction binding upon all. And since in this regard one is not outwardly compelled or obliged by the government, but rather aids the poor at the prompting of one's own heart and in a spirit of joy and radiance, such a deed is most commendable, approved, and pleasing.

This is the meaning of the righteous deeds mentioned in the heavenly Books and Scriptures.

(Abdu'l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 315-320)

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29. If it be right for a capitalist to possess a large fortune, it is equally just that his workman should have a sufficient means of existence.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 158-159)

30. Today the method of demand is the strike and resort to force, which is manifestly wrong and destructive of human foundations. Rightful privilege and demand must be set forth in laws and regulations.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238)

31. Difference of capacity in human individuals is fundamental. It is impossible for all to be alike, all to be equal, all to be wise. Bahá’u’lláh has revealed principles and laws which will accomplish the adjustment of varying human capacities.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, p. 37)

32. ...the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their employees and give a fairly certain percentage of their products to their workingmen in order that the employees may receive, beside their wages, some of the general income of the factory so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, p. 43)

33. You did a wonderful thing in this country in 1865 when you abolished chattel slavery, but you must do a much more wonderful thing now, you must abolish industrial slavery.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 1, p. 6)

34. According to the divine law, no wages should be given to the employee. Nay, rather indeed they are partners in every work.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 1, p. 7)

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35. The solution of economic questions will not be brought about by array of capital against labor, and labor against capital, in strife and conflict, but by the voluntary attitude of goodwill on both sides. Then a real and lasting justness of conditions will be secured....

It will not be possible in the future for men to amass great fortunes by the labors of others. The rich will willingly divide. They will come to this gradually, naturally, by their own volition. It will never be accomplished by war and bloodshed.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. VII, number 15, p. 147)

36. Profit sharing is recommended as a solution to one form of economic problems. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 19)

37. The Master has definitely stated that wages should be unequal, simply because that men are unequal in their ability and hence should receive wages that would correspond to their varying capacities and resources.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 20)

C. Progressive Income Tax

38. Now, if his income be equal to his expenditures, from such a farmer nothing whatever will be taken. That is, he will not be subjected to taxation of any sort, needing as he does all his income. Another farmer may have expenses running up to one thousand dollars. We will say, and his income is two thousand dollars. From such an one a tenth will be required, because he has a surplus. But if his income be ten thousand dollars and his expenses one thousand dollars or his income twenty thousand dollars, he will have to pay as taxes, one-fourth. If his income be one hundred thousand dollars and his expenses five thousand, one-third will he have

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to pay because he has still a surplus, since his expenses are five thousand and his income one hundred thousand. If he pays, say, thirty-five thousand dollars, in addition to the expenditure of five thousand he still has sixty thousand left. But if his expenses be ten thousand and his income two hundred thousand, then he must give an even half because ninety thousand will be in that case the sum remaining. Such a scale as this will determine allotment of taxes....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. XIII, number 9, pp. 228-229)

39. All must be producers. Each person in the community whose need is equal to his individual producing capacity shall be exempt from taxation. But if his income is greater than his needs, he must pay a tax until an adjustment is effected. That is to say, a man’s capacity for production and his needs will be equalized and reconciled through taxation. If his production exceeds he will pay a tax; if his necessities exceed his production, he shall receive an amount sufficient to equalize or adjust. Therefore, taxation will be proportionate to capacity and production, and there will be no poor in the community.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 217)

D. Division of Inheritance

40. We have divided inheritance into seven categories: to the children, We have allotted nine parts comprising five hundred and forty shares; to the wife, eight parts comprising four hundred and eighty shares; to the father, seven parts comprising four hundred and twenty shares; to the mother, six parts comprising three hundred and sixty shares; to the brothers, five parts or three hundred shares; to the sisters, four parts or two hundred and forty shares; and to the teachers, three parts or one hundred and eighty shares. (Bahá’u’lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 20)

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41. Should the deceased leave no offspring, their share shall revert to the House of Justice, to be expended by the Trustees of the All-Merciful on the orphaned and widowed, and on whatsoever will bring benefit to the generality of the people, that all may give thanks unto their Lord, the All-Gracious, the Pardoner.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 21)

42. To divide the inheritance as it is prescribed by Bahá'u'lláh we have to divide it into 2520 shares. But we can also divide it into 42 shares. Then every one of the beneficiaries will take so many of these shares. These numbers form like a highest denominator for the different fractions which represent the shares of the different individuals that will benefit in case of intestacy. In case of the non-existence of one class of inheritors the Aqdas mentions how it should be divided. As general rule a part goes to the House of Justice, a part to the children.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 21 October 1932)

43. ...even though a Bahá'í is permitted in his will to dispose of his wealth in the way he wishes, yet he is morally and conscientiously bound to always bear in mind, while writing his will, the necessity of his upholding the principle of Bahá'u'lláh regarding the social function of wealth, and the consequent necessity of avoiding its over-accumulation and concentration in a few individuals or groups of individuals.

(Shoghi Effendi. Cited in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 38)

E. Huqúqu'lláh (Right of God)

44. Should anyone acquire one hundred mithqáls of gold, nineteen mithqáls thereof are God's and to be rendered unto Him, The Fashioner of earth and heaven. Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of so great a bounty. This We have commanded you, though We are well able to

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dispense with you and with all who are in the heavens and on earth; in it there are benefits and wisdoms beyond the ken of any one but God, the Omniscient, the All-Informed. Say: By this means He hath desired to purify what ye possess and to enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can comprehend save those whom God hath willed. He, in truth, is the Beneficent, the Gracious, the Bountiful.

O people! Deal not faithlessly with the Right of God, nor, without His leave, make free with its disposal. Thus hath His commandment been established in the holy Tablets, and in this exalted Book. He who dealeth faithlessly with God shall in justice meet with faithlessness himself; he, however, who acteth in accordance with God's bidding shall receive a blessing from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Gracious, the Bestower, the Generous, the Ancient of Days. He, verily, hath willed for you that which is yet beyond your knowledge, but which shall be known to you when, after this fleeting life, your souls soar heavenwards and the trappings of your earthly joys are folded up. Thus admonisheth you He in Whose possession is the Guarded Tablet.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 97)

(Note: Mithqál is a unit of weight, equivalent to a little over 3 1/2 grammes, used in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* with reference to quantities of gold or silver for various purposes, usually in amounts of 9, 19 or 95 mithqáls. The equivalents of these in the metric system and in troy ounces (which are used in the measurement of precious metals), are as follows:

9 mithqáls = 32.775 grammes = 1.05374 troy ounces

19 mithqáls = 69.192 grammes = 2.22456 troy ounces

95 mithqáls = 345.958 grammes = 11.12282 troy ounces

This computation is based on the guidance of Shoghi Effendi, conveyed in a letter written on his behalf, which states "one mithqál consists of nineteen nakhuds. The weight of twenty-four nakhuds equals four and three-fifths grammes. Calculations may be made on this basis." The mithqál traditionally used in the Middle East had consisted of 24 nakhuds but in the Bayán this was changed to 19 nakhuds and Bahá'u'lláh confirmed this as the size of the mithqál referred to in the Bahá'í laws (Q&A #23).

Reference: Jonah Winters (2010). Glossary of Bahá'í terms. Cited in <https://bahai-library.com/winters_bahai_glossary>

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45. ...the first duty is to recognize the one true God - magnified be his Glory—the second is to show forth constancy in His Cause, and, after these, one's duty is to purify one's riches and earthly possessions...

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 31)

46. The question of Huqúq is highly significant. It hath been and will always be conducive to divine increase, prosperity, dignity and honour...

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 45)

47. The Right of God is an obligation upon everyone. This commandment hath been revealed and set down in the Book by the Pen of Glory. However, it is not permissible to solicit or demand it. If one is privileged to pay Huqúq, and doeth so in a spirit of joy and radiance, such an act is acceptable, and not otherwise.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 38)

48. ...the payment of the Right of God is conducive to prosperity, to blessing, and to honour and divine protection.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 6)

49. O Zayn! ...Beseech ye God that He may enable everyone to discharge the obligation of Huqúq, inasmuch as the progress and promotion of the Cause of God depend on material means. If His faithful servants could realize how meritorious are benevolent deeds in these days, they would all arise to do that which is meet and seemly.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 1)

50. ...inasmuch as God hath made the achievement of everything conditional upon material means, therefore the injunction prescribing payment of the Huqúq hath been

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revealed from the heaven of His Will, and the blessings flowing from this deed shall fall to the donors themselves.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 33)

51. However, the wisdom of this command is that the act of giving is well-pleasing in the sight of God. Consider how well-pleasing must this mighty act be in His estimation that He hath ascribed it unto His Own self. Rejoice ye then, O people of generosity!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 61)

52. In brief, after having deducted the yearly expenses, if there is still any surplus left, then Huqúq will be applicable to this surplus at the rate of 19% and no further payment of Huqúq will fall due on it. In the following year however, after the annual expenses, if there is still an excess of income over the expenditure of that second year, then Huqúq will be applicable to the amount of the excess only.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 66)

53. With humility before our sovereign Lord, we now announce that as of Ridván 1992, the beginning of the Holy Year, the Law of Huqúqu'lláh, the Right of God, will become universally applicable. All are lovingly called to observe it.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván Messages 1991)

F. Zakát (Tithes)

54. It hath been enjoined upon you to purify your means of sustenance and other such things through payment of Zakát. Thus hath it been prescribed in this exalted Tablet by Him Who is the Revealer of verses. We shall, if it be God's will and purpose, set forth erelong the measure of its assessment. He, verily, expoundeth whatsoever He desireth by virtue of His own knowledge, and He, of a truth, is Omniscient and All-Wise.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 146)

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55. And in the matter of Zakát, We have likewise decreed that you should follow what hath been revealed in the Qur'án. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Questions and Answers, number 107)

56. Zakát is referred to in the Qur'án as a regular charity binding upon Muslims. In due course the concept evolved into a form of alms-tax which imposed the obligation to give a fixed portion of certain categories of income, beyond specified limits, for the relief of the poor, for various charitable purposes, and to aid the Faith of God. The limit of exemption varied for different commodities, as did the percentage payable on the portion assessable.

Bahá'u'lláh states that the Bahá'í law of Zakát follows "what hath been revealed in the Qur'án". Since such issues as the limits for exemption, the categories of income concerned, the frequency of payments, and the scale of rates for the various categories of Zakát are not mentioned in the Qur'án, these matters will have to be set forth in the future by the Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi has indicated that pending such legislation the believers should, according to their means and possibilities, make regular contributions to the Bahá'í Fund.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 161)

G. The Law on Treasure Trove

57. Should a treasure be found, one third thereof is the right of the discoverer, and the other two thirds should be expended by the men of the House of Justice for the welfare of all people. This shall be done after the establishment of the House of Justice, and until that time it shall be committed to the keeping of trustworthy persons in each locality and territory. He, in truth, is the Ruler, the Ordainer, the Omniscient, the All-Informed.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 217)

H. Charity and philanthropic activities

58. Charity is pleasing and praiseworthy in the sight of God and is regarded as a prince among goodly deeds... Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 71)

59. The essence of charity is for the servant to recant the blessings of His Lord, and to render thanks unto Him at all times and under all conditions.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 156)

60. The Pen of Admonition exhorteth the friends and enjoineth on them charity, pity, wisdom, and gentleness.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *A Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 45)

61. In all the cycles of the prophets the philanthropic affairs were confined to their respective peoples only—with the exception of small matters, such as charity, which was permissible to extend to others. But in this wonderful dispensation, philanthropic affairs are for all humanity, without any exception, because it is the manifestation of the mercifulness of God. Therefore, every universal matter—that is, one that belongs to all the world of humanity—is divine; and every matter that is sectarian and special is not universal in character—that is, it is limited. Therefore, my hope is that the friends of God, every one of them, may become as the mercy of God to all mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Star of the West*, vol. 9, number 1, p. 9)

62. Therefore, strive to show in the human world that women are most capable and efficient, that their hearts are more tender and susceptible than the hearts of men, that they are more philanthropic and responsive toward the needy and suffering, that they are inflexibly opposed to war and are lovers of peace. Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for

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man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 284)

63. Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 24)

64. In philanthropic enterprises and acts of charity, in promotion of the general welfare and furtherance of the public good including that of every group without any exception whatever, let the beloved of God attract the favourable attention of all, and lead all the rest.

(Shoghi Effendi. Compilation on *Bahá'í Education*, p. 50)

65. The Bahá'ís should not go so far as to refrain from extending charity to the needy, if they are able and willing to do so.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 11 March 1942)

31. Socialism and capitalism

In the divine teachings equality is brought about through a ready willingness to share.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. The question of socialization is very important. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united and organize an assembly the members of which should be elected from the parliaments and the nobles of the nations. These must plan with utmost wisdom and power so that neither the capitalist suffer from enormous losses nor the laborers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law; then announce to the public that the rights of working people are to be strongly preserved. Also the rights of capitalists are to be protected. When such a general plan is adopted by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it. Otherwise, the labor problem will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place.

For instance, the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their employees and give fairly certain percentage of their products to their workingmen in order that the employees may receive, beside their wages, some of the general income of the factory so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely. Also, every factory that has ten thousand shares will give two thousand shares of

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these ten thousand to its employees and will write the shares in their names, so that they may have them, and the rest will belong to the capitalists. Then at the end of the month or year whatever they may earn after the expenses and wages are paid, according to the number of shares, should be divided among both. In reality, so far great injustice has befallen the common people. Laws must be made because it is impossible for the laborers to be satisfied with the present system. They will strike every month and every year. Finally, the capitalists will lose. In ancient times a strike occurred among the Turkish soldiers. They said to the government: "Our wages are very small and they should be increased." The government was forced to give them their demands. Shortly afterwards they struck again. Finally, all the incomes went to the pockets of the soldiers to the extent that they killed the king, saying: "Why didst thou not increase the income so that we might have received more?"

It is impossible for a country to live properly without laws. To solve this problem rigorous laws must be made, so that all the governments of the world will be the protectors thereof.

In the Bolshevistic principles equality is effected through force. The masses who are opposed to the people of rank and to the wealthy class desire to partake of their advantages.

But in the divine teachings equality is brought about through a ready willingness to share. It is commanded as regards wealth that the rich among the people, and the aristocrats should, by their own free will and for the sake of their own happiness, concern themselves with and care for the poor. This equality is the result of the lofty characteristics and noble attributes of mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundation of World Unity*, pp. 43-44)

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2. Under the laws which are to govern the world, the socialists may justly demand human rights but without resort to force and violence.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238)

3. One thing, however, is certain that the Cause neither accepts the theories of the Capitalistic economies in full, nor can it agree with the Marxists and Communists in their repudiation of the principle of private ownership and of the vital sacred rights of the individual.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 10 June 1930)

4. The question of individual versus state ownership or control of the means of production, as interpreted in the light of the general principles laid down by Bahá’u’lláh and the Master, cannot be satisfactorily answered by the believers in the light of either the socialist or fascist schools of economics. In the Bahá’í economic system of the future, private ownership will be retained, but will be controlled, regulated and even restricted. Complete socialization is not only impossible but most unjust, and in this the Cause is in fundamental disagreement with the extreme socialists or communists. It can also not agree with the other extreme tendency represented by the “laissez-faire” or individualistic school of economics which became very popular in the 18th century and which is still supported, in certain of its essential features, by the so-called democratic countries. For absolute freedom, even in the economic sphere, leads to confusion and corruption, and acts not only to the detriment of the state, or the collectivity, but inevitably results in the end in jeopardizing the very interests of the individual himself. Individualism and socialism, therefore, do not offer the right solution to the economic problem. In both the democratic and fascist countries today, there is a growing tendency towards over-control, and even increasing ownership of the

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means of production, and such a tendency cannot be fully sanctioned by the believers. The Cause can and indeed will in the future maintain the right balance between the two extreme tendencies of individualism and collectivism, not only in the field of economics, but in all other social domains. The exact limits defining the rights and powers of the individual as against the state and vice versa will have to be assigned in the future.

(From a Letter dated 25 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi as transcribed by the recipient of this letter in a manuscript he prepared, a copy of which is held at the Bahá'í World Centre.)

5. There is nothing in the teachings against some kind of capitalism, its present form, though, would require adjustments to be made.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 19)

32. Stewards of the environment and nature

Blessed is the Spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.

Bahá'u'lláh

A. Our relationship with Nature

1. Nature is that condition or reality which outwardly is the source of the life and death, or, in other words, of the composition and decomposition, of all things.

This nature is subject to a sound organization, to inviolable laws, to a perfect order, and to a consummate design, from which it never departs. To such an extent is this true that were you to gaze with the eye of insight and discernment, you would observe that all things—from the smallest invisible atom to the largest globes in the world of existence, such as the sun or the other great stars and luminous bodies—are most perfectly organized, be it with regard to their order, their composition, their outward form, or their motion, and that all are subject to one universal law from which they never depart.

When you consider nature itself, however, you see that it has neither awareness nor will. For instance, the nature of fire is to burn; it burns without consciousness or will. The nature of water is to flow; it flows without consciousness or will. The nature of the sun is to shed light; it shines without consciousness or will. The nature of vapour is

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to rise; it rises without consciousness or will. It is therefore evident that the natural movements of all created things are compelled, and that nothing moves of its own will save animals and, in particular, man.

Man is able to resist and oppose nature inasmuch as he discovers the natures of things and, by virtue of this discovery, has mastery over nature itself. Indeed, all the crafts that man has devised proceed from this discovery. For example, he has invented the telegraph, which connects the East and the West. It is therefore evident that man rules over nature.

Now, can such organization, order, and laws as you observe in existence be attributed merely to the effect of nature, notwithstanding that nature itself has neither consciousness nor understanding? It is therefore evident that this nature, which has neither consciousness nor understanding, is in the grasp of the omnipotent Lord, Who is the Ruler of the world of nature and Who causes it to manifest whatsoever He desires.

Some say that human existence is among those things that have appeared in the world of being and that are due to the exigencies of nature. Were this true, man would be the branch and nature the root. But is it possible that there could exist a will, a consciousness, and certain perfections in the branch which are absent in the root?

Hence it is clear that nature, in its very essence, is in the grasp of God's might, and that it is that Eternal and Almighty One Who subjects nature to ideal laws and organizing principles, and Who rules over it.

(Abdu'l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, pp.3-4)

2. Nature has no consciousness; man is endowed with it. Nature is without volition and acts perforce, whereas man possesses a mighty will. Nature is incapable of discovering mysteries or realities, whereas man is especially fitted to do

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so. Nature is not in touch with the realm of God; man is attuned to its evidences. Nature is uninformed of God; man is conscious of Him. Man acquires divine virtues; nature is denied them. Man can voluntarily discontinue vices; nature has no power to modify the influence of its instincts. Altogether it is evident that man is more noble and superior, that in him there is an ideal power surpassing nature. He has consciousness, volition, memory, intelligent power, divine attributes and virtues of which nature is completely deprived and bereft; therefore, man is higher and nobler by reason of the ideal and heavenly force latent and manifest in him.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 178)

3. The materialists hold to the opinion that the world of nature is complete. The divine philosophers declare that the world of nature is incomplete. There is a wide difference between the two. The materialists call attention to the perfection of nature, the sun, moon and stars, the trees in their adornment, the whole earth and the sea — even unimportant phenomena revealing the most perfect symmetry. The divine philosophers deny this seeming perfection and completeness in nature’s kingdom, even though admitting the beauty of its scenes and aspects and acknowledging the irresistible cosmic forces which control the colossal suns and planets. They hold that while nature seems perfect, it is, nevertheless, imperfect because it has need of intelligence and education. In proof of this they say that man, though he be a very god in the realm of material creation, is himself in need of an educator. Man undeveloped by education is savage, animalistic, brutal. Laws and regulations, schools, colleges and universities have for their purpose the training of man and his uplift from the dark borderland of the animal kingdom.

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

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4. This Nature is subjected to an absolute organization, to determined laws, to a complete order and a finished design, from which it will never depart — to such a degree, indeed, that if you look carefully and with keen sight, from the smallest invisible atom up to such large bodies of the world of existence as the globe of the sun or the other great stars and luminous spheres, whether you regard their arrangement, their composition, their form or their movement, you will find that all are in the highest degree of organization and are under one law from which they will never depart.

But when you look at Nature itself, you see that it has no intelligence, no will. For instance, the nature of fire is to burn; it burns without will or intelligence. The nature of water is fluidity; it flows without will or intelligence. The nature of the sun is radiance; it shines without will or intelligence. The nature of vapour is to ascend; it ascends without will or intelligence. Thus it is clear that the natural movements of all things are compelled; there are no voluntary movements except those of animals and, above all, those of man. Man is able to resist and to oppose Nature because he discovers the constitution of things, and through this he commands the forces of Nature; all the inventions he has made are due to his discovery of the constitution of things. For example, he invented the telegraph, which is the means of communication between the East and the West. It is evident, then, that man rules over Nature.

Now, when you behold in existence such organizations, arrangements and laws, can you say that all these are the effects of Nature, though Nature has neither intelligence nor perception? If not, it becomes evident that this Nature, which has neither perception nor intelligence, is in the grasp of Almighty God, Who is the Ruler of the world of Nature; whatever He wishes, He causes Nature to manifest. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 3-4)

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5. Now concerning nature, it is but the essential properties and the necessary relations inherent in the realities of things. And though these infinite realities are diverse in their character yet they are in the utmost harmony and closely connected together. As one's vision is broadened and the matter observed carefully, it will be made certain that every reality is but an essential requisite of other realities. Thus to connect and harmonize these diverse and infinite realities an all-unifying Power is necessary, that every part of existent being may in perfect order discharge its own function. Consider the body of man, and let the part be an indication of the whole. Consider how these diverse parts and members of the human body are closely connected and harmoniously united one with the other. Every part is the essential requisite of all other parts and has a function by itself. It is the mind that is the all-unifying agency that so uniteth all the component parts one with the other that each dischargeth its specific function in perfect order, and thereby co-operation and reaction are made possible. All parts function under certain laws that are essential to existence. Should that all-unifying agency that directeth all these parts be harmed in any way there is no doubt that the constituent parts and members will cease functioning properly; and though that all-unifying agency in the temple of man be not sensed or seen and the reality thereof be unknown, yet by its effects it manifesteth itself with the greatest power. Thus it hath been proven and made evident that these infinite beings in this wondrous universe will discharge their functions properly only when directed and controlled by that Universal Reality, so that order may be established in the world. For example, interaction and co-operation between the constituent parts of the human body are evident and indisputable, yet this does not suffice; an all-unifying agency is necessary that shall direct and control the component

parts, so that these through interaction and co-operation may discharge in perfect order their necessary and respective functions.

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

B. Preservation of the Earth’s resources

6. Strange and astonishing things exist in the earth but they are hidden from the minds and the understanding of men. These things are capable of changing the whole atmosphere of the earth and their contamination would prove lethal.

O people of Bahá! Each one of the ordinances We have revealed is a mighty stronghold for the preservation of the world of being.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 69)

7. Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God’s Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 142)

8. Know thou that every created thing is a sign of the revelation of God. Each, according to its capacity, is, and will ever remain, a token of the Almighty. Inasmuch as He, the sovereign Lord of all, hath willed to reveal His sovereignty in the Kingdom of names and attributes, each and every created thing hath, through the act of the Divine Will, been made a sign of His glory.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 184)

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9. It is their duty (the Sovereigns) to convene an all-inclusive assembly, which either they themselves or their ministers will attend, and to enforce whatever measures are required to establish unity and concord amongst men. They must put away the weapons of war, and turn to the instruments of universal reconstruction.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 30-31)

10. Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 44)

11. ...ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Hidden Words*, Persian, number 20)

12. The Lord of all mankind hath fashioned this human realm to be a Garden of Eden, an earthly paradise. If, as it must, it findeth the way to harmony and peace, to love and mutual trust, it will become a true abode of bliss, a place of manifold blessings and unending delights. Therein shall be revealed the excellence of humankind, therein shall the rays of the Sun of Truth shine forth on every hand.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 275)

13. The excellence, adornment, and perfection of the earth consist in this, that through the outpourings of the vernal showers it should become green and verdant; that plants should spring forth; that flowers and herbs should

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grow; that blossom-filled trees should produce an abundant yield and bring forth fresh and succulent fruit; that gardens should be arrayed; that meadows should be adorned; that plains and mountains should don an emerald robe; and that fields and bowers, villages and cities should be decked forth. This is the felicity of the mineral world.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 88)

14. Earth can be made a paradise.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in *the Star of the West*, vol. XIII, number 9, p. 227)

15. ...any agency whatever, though it be the instrument of mankind’s greatest good, is capable of misuse. Its proper use or abuse depends on the varying degrees of enlightenment, capacity, faith, honesty, devotion and highmindedness of the leaders of public opinion.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilizations*, p. 16)

16. There is the well-known case of the ruler who is fostering peace and tranquility and at the same time devoting more energy than the warmongers to the accumulation of weapons and the building up of a larger army, on the grounds that peace and harmony can only be brought about by force. Peace is the pretext, and night and day they are all straining every nerve to pile up more weapons of war, and to pay for this their wretched people must sacrifice most of whatever they are able to earn by their sweat and toil. How many thousands have given up their work in useful industries and are laboring day and night to produce new and deadlier weapons which would spill out the blood of the race more copiously than before.

Each day they invent a new bomb or explosive and then the governments must abandon their obsolete arms and begin producing the new, since the old weapons cannot hold their own against the new ... The staggering cost of it all must be borne by the hapless masses.

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...In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.

Observe that if such a happy situation be forthcoming, no government would need continually to pile up the weapons of war, nor feel itself obliged to produce ever new military weapons with which to conquer the human race. A small force for the purposes of internal security, the correction of criminal and disorderly elements and the prevention of local disturbances would be required — no more. In this way the entire population would, first of all, be relieved of the crushing burden of expenditure currently imposed for military purposes, and secondly, great numbers of people would cease to devote their time to the continual devising of new weapons of destruction — those testimonials of greed and bloodthirstiness, so inconsistent with the gift of life — and would instead bend their efforts to the production of whatever will foster human existence and peace and well-being, and would become the cause of universal development and prosperity. Then every nation on earth will reign in honor, and every people will be cradled in tranquillity and content.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilizations*, pp. 61-62)

17. Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the

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human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, p. 40)

18. In such a world society ... The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated. National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease, and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and cooperation. The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed, economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear. The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 204)

19. We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other

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and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.

No movement in the world directs its attention upon both these aspects of human life and has full measures for their improvement save the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. And this is its distinctive feature. If we desire therefore the good of the world we should strive to spread those teachings and also practice them in our own life. Through them will the human heart be changed and also our social environment provides the atmosphere in which we can grow spiritually and reflect in full the light of God shining through the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf, dated 17 February 1933)

20. A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation — such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 204)

21. Creation reflects the names and attributes of God, and mankind has a profound responsibility to protect the natural environment and preserve its ecological balance.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 75)

22. Until such time as the nations of the world understand and follow the admonitions of Bahá'u'lláh to whole-heartedly work together in looking after the best interests of all

humankind, and unite in the search for ways and means to meet the many environmental problems besetting our planet, the House of Justice feels that little progress will be made towards their solution....

(Universal House of Justice. *Conservation of the Earth's Resources*, p. 16)

C. Kindness to animals

23. Burden not an animal with more than it can bear. We, truly, have prohibited such treatment through a most binding interdiction in the Book. Be ye the embodiments of justice and fairness amidst all creation. (Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 187)

24. Briefly, it is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved of God must treat with mercy and compassion, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature. For in all physical respects, and where the animal spirit is concerned, the self-same feelings are shared by animal and man. Man hath not grasped this truth, however, and he believeth that physical sensations are confined to human beings, wherefore is he unjust to the animals, and cruel.

And yet in truth, what difference is there when it cometh to physical sensations? The feelings are one and the same, whether ye inflict pain on man or on beast. There is no difference here whatever. And indeed ye do worse to harm an animal, for man hath a language, he can lodge a complaint, he can cry out and moan; if injured he can have recourse to the authorities and these will protect him from his aggressor. But the hapless beast is mute, able neither to express its hurt nor take its case to the authorities. If a man inflict a thousand ills upon a beast, it can neither ward him off with speech nor hale him into court. Therefore, is it essential that ye show forth the utmost consideration to the animal, and that ye be even kinder to him than to your fellowmen.

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Train your children from their earliest days to be infinitely tender and loving to animals. If an animal be sick, let the children try to heal it, if it be hungry, let them feed it, if thirsty, let them quench its thirst, if weary, let them see that it rests.

Most human beings are sinners, but the beasts are innocent. Surely those without sin should receive the most kindness and love — all except animals which are harmful ...But to blessed animals the utmost kindness must be shown, the more the better. Tenderness and loving-kindness are basic principles of God's heavenly kingdom. Ye should most carefully bear this matter in mind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 158-160)

25. The Almighty hath not created in man the claws and teeth of ferocious animals, nay rather hath the human form been fashioned and set with the most comely attributes and adorned with the most perfect virtues. The honour of this creation and the worthiness of this garment therefore require man to have love and affinity for his own kind, nay rather, to act towards all living creatures with justice and equity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 287)

26. Regarding the eating of animal flesh and abstinence therefrom, ...he [man] is not in need of meat, nor is he obliged to eat it. Even without eating meat he would live with the utmost vigour and energy ...Truly, the killing of animals and the eating of their meat is somewhat contrary to pity and compassion, and if one can content oneself with cereals, fruit, oil and nuts, such as pistachios, almonds and so on, it would undoubtedly be better and more pleasing.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Compilation on Conservation of the Earth's Resources*, p.11)

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27. The Guardian fully sympathizes with your repulsion against any torture to animals...

...Once we change human hearts, there will be no more cruelty to animals, and medical research will be carried out in a way which will eliminate as much suffering in experiments as possible.

(Shoghi Effendi. Compilation on *Conservation of the Earth's Resources*, p.10)

28. In regard to the question as to whether people ought to kill animals for food or not, there is no explicit statement in the Bahá'í Sacred Scriptures (as far as I know) in favor or against it. It is certain, however, that if man can live on a purely vegetarian diet and thus avoid killing animals, it would be much preferable. This is, however, a very controversial question and the Bahá'ís are free to express their views on it.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Lights of Guidance*, p. 296)

29. Your concern for the prevention of cruelty to animals and for restraint in exploiting them unduly for food and other purposes is indeed praiseworthy; however, the House of Justice is not aware of any absolute prohibition in any Holy Book against the use of animals for food and clothing. As the laws brought by Bahá'u'lláh become known and operative throughout the world, we believe that humanity will find the proper balance in adjusting itself to nature and to the world of animals.

As in so many other areas, the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in this regard follow the golden mean: kindness toward animals is definitely upheld, vegetarianism is encouraged, hunting is regulated, but certain latitude is left to individual conscience and in practical regard to the diversity of circumstances under which human beings live.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated December 16, 1998, *Traditional practices in Africa*)

D. Health and healing

30. Resort ye, in times of sickness, to competent physicians; We have not set aside the use of material means, rather have We confirmed it through this Pen, which God hath made to be the Dawning-Place of His shining and glorious Cause.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 113)

31. Although ill health is one of the unavoidable conditions of man, truly it is hard to bear. The bounty of good health is the greatest of all gifts.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 151)

32. There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the treatment of physicians; the second consisteth in prayers offered by the spiritual ones to God and in turning to Him. Both means should be used and practised. Illnesses which occur by reason of physical causes should be treated by doctors with medical remedies; those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, will be helped more effectively by spiritual rather than by physical treatment. Hence, both kinds of treatment should be followed; they are not contradictory. Therefore thou shouldst also accept physical remedies inasmuch as these too have come from the mercy and favour of God, Who hath revealed and made manifest medical science so that His servants may profit from this kind of treatment also. Thou shouldst give equal attention to spiritual treatments, for they produce marvellous effects. Now, if thou wishest to know the true remedy which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the divine kingdom, know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Focus thine attention upon them.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 151-152)

33. According to the explicit decree of Bahá'u'lláh one must not turn aside from the advice of a competent doctor. It is imperative to consult one even if the patient himself be a well-known and eminent physician. In short, the point is that you should maintain your health by consulting a highly skilled physician.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 156)

34. I hope thou wilt become as a rising light and obtain spiritual health; and spiritual health is conducive to physical health.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Divine Art of Living*, p. 58)

35. Between material things and spiritual things there is a connection. The more healthful his body the greater will be the power of the spirit of man, the power of the intellect, the power of the memory, the power of reflections will then be greater.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 18, p. 231)

36. In the Book of Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh urges us, that when we obtain any physical ailment we should refer to the doctor and abide by his decision. Physical and Spiritual forces have both to be used to secure the speedy recovery of the patients; no partial treatment is sufficient.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf, dated 1 June 1933)

37. As you know Bahá'u'lláh has ordained that in case of illness we should always consult the most competent physicians. And this is exactly what the Guardian strongly advises you to do. For the prayer alone is not sufficient. To render it more effective we have to make use of all the physical and material advantages which God has given us. Healing through purely spiritual forces is undoubtedly as

inadequate as that which materialist physicians and thinkers vainly seek to obtain by resorting entirely to mechanical devices and methods. The best result can be obtained by combining the two processes, spiritual and physical.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf, dated 12 March 1934)

E. Physical and spiritual aspect of cleanliness

38. Whoso wisheth to make use of vessels of silver and gold is at liberty to do so. Take heed lest, when partaking of food, ye plunge your hands into the contents of bowls and platters. Adopt ye such usages as are most in keeping with refinement. He, verily, desireth to see in you the manners of the inmates of Paradise in His mighty and most sublime Kingdom. Hold ye fast unto refinement under all conditions, that your eyes may be preserved from beholding what is repugnant both to your own selves and to the dwellers of Paradise. Should anyone depart therefrom, his deed shall at that moment be rendered vain; yet should he have good reason, God will excuse him. He, in truth, is the Gracious, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 46)

39. Cleave ye unto the cord of refinement with such tenacity as to allow no trace of dirt to be seen upon your garments. Such is the injunction of One Who is sanctified above all refinement. Whoso falleth short of this standard with good reason shall incur no blame. God, verily, is the Forgiving, the Merciful. Wash ye every soiled thing with water that hath undergone no alteration in any one of the three respects; take heed not to use water that hath been altered through exposure to the air or to some other agent. Be ye the very essence of cleanliness amongst mankind. This, truly, is what your Lord, the Incomparable, the All-Wise, desireth for you.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 74)

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40. Immerse yourselves in clean water; it is not permissible to bathe yourselves in water that hath already been used. See that ye approach not the public pools of Persian baths; whoso maketh his way toward such baths will smell their fetid adour ere he entereth therein...

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 106)

41. Ye have been enjoined to renew the furnishings of your homes after the passing of each nineteen years; thus hath it been ordained by One Who is Omniscient and All-Perceiving. He, verily, is desirous of refinement, both for you yourselves and for all that ye possess; lay not aside the fear of God and be not of the negligent. Whoso findeth that his means are insufficient to this purpose hath been excused by God, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bounteous.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 151)

42. 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 become a focal centre 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.

This is why, in Holy Scriptures, the counsels of heaven are likened to water, even as the Qur'án saith: 'And pure water send We down from Heaven,' (Qur'án 25:50) and the

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Gospel: 'Except a man be baptized of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.'(2cf.John 3:5) Thus is it clear that the Teachings which come from God are heavenly outpourings of grace; they are rain-showers of divine mercy, and they cleanse the human heart.

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 conduce 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.

Observe how pleasing is cleanliness in the sight of God, and how specifically it is emphasized in the Holy Books of the Prophets; for the Scriptures forbid the eating or the use of any unclean thing. Some of these prohibitions were absolute, and binding upon all, and whoso transgressed the given law was abhorred of God and anathematized by the believers. Such, for example, were things categorically forbidden, the perpetration of which was accounted a most grievous sin, among them actions so loathsome that it is shameful even to speak their name.

But there are other 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

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expressly set forth in the Text, but their avoidance is necessary to purity, cleanliness, the preservation of health, and freedom from addiction.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 146-147)

43. 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 tremble for joy. The purport is that physical cleanliness hath exert its effect upon the human soul.

Observe how pleasing is cleanliness in sight of God, and how specifically it is emphasised in the Holy Books of the Prophets; for the Scriptures forbid the eating or the use of any unclean thing. Some of these prohibitions were absolute, and binding upon all, and whoso transgressed the given law was abhorred of God and anathematized... by the believers.

But there are other forbidden things which do not cause immediate harm, and injurious effects of which are only gradually produced: such acts are also repugnant to the Lord, and blameworthy in His sight, and repellent...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Divine Art of Living*, pp. 108-109)

44. It is certain that in this wonderful new age the development of medical science will lead to the doctors' healing their patients with foods. ...At whatever time highly-skilled physicians shall have developed the healing of illnesses by means of foods, and shall make provision for simple foods, and shall prohibit humankind from living as slaves to their lustful appetites, it is certain that the incidence of chronic and diversified illnesses will abate, and the general

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health of all mankind will be much improved. This is destined to come about. In the same way, in the character, the conduct and the manners of men, universal modifications will be made.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 153)

45. The science of medicine is still in a condition of infancy; it has not reached maturity. But when it has reached this point, cures will be performed by things which are not repulsive to the smell and taste of man - that is to say, by aliments, fruits and vegetables which are agreeable to the taste and have an agreeable smell. For the provoking cause of disease - that is to say, the cause of the entrance of disease into the human body - is either a physical one or is the effect of excitement of the nerves.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 257)

46. It is therefore evident that it is possible to cure illnesses by means of fruits and other foods. But as the science of medicine has not yet been perfected, this fact has not been fully understood. When this science reaches perfection, treatments will be administered with fragrant fruits and plants as well as with other foods, and with hot and cold waters of various temperatures.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 299)

F. Alcoholic drinks and drugs

47. It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away. Nay, rather it behoveth him to comport himself in a manner worthy of the human station, and not in accordance with the misdeeds of every heedless and wavering soul.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 119)

48. Gambling and the use of opium have been forbidden unto you. Eschew them both, O people, and be not of those

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who transgress. Beware of using any substance that induceth sluggishness and torpor in the human temple and inflicteth harm upon the body. We, verily, desire for you naught save what shall profit you, and to this bear witness all created things, had ye but ears to hear.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 155)

49. It hath been forbidden you to smoke opium. We, truly, have prohibited this practice through a most binding interdiction in the Book. Should anyone partake thereof, assuredly he is not of Me. Fear God, O ye endued with understanding!

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 190)

50. 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. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, note 144)

51. Drink ye, O handmaidens of God, the mystic Wine from the cup of My words. Cast away, then, from you that which your minds abhor, for it hath been forbidden, unto you in His Tablets and His Scriptures. Beware lest ye barter away the River that is life indeed for that which the souls of the pure-hearted detest. Become ye intoxicated with the wine of the love of God, and not with that which deadeneth your minds, O ye that abhor Him! Verily, it hath been forbidden unto every believer, whether man or woman. Thus hath the sun of My commandment shone forth above the horizon of My utterance, that the handmaidens who believe in Me may be illumined.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in the *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 27)

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52. 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. Quoted in the *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 27)

53. 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 qualified 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.

The Báb, at the outset of His mission, explicitly prohibited tobacco, and the friends one and all abandoned its use. But since those were times when dissimulation was permitted, and every individual who abstained from smoking was exposed to harassment, abuse and even death — the friends, in order not to advertise their beliefs, would smoke. Later on, the Book of Aqdas was revealed, and since smoking tobacco was not specifically forbidden there, the believers did not give it up. The Blessed Beauty, however, always expressed repugnance for it, and although, in the early days, there were reasons why He would smoke a little tobacco, in time He completely renounced it, and those sanctified souls who followed Him in all things also abandoned its use.

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 Covenant, 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

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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.

As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us from the punishment He inflicteth on the user. According to the explicit Test 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 perpetration 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 quenqueth 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 perchance 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.

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

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to enjoy the sweet savours 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!'

O ye, God's loved ones! Experience hath shown how greatly the renouncing of smoking, of intoxicating drink, and of opium, conduceth to health and vigour, to the expansion and keenness of the mind and to bodily strength. There is today a people who strictly avoid tobacco, intoxicating liquor and opium. This people is far and away superior to the others, for strength and physical courage, for health, beauty and comeliness. A single one of their men can stand up to ten men of another tribe. This hath proved true of the entire people: that is, member for member, each individual of this community is in every respect superior to the individuals of other communities.

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*. pp. 147-150)

54. Experience hath shown how greatly the renouncing of smoking of intoxicating drink, and of opium, conduceth to health and vigor, to the expansion and keenness of the mind and bodily strength.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Divine Art of Living*, p. 109)

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55. Concerning the use of alcoholic drinks and drugs the Guardian wishes you to know that they have been explicitly forbidden in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Opium is, undoubtedly, prohibited. But smoking, though allowed, is discouraged.
(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf, dated 27 December 1933)

56. 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 everything that takes away the mind, or in other words makes one drunk, is forbidden.
(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf, dated 15 February 1926)

33. Bahá'í consultation

The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. It is incumbent upon them (Members of Local Spiritual Assemblies) to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly. Thus, hath the Lord your God commanded you. Beware lest ye put away that which is clearly revealed in His Tablet. Fear God, O ye that perceive.
(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 29)
2. The Great Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.
(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 3)
3. Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.
(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 3)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 3)

5. The question of consultation is of the utmost importance, and is one of the most potent instruments conducive to the tranquillity and felicity of the people.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 3)

6. Regarding thy question about consultation of a father with his son, or a son with his father, in matters of trade and commerce, consultation is one of the fundamental elements of the foundation of the Law of God. Such consultation is assuredly acceptable, whether between father and son, or with others. There is nothing better than this. Man must consult in all things for this will lead him to the depths of each problem and enable him to find the right solution.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I, p. 393)

7. 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 consulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, harmony and sincerity towards each other. The principle of consultation is one of the most fundamental elements of the

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divine edifice. Even in their ordinary affairs the individual members of society should consult.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 8)

8. ...consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together. Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others. If he finds that a previously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully to arrive at unity and truth. Opposition and division are deplorable. It is better then to have the opinion of a wise, sagacious man; otherwise, contradiction and altercation, in which varied and divergent views are presented, will make it necessary for a judicial body to render decision upon the question. Even a majority of opinion or consensus may be incorrect. A thousand people may hold to one view and be mistaken, whereas one sagacious person may be right. Therefore, true consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love. Members must love each other in the spirit of fellowship in order that good results may be forthcoming. Love and fellowship are the foundation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 72-73)

9. The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these

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attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 21)

10. ...the shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of different opinions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 21)

11. As to the education of children, exert every effort to further this; it is of the utmost importance. So too, the education of girls in all the rules of righteous conduct, that they may grow up with a good character and high standards of behaviour. For mothers are the first educators of the child, and every child at the beginning of life is like a fresh and tender branch in his parents' hands. His father and mother can train him in any way they choose.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol I, p. 284)

12. Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá’í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 63-64)

13. The principle of consultation, which constitutes one of the basic laws of the Administration, should be applied to all Bahá’í activities which affect the collective interests of the Faith, for it is through cooperation and continued exchange of thoughts and views that the Cause can best safeguard and foster its interests. Individual initiative, personal ability and resourcefulness, though indispensable, are, unless supported

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and enriched by the collective experiences and wisdom of the group, utterly incapable of achieving such a tremendous task. (Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in a Compilation on *Consultation*, p. 15)

14. Consultation is no easy skill to learn, requiring as it does the subjugation of all egotism and unruly passions, the cultivation of frankness and freedom of thought as well as courtesy, openness of mind, and wholehearted acquiescence in a majority decision.

(Universal House of Justice. *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 96)

15. A sign of growing maturity in Bahá'í communities was the importance given to better practicing the art of consultation. The believers developed materials, organized classes and seminars, and began Assembly meetings with deepenings on this fine art.

(Universal House of Justice. Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 57)

34. Economics is based on spiritual constitution

When the love of God is established everything else will be realised, this is the true foundation of all economics.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

A. Moderation and contentment

1. It is incumbent upon them who are in authority to exercise moderation in all things. Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence. Consider for instance such things as liberty, civilization and the like. However much men of understanding may favorably regard them, they will, if carried to excess, exercise a pernicious influence upon men.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 216)

2. Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be not content with that which perisheth.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 320)

3. Overstep not the bounds of moderation, and deal justly with them that serve thee. Bestow upon them according to their needs, and not to the extent that will enable them to lay up riches for themselves, to deck their persons, to embellish their homes, to acquire the things that are of no benefit unto them, and to be numbered with the extravagant. Deal with them with undeviating justice, so that none among them may either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries. This is but manifest justice.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 235)

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4. Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation, and be numbered among the extravagant.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 251)

5. Whoso cleaveth to justice, can, under no circumstances, transgress the limits of moderation. He discerneth the truth in all things, through the guidance of Him Who is the All-Seeing. The civilization, so often vaunted by the learned exponents of arts and sciences, will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing. If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation. Meditate on this, O people, and be not of them that wander distraught in the wilderness of error. The day is approaching when its flame will devour the cities, when the Tongue of Grandeur will proclaim: "The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Praised!"

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 342-343)

6. In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess it will prove a source of evil.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 69)

7. The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment with that which God hath ordained.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 155)

8. The source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 155)

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9. If thou wouldst content thyself with whatever might come to pass it would be praiseworthy.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 175)

10. O Son of Spirit! Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be content with what We have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if therewith thou dost content thyself.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Arabic *Hidden Words*, number 18)

11. O Son of Being! Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Arabic *Hidden Words*, number 55)

12. O Son of Man! Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?

(Bahá'u'lláh. Arabic *Hidden Words*, number 56)

13. O Quintessence of Passion! Put away all covetousness and seek contentment; for the covetous hath ever been deprived, and the contented hath ever been loved and praised.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Persian *Hidden Words*, number 50)

14. Verily the most necessary thing is contentment under all circumstances; by this one is preserved from morbid conditions and from lassitude.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in the *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 108)

15. A good character is in the sight of God and His chosen ones and possessors of insight, the most excellent and praiseworthy of all things, but always on condition that its

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center of emanation should be reason and knowledge and its base should be true moderation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 60)

16. Economy is the foundation of human prosperity. The spendthrift is always in trouble. Prodigality on the part of any person is an unpardonable sin ... It is more kingly to be satisfied with a crust of stale bread than to enjoy a sumptuous dinner of many courses, the money for which comes out of the pockets of others. ...A Bahá’í must be satisfied. ...The mind of a contented person is always peaceful and his heart at rest.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 2, p. 18)

17. Moderation is necessary in all affairs.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 2, p. 26)

B. Justice and equity

18. Tread ye the path of justice and equity in all things. Thus biddeth you He Who is the Dawning-place of Revelation, would that ye might comprehend.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 60)

19. Say: ‘O God, my God! Attire mine head with the crown of justice, and my temple with the ornament of equity. Thou, verily, art the Possessor of all gifts and bounties.’

Justice and equity are twin Guardians that watch over men. From them are revealed such blessed and perspicuous words as are the cause of the well-being of the world and the protection of the nations.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 12)

20. We entreat God to deliver the light of equity and the sun of justice from the thick clouds of waywardness, and cause them to shine forth upon men. No light can compare

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with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquillity of the nations depend upon it.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 28)

21. We hope that thou wilt cause the light of justice to shine more brightly. By the righteousness of God! Justice is a powerful force. It is, above all else, the conqueror of the citadels of the hearts and souls of men, and the revealer of the secrets of the world of being, and the standard-bearer of love and bounty.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 31)

22. We cherish the hope that the light of justice may shine upon the world and sanctify it from tyranny. If the rulers and kings of the earth, the symbols of the power of God, exalted be His glory, arise and resolve to dedicate themselves to whatever will promote the highest interests of the whole of humanity, the reign of justice will assuredly be established amongst the children of men, and the effulgence of its light will envelop the whole earth. The Great Being saith: The structure of world stability and order hath been reared upon, and will continue to be sustained by, the twin pillars of reward and punishment... In another passage, He hath written: Take heed, O concourse of the rulers of the world! There is no force on earth that can equal in its conquering power the force of justice and wisdom.... Blessed is the king who marcheth with the ensign of wisdom unfurled before him, and the battalions of justice massed in his rear. He verily is the ornament that adorneth the brow of peace and the countenance of security. There can be no doubt whatever that if the day star of justice, which the clouds of tyranny have obscured, were to shed its light upon men, the face of the earth would be completely transformed

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 218)

23. ... equity is the most fundamental among human

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virtues. The evaluation of all things must needs depend upon it.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 203)

24. Beware lest thou be led to connive at injustice. Set thy heart firmly upon justice, and alter not the Cause of God, and be of them whose eyes are directed towards the things that have been revealed in His Book.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 230)

25. Cleave ye to justice and fairness, and turn away from the whisperings of the foolish, them that are estranged from God, that have decked their heads with the ornament of the learned, and have condemned to death Him Who is the Fountain of wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 342)

26. O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Arabic Hidden Words*, number 2)

27. In these days truthfulness and sincerity are sorely afflicted in the clutches of falsehood, and justice is tormented by the scourge of injustice. The smoke of corruption hath enveloped the whole world in such wise that naught can be seen in any direction save regiments of soldiers and nothing is heard from any land but the clashing of swords. We beseech God, the True One, to strengthen the wielders of His power in that which will rehabilitate the world and bring

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tranquillity to the nations.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 39)

28. Judge thou fairly and be not of the unjust. Take fast hold of justice and adhere unto equity that perchance thou mayest not, for selfish motives, use religion as a snare, nor disregard the truth for the sake of gold.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 42)

29. O son of man! If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself. Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 64)

30. The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significant.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 67)

31. Moreover We counsel them to observe justice, equity, honesty, piety and that whereby both the Word of God and their own station will be exalted amongst men. Verily I am the One Who exhorteth with justice. Unto this beareth witness He from Whose Pen rivers of mercy have flowed and from Whose utterance fountains of living waters have streamed forth unto all created things. Immeasurably exalted is this boundless grace; immensely blessed is this resplendent favour.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 77)

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32. Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 92)

33. Once again We exhort all believers to observe justice and fairness and to show forth love and contentment. They are indeed the people of Bahá, the companions of the Crimson Ark. Upon them be the peace of God, the Lord of all Names, the Creator of the heavens

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 134)

34. The Great Being saith: The heaven of statesmanship is made luminous and resplendent by the brightness of the light of these blessed words which hath dawned from the dayspring of the Will of God: It behoveth every ruler to weigh his own being every day in the balance of equity and justice and then to judge between men and counsel them to do that which would direct their steps unto the path of wisdom and understanding.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 166)

35. He hath come for your salvation, and hath borne tribulations that ye may ascend, by the ladder of utterance, unto the summit of understanding.... Peruse, with fairness and justice, that which hath been sent down. It will, verily, exalt you through the truth, and will cause you to behold the things from which ye have been withheld, and will enable you to quaff His sparkling Wine.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 78)

36. O King! I adjure thee by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, to look upon thy servants with the glances of the eye of thy favour, and to treat them with justice, that God may treat thee with mercy. Potent is thy Lord to do as He pleaseth. The world, with all its abasement and glory, shall pass away, and

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the kingdom will remain unto God, the Most Exalted, the All-Knowing.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p.97)

37. No man can attain his true station, except through his justice.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Cited *Compilation on Consultation*, p. 1)

38. This disparity is confined to the human race: Among other creatures, that is, among the animals, a certain kind of justice and equality prevails. Thus there is equality within a shepherd's flock, or within a herd of deer in the wilderness, or among the songbirds that dwell in the mountains, plains, and orchards. The animals of every species enjoy a measure of equality and do not differ greatly from one another in their means of existence, and thus they live in perfect peace and joy.

It is quite otherwise with the human race, where the greatest oppression and injustice are to be found. Thus you can observe, on the one hand, a single person who has amassed a fortune, made an entire country his personal dominion, acquired immense wealth, and secured an unceasing flow of gains and profits, and, on the other, a hundred thousand helpless souls—weak, powerless, and wanting even a mouthful of bread. There is neither equality here nor benevolence. Observe how, as a result, general peace and happiness have become so wanting, and the welfare of humanity so undermined, that the lives of a vast multitude have been rendered fruitless! For all the wealth, power, commerce, and industry are concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, while all others toil under the burden of endless hardships and difficulties, are bereft of advantages and benefits, and remain deprived of comfort and peace...

However, absolute equality is just as untenable, for complete equality in wealth, power, commerce, agriculture,

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and industry would result in chaos and disorder, disrupt livelihoods, provoke universal discontent, and undermine the orderly conduct of the affairs of the community. For unjustified equality is also fraught with peril...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 315-316)

39. O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Arabic Hidden Words*, number 2)

40. Justice and equity are twin Guardian that watch over men.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 76)

41. ... although at the present time the rich enjoy the greatest luxury and comfort, they are nevertheless deprived of eternal happiness; for eternal happiness is contingent upon giving, and the poor are everywhere in the state of abject need. Through the manifestation of God’s great equity the poor of the world will be rewarded and assisted fully, and there will be a readjustment in the economic conditions of mankind so that in the future there will not be the abnormally rich nor the abject poor. The rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic condition as well as the poor, for owing to certain provisions and restrictions they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress of want and misery. The rich will enjoy his palace, and the poor will have his comfortable cottage.

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The essence of the matter is that divine justice will become manifest in human conditions and affairs, and all mankind will find comfort and enjoyment in life. It is not meant that all will be equal, for inequality in degree and capacity is a property of nature. Necessarily there will be rich people and also those who will be in want of their livelihood, but in the aggregate community there will be equalization and readjustment of values and interests. In the future there will be no very rich nor extremely poor. There will be an equilibrium of interests, and a condition will be established which will make both rich and poor comfortable and content. This will be an eternal and blessed outcome of the glorious twentieth century which will be realized universally.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 132)

42. Difference of capacity in human individuals is fundamental. It is impossible for all to be alike, all to be equal, all to be wise.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 217)

43. Well is it with that learned man whose head is adorned with the crown of justice, and whose body glorieth in the ornament of honesty.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *A Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 45)

44. Equality and Brotherhood must be established among all members of mankind. This is according to Justice. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved. All men must be treated equally. This is inherent in the very nature of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 29)

45. Until all nations and peoples become united by the bonds of the Holy Spirit in this real fraternity, until national and international prejudices are effaced in the reality of this spiritual brotherhood, true progress, prosperity and lasting

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happiness will not be attained by man. This is the century of new and universal nationhood. Sciences have advanced, industries have progressed, politics have been reformed, liberty has been proclaimed, justice is awakening. This is the century of motion, divine stimulus and accomplishment; the century of human solidarity and altruistic service; the century of Universal Peace and the reality of the divine kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 227)

46. The foundation of the Kingdom of God is laid upon justice, fairness, mercy, sympathy and kindness to every soul. Then strive ye with heart and soul to practice love and kindness to the world of humanity at large, except to those souls who are selfish and insincere. It is not advisable to show kindness to a person who is a tyrant, a traitor or a thief because kindness encourages him to become worse and does not awaken him. The more kindness you show to a liar the more he is apt to lie, for he thinks that you know not, while you do know, but extreme kindness keeps you from revealing your knowledge.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 412)

47. If the soul identifies itself with the material world it remains dark, for in the natural world there is corruption, aggression, struggles for existence, greed, darkness, transgression and vice. If the soul remains in this station and moves along these paths it will be the recipient of this darkness; but if it becomes the recipient of the graces of the world of mind, its darkness will be transformed into light, its tyranny into justice, its ignorance into wisdom, its aggression into loving kindness; until it reach the apex. Then there will not remain any struggle for existence. Man will become free from egotism; he will be released from the material world; he will become the personification of justice and virtue, for a

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sanctified soul illumines humanity and is an honor to mankind, conferring life upon the children of men and suffering all nations to attain to the station of perfect unity. Therefore, we can apply the name “holy soul” to such a one.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Divine Philosophy*, p. 120)

48. It is evident and clear to the wise men of nations - those wise men who are the wooers of absolute reality - that the purpose of the divine messengers and the revelation of the heavenly books and the establishment of the religion of God has been none other than to create amity and justice between the children of the races. True religion is the foundation of spiritual union, the union of thought, the union of susceptibilities, the unity of customs and the ideal chain binding together all the children of men. Through its practical realization, the minds and souls will receive development by divine instruction; they will become assisted to investigate reality, attain to a lofty station of wisdom and establish the basis of a divine civilization.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Divine Philosophy*, p. 160)

49. And among the teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh are justice and right. Until these are realized on the plane of existence, all things will be in disorder and remain imperfect. The world of mankind is a world of oppression and cruelty, and a realm of aggression and error.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 31)

50. We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God

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will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 43)

51. When a ruler knows that his judgments will be weighed in a balance by the Divine Judge, and that if he be not found wanting he will come into the Celestial Kingdom and that the light of the Heavenly Bounty will shine upon him, then will he surely act with justice and equity. Behold how important it is that Ministers of State should be enlightened by religion!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 158)

52. Oh, friends of God, be living examples of justice! So that by the Mercy of God, the world may see in your actions that you manifest the attributes of justice and mercy.

Justice is not limited, it is a universal quality. Its operation must be carried out in all classes, from the highest to the lowest. Justice must be sacred, and the rights of all the people must be considered. Desire for others only that which you desire for yourselves. Then shall we rejoice in the Sun of Justice, which shines from the Horizon of God.

Each man has been placed in a post of honour, which he must not desert. A humble workman who commits an injustice is as much to blame as a renowned tyrant. Thus we all have our choice between justice and injustice.

I hope that each one of you will become just, and direct your thoughts towards the unity of mankind; that you will never harm your neighbours nor speak ill of any one; that you will respect the rights of all men, and be more concerned for the interests of others than for your own. Thus will you become torches of Divine justice, acting in accordance with the Teaching of Bahá’u’lláh. who, during His life, bore innumerable trials and persecutions in order to show forth to the world of mankind the virtues of the World of Divinity,

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making it possible for you to realize the supremacy of the spirit, and to rejoice in the Justice of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p. 158)

53. We should continually be establishing new bases for human happiness and creating and promoting new instrumentalities toward this end. How excellent, how honorable is man if he arises to fulfil his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man’s, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilization and justice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 3)

54. ... to establish equity and righteousness... establish a just government and to secure the progress of all his subjects.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 11)

55. It is unquestionable that the object in establishing parliaments is to bring about justice and righteousness, but everything hinges on the efforts of the elected representatives. If their intention is sincere, desirable results and unforeseen improvements will be forthcoming; if not, it is certain that the whole thing will be meaningless, the country will come to a standstill and public affairs will continuously deteriorate. “I see a thousand builders unequal to one subverter; what then of the one builder who is followed by a thousand subverters?”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 23)

56. The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one’s own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It

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means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 38)

57. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourselves, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 14)

58. If anyone looketh with the eyes of justice he shall be struck with wonder and amazement and will testify that all the peoples, sects and races of the world should be glad, content and grateful for the teachings and admonitions of Bahá'u'lláh. For these divine injunctions tame every ferocious beast, transform the creeping insect into a soaring bird, cause human souls to become angels of the Kingdom, and make the human world a focus for the qualities of mercy.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 292-293)

59. ... among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form ... the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Ridván Message*, 2012)

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60. Justice He extols as "the light of men" and their "guardian," as "the revealer of the secrets of the world of being, and the standard-bearer of love and bounty"; declares its radiance to be incomparable; affirms that upon it must depend "the organization of the world and the tranquillity of mankind." He characterizes its "two pillars" - "reward and punishment" - as "the sources of life" to the human race; warns the peoples of the world to bestir themselves in anticipation of its advent; and prophesies that, after an interval of great turmoil and grievous injustice, its day-star will shine in its full splendor and glory.

(Shoghi Effendi. *God Passes By*, p. 217)

61. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice." "The time must come," He, foreshadowing the tentative efforts that are now being made, has written, "when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace among men... Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him."

(Shoghi Effendi. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 192)

62. Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path. Compose your differences, and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lightened, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquilized. Heal the dissensions that divide you, and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of your cities and territories demandeth. Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation,

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and be numbered among the extravagant. We have learned that you are increasing your outlay every year, and are laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is more than they can bear, and is a grievous injustice. Decide justly between men, and be ye the emblems of justice amongst them. This, if ye judge fairly, is the thing that behooveth you, and beseemeth your station.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Promised Day is Come*, p. 22)

63. Social inequality is the inevitable outcome of the natural inequality of man. Human beings are different in ability and should, therefore, be different in their social and economic standing. Extremes of wealth and poverty should, however, be abolished...

(Shoghi Effendi. *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 20)

64. Apart from principles of social justice, which doubtless motivated a significant number of those committed to this task, the economic dislocations produced by the events of the previous three decades had made it clear that existing arrangements were outdated and ineffective.

(Universal House of Justice. *Century of Light*, p. 74)

65. Social justice will be attained only when every member of society enjoys a relative degree of material prosperity and gives due regard to the acquisition of spiritual qualities.

(Universal House of Justice. 2 April 2010 to the Bahá'ís of Iran)

66. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that "among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form," that "the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs".

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

67. By applying in one's life those principles of the Faith that relate to fairness and equity, a single soul can uphold a

standard far above the low threshold by which the world measures itself. Humanity is weary for want of a pattern of life to which to aspire; we look to you to foster communities whose ways will give hope to the world.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

C. Trustworthiness and truthfulness

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

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Trustworthiness*, pp. 8-9)

69. Commerce is as a heaven, whose sun is trustworthiness and whose moon is truthfulness. The most precious of all things in the estimation of Him Who is the Sovereign Truth is trustworthiness: thus, hath it been recorded in the sacred Scroll of God. Entreat ye the One God to enable all mankind to attain to this most noble and lofty station.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Trustworthiness*, p. 9)

70. Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with anyone. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the emblems of His generosity amidst His people.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 297)

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71. Trustworthiness... is the door of security for all that dwell on earth and a token of glory on the part of the All-Merciful. He who partaketh thereof hath indeed partaken of the treasures of wealth and prosperity. Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it. All the domains of power, of grandeur and of wealth are illumined by its light.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 37)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in the *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 19)

73. We beseech the True One to adorn His handmaidens with the ornament of chastity, of trustworthiness, of righteousness and of purity.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a *Compilation on Women*, p. 46)

74. ...In the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything. What shall faith and piety avail if trustworthiness be lacking? Of what consequence can they be? What benefit or advantage can they confer?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a *Compilation on Trustworthiness*, number 47)

75. Every business company should be established on divine principles. Its foundations should be trustworthiness, piety and truthfulness in order to protect the rights of the people.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a *Compilation on Trustworthiness*, number 51)

D. Sincerity

76. It behoveth, likewise, the loved ones of God to be forbearing towards their fellow-men, and to be so sanctified and detached from all things, and to evince such sincerity and fairness, that all the peoples of the earth may recognize them as the trustees of God amongst men.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 242)

77. Sincerity is the foundation-stone of Faith. That is, a religious individual must disregard his personal desires and seek in whatever way he can wholeheartedly to serve the public interests; and it is impossible for a human being to turn aside from his own selfish advantages and sacrifice his own good for the good of the community except through true religious faith.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 96)

78. We should at all times manifest our truthfulness and sincerity, nay rather, we must be constant in our faithfulness and trustworthiness, and occupy ourselves in offering prayers for the good of all.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 294)

79. Likewise, they must treat with and behave toward all the governments, nations, communities, kings and subjects with the utmost sincerity, trustworthiness, straightforwardness, love and kindness.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. vol. 2, p. 436)

80. The essential principles of His [*Bahá'u'lláh*] healing remedies are the knowledge and love of God, severance from all else save God, turning our faces in sincerity toward the Kingdom of God, implicit faith, firmness and fidelity, loving-kindness toward all creatures and the acquisition of the divine virtues indicated for the human world. These are the fundamental principles of progress, civilization, international

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peace and the unity of mankind. These are the essentials of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, the secret of everlasting health, the remedy and healing for man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 205)

81. If he is a Bahá'í in reality, his deeds and actions will be decisive proofs of it. What are the requirements? Love for mankind, sincerity toward all, reflecting the oneness of the world of humanity, philanthropy, becoming enkindled with the fire of the love of God, attainment to the knowledge of God and that which is conducive to human welfare.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 336)

82. It is essential that scholars and the spiritually learned should undertake in all sincerity and purity of intent and for the sake of God alone, to counsel and exhort the masses and clarify their vision with that collyrium which is knowledge.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 39)

83. Universal benefits derive from the grace of the Divine religions, for they lead their true followers to sincerity of intent, to high purpose, to purity and spotless honor, to surpassing kindness and compassion, to the keeping of their covenants when they have covenanted, to concern for the rights of others, to liberality, to justice in every aspect of life, to humanity and philanthropy, to valor and to unflagging efforts in the service of mankind. It is religion, to sum up, which produces all human virtues, and it is these virtues which are the bright candles of civilization. If a man is not characterized by these excellent qualities, it is certain that he has never attained to so much as a drop out of the fathomless river of the waters of life that flows through the teachings of the Holy Books, nor caught the faintest breath of the fragrant breezes that blow from the gardens of God; for nothing on earth can be demonstrated by words alone, and every level of existence is known by its signs and symbols, and every degree

in man's development has its identifying mark.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 98)

E. Detachment

84. Now is the moment in which to cleanse thyself with the waters of detachment that have flowed out from the Supreme Pen, and to ponder, wholly for the sake of God, those things which, time and again, have been sent down or manifested, and then to strive, as much as lieth in thee, to quench, through the power of wisdom and the force of thy utterance, the fire of enmity and hatred which smouldereth in the hearts of the peoples of the world.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 12)

85. Blessed are they that have soared on the wings of detachment and attained the station which, as ordained by God, overshadoweth the entire creation, whom neither the vain imaginations of the learned, nor the multitude of the hosts of the earth have succeeded in deflecting from His Cause. Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe? Thus hath His bounty been sent down unto men, His testimony fulfilled, and His proof shone forth above the Horizon of mercy. Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: "Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!"

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 34)

86. Once again doth the Tongue of the Ancient of Days reveal, while in this Most Great Prison, these words which are recorded in this snow-white Scroll: O ye the beloved of

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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 activities of those who are its outward leaders.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 241)

87. Should any man, in this Day, arise and, with absolute detachment from all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, set his affections on Him Who is the Day Spring of God's holy Revelation, he will, verily, be empowered to subdue all created things, through the potency of one of the Names of the Lord, his God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 318)

88. O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks, through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber. Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Synopsis and Codification of The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 16)

89. Most of the people in Persia are steeped in deception and idle fancy. How great the difference between the condition of these people and the station of such valiant souls as have passed beyond the sea of names and pitched their tents upon the shores of the ocean of detachment.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 57)

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90. ALAS! ALAS! O LOVERS OF WORLDLY DESIRE!

Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the Beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor hath the breeze of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 45)

91. O SON OF PASSION!

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches and in perfect peace advance into the realm of poverty; that from the well-spring of detachment thou mayest quaff the wine of immortal life.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 55)

92. Know that thy true adornment consisteth in the love of God and in thy detachment from all save Him, and not in the luxuries thou dost possess. Abandon them unto those who seek after them and turn unto God, He Who causeth the rivers to flow.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 60)

93. ...we must be happy and pass our time in praises, appreciating all things. But there is something else: detachment. We can appreciate without attaching ourselves to the things of this world. It sometimes happens that if a man loses his fortune he is so disheartened that he dies or becomes insane. While enjoying the things of this world we must remember that one day we shall have to do without them.

Attach not thyself to anything unless in it thou seest

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the reality of God - this is the first step into the court of eternity. The earth life lasts but a short time, even its benefits are transitory; that which is temporary does not deserve our heart's attachment.

Material favors sometimes deprive us of spiritual favors and material rest of spiritual rest. A rich man said to Christ, "I would fain be thy disciple." "Go and put into practice the ten commandments," replied the Christ. "But I know them by heart and have always practiced them." "Then sell what thou hast and take up thy cross and follow me." The man returned to his home. But the rich who are attracted through their hearts have the spark and are like unto brilliant torches. Bahá'u'lláh has spoken of the importance of their station. Certain rich ones have sacrificed their possessions and even their lives for this cause. Riches did not prove an obstacle for them and they are like unto stars in the heaven of both worlds - flames of reality.

Detachment does not consist in setting fire to one's house, or becoming bankrupt or throwing one's fortune out of the window, or even giving away all of one's possessions. Detachment consists in refraining from letting our possessions possess us. A prosperous merchant who is not absorbed in his business knows severance. A banker whose occupation does not prevent him from serving humanity is severed. A poor man can be attached to a small thing.

A rich man and a poor man lived in the same town. One day the poor man said to the rich man, "I want to go to the Holy Land." The rich man replied, "Very good, I will go also," and they started from the town and began their pilgrimage. But night fell and the poor man said, "Let us return to our houses to pass the night." The rich man replied, "We have started for the Holy Land and must not now return." The poor man said, "The Holy Land is a long distance to travel on foot. I have a donkey, I will go and fetch it." "What?" replied the rich man, "are you not ashamed? I

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leave all my possessions to go on this pilgrimage and you wish to return to get your donkey! I have abandoned with joy my whole fortune. Your whole wealth consists of a donkey and you cannot leave it!" You see that fortune is not necessarily an impediment. The rich man who is thus detached is near to reality. There are many rich people who are severed and many poor who are not.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Divine Philosophy*, p. 135)

94. Content thyself with but little of this world's goods! Verily, economy is a great treasure.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 374)

95. "Now is the time," He no less significantly remarks in another of these Tablets, "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. I swear by Him besides Whom there is none other God that each one of you will become an Israfil of Life, and will blow the Breath of Life into the souls of others." And lastly this glorious promise in another of those immortal Tablets: "Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God, will, in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established."

(Shoghi Effendi. *Citadel of Faith*, p. 29)

96. Let them "disencumber themselves of all attachment to this world and the vanities thereof," and, with that spirit of detachment which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá exemplified and wished them to emulate, bring these diversified peoples and countries to the remembrance of God and His supreme Manifestation. Let His love be a "storehouse of treasure for their souls," on the day when "every pillar shall tremble, when the very skins of men shall creep, when all eyes shall

stare up with terror." Let their "souls be aglow with the flame of the undying Fire that burneth in the midmost heart of the world, in such wise that the waters of the universe shall be powerless to cool down its ardor." Let them be "unrestrained as the wind" which "neither the sight of desolation nor the evidences of prosperity can either pain or please." Let them "unloose their tongues and proclaim unceasingly His Cause." Let them "proclaim that which the Most Great Spirit will inspire them to utter in the service of the Cause of their Lord." Let them "beware lest they contend with anyone, nay strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation." Let them "wholly for the sake of God proclaim His Message, and with that same spirit accept whatever response their words may evoke in their hearers." Let them not, for one moment, forget that the "Faithful Spirit shall strengthen them through its power," and that "a company of His chosen angels shall go forth with them, as bidden by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise." Let them ever bear in mind "how great is the blessedness that awaiteth them that have attained the honor of serving the Almighty," and remember that "such a service is indeed the prince of all goodly deeds, and the ornament of every goodly act."

(Shoghi Effendi. *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 60)

F. Gratitude and thankfulness

97. 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 276)

98. All that has been created is for man, who is at the apex of creation, and he must be thankful for the divine bestowals.

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All material things are for us, so that through our gratitude we may learn to understand life as a divine benefit.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in the *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, p. 102)

99. God has conferred upon man the gift of guidance, and in thankfulness for this great gift certain deeds must emanate from him. To express his gratitude for the favors of God man must show forth praiseworthy actions. In response to these bestowals he must render good deeds, be self-sacrificing, loving the servants of God, forfeiting even life for them, showing kindness to all the creatures.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 236)

100. We yield thanks to God that, through the potency of His Word, you--the community of His Greatest Name -- are cultivating environments wherein true understanding can blossom.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

G. The path of service

101. Thy day of service is now come.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 92)

102. ... one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 248)

103. 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 become the cause of the education, the development, the prosperity and honor of the 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

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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. *Secret of Devine Civilization*, p. 103)

104. Participation of youth in external affairs opened new possibilities for the Faith in this field; commitment to a year of service was more widely demonstrated; at the same time there was a notable increase in the number of youth acquiring formal training and achieving academic, professional and vocational excellence - altogether an indication that the youth are doing more in direct service to the Faith while at the same time contributing to the general development of society.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 1996 to the Bahá’ís of the World, p. 6)

105. Stressing the effect of negative social forces on junior youth does not imply that young people are basically fragile. They can, with help, face these forces. They can develop the powers of the soul and mind that not only enable them to transcend such challenges but also make them contributors to building a new society. In this light, the Universal House of Justice has called for approaches “that will engage their interests, mould their capacities for teaching and service, and involve them in social interaction with older youth”

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2000, p. 9)

106. Bahá’í youth and their friends in many communities are committing themselves to serving as animators of the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme. The programme gives young people “tools needed to combat the forces that would rob them of their true identity as noble beings and to work for the common good”.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2010)

107. They also strive to create an atmosphere among

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themselves and in their communities where the greatest joy is derived from aiding “one another scale the heights of service”.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2010)

108. [service] can be experienced and known, not only by one or two but by scores upon scores’

(Universal House of Justice. Message dated 12 December 2011)

109. In the life of the individual believer who desires, above all, to invite others into communion with the Creator and to render service to humanity can be found signs of the spiritual transformation intended for every soul by the Lord of the Age.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

110. Within communities of every size and strength, we are glad to see the processes of the Five Year Plan kindling the spirit of service and stimulating purposeful action.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 8 February 2013 to the Bahá’ís of the World)

111. We are struck, too, by the number of youth who, after only a brief association with the Baha’i community, commit themselves to meaningful acts of service and quickly discover their affinity with the Faith’s community-building endeavour.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 8 February 2013 to the Bahá’ís of the World)

112. To every generation of young believers comes an opportunity to make a contribution to the fortunes of humanity, unique to their time of life. For the present generation, the moment has come to reflect, to commit, to steel themselves for a life of service from which blessing will flow in abundance.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 8 February 2013 to Bahá’ís of the World)

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113. With this in mind, we are delighted that so many of you are already engaged in service by conducting community-building activities, as well as by organizing, coordinating, or otherwise administering the efforts of others; in all of these endeavours you are taking an increasing level of responsibility upon your shoulders. Not surprisingly, it is your age group that is gaining the most experience at aiding junior youth, and children too, with their moral and spiritual development, fostering in them capacity for collective service and true friendship. After all, aware of the world which these young souls will need to navigate, with its pitfalls and also its opportunities, you readily appreciate the importance of spiritual strengthening and preparation.

(Universal House of Justice. Dated 1 July 2013, to the participants of 114 youth conferences)

114. To follow a path of service, whatever form one's activity assumes, requires faith and tenacity. In this connection, the benefit of walking that path in the company of others is immense. Loving fellowship, mutual encouragement, and willingness to learn together are natural properties of any group of youth sincerely striving for the same ends, and should also characterize those essential relationships that bind together the components of society.

(Universal House of Justice. Dated 1 July 2013, to the participants of 114 youth conferences)

115. For every gathering we will entreat the Almighty to bestow upon its participants a measure of His boundless grace, knowing, as you do, that divine assistance is promised to all those who arise to serve humankind in response to the galvanizing call of Bahá'u'lláh.

(Universal House of Justice. Dated 1 July 2013, to the participants of 114 youth conferences)

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116. The Bahá'í community's increasing engagement with the life of society, which is enabling it to offer a fresh perspective to formal and informal conversations of all kinds, carries distinct echoes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's deep concern for the needs of the age.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 5 December 2013 to the Bahá'ís of the World)

117. As the valiant youth in the Cradle of the Faith, you are well aware of your mission to be a source of hope to those around you, to be channels of love and affection, to be symbols of forgiveness and patience, of serenity and strength to your compatriots, and above all, to be in the front ranks of that process by which the worldwide community has learned to build capacity for service, heighten unity, deepen understanding, and hone abilities so that purposeful action for the benefit of mankind may ensue. Through the spiritual and social transformation thus promoted, the Bahá'í world has come to realize that what is being cultivated is a process that enhances orientation to service and commitment to the application of the divine precepts— a process that holds far-reaching implications for the life of the individual and for the betterment of the world.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 29 January 2014 to the Bahá'í youth in Iran)

35. The application of spiritual virtues to solve economic problems

Our troubles are not purely economic. There are also basic spiritual reforms that have to set in. There is the human heart that has to be changed.

Shoghi Effendi

1. O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 137-138)

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2. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action...

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 166)

3. ... is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Kitáb-i-Iqán - The Book of Certitude*, pp. 240-241)

4. To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 215)

6. 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

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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*. p. 285)

7. 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 305)

8. The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame! ... Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God. Your behavior towards your neighbor should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be re-created by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 316-317)

9. The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in the *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 20)

10. Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Persian Hidden Words*, number 5)

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11. O Son of My Handmaid! Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Persian *Hidden Words*, number 76)

12. O Son of Spirit! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Arabic *Hidden Words*, number 22)

13. O Son of Being! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Arabic *Hidden Words*, number 31)

14. This Wronged One enjoineeth on you honesty and piety. Blessed the city that shineth by their light. Through them man is exalted, and the door of security is unlocked before the face of all creation.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 23)

15. The fruits of the tree of man have ever been and are goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. Withhold not these fruits from the heedless. If they be accepted, your end is attained, and the purpose of life achieved. If not, leave them in their pastime of vain disputes. Strive, O people of God, that haply the hearts of the divers kindreds of the earth may, through the waters of your forbearance and loving-kindness, be cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred, and be made worthy and befitting recipients of the splendors of the Sun of Truth.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 26)

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16. Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself: such a one is of the people of Bahá.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 185)

17. No goodly deed was or will ever be lost, for benevolent acts are treasures preserved with God for the benefit of those who act.

(Bahá'u'lláh. Quoted in a Compilation on *Huqúqu'lláh*, number 40)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 19)

19. ... the honour and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 2)

20. If a soul is endowed with the attributes of true faith and characterized with spiritual qualities he will become to all mankind an emblem of the outstretched mercies of God. For the attributes of the people of faith are justice and fair-mindedness; forbearance and compassion and generosity; consideration for others; candor, trustworthiness, and loyalty; love and loving-kindness; devotion and determination and humanity. If therefore an individual is truly righteous, he will avail himself of all those means which will attract the hearts of men, and through the attributes of God he will draw them to the straight path of faith and cause them to drink from the river of everlasting life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 55-56)

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21. A superficial culture, unsupported by a cultivated morality, is as “a confused medley of dreams,” and external lustre without inner perfection is “like a vapor in the desert which the thirsty dreameth to be water.” For results which would win the good pleasure of God and secure the peace and well-being of man, could never be fully achieved in a merely external civilization.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 60-61)

22. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behavior, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá’ís. Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 70-71)

23. O ye beloved of the Lord! The Kingdom of God is founded upon equity and justice, and also upon mercy, compassion, and kindness to every living soul. Strive ye then with all your heart to treat compassionately all humankind—except for those who have some selfish, private motive, or some disease of the soul. Kindness cannot be shown the tyrant, the deceiver, or the thief, because, far from awakening them to the error of their ways, it maketh them to continue in their perversity as before. No matter how much kindness ye may expend upon the liar, he will but lie the more, for he believeth you to be deceived, while ye understand him but too well, and only remain silent out of your extreme compassion.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. p. 158)

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24. When praiseworthy qualities and high morals emanate from man, he becometh a heavenly being, an angel of the Kingdom, a divine reality and a celestial effulgence.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 287-288)

25. Good behaviour and high moral character must come first... The foundation-principle of a school is first and foremost moral training, character building, and the rectification of conduct.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Quoted in a Compilation on *Bahá’í Education*, p. 29)

26. 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! This is the work of a true Bahá’í, and this is what is expected of him. If we strive to do all this, then we are true Bahá’ís, but if we neglect it, we are not followers of the Light, and we have no right to the name.

God, who sees all hearts, knows how far our lives are the fulfilment of our words.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, pp. 79-80)

27. Should anyone, God forbid, manifest one iota of dishonesty, or show laxity and negligence in carrying out his duties, or unlawfully exact money from the people, be it even a single penny, or secure private gains for himself, or seek personal benefits, such a person will surely be deprived of the blessings of the Almighty. Beware, beware, lest ye fall short of what hath been set forth in this Letter.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 403-404)

28. ...you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world -- for faithfulness and sincerity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness and steadfastness, for philanthropic

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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. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 190)

29. Let each one of you be as a lamp shining forth with the light of the virtues of the world of humanity. Be trustworthy, sincere, affectionate and replete with chastity. Be illumined, be spiritual, be divine, be glorious, be quickened of God, be a Bahá’í.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 453)

30. O army of God! Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the Blessed Beauty — may my life be a sacrifice to His loved ones — ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá’ís. Until you attain to this station, you have not fulfilled the Covenant and the Testament of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 401)

31. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourself, should they show their enmity

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be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 445)

32. The immortality of the spirit is mentioned in the Holy Books; it is the fundamental basis of the divine religions. Now punishments and rewards are said to be of two kinds. Firstly, the rewards and punishments of this life; secondly, those of the other world. But the paradise and hell of existence are found in all the worlds of God, whether in this world or in the spiritual heavenly worlds. Gaining these rewards is the gaining of eternal life. That is why Christ said, "Act in such a way that you may find eternal life, and that you may be born of water and the spirit, so that you may enter into the Kingdom."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 323)

33. If any one of you enters a city he must become the center of attraction because of the sincerity, faithfulness, love, honesty, fidelity, truthfulness and loving-kindness of his disposition and nature toward all the inhabitants of the world, that the people of the city may all cry out: "This person is unquestionably a Bahá’í; for his manners, his behavior, his conduct, his morals, his nature and his disposition are of the attributes of the Bahá’ís." Until you do attain to this station, you have not fulfilled the Covenant and the Testament of God. For according to the irrefutable texts, He has taken from us a firm covenant that we may live and act in accord with the divine exhortations, If they attain unto this all-surpassing blessing, the people of each nation will pursue, with tranquillity and contentment, their own occupations, and the groanings and lamentations of most men would be silenced.

(Bahá’u’lláh. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 31)

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34. He feels you should both consider the competent running of your business not only a moral obligation to any creditors outstanding, but also the wise and proper things to do.

(Shoghi Effendi. Cited in *Compilation on Trustworthiness*, number 80)

35. Technocracy, as well as the other movements now existing in the world, every one of them, has some wonderful point that connects it very closely to the teachings of the Faith. But all these see the light partially. The spirit of the Cause pulsates in their veins but they have to become conscious of the center of inspiration and light if they desire to reform fully our corrupted and despairing society. Our troubles are not purely economic. There are also basic spiritual reforms that have to set in. There is the human heart that has to be changed.

Nothing but the abundance of our actions, nothing but the purity of our lives and the integrity of our characters, can in the last resort establish our claim that the Bahá'í spirit is in this day the sole agency that can translate a long-cherished ideal into an enduring achievement.

(Shoghi Effendi. *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 68)

36. We need a change of heart, a reframing of all our conceptions and a new orientation of our activities. The inward life of man as well as his outward environment have to be reshaped if human salvation is to be secured.

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in *Conservation of the Earth's Resources*, p. 15)

37. Its [*the Bahá'í Faith*] 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.

(Shoghi Effendi. Quoted in *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude*. P. 14)

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38. Our task is to build the Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Undeflected by the desperate expedients of those who seek to subdue the storm convulsing human life by political, economic, social or educational programs, let us, with single-minded devotion and concentrating all our efforts on our objective, raise His Divine System and sheltered within its impregnable stronghold, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, demonstrate the Bahá'í way of life. 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 freedom 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.

(Universal House of Justice. Messages of the Universal House of Justice. p. 12)

39. The Bahá'í community must demonstrate in ever-increasing measure its ability to redeem the disorderliness, the lack of cohesion, the permissiveness, the godlessness of modern society; the laws, the religious obligations, the observances of Bahá'í life, Bahá'í moral principles and standards of dignity, decency and reverence, must become deeply implanted in Bahá'í consciousness and increasingly inform and characterize this community....

(Universal House of Justice. Messages of the Universal House of Justice. p. 90)

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40. But in our concern for such immediate obvious calls upon our succour we must not allow ourselves to forget the continuing, appalling burden of suffering under which millions of human beings are always groaning — a burden which they have borne for century upon century and which it is the mission of Bahá'u'lláh to lift at last. The principal cause of this suffering, which one can witness wherever one turns, is the corruption of human morals and the prevalence of prejudice, suspicion, hatred, untrustworthiness, selfishness and tyranny among men. It is not merely material well-being that people need. What they desperately need is to know how to live their lives — they need to know who they are, to what purpose they exist, and how they should act towards one another; and, once they know the answers to these questions, they need to be helped to gradually apply these answers to everyday behaviour. It is to the solution of this basic problem of mankind that the greater part of all our energy and resources should be directed. There are mighty agencies in this world, governments, foundations, institutions of many kinds with tremendous financial resources which are working to improve the material lot of human beings. Anything we Bahá'ís could add to such resources in the way of special funds or contributions would be a negligible drop in the ocean. However, alone among men we have the Divinely-given remedy for the real ills of mankind; no one else is doing or can do this most important work, and if we divert our energy and our funds into fields in which others are already doing more than we can hope to do, we shall be delaying the diffusion of the Divine Message which is the most important task of all.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 19 November 1974)

41. The greatest need of all peoples is for the Faith itself, so that they may know the destiny towards which they as individuals and as members of society must strive, and will

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learn from the teachings those virtues and methods which will enable them to work together in harmony, forbearance and trustworthiness ... The principle remains, however, that the spiritual precedes the material. First comes the illumination of hearts and minds by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. and then the grassroots stirring of the believers wishing to apply these teachings to the daily life of their community. Such stirrings can be fostered, encouraged and assisted by the national and continental institutions of the Faith, but without them any activities introduced from above might well prove abortive.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 8 May 1984)

42. Souls must be transformed, communities thereby consolidated, new models of life thus attained.

(The Universal House of Justice. Ridván Message, 1989)

43. There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitates the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them.

(Universal House of Justice. *Promise of World Peace*, p. 13)

44. The light of the Revelation is destined to illumine every sphere of endeavour; in each, the relationships that sustain society are to be recast; in each, the world seeks examples of how human beings should be to one another. We offer for

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your consideration, given its conspicuous part in generating the ferment in which so many people have recently been embroiled, the economic life of humanity, where injustice is tolerated with indifference and disproportionate gain is regarded as the emblem of success. So deeply entrenched are such pernicious attitudes that it is hard to imagine how any one individual can alone alter the prevailing standards by which the relationships in this domain are governed. Nevertheless, there are certainly practices a Bahá'í would eschew, such as dishonesty in one's transactions or the economic exploitation of others. Faithful adherence to the divine admonitions demands there be no contradiction between one's economic conduct and one's beliefs as a Bahá'í.

(Universal House of Justice. Ridván 2012)

45. Conscious, as you [the youths] are, that Bahá'u'lláh came to transform both the inner life and external conditions of humanity, you are assisting those younger than yourselves to refine their characters and prepare to assume responsibility for the well-being of their communities. As they enter adolescence, you are helping them to enhance their power of expression, as well as enabling a strong moral sensibility to take root within them. In so doing, your own sense of purpose is becoming more clearly defined as you heed Bahá'u'lláh's injunction: "Let deeds, not words, be your adorning."

(Universal House of Justice. Dated 1 July 2013, to the participants of 114 youth conferences)

36. The role of religion in social and economic development

By the statement 'the economic solution is divine in nature' is meant that religion alone can, in the last resort, bring in man's nature such a fundamental change as to enable him to adjust the economic relationships of society.

Shoghi Effendi

1. Religion is verily the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world and of tranquility amongst its peoples. The weakening of the pillars of religion hath strengthened the foolish and emboldened them and made them more arrogant. Verily I say: The greater the decline of religion, the more grievous the waywardness of the ungodly. This cannot but lead in the end to chaos and confusion. Hear Me, O men of insight, and be warned, ye who are endued with discernment!

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. pp. 63-64)

2. In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquility and peace cease to shine.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 125)

3. Men at all times and under all conditions stand in need of one to exhort them, guide them, and to instruct and teach

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them. Therefore, He hath sent forth His Messengers, His Prophets and chosen ones that they might acquaint the people with the divine purpose underlying the revelation of Books and the raising up of Messengers, and that everyone may become aware of the trust of God which is latent in the reality of every soul.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 161)

4. Through the Teachings of this Daystar of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 68)

5. God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is two-fold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquility of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.

The prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity...every time the prophets of God have illumined the world with the resplendent radiance of the Daystar of Divine knowledge, they have invariably summoned its peoples to embrace the light of God through such means as best befitted the exigencies of the age in which they appeared. They were thus able to scatter the darkness of ignorance, and to shed upon the world the glory of their own knowledge. It is towards the inmost essence of these

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prophets, therefore, that the eye of every man of discernment must be directed, inasmuch as their one and only purpose hath always been to guide the erring, and give peace to the afflicted...These are not days of prosperity and triumph. The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills. Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring physician hath prepared.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 79)

6. The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man's supreme distinction, his real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandment of God shall attain everlasting felicity.

(Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. p. 289)

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 observance 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. Briefly, it is demonstrable that in this life, both outwardly and inwardly the mightiest of structures, the most solidly established, the most enduring, standing guard over the world, assuring both the spiritual and the material perfections of mankind, and protecting the happiness and the civilization of society-is religion. ...It is certain that the greatest of instrumentalities for achieving the advancement and the glory of man, the supreme agency for the enlightenment and the redemption of the world, is love and fellowship and unity among all the members of the human race. Nothing can be effected in the world, not even

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conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion. “Hadst Thou spent all the riches of the earth, Thou couldst not have united their hearts; but God hath united them.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 71-72)

8. ...for they lead their true followers to sincerity of intent, to high purpose, to purity and spotless honor, to surpassing kindness and compassion, to the keeping of their covenants when they have covenanted, to concern for the rights of others, to liberality, to justice in every aspect of life, to humanity and philanthropy, to valor and to unflagging efforts in the service of mankind. It is religion, to sum up, which produces all human virtues, and it is these virtues which are the bright candles of civilization...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 98)

9. Praise be to God, today the splendor of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations, and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony... Anyone attending these will be struck with amazement, and might suppose that these souls are all of one land, one nationality, one community, one thought, one belief and one opinion; whereas, in fact, one is an American, the other an African, one cometh from Asia and another from Europe, one is a native of India, another is from Turkestan, one is an Arab, another a Tajik, another a Persian and yet another a Greek. Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity, love and freedom; they have one voice, one thought and one purpose. Verily, this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God! If all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement as

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to unite the members of different races and to raise up from the heart of the world a voice that shall dispel war and strife, uproot dissension and disputation, usher in the era of universal peace and establish unity and concord amongst men.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. pp. 292-293)

10. Religion is the outer expression of the divine reality. Therefore, it must be living, vitalized, moving and progressive. If it be without motion and non-progressive, it is without the divine life; it is dead. The divine institutes are continuously active and evolutionary; therefore, the revelation of them must be progressive and continuous. All things are subject to reformation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 140)

11. When the holy, divine Manifestations or Prophets appear in the world, a cycle of radiance, an age of mercy dawns. Everything is renewed. Minds, hearts and all human forces are reformed, perfections are quickened, sciences, discoveries and investigations are stimulated afresh, and everything appertaining to the virtues of the human world is revitalized.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 287)

12. The greatest bestowal of God in the world of humanity is religion, for assuredly the divine teachings of religion are above all other sources of instruction and development to man. Religion confers upon man eternal life and guides his footsteps in the world of morality. It opens the doors of unending happiness and bestows everlasting honor upon the human kingdom. It has been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 361)

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

All religious laws conform to reason, and are suited to the people for whom they are framed, and for the age in which they are to be obeyed.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*, p.141

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14. 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. Briefly, it is demonstrable that in the life, both outwardly and inwardly the mightiest of structures, the most solidly established, the most enduring, standing guard over the world, assuring, both the spiritual and the material perfections of mankind, and protecting the happiness and the civilization of society—is religion.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 71-72)

15. Our purpose is to show how true religion promotes the civilization and honor, the prosperity and prestige, the learning and advancement of a people once abject, enslaved and ignorant, and how, when it falls into the hands of religious leaders who are foolish and fanatical, it is diverted to the wrong ends, until this greatest of splendors turns into blackest night.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 80)

16. As the compassionate Lord has crowned the head of man with such a refulgent diadem, we must strive that its luminous gems may cast their light upon the whole world.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 90)

17. The Call of God, when raised, breathed a new life into the body of mankind, and infused a new spirit into the whole

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creation. It is for this reason that the world hath been moved to its depths, and the hearts and consciences of men been quickened. Ere long the evidences of this regeneration will be revealed, and the fast asleep will be awakened.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Cited in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*. p. 169)

18. By the statement ‘the economic solution is divine in nature’ is meant that religion alone can, in the last resort, bring in man’s nature such a fundamental change as to enable him to adjust the economic relationships of society. It is only in this way that man can control the economic forces that threaten to disrupt the foundations of his existence, and thus assert his mastery over the forces of nature.

(Shoghi Effendi. Letter written on his behalf dated 26 December 1935)

19. Chaos and confusion are daily increasing in the world. They will attain such intensity as to render the frame of mankind unable to bear them. Then will men be awakened and become aware that religion is the impregnable stronghold and the manifest light of the world, and its laws, exhortations and teachings the source of life on earth.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter dated 10 February 1980)

20. You are living proofs that religion promotes upright character, instills forbearance, compassion, forgiveness, magnanimity, high-mindedness. It prohibits harm to others and invites souls to the plane of sacrifice, that they may give of themselves for the good of others. It imparts a world-embracing vision and cleanses the heart from self-centredness and prejudice. It inspires souls to build unity, to endeavour for material and spiritual betterment for all, to see their own happiness in that of others, to advance learning and science, to be an instrument of true joy, and to revive the body of humankind. It burnishes the mirror of the soul until it reflects the qualities of the spirit with which it has been endowed. And then the power of the divine attributes is

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manifested in the individual and collective lives of humanity and aids the emergence of a new social order. Such is the true conception of religion set forth in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Praised be God that you are ever striving to model your lives after the sublime pattern enshrined in His Teachings.

(Universal House of Justice. Letter 29 January 2014 to the Bahá'í youth of Iran.)

37. Economic Life: The Universal House of Justice

1 March 2017

To the Bahá'ís of the World

Dearly loved Friends,

In an increasingly interconnected world, more light is being cast on the social conditions of every people, giving greater visibility to their circumstances. While there are developments that give hope, there is much that should weigh heavy on the conscience of the human race. Inequity, discrimination, and exploitation blight the life of humanity, seemingly immune to the treatments applied by political schemes of every hue. The economic impact of these afflictions has resulted in the prolonged suffering of so many, as well as in deep-seated, structural defects in society. No one whose heart has been attracted to the teachings of the Blessed Beauty can remain unmoved by these consequences. “The world is in great turmoil,” Bahá'u'lláh observes in the *Lawḥ-i-Dunyá*, “and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions.” As the Bahá'í community strives to contribute at the level of thought and action to the betterment of the world, the adverse conditions

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experienced by many populations will more and more demand its attention.

The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. Humanity's collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected. A stubborn obstruction, then, stands in the way of meaningful social progress: time and again, avarice and self-interest prevail at the expense of the common good. Unconscionable quantities of wealth are being amassed, and the instability this creates is made worse by how income and opportunity are spread so unevenly both between nations and within nations. But it need not be so. However much such conditions are the outcome of history, they do not have to define the future, and even if current approaches to economic life satisfied humanity's stage of adolescence, they are certainly inadequate for its dawning age of maturity. There is no justification for continuing to perpetuate structures, rules, and systems that manifestly fail to serve the interests of all peoples. The teachings of the Faith leave no room for doubt: there is an inherent moral dimension to the generation, distribution, and utilization of wealth and resources.

The stresses emerging out of the long-term process of transition from a divided world to a united one are being felt within international relations as much as in the deepening fractures that affect societies large and small. With prevailing modes of thought found to be badly wanting, the world is in desperate need of a shared ethic, a sure framework for addressing the crises that gather like storm clouds. The vision of Bahá'u'lláh challenges many of the assumptions that are allowed to shape contemporary discourse—for instance,

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that self-interest, far from needing to be restrained, drives prosperity, and that progress depends upon its expression through relentless competition. To view the worth of an individual chiefly in terms of how much one can accumulate and how many goods one can consume relative to others is wholly alien to Bahá'í thought. But neither are the teachings in sympathy with sweeping dismissals of wealth as inherently distasteful or immoral, and asceticism is prohibited. Wealth must serve humanity. Its use must accord with spiritual principles; systems must be created in their light. And, in Bahá'u'lláh's memorable words, "No light can compare with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquillity of the nations depend upon it."

Although Bahá'u'lláh does not set out in His Revelation a detailed economic system, a constant theme throughout the entire corpus of His teachings is the reorganization of human society. Consideration of this theme inevitably gives rise to questions of economics. Of course, the future order conceived by Bahá'u'lláh is far beyond anything that can be imagined by the present generation. Nevertheless, its eventual emergence will depend on strenuous effort by His followers to put His teachings into effect today. With this in mind, we hope that the comments below will stimulate thoughtful, ongoing reflection by the friends. The aim is to learn about how to participate in the material affairs of society in a way that is consistent with the divine precepts and how, in practical terms, collective prosperity can be advanced through justice and generosity, collaboration and mutual assistance.

Our call to examine the implications of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh for economic life is intended to reach Bahá'í institutions and communities but is directed more especially to the individual believer. If a new model of community life, patterned on the teachings, is to emerge, must not the

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company of the faithful demonstrate in their own lives the rectitude of conduct that is one of its most distinguishing features? Every choice a Bahá'í makes — as employee or employer, producer or consumer, borrower or lender, benefactor or beneficiary — leaves a trace, and the moral duty to lead a coherent life demands that one's economic decisions be in accordance with lofty ideals, that the purity of one's aims be matched by the purity of one's actions to fulfil those aims. Naturally, the friends habitually look to the teachings to set the standard to which to aspire. But the community's deepening engagement with society means that the economic dimension of social existence must receive ever more concentrated attention. Particularly in clusters where the community-building process is beginning to embrace large numbers, the exhortations contained in the Bahá'í Writings should increasingly inform economic relationships within families, neighbourhoods, and peoples. Not content with whatever values prevail in the existing order that surrounds them, the friends everywhere should consider the application of the teachings to their lives and, using the opportunities their circumstances offer them, make their own individual and collective contributions to economic justice and social progress wherever they reside. Such efforts will add to a growing storehouse of knowledge in this regard.

A foundational concept to explore in this context is the spiritual reality of man. In the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the nobility inherent to every human being is unequivocally asserted; it is a fundamental tenet of Bahá'í belief, upon which hope for the future of humankind is built. The soul's capacity to manifest all the names and attributes of God — He Who is the Compassionate, the Bestower, the Bountiful — is repeatedly affirmed in the Writings. Economic life is an arena for the expression of honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, generosity, and other qualities of the spirit.

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The individual is not merely a self-interested economic unit, striving to claim an ever-greater share of the world's material resources. "Man's merit lieth in service and virtue", Bahá'u'lláh avers, "and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches." And further: "Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest." By consecrating oneself to the service of others, one finds meaning and purpose in life and contributes to the upliftment of society itself. At the outset of His celebrated treatise *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

And the honour and distinction of the individual consist 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 happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

Viewed in this light, many seemingly ordinary economic activities gain new significance because of their potential to add to human welfare and prosperity. "Every person must have an occupation, a trade or a craft," explains the Master, "so that he may carry other people's burdens, and not himself be a burden to others." The poor are urged by Bahá'u'lláh to "exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood", while they who are possessed of riches "must have the utmost regard for the poor". "Wealth", 'Abdu'l-Bahá has affirmed, "is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes." At the same time, the Hidden Words is replete with warnings of its perilous allure, that

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wealth is a “mighty barrier” between the believer and the proper Object of his adoration. No wonder, then, that Bahá'u'lláh extols the station of the wealthy one who is not hindered by riches from attaining the eternal kingdom; the splendour of such a soul “shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth!” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declares that “if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement”. For wealth is most commendable “provided the entire population is wealthy.” Examining one’s life to determine what is a necessity and then discharging with joy one’s obligation in relation to the law of Huqúqu’lláh is an indispensable discipline to bring one’s priorities into balance, purify whatever wealth one possesses, and ensure that the share which is the Right of God provides for the greater good. At all times, contentment and moderation, benevolence and fellow feeling, sacrifice and reliance on the Almighty are qualities that befit the God-fearing soul.

The forces of materialism promote a quite contrary line of thinking: that happiness comes from constant acquisition, that the more one has the better, that worry for the environment is for another day. These seductive messages fuel an increasingly entrenched sense of personal entitlement, which uses the language of justice and rights to disguise self-interest. Indifference to the hardship experienced by others becomes commonplace while entertainment and distracting amusements are voraciously consumed. The enervating influence of materialism seeps into every culture, and all Bahá’ís recognize that, unless they strive to remain conscious of its effects, they may to one degree or another unwittingly adopt its ways of seeing the

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world. Parents must be acutely aware that, even when very young, children absorb the norms of their surroundings. The junior youth spiritual empowerment programme encourages thoughtful discernment at an age when the call of materialism grows more insistent. With the approach of adulthood comes a responsibility, shared by one's generation, not to allow worldly pursuits to blind one's eyes to injustice and privation. Over time, the qualities and attitudes nurtured by the courses of the training institute, through exposure to the Word of God, help individuals to see past the illusions that, at every stage of life, the world uses to pull attention away from service and towards the self. And ultimately, the systematic study of the Word of God and the exploration of its implications raises consciousness of the need to manage one's material affairs in keeping with the divine teachings.

Beloved Friends: The extremes of wealth and poverty in the world are becoming ever more untenable. As inequity persists, so the established order is seen to be unsure of itself, and its values are being questioned. Whatever the tribulations that a conflicted world must confront in the future, we pray that the Almighty will help His loved ones to overcome every obstacle in their path and assist them to serve humanity. The larger the presence of a Bahá'í community in a population, the greater its responsibility to find ways of addressing the root causes of the poverty in its surroundings. Although the friends are at the early stages of learning about such work and of contributing to the related discourses, the community-building process of the Five Year Plan is creating everywhere the ideal environment in which to accrue knowledge and experience, gradually but consistently, about the higher purpose of economic activity. Against the background of the age-long work of erecting a divine civilization, may this exploration become a more

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pronounced feature of community life, institutional thought, and individual action in the years ahead.

[The Universal House of Justice

38. A brief history of the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. The Bahá'í Faith revolves around three central figures, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The first of whom was a youth, a native of Shíráz, named Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, known as the Báb or the Gate. He, in May 1844, at the age of 25, advanced the claim of being the herald who according to the sacred Scriptures of previous dispensations, must needs announce and prepare the way for the advent of One greater than Himself, Whose the mission would be, according to those same Scriptures, to inaugurate an era of righteousness and peace, an era that would be hailed as the consummation of all previous Dispensations, and initiate a new cycle in the religious History of mankind. Swift and severe persecution, launched by the organised forces of ecclesiastical and state in His native land led to His execution, in July 1850, by a firing squad in the public square of Tabríz in Persia.

The founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Mirza Husayn-'Alí-i-Núrí is known as Bahá'u'lláh, means the 'Glory of God' is regarded by Bahá'ís as the most recent in the line of messengers of God. The word Bahá'í is derived from Arabic, it is the name of religion and refers to followers of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh was born in Persia (Iran) on 12 November 1817. He was the son of a government minister in the court of the Shah. He grew up in an affluent and comfortable household and was expected to take on the responsibilities of His father as a minister after he passed away. This position he declined. Since the inception of the Faith in 1844, following the declaration by His forerunner, the Báb, and have accepted him as the promised one of Islam, Bahá'u'lláh took it upon himself to support the Báb's

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followers. This led to him being caught in a whirlpool of persecutions, which were being inflicted on the Báb's followers by clerics and government officials. He was put in the Tehran dungeon in 1853 in chains. After a few months, he was released from the dungeon in a very poor state of physical health, having been banished to Baghdad under the Ottoman Empire at the time. Along with His family and many of His followers he was repeatedly banished within the Ottoman Empire, until finally he was sent to the prison city of Acre where He remained until His passing on 29 May 1892. The shrine of Bahá'u'lláh is in Akka – Israel which is considered the most sacred place for Bahá'ís around the world.

Bahá'u'lláh in His *Book of the Covenant* appointed His oldest son, 'Abbás Effendi known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá, meaning 'servant of Bahá' as head of the Bahá'í Faith after His own passing and the only authorised interpreter of His writings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was born in Persia on 23 May 1844 and passed away 28 November 1921 in Haifa, Israel.

In 1911-1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled to Europe and North America. During these travels, he proclaimed Bahá'u'lláh's message of social justice and unity and world peace to church congregations, the members of trade unions, peace organisations, university faculties, journalists, government officials, and many public audiences. The talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in North America is selected and published in *Promulgation of Universal Peace* and certain talks in Europe have published in *Paris talks*.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in His *Will and Testament* appointed His grandson, Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Bahá'í community and the interpreter of the central figures of the Faith. Shoghi Effendi was then only 25 years old and still a student at Oxford University. His ministry from 1921 to 1957 was filled with carrying on His weighty responsibilities as the leader of the Bahá'í community and an interpreter. Shoghi

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Effendi was born in Akka on 1 March 1897 and passed away in London - England on 4 November 1957.

In His *Will and Testament*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá outlined the nature of two principal institutions namely the ‘Guardianship’ which is referred to Shoghi Effendi, and the ‘Universal House of Justice’ envisioned by Bahá’u’lláh for the conduct of the affairs of the Bahá’í community. The two most important functions of the Guardianship were the interpretation of Bahá’í teachings and the guidance of the Bahá’í community.

The Bahá’í Faith is a religion without priests; hence, after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, the affairs of the Bahá’í community have been managed through an administrative order. The system of Bahá’í administration has its origins in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh and is regarded by Bahá’ís as having been divinely ordained. It is distinguished from other religious or secular forms of government, as Shoghi Effendis describes, ‘Bahá’u’lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word who is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances, the Universal House of Justice (World Order: p. 145) With electoral and consultative principles, the Bahá’í administrative order operates democratically at the local, national, and international levels. The election of Bahá’í institutions take place each year on 21st April. The Bahá’í election is theoretically and practically different from the electoral processes currently practised, in that there is an emphasis on spiritual qualities and service orientation, rather than material gain or power. Bahá’ís are free to vote for any adult Bahá’í who they consider as ‘pure, faithful and active’. Therefore, nomination or canvassing is deprecated.

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The Universal House of Justice is a nine-member body elected at five-year intervals by the entire membership of over 180 National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the Bahá'í world. The Universal House of Justice consults on issues pertaining to the welfare of the whole of humanity as well as the affairs of the Bahá'í communities and guides the Bahá'í world within the framework of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. It was first instituted in 1963, and its seat is in Haifa - Israel. The Universal House of Justice appointed 'the Bahá'í International Community' as a representative of the Bahá'í community with international agencies.

The Bahá'í International Community is an international non-governmental organisation with affiliates in over 180 countries and territories, representing the members of the Bahá'í Faith worldwide. One of the aims of the Bahá'í International Community is to seek to promote and apply principles derived from the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith that contribute to the resolution of the current day challenges facing humanity. To achieve its purpose the Bahá'í International Community interacts with the work of the United Nations and its specialised agencies, governments and other non-governmental organisations, and have been presented at world conferences and meetings of United Nations agencies for a number of years. These include contributions on such diverse subjects as food, population, narcotics and alcohol, the ageing, women, youth, international trade, education, health, and peaceful utilization of outer space. In May 1970, the Bahá'í International Community gained consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in 1976 with the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF). Then, in 1989, the Bahá'í International Community developed a working relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO).

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