

**The True Foundation**  
*Of All*  
**Economics**

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

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...History, Economics or Sociology...cover subjects which our teachings  
cast an entirely new light upon. (Shoghi Effendi, *Scholarship*. P. 12)

Dedicated to:

The memory of Dr. Rahmatu'lláh Muhájir,  
Hand of the Cause of God, who first encouraged me  
to compile the Writings of the Bahá'í Faith on Economics

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# 1

## **Social and Economic Conditions 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. 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 171)

3. 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)

4. 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 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)

5. 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)

6. 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 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)

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. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

(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 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, so that the cry of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá may arise on all sides.

(‘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, The 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 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, The 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 strangled 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 newborn 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 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 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.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 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.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated 14 April 1932)

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 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...

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 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 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. 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.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated 18 December 1943)

24. 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 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 Treshold.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10 February 1980)

25. ...Both within and without the Cause of God, powerful forces are operating to bring to a climax the twin tendencies of this portentous century. Among the many evidences which reveal this process may be cited, on the one hand, the continual increase of lawlessness, terrorism, economic confusion, immorality and the growing danger from the proliferation of weapons of destruction, and on the other, the worldwide, divinely propelled expansion, consolidation and rapid emergence into the limelight of world affairs of the Cause itself, a process crowned by the wonderful efflorescence of Mount Carmel, the mountain of God, whose Divine springtime is now so magnificently burgeoning.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 1983)

26. 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 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.

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

27. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace, p. 10)

28. 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...

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated June 1988)

29. We have toiled to build a community at a period when the world has witnessed startling changes which have profoundly altered the character of society and plunged it into an unprecedented state of worry and confusion. Indeed, the world in its current condition has lost its bearing through the operation of forces it neither understands nor can control. It is a period in which great dynasties and empires have collapsed in rapid succession, in which powerful ideologies have captured the hearts of millions only to expire in infamy, in which two world wars wreaked havoc on civilized life as it was known at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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

30. And yet, even with such miraculous advances, with the emergence of international organizations, and with valiant attempts and brilliant successes at international cooperation, nations are at woeful odds with one another, people are convulsed by economic upheavals, races feel more alienated than before and are filled with mistrust, humiliation and fear.

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

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...

(The 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 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2000)

## 2

### **Remedy Consists in the Establishment of 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. 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, p. 247) Ridván
4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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.

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)

7. 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 Common -wealth of all the nations of the world? Some form of a

world superstate 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 judgement 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 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 judgement of the world’s federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally 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)

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 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)

9. 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)

10. 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 fulfill a great responsibility.

( Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 19 July 1956)

11. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, message dated 27 August 1989)

12. 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 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.

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

13. 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.

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

14. 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.

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

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

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

## The Application of the Bahá'í Teachings on Economics

*The Bahá'í Cause covers all economic and social questions  
under the heading and ruling of its laws.  
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 238)*

1. 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 dated 10 June 1939)

2. With regard to your wish for reorganizing your business along Bahá'í lines, Shoghi Effendi deeply appreciates the spirit that has prompted you to make such a suggestion. But, he feels nevertheless that 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)

3. ... the Writings are not so rich on this subject and many issues at present baffling the minds of the world are not even mentioned. 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)

4. 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)

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

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

6. 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. 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)

## The Bahá'í Approach to Economic Issues is Spiritual 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 238-239)

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

3. 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, *The world Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 19)

4. 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, *The world Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 23-24)

5. 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 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, *The world Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 60-61)

6. 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)

**The Unity of the Entire Human Race: A Fundamental Prerequisite  
for the Happiness of Humankind**

*...the greatest of instrumentalities for achieving the advancement and the glory of man,  
...is love and fellowship and unity among all the members of the human race...*

*'Abdu'l-Bahá*

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. 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)

3. 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 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)

4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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)

7. 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)

8. 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)

9. 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)

10. 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)

11. . . .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)

12. 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)

13. 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)

14. 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)

15. 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, ...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)

16. 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)

17. 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, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 73)

18. 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 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, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 42-43)

19. 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 cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet. 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.

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, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 202)

20. 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, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 163-164)

21. 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)

22. 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.

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

23. 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."

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

24. 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.

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

25. 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.

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

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

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

27. 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.

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

28. ...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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 1993)

29. Oneness of mankind...is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal.

(The Universal House of Justice, message dated 20 October 1983)

**A Prayer For Unity**

**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*

## 6

### **Uplifting the Welfare of the Generality of Humankind**

*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 chooseth for thyself.

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

4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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)

7. 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)

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

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

9. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238)

10. 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)

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. 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, *A Compilation on Education*, p. 50)

14. 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 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, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 42)

15. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 November 1999)

## 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, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 33-34)

2. 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)

3. 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)

4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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)

7. 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)

8. 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)

9. The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality. Set not your affections upon it.

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

10. 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 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)

11. 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 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, quoted in the Divine Art of Living, pp. 17-18)

12. 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)

13. ...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 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)

14. O ye concourse of the Kingdom of Abhá! 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)

15. 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)

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)

17. 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)

18. 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, 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)

19. 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 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)

20. 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)

21. 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)

22. 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 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)

23. 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)

24. ... 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)

25. 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.

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 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)

26. 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)

27. 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)

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

29. 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)

30. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, message dated 20 October 1983)

## 8

### **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 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 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.

Likened 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 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 *Mashriqu'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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

... 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 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)

4. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 129)

5. 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 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)

6. ... 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)

7. 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)

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, 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

illuminated by the spirit. In such a body all will receive spiritual health and vitality from the organism itself, and the most perfect flowers and fruits will be brought forth.

(The Universal House of Justice, *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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, p. 13)

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

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

## 9

### **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 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.

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

7. 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)

8. ...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)

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)

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 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 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!

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 3 June 1987)

## The Interdependence of the 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)

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. A word of warning should, however, be uttered in this connection. 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. 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.

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, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 122)

6. 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. 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, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 203)

7. 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.

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

8. 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.

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

## Economic Moderation and Contentment

*In all matters moderation is desirable.*

*Bahá'u'lláh*

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. 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)

3. 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))

4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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)

7. 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)

8. 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)

9. 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)

10. 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)

11. 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)

12. ...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)

13. Moderation is necessary in all affairs.  
(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in the Star of the West, vol. VIII, number 2, p. 26)

14. 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 center of emanation should be reason and knowledge and its base should be true moderation.  
(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 60)

15. 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)

## Education and Professional Training

*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, The Kitab-i Aqdas, p. 37)

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 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 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. ... 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 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)

11. ... 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)

12. 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)

13. O ye recipients of the favours of God! In this new and wondrous Age, the unshakable foundation is the teaching of sciences and arts. 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)

14. ... 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)

15. 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. 304)

16. 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, The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 31-32)

17. 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, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 109)

18. 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 industries and to promote improvement in our domestic products?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 101-102)

19. Observe carefully how education and the arts of civilization bring honour, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 111)

20. But education is of three kinds: material, human and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease. This education is common to animals and man.

Human education signifies civilization and progress — that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries and elaborate institutions, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal.

Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this state man becomes the focus of divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, “Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness.” This is the goal of the world of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 8)

21. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 76)

22. Among other teachings and principles Bahá’u’lláh counsels the education of all members of society. No 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 108)

23. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 300)

24. . . . 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 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)

25. 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)

26. ...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.

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)

27. 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)

28. 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. 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)

29. ...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)

30. 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)

31. 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)

32. 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)

33. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p. 95)

34. 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.

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

35. ...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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *Ridván Message 2000*)

36. ... 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 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 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2000)

## Institute Process and 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...*

*The 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.

(The 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 effectiveness of your institute programs in developing the capabilities of the friends to serve the Cause.

(The 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.

(The 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.

(The 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 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.

(The 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.

(The 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Four Year Plan, section 11.7)

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....

(The 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...

(The Universal House of Justice, Four Year Plan, sections 1.15, 1.19)

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.

(The 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.

(The 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. ... 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.

(The 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 26 November 1999)

## Participation of Women in Social and Economic Development

*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. We beseech the True One to adorn His handmaidens with the ornament of chastity, of trustworthiness, of righteousness and of purity. Verily, He is the All-Bestowing, the All-Generous. We make mention of the handmaidens of God at this time and announce unto them the glad-tidings of the tokens of the mercy and compassion of God and His consideration for them, glorified be He, and We supplicate Him for all His assistance to perform such deeds as are the cause of the exaltation of His Word. He verily speaketh the truth and enjoineth upon His servants and His handmaidens that which will profit them in every world of His worlds. He, verily, is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in a Compilation on Women, p. 46)

2. Humanity is like a bird with its two wings--the one is male, the other female. Unless both wings are strong and impelled by some common force, the bird cannot fly heavenwards. According to the spirit of this age, women must advance and fulfill their mission in all departments of life, becoming equal to men. They must be on the same level as men and enjoy equal rights. This is my earnest prayer and it is one of the fundamental principles of Bahá'u'lláh.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 147)

3. ...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)

4. ... 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)

5. ... recognition of equality in the social and economic equation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in a Compilation on Women, p. 39)

6. ... 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)

7. ... 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)

8. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 76-77)

9. ... 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 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 108)

10. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 133)

11. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 135)

12. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 182)

13. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 283)

14. 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 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 284)

15. ... 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 375))

16. The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So lone 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)

17. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 375)

18. 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)

19. ... 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)

20. 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 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)

21. 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)

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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, pp. 11-12)

23. ... 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.

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

24. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 10 December 1992 to all national Spiritual assemblies)

## Growth and Development

*The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing like a living being.*

*The 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, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 77)

2. 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, 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)

3. ... 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)

4. 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)

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. 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)

7. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 361)

8. ...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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 400-401)

9. 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 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)

10. ... It is clear that original matter, which is in the embryonic state, and the mingled and composed elements which were its earliest forms, gradually grew and developed during many ages and cycles, passing from one shape and form to another, until they appeared in this perfection, this system, this organization and this establishment, through the supreme wisdom of God.

Let us return to our subject that man, in the beginning of his existence and in the womb of the earth, like the embryo in the womb of the mother, gradually grew and developed, and passed from one form to another, from one shape to another, until he appeared with this beauty and

perfection, this force and this power. It is certain that in the beginning he had not this loveliness and grace and elegance, and that he only by degrees attained this shape, this form, this beauty and this grace. There is no doubt that the human embryo did not at once appear in this form; neither did it then become the manifestation of the words “Blessed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of Makers.” (Qur’án 23:14) Gradually it passed through various conditions and different shapes, until it attained this form and beauty, this perfection, grace and loveliness. Thus it is evident and confirmed that the development and growth of man on this earth, until he reached his present perfection, resembled the growth and development of the embryo in the womb of the mother: by degrees it passed from condition to condition, from form to form, from one shape to another, for this is according to the requirement of the universal system and Divine Law.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 183)

11. All created things have their degree or stage of maturity. The period of maturity in the life of a tree is the 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 the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, pp. 164-165)

12. 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)

13. ...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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 302)

14. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 325-326)

15. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 378)

16. 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, 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, The 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 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.

(The 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Office of Social and Economic Development, dated 12 November 1983)

23. "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, 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.... The Bahá'í World Community growing like a healthy new body, develops new cells, new organs, new functions and powers as it presses on 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 Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 38)

24. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements*, p. 72)

25. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements*, pp. 72-73)

26. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *Ridván Message 1996*)

27. The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing like a living being.

(The Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 89)

28. 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 maturation 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 6 January 1986)

29. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, seminar on Bahá'í social and economic development, Office of social and economic development, p. 14)

## The 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. 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)

2. 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)

3. 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)

4. 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)

5. ... 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 his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 2-3)

6. How excellent, how honourable is man if he arises to fulfill 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, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 4)

7. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 469)

8. 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)

9. 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 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Letter dated 27 July 1976)

10. 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....

(The Universal House of Justice, Message to the Bahá'í World, Naw-Ruz 1979)

11. 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 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 unfailing 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 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 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, 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Statement dated 20 October 1983)

12. 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; 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 teaching opportunities for the Bahá'í community, opportunities which the friends should seize upon through their expansion and consolidation activities.

(The Universal House of Justice, seminar on Bahá'í social and economic development, Office of Social and Economic Development, p. 7)

13. 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 few can be compared with the kind of complex projects promoted and funded by government agencies and large nongovernmental organizations.

(The Universal House of Justice, seminar on Bahá'í social and economic development, Office of Social and Economic Development, p. 11)

14. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter to the International Teaching Centre, dated 1 November 1983)

15. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Office of Social and Economic Development Memorandum, dated 12 November 1983)

16. The message of the House of Justice dated 20 October 1983 has clearly set out the concepts, defined the objectives and outlined the guiding principles for the selection and implementation of Bahá'í development projects, programmes or activities. 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.

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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 22 December 1983)

17. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 9 November 1983)

18. There are two principles which the House of Justice feels are fundamental to the generality of such projects of 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 May 1984)

19. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 1983)

20. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 1992)

21. 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 development and have gained invaluable experience in developing the art of applying spiritual concepts to the practical

challenges of daily life. At the conclusion of the Plan a reported 1,344 Bahá'í development endeavors were functioning throughout the world under the jurisdiction of 137 National Spiritual Assemblies.

(The Universal House of Justice, The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 72)

22. Many communities developed their consultative skill in order to more effectively identify feasible projects, formulate the necessary plans, and guide the resulting undertakings.

(The Universal House of Justice, The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p.72)

23. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, The Six-Year Plan, summary of achievements, pp. 76-77)

24. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 78)

25. 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. A large number of projects were also specifically aimed at enhancing the social and spiritual development of these young people.

(The Universal House of Justice The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 81)

26. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 84)

27. ...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.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 May 1984)

28. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 1996)

## 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, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 30)

2. 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)

3. 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)

4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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)

7. 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)

8. 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. Whoso observeth this duty, the help of the invisible One shall most certainly aid him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleaning from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 202)

9. 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, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 72)

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 the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 235)

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)

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 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)

## The 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, The 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 organized and the affairs of that village should be under the control of that board.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Extract from a 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, The 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. ... 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.
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 to an individual believer, dated 4 October 1912)

Revenue and expenditure of the storehouse:

9. 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.

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 people will not remain hungry, they will not remain naked. All will be in the utmost welfare and comfort.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Bahá’í World*, vol. IV, pp. 450-451)

10. 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... but also, ...to promote the standards of agriculture and other skills in the life of the people.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 27 July 1976)

## **Social Security and Eliminating Extremes of Wealth and Poverty**

*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.*

*The Universal House of Justice*

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, p. 19)

2. 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...

(Bahá'u'lláh, Persian Hidden Words, number 49)

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-minded 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. 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)

7. 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)

8. 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)

9. 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)

10. 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 aforetime, should not defile their tongues with abuse.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 38)

11. 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)

12. 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 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 107)

13. ... 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.

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. The significance of it is that the glad tidings of great joy revealed in the promises of the Holy Books will be fulfilled. Await ye this consummation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 132)

14. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 170)

15. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 181-182)

16. 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 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 grantees. 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 grantees 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 grantee of that province. The farmers and merchants were not obliged to defend the country. In lieu of labor the grantees received the taxes. Lycurgus, in order to establish this forever as a law, brought nine thousand grantees 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 216-217)

17. 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, which is

manifestly wrong and destructive of human foundation. Rightful privilege and demand must be set forth in laws and regulations.

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

18. 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)

19. 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)

20. 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 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 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 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.

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)

21. 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)

22. 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 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.

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 whilest 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)

23. Good God! Is it possible that, seeing one of his fellow-creatures starving, destitute of everything, a man can rest and live comfortably in his luxurious mansion? He who meets another in the greatest misery, can he enjoy his fortune? That is why, in the Religion of God, it is prescribed and established that wealthy men each year give over a certain part of their fortune for the maintenance of the poor and unfortunate. That is the foundation of the Religion of God and is binding upon all.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 277)

24. ‘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)

25. ...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, The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 204)

26. 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)

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. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, pp. 10-11)

29. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *The Six Year Plan*, summary of achievements, p. 76)

## Distribution of Wealth

*Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy.*

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

### A. Voluntary Giving

1. . . . 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. 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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 156)

3. . . . 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)

4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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)

7. 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)

8. 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)

9. If a wealthy man at the time of his death bequeaths a gift to the poor and miserable, and gives a part of his wealth to be spent for them, perhaps this action may be the cause of his pardon and forgiveness, and of his progress in the Divine Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 231)

10. 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)

11. 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, cited in the *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, number 1, p. 231)

12. . . . 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)

13. 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)

14. 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)

15. 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

16. You have questioned me about strikes. This question is and will be for a long time the subject of great difficulties. Strikes are due to two causes. One is the extreme greed and rapacity of the manufacturers and industrialists; the other, the excesses, the avidity and intransigence of the workmen and artisans. It is, therefore, necessary to remedy these two causes.

But the principle cause of these difficulties lies in the laws of the present civilization; for they lead to a small number of individuals accumulating incomparable fortunes, beyond their needs, while the greater number remain destitute, stripped and in the greatest misery. This is contrary to justice, to humanity, to equity; it is the height of iniquity, the opposite to what causes divine satisfaction.

This contrast is peculiar to the world of man: with other creatures — that is to say, with nearly all animals — there is a kind of justice and equality. Thus equality exists in a shepherd's flock and in a herd of deer in the country. Likewise, among the birds of the prairie, of the plain, of the hills or of the orchard, and among every kind of animal some kind of equality prevails. With them such a difference in the means of existence is not to be found; so they live in the most complete peace and joy.

It is quite otherwise with the human species, which persists in the greatest error, and in absolute iniquity. Consider an individual who has amassed treasures by colonizing a country for his profit: he has obtained an incomparable fortune and has secured profits and incomes which flow like a river, while a hundred thousand unfortunate people, weak and powerless, are in need of a mouthful of bread. There is neither equality nor benevolence. So you see that general peace and joy are destroyed, and the welfare of

humanity is negated to such an extent as to make fruitless the lives of many. For fortune, honors, commerce, industry are in the hands of some industrialists, while other people are submitted to quite a series of difficulties and to limitless troubles; they have neither advantages, nor profits, nor comforts, nor peace.

Then rules and laws should be established to regulate the excessive fortunes of certain private individual and meet the needs of millions of the poor masses; thus a certain moderation would be obtained. However, absolute equality is just as impossible, for absolute equality in fortunes, honors, commerce, agriculture, industry would end in disorderliness, in chaos, in disorganization of the means of existence, and in universal disappointment: the order of the community would be quite destroyed. Thus difficulties will also arise when unjustified equality is imposed. It is, therefore, preferable for moderation to be established by means of laws and regulations to hinder the constitution of the excessive fortunes of certain individuals, and to protect the essential needs of the masses. For instance, the manufacturers and the industrialists heap up a treasure each day, and the poor artisans do not gain their daily sustenance: that is the height of iniquity, and no just man can accept it. Therefore, laws and regulations should be established which would permit the workmen to receive from the factory owner their wages and a share in the fourth or the fifth part of the profits, according to the capacity of the factory; or in some other way the body of workmen and the manufacturers should share equitably the profits and advantages. Indeed, the capital and management come from the owner of the factory, and the work and labor, from the body of the workmen. Either the workmen should receive wages which assure them an adequate support and, when they cease work, becoming feeble or helpless, they should have sufficient benefits from the income of the industry; or the wages should be high enough to satisfy the workmen with the amount they receive so that they may themselves be able to put a little aside for days of want and helplessness.

When matters will be thus fixed, the owner of the factory will no longer put aside daily a treasure which he has absolutely no need of (for, if the fortune is disproportionate, the capitalist succumbs under a formidable burden and gets into the greatest difficulties and troubles; the administration of an excessive fortune is very difficult and exhausts man's natural strength). And the workmen and artisans will no longer be in the greatest

misery and want; they will no longer be submitted to the worst privations at the end of their life.

It is, then, clear and evident that the repartition of excessive fortunes among a small number of individuals, while the masses are in need, is an iniquity and an injustice. In the same way, absolute equality would be an obstacle to life, to welfare, to order and to the peace of humanity. In such a question moderation is preferable. It lies in the capitalists' being moderate in the acquisition of their profits, and in their having a consideration for the welfare of the poor and needy — that is to say, that the workmen and artisans receive a fixed and established daily wage, and have a share in the general profits of the factory.

It would be well, with regard to the common rights of manufacturers, workmen and artisans, that laws be established, giving moderate profits to manufacturers, and to workmen the necessary means of existence and security for the future. Thus when they become feeble and cease working, get old and helpless, or leave behind children under age, they and their children will not be annihilated by excess of poverty. And it is from the income of the factory itself, to which they have a right, that they will derive a share, however small, toward their livelihood.

In the same way, the workmen should no longer make excessive claims and revolt, nor demand beyond their rights; they should no longer go out on strike; they should be obedient and submissive and not ask for exorbitant wages. But the mutual and reasonable rights of both associated parties will be legally fixed and established according to custom by just and impartial laws. In case one of the two parties should transgress, the court of justice should condemn the transgressor, and the executive branch should enforce the verdict; thus order will be reestablished, and the difficulties, settled. The interference of courts of justice and of the government in difficulties pending between manufacturers and workmen is legal, for the reason that current affairs between workmen and manufacturers can not be compared with ordinary affairs between private persons, which do not concern the public, and with which the government should not occupy itself. In reality, although they appear to be private matters, these difficulties between the two parties produce a detriment to the public; for commerce, industry, agriculture and the general affairs of the country are all intimately linked together. If one

of these suffers an abuse, the detriment affects the mass. Thus the difficulties between workmen and manufacturers become a cause of general detriment.

The court of justice and the government have, therefore, the right of interference. When a difficulty occurs between two individuals with reference to private rights, it is necessary for a third to settle the question. This is the part of the government. Then the problem of strikes — which cause troubles in the country and are often connected with the excessive vexations of the workmen, as well as with the rapacity of manufacturers — how could it remain neglected?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 273-276)

17. 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)

18. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238)

19. 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)

20. 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)

21. 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)

22. 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)

23. ... 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)

24. Profit sharing is recommended as a solution to one form of economic problems.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Directives from the Guardian, p. 19)

25. 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. Graduated Income Tax

26. 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 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)

27. 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, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 217)

#### D. Division of Inheritance

28. Inheritance falls into the following categories:

- |                    |       |             |        |
|--------------------|-------|-------------|--------|
| 1. children        | 1,080 | out of 2520 | shares |
| 2. husband or wife | 390   | out of 2520 | shares |
| 3. father          | 330   | out of 2520 | shares |
| 4. mother          | 270   | out of 2520 | shares |
| 5. brother         | 210   | out of 2520 | shares |
| 6. sister          | 150   | out of 2520 | shares |
| 7. teacher         | 90    | out of 2520 | shares |

(Bahá’u’lláh, Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 153)

29. 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, pp. 26-27)

30. 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)

31. ...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, p. 182)

#### E. Huqúqu'lláh (the Right of God)

32. 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 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, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 55)

33. ...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)

34. ...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)

35. 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)

36. ...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)

37. 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)

38. ...And inasmuch as God hath made the achievement of everything conditional upon material means, therefore the injunction prescribing payment of the Huqúq hath been 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)

39. ...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)

40. 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)

41. 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. (The Universal House of Justice. Ridván Messages 1991)

#### F. Zakát (Tithes)

42. 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 ere long 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 72)

43. 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p.140)

44. Bahá'u'lláh, likewise, commanded the rich to give freely to the poor. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas it is further written by Him that those who have a certain amount of income must give one-fifth of it to God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 137)

#### G. The Law on Treasure Trove

45. 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)

46. Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes. Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the

supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor — in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society — its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 24-25)

## Socialism and Capitalism

*The Cause, can and indeed will in the future maintain the right balance between the two tendencies of individualism and collectivism, not only in the field of economics, but in all other social domains.*

*Shoghi Effendi*

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 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)

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, The 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 dated 10 June 1939)

4. 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 cannot also agree with the other extreme tendency represented by the “Laissez-faire” or individualistic school of economics which became very popular in the late eighteenth century, 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 overcontrol, and even increasing ownership of the means of production, and such tendency cannot be fully sanctioned by the believers. The Cause, can and indeed will in the future maintain the right balance between the two 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.

(Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 25 August 1939)

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)

## The Law on Interest

*...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, 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)

## The Proper Utilization of the Earth's Resources

*1. 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....*

*(The Universal House of Justice, quoted in a Compilation on Conservation of the Earth's Resources, p. 16)*

### A. Proper Utilization of the Earth's Resources

2. 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, Bahá'í Prayers)

3. Every time I lift up mine eyes unto Thy heaven, I call to mind Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; and every time I turn my gaze to Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. And when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 207)

4. 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)

5. 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)

6. 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)

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

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

8. 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)

9. 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. 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))

10. 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)

11. 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)

12. 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)

13. 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)

14. It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the 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)

15. 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)

16. 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.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 78)

17. It is necessary that the signs of the perfection of the spirit should be apparent in this world, so that the world of creation may bring forth endless results, and this body may receive life and manifest the divine bounties. So, for example, the rays of the sun must shine upon the earth, and the solar heat develop the earthly beings; if the rays and heat of the sun did not shine upon the earth, the earth would be uninhabited, without meaning, and its development would be retarded. In the same way, if the perfections of

the spirit did not appear in this world, this world would be unenlightened and absolutely brutal. By the appearance of the spirit in the physical form, this world is enlightened. As the spirit of man is the cause of the life of the body, so the world is in the condition of the body, and man is in the condition of the spirit. If there were no man, the perfections of the spirit would not appear, and the light of the mind would not be resplendent in this world. This world would be like a body without a soul.

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

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

18. And if, as thou passest by fields and plantations, thou observest that the plants, flowers and sweet-smelling herbs are growing luxuriantly together, forming a pattern of unity, this is an evidence of the fact that that plantation and garden is flourishing under the care of a skilful gardener. But when thou seest it in a state of disorder and irregularity thou inferrest that it hath lacked the training of an efficient farmer and thus hath produced weeds and tares.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 290)

19. Earth can be made a paradise.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited in *the Star of the West*, vol. XIII, number 9, p. 227)

20. In the physical creation, evolution is from one degree of perfection to another. The mineral passes with its mineral perfections to the vegetable; the vegetable, with its perfections, passes to the animal world, and so on to that of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 62)

21. When we consider existence, we see that the mineral, vegetable, animal and human worlds are all in need of an educator.

If the earth is not cultivated, it becomes a jungle where useless weeds grow; but if a cultivator comes and tills the ground, it produces crops which nourish living creatures. It is evident, therefore, that the soil needs the cultivation of the farmer. Consider the trees:

if they remain without a cultivator, they will be fruitless, and without fruit they are useless; but if they receive the care of a gardener, these same barren trees become fruitful, and through cultivation, fertilization and engrafting the trees which had bitter fruits yield sweet fruits....

The same is true with respect to animals: notice that when the animal is trained it becomes domestic, and also that man, if he is left without education, becomes bestial, and, moreover, if left under the rule of nature, becomes lower than an animal, whereas if he is educated he becomes an angel.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 7)

22. 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)

23. ... 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, The Secret of Divine Civilizations, p. 16)

24. 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.

...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, *The Secret of Divine Civilizations*, pp. 61-62)

25. ...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...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in the *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, p. 40)

26. All that has been created is for man, who is at the apex of creation, and he must be thankful for the divine bestowals. 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)

27. 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 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 ... 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...

... 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, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 203-204)

28. ... 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, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 204)

29. Creation reflects the names and attributes of God, and mankind has a profound responsibility to protect the natural environment and preserve its ecological balance. (The Universal House of Justice, The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 75)

### B. Loving Animals

30. 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 87)

31. 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 selfsame 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.

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)

32. 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, A Compilation on Conservation of the Earth's Resources, p.11)

33. 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, A Compilation on Conservation of the Earth's Resources, p.10)

### C. Cleanliness

34. ... 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 46-47)

35. 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 36)

36. ... 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 odour ere he entereth therein...

(Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 58)

37. 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 74)

38. 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 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 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)

39. Cleanliness and sanctity in all conditions are characteristics of pure beings and necessities of free souls...

In all conditions, cleanliness and sanctity, purity and delicacy exalt humanity and make the contingent beings progress. Even when applied to physical things, delicacy causeth the attainment of spirituality, as it is established in the Holy Scriptures.

External cleanliness, although it is but a physical thing, hath a great influence upon spirituality. For example, although sound is but the vibrations of the air, which affect the tympanum of the ear, and vibrations of the air are but an accident among the accidents which depend upon the air, consider how much marvelous notes or a charming song influence the spirits! A wonderful song giveth wings to the spirit and filleth the heart with exaltation. To return to the subject, the fact of having a pure and spotless body likewise exerciseth an influence upon the spirit of man...

...Renouncing of tobacco, wine and opium, giveth health, strength and intellectual enjoyments penetration of judgment and physical vigor...

Therefore strive that the greatest cleanliness and sanctity, which is the great desire of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, should be resplendent among the Bahá'ís, and that the companions of God should surpass the rest of mankind in all conditions and perfections; that they may be physically and morally superior to others; that through cleanliness and purity, refinement and health, they may be the chief of wise men, and that by their affranchisement, their prudence and the control of their desires, they may be the princes of the pure, the free and the wise.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in the Divine Art of Living, pp. 57-58)

#### D. Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs

40. 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 227)

41. Gambling and the use of opium have been forbidden unto you. Eschew them both, O people, and be not of those 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 75)

42. 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)

43. 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 62)

44. 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, p. 227)

45. 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, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 88)

46. 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)

47. 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 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 quenbeth 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 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)

48. 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)

49. 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)

50. Regarding your questions: Concerning smoking; it is not forbidden in the Bahá’í teachings and no one can enforce its prohibition. It is strongly discouraged as a habit which is not very clean or very healthy. But it is a matter left entirely to the conscience of the individual and not of major importance, whereas the use of alcohol is definitely forbidden and thus not left optional to the conscience of the believer.

(Shoghi Effendi, letter written on his behalf, dated 19 April 1941)

51. Concerning the so-called ‘spiritual’ virtues of the hallucinogens... spiritual stimulation should come from turning one’s heart to Bahá’u’lláh, and not through physical means such as drugs and agents.

From the description given in your letter it appears that hallucinogenic agents are a form of intoxicant. As the friends, including the youth, are required strictly to abstain from all forms of intoxicants, and are further expected conscientiously to obey the civil law of their country, it is obvious that they should refrain from using these drugs.

A very great responsibility for the future peace and well being of the world is borne by the youth of today. Let the Bahá’í youth by the power of the Cause they espouse be the shining example for their companions.

(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 15 April 1965)

#### E. Health

52. 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, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 60)

53. 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)

54. 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)

55. 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)

56. 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)

57. 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)

## The Skill of Bahá'í Consultation

*The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.*

*Bahá'u'lláh*

1. 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)

2. 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)

3. 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)

4. 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)

5. 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, p. 29)

6. 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 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)

7. 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 attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá'í Administration, p. 21)

8. ...the shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of different opinions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in Bahá'í Administration, p. 21)

9. 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)

10. 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 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)

11. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, p. 96)

12. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, The Six Year Plan, summary of achievements, p. 57)

## Moral Values: The Basis for Economics

*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. 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)

2. 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)

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)

5. Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 285)

6. 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)

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! Please God, ye will regard this blessed night as the night of unity, will knit your souls together, and resolve to adorn yourselves with the ornament of a goodly and praiseworthy character. 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. 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)

10. 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)

11. 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)

12. . . . Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.  
(Bahá'u'lláh, Persian Hidden Words, number 5)

13. 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. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet.  
(Bahá'u'lláh, Persian Hidden Words, number 76)

14. 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)

15. 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)

16. 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)

17. O ye friends of God in His cities and His loved ones in His lands! 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)

18. 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)

19. 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)

20. 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)

21. ...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, p. 13, number 47)

22. 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...

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

23. ... 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)

24. ... 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.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 23-24)

25. ... 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, The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 55-56)

26. 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.

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, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 60-61)

27. 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, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 96)

28. 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)

29. 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)

30. 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)

31. 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)

32. 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!

These virtues do not appear from reality of man except through the power of God and the divine teachings, for they need supernatural power for their manifestation. It may be that in the world of nature a trace of these perfections may appear, but they are unstable and ephemeral; they are like the rays of the sun upon the wall.

As the compassionate God has placed such a wonderful crown upon the head of man, man should strive that its brilliant jewels may become visible in the world.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 78-80)

33. 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)

34. ... 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 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. (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 190)

35. 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 453)

36. Justice and equity are twin Guardian that watch over men.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 76)

37. 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)

38. 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.

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 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)

39. 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 a Compilation on Conservation of the Earth’s Resources, p. 15)

40. The Bahá'í Faith, like all other Divine Religions, is thus fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the development of the individual and society, through the acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. It is the soul of man which has first to be fed. (Shoghi Effendi, quoted in *Spiritual Foundations: Prayer, Meditation and the Devotional Attitude*. P. 14)

41. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages of the Universal House of Justice*, p. 12)

42. 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....

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages of the Universal House of Justice*, p. 90)

43. 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'is 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.  
(The Universal House of Justice, letter dated 19 November 1974)

44. 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 ... 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.

(The Universal House of justice, letter dated 8 May 1984)

45. 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.

(The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace, p. 13)

## The Role of Religion in Social and Economic Development

*...religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world...*

*Bahá'u'lláh*

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 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 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 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, The 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 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.

Can any power withstand the penetrating influence of the Words of God? Nay, by God! The proof is clear and the evidence is complete! 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)

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, The 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, *The 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, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 361)

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)

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. 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 dated 26 November 1935)

16. 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.

(The Universal House of justice, letter dated 10 February 1980)

[AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM PERISAN]

2 April 2010

To the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith

Dearly loved Friends,

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 inequalities so prevalent in the world today.

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 an act of worship the assiduous and honest pursuit of a useful trade or profession, undertaken in the spirit of service. 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. In this light, we are providing in the paragraphs that follow a few comments on the family and its influence on social and economic affairs, in the hope that they will assist you in engaging in constructive dialogue with your compatriots.

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. 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.

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. 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 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 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.

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 costs of certain goods 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 goods that promote violence and immorality—are unworthy and unacceptable.

Today the world is assailed by an array of destructive forces. Materialism, rooted in the West, has now spread to every corner of the planet, breeding, in the name of a strong global economy and human welfare, a culture of consumerism. It skilfully and ingeniously promotes a habit of consumption that seeks to satisfy the basest and most selfish desires, while encouraging the expenditure of wealth so as to prolong and exacerbate social conflict.

How vain and foolish a worldview! And meanwhile, a rising tide of fundamentalism, bringing with it an exceedingly narrow understanding of religion and spirituality, continues to gather strength, threatening to engulf humanity in rigid dogmatism. In its most extreme form, it conditions the resolution of the problems of the world upon the occurrence of events derived from illogical and superstitious notions. It professes to uphold virtue yet, in practice, perpetuates oppression and greed. Among the deplorable results of the operation of such forces are a deepening confusion on the part of young people everywhere, a sense of hopelessness in the ranks of those who would drive progress, and the emergence of a myriad social maladies.

The key to resolving these social ills 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.

It is our hope that, as you consult on these matters with friends, relatives, neighbours and co-workers, 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.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]

## A New Framework for Global Prosperity

*Bahá'í International Community's submission to the 2006 Commission on Social Development on the review of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty*

January 2006

1. Any definition of poverty and course for its elimination is shaped by prevailing notions about the nature and purpose of the development process. The combined efforts of the United Nations and civil society have significantly expanded the understanding of poverty and development. The recognition of the interrelatedness of development, human rights, and human security; the increased awareness of the interactions between the market and the legal, social, cultural and physical environment in which it operates<sup>1</sup>; the acknowledgement of human well-being as the goal of development; efforts to introduce more equity into systems of global trade and finance; and the emphasis on human solidarity as the basis for sustainable development -- these have generated a worldwide momentum in the drive to find enduring solutions to the scourge of poverty.
2. Despite these advances, however, the underlying materialistic assumptions driving poverty eradication efforts remain virtually unchallenged: it is generally accepted that an increase in material resources will eradicate this condition from human life. The Millennium Development Goals, while effective in catalyzing poverty alleviation efforts, have also framed development primarily in terms of the improvement of material conditions.<sup>2</sup> Yet the most persistent ills obstructing the peaceful development of peoples and nations -- the marginalization of girls and women, failing states, the lack of political freedoms, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the proliferation of weapons and violent conflict, inter-ethnic and racial tensions, religious intolerance and extremism, lawlessness and growing unemployment -- cannot be alleviated by material means alone. These social ills evidence a different kind of poverty -- one rooted in the values and attitudes that shape relationships between individuals, communities, and nations as well as between the governors and the governed.
3. The Bahá'í International Community views the purpose of development as contributing to the foundation for a new social and international order, capable of creating and sustaining conditions in which human beings can advance morally, culturally, and intellectually<sup>3</sup>. This purpose is rooted in the understanding that the transformation of society will involve profound changes in the individual as well as the deliberate and systematic re-creation of social structures. From this perspective, *poverty can be defined as the absence of resources -- physical, social, and ethical -- necessary for the establishment of conditions, which promote the moral, material, and creative capacities of individuals, communities, and institutions*. Guided by this definition and the belief in the inherent goodness and essential spiritual nature of every human being, we submit the following

recommendations to the United Nations on the occasion of its review of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

**4. Overcome the limitations of particularistic mindsets**

The eradication of poverty will require a fundamental paradigm shift on the part of nations and individuals. Our particularistic frames of reference -- defined by ethnic or religious community, nation, 'North' and 'South,' 'developed' and 'developing,' or regional alliances -- must gradually give way to an emerging sense of global solidarity and responsibility. Facilitated by efforts to integrate human rights into development and security frameworks, initiatives to create more just systems of trade and finance, evolving concepts of sovereignty, a growing body of international law, and a dramatic increase in travel and communication technology, such a shift is already well underway. We must now strive to enlarge our notions of responsibility and citizenship until we come to understand the struggles and progress of other peoples and nations as our own. Such a paradigm shift represents a practical response to the recognition that peace and prosperity are indivisible and that no sustainable benefit can be conferred on a nation or community if the welfare of the nations as a whole is ignored or neglected.

**5. Enhance local deliberative and problem-solving capacity**

Often the target populations of poverty eradication projects are perceived as masses of undernourished people, overwhelmed by their circumstances and needs rather than capable agents of change in their communities. The challenge for development efforts is to find methods that allow individuals and communities to solve their own problems; the ability of a community to take on more complex social issues is a key indicator of progress. One of the essential skills involved is that of group decision-making -- bringing together diverse views, searching for the best solution, and generating commitment and solidarity to carry the decision through.

**6. Implement gender-based budgeting**

Many studies confirm that female poverty cannot be conceptualized the same way as male poverty, given that women's social and cultural roles and their relationship to systems of power and authority differ from those of men.<sup>4</sup> These differences, however, are rarely reflected in official poverty statistics and, consequently, do not inform resource allocation at local, national, and regional levels.<sup>5</sup> In order for governments to fulfill their commitments to gender equality, public expenditures must include a gender analysis -- involving women in budget decision-making and assessing the impact of fiscal measures on the status of women in the community.

7. As women hold approximately 15% of elected parliamentary seats globally, the power to legislate and effect change at the national and global levels rests primarily with men. It is equally their responsibility to push for the unconditional ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by member states and to put in place accountability mechanisms

when commitments are not followed through. The extension of opportunities to women and the emergence of new forms of partnership between men and women have the potential to revolutionize every institution of society from the family to the government -- creating the very conditions that make progress and prosperity possible.

**8. Create rural centers of technology training and research**

While the adoption of new technologies is integral to development, too often -- under the guise of 'modernization'-- these have been inappropriate to the culture and community into which they were introduced. Alongside Millennium Development Goals calling for the sharing of information and communication technologies, equally important is the creation of local institutions, such as rural centers of technology training and research, constructively blending modern scientific methods with indigenous practices and thereby directly engaging local populations in the generation and implementation of new ideas. True development consists of the creation of indigenous capacity to participate in the generation of technologies for the benefit of the broader community.

**9. Expand development indicators to assess ethical and moral capacities**

The measures and indicators used to assess poverty and human development, such as the Gross National Product and the Human Development Index, largely determine what is valued and, as such, shape development policy and priorities. The progress of communities and nations requires not only material inputs and legal measures to secure order, but the development of moral capabilities to govern behavior and decision-making by individuals and institutions.

10. In an effort to advance the methods for assessing development at the community level from a moral perspective, the Bahá'í International Community has proposed the following set of principles as a basis for the construction of ethically-based development indicators: unity in diversity (the extent to which all members of a community are integrated into community life); equity and justice (to ensure that opportunity and access to material and social resources are fairly distributed); gender equality; trustworthiness; and freedom of thought, conscience and belief.<sup>6</sup> These principles could be applied in the areas of economic development, education, environmental stewardship, and governance, for example, to generate development goals and construct new indicators to measure progress towards these goals.

**11. Eliminate extremes of wealth**

Extremes of poverty are linked to extremes of wealth. Given the interconnectedness of the global economic system, one extreme cannot be abolished while the other is allowed to exist. In this regard, efforts to eradicate poverty must include an earnest re-evaluation of global systems and processes -- including governance, trade, and the private transactions -- that perpetuate the growing extremes of wealth and poverty. Greater corporate accountability should not be restricted to the environment and labor standards but also take into account the full panoply of human rights. The legitimacy and social benefit of one's

material resources depend on the means by which they are acquired and the end to which they are used.

12. While the Millennium Development Goals have focused the world's development agenda for the next ten years, the United Nations must not limit its attention to this relatively short span of time -- which confines it to a primarily reactive mode. Alongside short-term goals, the United Nations, with academia and civil society, needs to consider longer-term scenarios and desired outcomes. Such an orientation would allow it to examine a wider range of policy and programmatic options and to cultivate a diversity of intellectual contributions, thereby enriching the visioning process. Let us not be content with minimum standards, narrow material goals, and compromise positions but rather cast a vision of prosperity that can inspire the masses of humanity to work towards its realization in a deliberate act of global solidarity.

### Notes

1. Jeffrey Sachs, "Clinical Economics," *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005).
2. While the Millennium Development Goals set out to promote gender equality, education, social inclusion and environmental sustainability, they focus primarily on people's material needs, including income poverty, hunger, disease, and provision of shelter.
3. This is consistent with Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that, "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized."
4. *Social Watch Report 2005 ? Roars and Whispers: Gender and Poverty, Promises vs. Action.* <http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informeImpreso/informe2005.htm>
5. Karen Judd, ed., *Gender Budget Initiatives: Strategies, Concepts, and Experiences* (New York: The United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2002).
6. Bahá'í International Community, *Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development*, a concept paper written for the World Faiths Development Dialogue, Lambeth Palace, London (London: The Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1998).

BIC Document #06-0101

Bahá'í International Community's Contribution to the 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

3 May 2010

New York, New York

Against the backdrop of climate change, environmental degradation, and the crippling extremes of wealth and poverty, the transformation from a culture of unfettered consumerism to a culture of sustainability has gained momentum in large part through the efforts of civil society organizations and governmental agencies worldwide. Beyond informed policies and 'greener technologies' it is a transformation that will require an earnest examination of our understanding of human nature and of the cultural frameworks driving institutions of government, business, education, and media around the world. Questions of what is *natural* and *just* will need to be critically re-examined. The issue of sustainable consumption and production, under consideration by this Commission, will need to be considered in the broader context of an ailing social order—one characterized by competition, violence, conflict and insecurity—of which it is a part.

In its contribution to the Commissions' review of the 10-Year Framework for Programmes[i] on sustainable consumption and production, the Bahá'í International Community would like, first, to note the strengths of this evolving Framework and, second—in line with the vision outlined above—to identify issues which require further elaboration. In terms of its strengths: the Framework considers the economic, social and environmental aspects of the transition to sustainable consumption and production, thereby breaking down the long-standing compartmentalization of these domains[ii]; it recognizes the inter-linkages between the themes of the Framework (e.g. education, institutional capacity building, participation of women, application of indigenous knowledge, etc.)[iii]; it has sought to involve stakeholders from around the world through regional consultations; and it calls on actors from all levels of society to achieve the goals articulated therein.

Yet, given that the Framework seeks to promote the shift towards sustainable consumption and production—implicitly challenging cultural norms and values, which have promoted consumerism at all cost—a number of underlying conceptions will need to be examined and, in many cases, revised in order to advance the goals therein. These

include conceptions of human nature; of development (and the nature of progress and prosperity); of the nature and causes of recent economic crises; of processes of technological development; and of the means and ends of educational processes. We invite others actively working to promote sustainable consumption and production to engage with us in dialogue about these underlying issues in order to learn from each other's perspectives and experiences and to collectively advance efforts to build a just and sustainable society.

### **Human nature**

The question of human nature has an important place in the discourse on sustainable consumption and production as it prompts us to reexamine, at the deepest levels, who we are and what our purpose is in life. The human experience is essentially spiritual in nature: it is rooted in the inner reality—or what some call the 'soul'—that we all share in common. The culture of consumerism, however, has tended to reduce human beings to competitive, insatiable consumers of goods and to objects of manipulation by the market. Commonly held views have assumed the existence of an intractable conflict between what people really want (i.e. to consume more) and what humanity needs (i.e. equitable access to resources). How, then, can we resolve the paralyzing contradiction that, on the one hand, we desire a world of peace and prosperity, while, on the other, much of economic and psychological theory depicts human beings as slaves to self-interest? The faculties needed to construct a more just and sustainable social order—moderation, justice, love, reason, sacrifice and service to the common good—have too often been dismissed as naïve ideals. Yet, it is these, and related, qualities that must be harnessed to overcome the traits of ego, greed, apathy and violence, which are often rewarded by the market and political forces driving current patterns of unsustainable consumption and production.

### **Vision of development**

In a similar manner, the articulation of a vision of sustainability must emerge from a public discourse on the nature and purpose of human development and the roles assigned to its protagonists.

The Bahá'í International Community understands the transition to sustainable consumption and production as part of a global enterprise which enables all individuals to fulfill their dual purpose, namely to develop their inherent potentialities and to contribute to the betterment of the wider community. It is not enough to conceive of sustainable consumption and production in terms of creating opportunities for those living in poverty to meet their basic needs. Rather, with the understanding that each individual has a

contribution to make to the construction of a more just and peaceful social order, these processes must be arranged in a way that permits each to play his or her rightful role as productive member of society. Within such a framework, sustainable consumption and production could be characterized as processes that provide for the material, social and spiritual needs of humanity across generations and enable all peoples to contribute to the ongoing advancement of society.

Progress at the technical and policy levels now needs to be accompanied by public dialogue—among rural and urban dwellers; among the materially poor and the affluent; among men, women and young persons alike—on the ethical foundations of the necessary systemic change. A sustainable social order is distinguished, among other things, by an ethic of reciprocity and balance at all levels of human organization. A relevant analogy is the human body: here, millions of cells collaborate to make human life possible. The astounding diversity of form and function connects them in a lifelong process of giving and receiving. It represents the highest expression of unity *indiversity*. Within such an order, the concept of justice is embodied in the recognition that the interests of the individual and of the wider community are inextricably linked. The pursuit of justice within the frame of unity (in diversity) provides a guide for collective deliberation and decision-making and offers a means by which unified thought and action can be achieved.

Ultimately, the transformation required to shift towards sustainable consumption and production will entail no less than an organic change in the structure of society itself so as to reflect fully the interdependence of the entire social body—as well as the interconnectedness with the natural world that sustains it. Among these changes, many of which are already the focus of considerable public discourse, are: the consciousness of world citizenship; the eventual federation of all nations through an integrated system of governance with capacity for global decision-making; the establishment of structures which recognize humanity's common ownership of the earth's resources; the establishment of full equality between men and women; the elimination of all forms of prejudice; the establishment of a universal currency and other integrating mechanisms that promote global economic justice; the adoption of an international auxiliary language to facilitate mutual understanding; and the redirection of massive military expenditures towards constructive social ends[iv].

### **Crisis in the current economic system**

As is well known, the dominant model of development depends on a society of vigorous consumers of material goods.[v] In such a model, endlessly rising levels of consumption

are cast as indicators of progress and prosperity. This preoccupation with the production and accumulation of material objects and comforts (as sources of meaning, happiness and social acceptance) has consolidated itself in the structures of power and information to the exclusion of competing voices and paradigms. The unfettered cultivation of needs and wants has led to a system fully dependent on excessive consumption for a privileged few, while reinforcing exclusion, poverty and inequality, for the majority. Each successive global crisis—be it climate, energy, food, water, disease, financial collapse—has revealed new dimensions of the exploitation and oppression inherent in the current patterns of consumption and production. Stark are the contrasts between the consumption of luxuries and the cost of provision of basic needs: basic education for all would cost \$10 billion[vi]; yet \$82 billion is spent annually on cigarettes in the United States alone.[vii] The eradication of world hunger would cost \$30 billion[viii]; water and sanitation—\$10 billion.[ix] By comparison, the world’s military budget rose to \$1.55 trillion in 2008.[x]

The narrowly materialistic worldview underpinning much of modern economic thinking has contributed to the degradation of human conduct, the disruption of families and communities, the corruption of public institutions, and the exploitation and marginalization of large segments of the population—women and girls in particular. Unarguably, economic activity and the strengthening of the economy (a process that may include, but is not synonymous with, economic growth) have a central role to play in achieving the prosperity of a region and its people. Yet the shift towards a more just, peaceful and sustainable society will require attention to a harmonious dynamic between the material and non-material (or moral) dimensions of consumption and production. The latter, in particular, will be essential for laying the foundation for just and peaceful human relations; these include the generation of knowledge, the cultivation of trust and trustworthiness, eradication of racism and violence, promotion of art, beauty, science, and the capacity for collaboration and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In this light, it is also important to emphasize the relationship between production and employment as a critical dimension of a strong economy. Too often, increases in productivity have been accompanied by delocalization or a transition to automation and thus, rising levels of unemployment. A single-minded focus on profit-maximization has also valued workforce reduction wherever possible. Under the present system, unemployment and underemployment are soaring and the majority of the world’s population does not earn enough to meet their basic needs. Those living in poverty have no means by which to express themselves in such a system. Sustainable production is not simply about ‘greener’ technology but rather, should involve systems that enable all

human beings to contribute to the productive process. In such a system, all are producers, and all have the opportunity to earn (or receive, if unable to earn) enough to meet their needs. More than simply the means of generating wealth and meeting basic needs, work provides a role in the community and developing one's talents, refining one's character, rendering service and contributing to the advancement of society.

### **Technological development**

The Framework for Programmes highlights the importance of technology transfer and knowledge sharing for achieving sustainable levels of consumption and production. Yet, the majority of technological development is driven by market forces that do not reflect the basic needs of the world's peoples. Furthermore, the emphasis on the transfer of technology without accompanying efforts to increase participation in the generation and application of knowledge can only serve to widen the gap between the rich and the poor—the 'developers' and the 'users' of technology. Developing the capacity for identifying technological need and for technological innovation and adaptation—in light of societal needs and environmental constraints—will be vital to social progress. The transformation of complex social realities will require the development of institutional capacity within local populations to create and apply knowledge in ways that address the specific needs of that population. This question of institutional capacity (e.g. the establishment of regional centers of research and training) constitutes a major challenge to sustainable development. If successfully met, however, the result will be to break the present unbalanced flow of knowledge in the world and dissociate development from ill-conceived processes of modernization. "Modern" technologies will be characterized by an orientation towards addressing locally defined needs and by priorities that take into account both the material and moral prosperity of society as a whole.

### **Education**

The Framework for Programmes identifies education and institutional capacity building as two of the programs that could support the implementation of sustainable patterns of consumption and production. Yet, if they are to effect the profound changes in the minds of people and in the structures of society (needed to shift towards sustainability), the nature of the educational processes will need to be rethought. As a starting point, the program of education must be based on a clear vision of the kind of society that we wish to live in; and the kind of individuals that will bring this about. It needs to help learners reflect on the purpose of life and help them to step out of their cultural realities to develop alternative visions and approaches to the problems at hand and to understand the manifold consequences of their behaviors and to adjust these accordingly.

Schools themselves must become participants in the social transformation processes. The curriculum cannot simply aim to impart relevant knowledge and skills; rather it should aim to develop the vast potential inherent in the human being. Individuals must be assisted to channel this potential towards the betterment of their communities and the advancement of society as a whole. The level of consciousness and the deep spirit of service and collaboration required to transform individual behaviors and institutional forces in the direction of sustainability will require a transformation of educational processes commensurate with the task at hand.

### **Bahá'í community's approach to cultural transformation**

Cultural transformation involves deliberate changes in individual choices and in institutional structures and norms. For over a decade, the worldwide Bahá'í community has been endeavoring systematically to effect a transformation among individuals and communities around the world—to inspire and build the capacity for service. The framework for action guiding these activities has been rooted in a dynamic of *learning*—characterized by action, reflection, and consultation. In thousands of communities, Bahá'ís have set into motion neighborhood-level processes that seek to empower individuals of all ages to recognize and develop their spiritual capacities [xi] and to channel their collective energies towards the betterment of their communities. Aware of the aspirations of the children of the world and their need for spiritual education, they have started children's classes that focus on laying the foundations of a noble and upright character. For youth aged 11-14, they have created a learning environment which helps them to form their moral identity at this critical time in their life and to develop skills which empower them to channel their constructive and creative energies toward the betterment of their communities. All are invited to take part in small groups of participatory learning around core concepts and themes which encourage individuals to become agents of change in their communities within a dynamic of learning and an orientation towards service.

The approach to curriculum development for these activities has not been one of design, field testing and evaluation; rather the first step in writing any set of materials has been taken when experience emerges from grassroots action in response to particular development needs. Curriculum materials are continually refined in light of new knowledge and insights. The cultural shifts taking place are evident in the greater capacity to carry out collective action, to see oneself as an agent of change in the community, as a humble learner, as an active participant in the generation, diffusion and application of knowledge. The continuous cycle of learning through action, reflection and

consultation has raised awareness of the needs and resources across communities as well as strengthened the mechanisms for collective action and deliberation.

In addition, professionals in various fields have joined together in organizations inspired by Bahá'í principles and values to work for sustainable consumption and production. The European Bahá'í Business Forum and affiliated bodies in other regions are working with business leaders to consider social purposes beyond profit, including sustainability in production processes and corporate responsibility. The International Environment Forum[xii] has long promoted sustainable lifestyles and more ethical consumption, including participation in the former Consumer Citizenship Network in Europe and now the Partnership for Education and Research for Responsible Living.[xiii]

The movement to redefine cultural norms in light of the exigencies of justice and sustainability is well underway. In different measures, leading cultural institutions, including governments, education and media, as well as businesses, religious organizations and civil society are bringing the values of sustainability to the forefront of public consciousness. Broader visions of human purpose and prosperity are moving from the periphery to the center of public discourse. It is becoming clear that the pathway to sustainability will be one of empowerment, collaboration and continual processes of questioning, learning and action in all regions of the world. It will be shaped by the experiences of women, men, children, the rich, the poor, the governors and the governed as each one is enabled to play their rightful role in the construction of a new society. As the sweeping tides of consumerism, unfettered consumption, extreme poverty and marginalization recede, they will reveal the human capacities for justice, reciprocity and happiness.

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[i] The main objective of the 10-Year Framework for Programmes is to be a global framework for action on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) that countries can endorse and commit to in order to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns, thereby promoting social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and de-linking economic growth from environmental degradation. The main challenge is to provide not only the key programs of the framework, but also the mechanisms for their implementation (e.g. financial support, capacity building, and technical assistance). See: *Proposed Input to CSD 18 and 19 on a 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production*. Third Public Draft (2 September 2009). Prepared by the Marrakech Process Secretariat: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

[[http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/pdf/Draft3\\_10yfpniputtoCSD2Sep09.pdf](http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/pdf/Draft3_10yfpniputtoCSD2Sep09.pdf)]

[ii] “Applying a Life-Cycle Perspective to the economic system can provide a way to structure the overall approach of the 10YFP as well as identify clear entry points for actions as well as actors. It allows for single focus on either production or consumption, or integrated focus on both while taking into account the economic, social and environmental impacts of products and services throughout their whole life-cycle. Because it is based on the total use of resources going into the production of goods and provision of services as well as the resulting emissions and waste, this life-cycle perspective provides a holistic picture of all the entry points for remediation as well as possible synergistic intervention throughout the production and consumption chain.” *Proposed Input to CSD 18 and 19 on a 10 Year Framework of Programmes* (see Note 1).

[iii] Ibid.

[iv] “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, *The World Order of Baha’u’llah* (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1991). (<http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/WOB/wob-56.html>).

[v] According to the Worldwatch Institute, consumption expenditures per person almost tripled between 1960 and 2006. (Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 201: The Rise and Fall of Consumer Cultures*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.) 60 billion tons of resources are extracted annually—50 percent more than 30 years ago. (Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without growth? The transition to a sustainable economy*. London: Sustainable Development Commission. March 2009; [http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/prosperity\\_without\\_growth\\_report.pdf](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/prosperity_without_growth_report.pdf)). The 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment found that some 60% of ecosystem services—climate regulation, the provision of fresh water, waste treatment, food from fisheries, etc.—were being degraded or used unsustainably. (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005.)

[vi] Action Aid (United Kingdom). *Fact File*. (<http://www.actionaid.org.uk>). See also: Sperling, Gene B. (Director of the Center for Universal Education, USA). *The Case for Universal Basic Education for the World's Poorest Boys and Girls*. November 2005. (Council on Foreign Relations, [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)).

[vii] *The Case for* Center for Disease Control and Prevention. *Economic Facts About U.S. Tobacco Use and Tobacco Production*. (Cites 2005 data). [[http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/economics/econ\\_facts/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/economics/econ_facts/index.htm)].

[viii] United Nations. Press Release. *Secretary-General Calls for \$30 Billion to Restructure World Agriculture, Create Long-Term Food Security*. 30 November 2008. [<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/press/foodsideevent.pdf>]

[ix] “The estimated cost of closing the gap between current trends and what is needed to meet the target ranges from \$10billion to \$18 billion per year.” United Nations Department of Public Information. Press Release. *Secretary-General, addressing side event, spells out areas ‘crying out for action’ to advance implementation of water and sanitation agenda*. 25 September 2008. [<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sgsm11813.doc.htm>].

[x] International Institute for Strategic Studies. [<http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/february-2010/report-military-spending-unaffected-by-recession/>]

[xi] Just as the physical body possesses physical capacities for movement, growth, etc., so too the soul has capacities, which can be consciously developed. These capacities include human consciousness; the power of intellect and rational thought; the capacity to love; the power of will; and the capacity to initiate and sustain action for the betterment of society, to name a few.

[xii] International Environment Forum: [www.iefworld.org](http://www.iefworld.org)

[xiii] Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living: <http://www.hihm.no/hihm/Prosjektsider/CCN/PERL>  
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