Excellence in All Things

A Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

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From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh[1]

...Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds. Strive that ye may be enabled to manifest to the peoples of the earth the signs of God, and to mirror forth His commandments. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), sec. 139, p. 305) **[1]**

...Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches.... Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low....

("Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas", (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 138) **[2]**

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.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 23) **[3]**

Tell him, no one in this world can claim any relationship to Me except those who, in all their deeds and in their conduct, follow My example, in such wise that all the peoples of the earth would be powerless to prevent them from doing and saying that which is meet and seemly.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 133) **[4]**

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

[5]

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.

[6]

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá[2]

From amongst all mankind hath He chosen you, and your eyes have been opened to the light of guidance and your ears attuned to the music of the Company above; and blessed by abounding grace, your hearts and souls have been born into new life. Thank ye and praise ye God that the hand of infinite bestowals hath set upon your heads this gem-studded crown, this crown whose lustrous jewels will forever flash and sparkle down all the reaches of time.

To thank Him for this, make ye a mighty effort, and choose for yourselves a noble goal. Through the power of faith, obey ye the teachings of God, and let all your actions conform to His laws....

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), sec. 17, p. 35) **[7]**

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." Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God....

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 35, pp. 70–71) **[8]**

O true companions! All humankind are as children in a school, and the Dawning-Points of Light, the Sources of divine revelation, are the teachers, wondrous and without peer. In the school of realities they educate these sons and daughters, according to teachings from God, and foster them in the bosom of grace, so that they may develop along every line, show forth the excellent gifts and blessings of the Lord, and combine human perfections; that they may advance in all aspects of human endeavour, whether outward or inward, hidden or visible, material or spiritual, until they make of this mortal world a widespread mirror, to reflect that other world which dieth not.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 102, p. 128) **[9]**

Wherefore, O loved ones of God! Make ye a mighty effort till you yourselves betoken this advancement in all these confirmations, and become focal centres of God's blessings, daysprings of the light of His unity, promoters of the gifts and graces of civilized life. Be ye in that land vanguards of the perfections of humankind; carry forward the various branches of knowledge, be active and progressive in the field of inventions and the arts. Endeavour to rectify the conduct of men, and seek to excel the whole world in moral character. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and

strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 102, p. 129) **[10]**

...They must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims, to conduct themselves well, to be chaste, pure, and undefiled, and will learn to be of powerful resolve and firm of purpose in all things....

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 110, p. 135) **[11]**

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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 119, p. 141) **[12]**

The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious. There is no doubt that it will yield the desired results; especially is this true of instruction as to Bahá'í obligations and Bahá'í conduct, for the little children must needs be made aware in their very heart and soul that "Bahá'í" is not just a name but a truth. Every child must be trained in the things of the spirit, so that he may embody all the virtues and become a source of glory to the Cause of God. Otherwise, the mere word "Bahá'í", if it yield no fruit, will come to nothing.

Strive then to the best of thine ability to let these children know that a Bahá'í is one who embodieth all the perfections, that he must shine out like a lighted taper—not be darkness upon darkness and yet bear the name "Bahá'í".

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 123, p. 143) **[13]**

It behoveth the craftsmen of the world at each moment to offer a thousand tokens of gratitude at the Sacred Threshold, and to exert their highest endeavour and diligently pursue their professions so that their efforts may produce that which will manifest the greatest beauty and perfection before the eyes of all men.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 127, p. 145) **[14]**

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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 129, p. 150) **[15]**

Let God's beloved, each and every one, be the essence of purity, the very life of holiness, so that in every country they may become famed for their sanctity, independence of spirit, and meekness. Let them be cheered by draughts from the eternal cup of love for God, and make merry as they drink from the wine-vaults of Heaven. Let them behold the Blessed Beauty, and feel the flame and rapture of that meeting, and be struck dumb with awe and wonder. This is the station of

the sincere; this is the way of the loyal; this is the brightness that shineth on the faces of those nigh unto God.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 174, p. 203) **[16]**

Now amidst all the peoples of the world must the beloved arise, with a heart even as the day-star, a strong inward urge, a shining brow, a musk-scented breath, a tongue speaking ever of God, an exposition crystal-clear, a high resolve, a power born of heaven, a spiritual character, a confirmation nothing short of the divine. Let them one and all become as a splendour on the horizon of heaven, and in the skies of the world a dazzling star. Let them be fruitful trees in the celestial bowers, sweet-scented blooms in the divine gardens; let them be verses of perfection on the page of the universe, words of oneness in the Book of Life. This is the first age, and the early beginnings of the dispensation of the Most Great Light, wherefore, within this century, virtues must be acquired, goodly qualities must be perfected within this span of time. In these very days the Abhá Paradise must pitch its pavilions on the plains of the world. The lights of reality must now be revealed, and the secrets of God's bestowals must now be made known, and now must the olden grace shine forth and this world change into the pleasure-ground of heaven, the garden of God. And out of pure hearts, and through heavenly bounties, all the perfections, qualities and attributes of the divine must now be made manifest.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 193, p. 232) **[17]**

...I beg of Him to bestow His confirmations upon those loved ones, dwellers in that pure and holy land, and to grant them successful outcomes in all things: that in their character, their behaviour, their words, their way of life, in all they are and do, He will make them to achieve distinction among men; that He will gather them into the world community, their hearts filled with ecstasy and fervour and yearning love, with knowledge and certitude, with steadfastness and unity, their faces beauteous and bright.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 207, p. 260) **[18]**

...they should exemplify in every aspect of their lives those attributes and virtues that are born of God and should arise to distinguish themselves by their goodly behaviour. They should justify their claim to be Bahá'ís by deeds and not by name. He is a true Bahá'í who strives by day and by night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavor, whose most cherished desire is so to live and act as to enrich and illuminate the world, whose source of inspiration is the essence of Divine virtue, whose aim in life is so to conduct himself as to be the cause of infinite progress. Only when he attains unto such perfect gifts can it be said of him that he is a true Bahá'í. For in this holy Dispensation, the crowning glory of bygone ages and cycles, true Faith is no mere acknowledgement of the Unity of God, but rather the living of a life that will manifest all the perfections and virtues implied in such belief....

("Bahá'í Year Book" ["The Bahá'í World"], vol. 1 (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1926), p. 12) **[19]**

So, O beloved of God, endeavor with your hearts and souls, that ye may be qualified with the morals and attributes of the Blessed Perfection, and partake of the bounties of His sanctity; that ye may become signs of unity and standards of oneness, discover the essence of singleness and sing harmonies and lays in this divine garden, in merciful melodies; that ye may become as thankful birds, and sing a song in the rose-garden of existence which may astonish minds and senses; that ye may hoist a standard on the apex of the universe which may flutter in the winds of favor, and plant a tree in the field of the visible world which may bring forth fruits of the utmost delicacy and freshness.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 2 (Chicago: Bahá'í Publishing Society, 1915), p. 374) **[20]**

O ye friends of God! Show ye an endeavor that all the nations and communities of the world, even the enemies, put their trust, assurance and hope in you; that if a person falls into errors for a hundred-thousand times he may yet turn his face to you, hopeful that you will forgive his sins; for he must not become hopeless, neither grieved nor despondent. This is the conduct and the manner of the people of Baha'. This is the foundation of the most high pathway! Ye should conform your conduct and manners with the advices of Abdul-Baha.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 2, p. 436) **[21]**

Then know thou that, verily, the people of Baha' must needs be distinguished from others in all respects, until they become the lamps of the True One among the creatures and the stars of guidance shining from the Supreme Concourse.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 3 (Chicago: Bahá'í Publishing Society, 1916), p. 682) **[22]**

The most vital duty, in this day, is to purify your characters, to correct your manners, and improve your conduct. The beloved of the Merciful must show forth such character and conduct among His creatures, that the fragrance of their holiness may be shed upon the whole world, and may quicken the dead, inasmuch as the purpose of the Manifestation of God and the dawning of the limitless lights of the Invisible is to educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man—so that blessed individuals, who have freed themselves from the murk of the animal world, shall rise up with those qualities which are the adornings of the reality of man….

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 2, p. 10) **[23]**

At this time, likewise, I most urgently request the friends of God to make every effort, as much as lieth within their competence, along these lines. The harder they strive to widen the scope of their knowledge, the better and more gratifying will be the result. Let the loved ones of God, whether young or old, whether male or female, each according to his capabilities, bestir themselves and spare no efforts to acquire the various current branches of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, and of the arts. Whensoever they gather in their meetings let their conversation be confined to learned subjects and to information on the knowledge of the day.

If they do thus, they will flood the world with the Manifest Light, and change this dusty earth into gardens of the Realm of Glory.

[24]

It is clear that learning is the greatest bestowal of God; that knowledge and the acquirement thereof is a blessing from Heaven. Thus is it incumbent upon the friends of God to exert such an effort and strive with such eagerness to promote divine knowledge, culture and the sciences, that erelong those who are schoolchildren today will become the most erudite of all the fraternity of the wise. This is a service rendered unto God Himself, and it is one of His inescapable commandments.

[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 world-wide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts.

[26]

...Utilize every means to make this School a garden of the All-Merciful, from which the lights of learning will cast their beams, and wherein the children, whether Bahá'í or other, will be educated to such a degree as to become God's gifts to man, and the pride of the human race. Let them make the greatest progress in the shortest span of time, let them open wide their eyes and uncover the inner realities of all things, become proficient in every art and skill, and learn to comprehend the secrets of all things even as they are—this faculty being one of the clearly evident effects of servitude to the Holy Threshold.

[27]

From the Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I give you my advice, and it is this: Train these children with divine exhortations. From their childhood instill in their hearts the love of God so they may manifest in their lives the fear of God and have confidence in the bestowals of God. Teach them to free themselves from human imperfections and to acquire the divine perfections latent in the heart of man. The life of man is useful if he attains the perfections of man. If he becomes the center of the imperfections of the world of humanity, death is better than life, and nonexistence better than existence. Therefore, make ye an effort in order that these children may be rightly trained and educated and that each one of them may attain perfection in the world of humanity. Know ye the value of these children, for they are all my children.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982),pp. 53–54) **[28]**

I desire distinction for you. The Bahá'ís must be distinguished from others of humanity. But this distinction must not depend upon wealth—that they should become more affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction I desire; not scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I desire spiritual distinction—that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity, for unity and accord, for love and justice. In brief, you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world—for faithfulness and 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. Finally, you must become distinguished for heavenly illumination and for acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction among you.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace", p. 190) **[29]**

Therefore I say that man must travel in the way of God. Day by day he must endeavor to become better, his belief must increase and become firmer, his good qualities and his turning to God must be greater, the fire of his love must flame more brightly; then day by day he will make progress, for to stop advancing is the means of going back. The bird when he flies soars ever higher and higher, for as soon as he stops flying he will come down. Every day, in the morning when arising you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must

implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

("Star of the West", vol. 8, no. 6 (24 June 1917), p. 68) **[30]**

You must become the shining candles of moral precepts and spiritual ideals and be the means of the illumination of others. Clothe your bodies with the robes of virtues. Characterize yourselves with the characteristics of the people of divine morality. Shun all manner of vices as you shun a poisonous snake or a leper. Let the corps of professors and the students be impressed with the purity and holiness of your lives so that they may take you as paragons of worthiness, examples of nobility of nature, observers of the moral laws, holding in subordination the lower element by the higher spirit, the conquerors of self and the masters of wholesome, vital forces in all the avenues of life. Strive always to be at the head of your classes through hard study and true merit. Be always in a prayerful state and appreciate the value of everything. Entertain high ideals and stimulate your intellectual and constructive forces.

("Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 9 (20 August 1918), p. 98) **[31]**

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....

("Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 9 (20 August 1918), pp. 98–99) **[32]**

...I hope that through the favor and bounty of the Blessed Beauty, his holiness the Báb, and the ineffable blessings which hallow this holy shrine,[3] the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abha may encircle you, and that you may be characterized with the shining qualities and brilliant attributes of the Bahá'í life. May your morality become more defined day by day! May your faith and assurance be increased day by day! May your attraction to the Kingdom of Abha be intensified day by day! May your attainment in sciences and arts become more universal day by day! Perchance, God willing, you may become perfect and accomplished from every standpoint and be the means of the enlightenment of Persia.

("Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 9 (20 August 1918), pp. 99–100) **[33]**

From Letters Written by Shoghi Effendi

One thing would lessen appreciably the heavy burden that weighs upon my heart and mind and that is the extent to which the Bahá'ís conform in their private life and character to the high code established by Bahá'u'lláh. It is an infinitely high standard and anything short of it will in the eyes of those who really count prove piteously negligible and utterly futile.

(12 October 1924 to an individual believer) **[34]**

Let every believer, desirous to witness the swift and healthy progress of the Cause of God, realize the twofold nature of his task. Let him first turn his eyes inwardly and search his own heart and satisfy himself that in his relations with his fellow-believers, irrespective of colour and class, he is proving himself increasingly loyal to the spirit of his beloved Faith. Assured and content that he is exerting his utmost in a conscious effort to approach nearer every day the lofty station to which his gracious Master summons him, let him turn to his second task, and, with befitting confidence and vigour, assail the devastating power of those forces which in his own heart he has already succeeded in subduing. Fully alive to the unfailing efficacy of the power of Bahá'u'lláh, and armed with the essential weapons of wise restraint and inflexible resolve, let him

wage a constant fight against the inherited tendencies, the corruptive instincts, the fluctuating fashions, the false pretences of the society in which he lives and moves.

(12 April 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922–1932" [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 130) **[35]**

We can prove ourselves worthy of our Cause only if in our individual conduct and corporate life we sedulously imitate the example of our beloved Master, Whom the terrors of tyranny, the storms of incessant abuse, the oppressiveness of humiliation, never caused to deviate a hair's breadth from the revealed Law of Bahá'u'lláh.

Such is the path of servitude, such is the way of holiness He chose to tread to the very end of His life. Nothing short of the strictest adherence to His glorious example can safely steer our course amid the pitfalls of this perilous age, and lead us on to fulfil our high destiny.

(12 April 1927, published in "Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922–1932", p. 132) **[36]**

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 exceptions whatever, let the beloved of God attract the favourable attention of all, and lead all the rest.

(January 1929 addressed to the Bahá'ís of the East—translated from the Persian) **[37]**

The work in which you are engaged is dear and near to my heart and constitutes one of the most vital aspects of the manifold activities of our beloved Faith. The highest standards of purity, of integrity, of detachment and sacrifice must be maintained by the members of your group in order to enable you to play a decisive part in the spread and consolidation of the Faith. A tremendous responsibility has been laid upon you, and nothing short of a pure, a virtuous, an active and truly exemplary life can enable you to fulfil your high destiny.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 6 September 1934 written on his behalf to the Youth Council of the Central States Summer School) **[38]**

Such a rectitude of conduct must manifest itself, with ever-increasing potency, in every verdict which the elected representatives of the Bahá'í community, in whatever capacity they may find themselves, may be called upon to pronounce. It must be constantly reflected in the business dealings of all its members, in their domestic lives, in all manner of employment, and in any service they may, in the future, render their government or people. It must be exemplified in the conduct of all Bahá'í electors, when exercising their sacred rights and functions. It must characterize the attitude of every loyal believer towards nonacceptance of political posts, nonidentification with political parties, nonparticipation in political controversies, and nonmembership in political organizations and ecclesiastical institutions. It must reveal itself in the uncompromising adherence of all, whether young or old, to the clearly enunciated and fundamental principles laid down by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His addresses, and to the laws and ordinances revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in His Most Holy Book. It must be demonstrated in the impartiality of every defender of the Faith against its enemies, in his fair-mindedness in recognizing any merits that enemy may possess, and in his honesty in discharging any obligations he may have towards him. It must constitute the brightest ornament of the life, the pursuits, the exertions, and the utterances of every Bahá'í teacher, whether laboring at home or abroad, whether in the front ranks of the teaching force, or occupying a less active and responsible position. It must be made the hallmark of that numerically small, yet intensely dynamic and highly responsible body of the elected national representatives of every Bahá'í community, which constitutes the sustaining pillar, and the sole instrument for the election, in every community, of

that Universal House whose very name and title, as ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, symbolizes that rectitude of conduct which is its highest mission to safeguard and enforce.

(25 December 1938 to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, published as "The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), pp. 26–27) **[39]**

A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behavior and conduct of all Bahá'ís, both in their social relations with the members of their own community, and in their contact with the world at large. It must adorn and reinforce the ceaseless labors and meritorious exertions of those whose enviable position is to propagate the Message, and to administer the affairs, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. It must be upheld, in all its integrity and implications, in every phase of the life of those who fill the ranks of that Faith, whether in their homes, their travels, their clubs, their societies, their entertainments, their schools, and their universities. It must be accorded special consideration in the conduct of the social activities of every Bahá'í summer school and any other occasions on which Bahá'í community life is organized and fostered. It must be closely and continually identified with the mission of the Bahá'í youth, both as an element in the life of the Bahá'í community, and as a factor in the future progress and orientation of the youth of their own country.

(25 December 1938, "The Advent of Divine Justice", pp. 29–30) **[40]**

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi[4]

The responsibility of young believers is very great, as they must not only fit themselves to inherit the work of the older Bahá'ís and carry on the affairs of the Cause in general, but the world which lies ahead of them—as promised by Bahá'u'lláh—will be a world chastened by its sufferings, ready to listen to His Divine Message at last; and consequently a very high character will be expected of the exponents of such a religion. To deepen their knowledge, to perfect themselves in the Bahá'í standards of virtue and upright conduct, should be the paramount duty of every young Bahá'í.

(6 June 1941 to the Bahá'í youth of Bombay, India, published in "Dawn of a New Day" (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, [1970]), pp. 179–80) **[41]**

The Guardian was delighted to hear of your youth group. The children who are trained in the world-embracing teachings of Bahá'u'lláh cannot but grow up to be a truly new race of men. He hopes these young people will prepare themselves for the great task which will face them in the future, that of helping to rebuild the world with the aid and inspiration of the Bahá'í teachings.

(25 December 1941 to the Bahá'ís of Hobart, Tasmania) **[42]**

If we could perceive the true reality of things we would see that the greatest of all battles raging in the world today is the spiritual battle. If the believers like yourself, young and eager and full of life, desire to win laurels for true and undying heroism, then let them join in the spiritual battle—whatever their physical occupation may be—which involves the very soul of man. The hardest and the noblest task in the world today is to be a *true* Bahá'í; this requires that we defeat not only the current evils prevailing all over the world, but the weaknesses, attachments to the past, prejudices, and selfishnesses that may be inherited and acquired within our own characters; that we give forth a shining and incorruptible example to our fellow-men.

(5 April 1942) **[43]**

He hopes that you will develop into Bahá'ís in character as well as in belief. The whole purpose of Bahá'u'lláh is that we should become a new kind of people, people who are upright, kind, intelligent, truthful, and honest and who live according to His great laws laid down for this

new epoch in man's development. To call ourselves Bahá'ís is not enough, our inmost being must become ennobled and enlightened through living a Bahá'í life.

(25 August 1944 to the Bahá'ís attending the Louhelen School Youth Session) **[44]**

Indeed if the friends could seek, and exert themselves, to become 100 per cent Bahá'ís they would see how greatly their influence over others would be increased, and how rapidly the Cause would spread. The world is seeking not a compromise but the embodiment of a high and shining ideal. The more the friends live up to our teachings in every aspect of their lives, in their homes, in business, in their social relationships, the greater will be the attraction they exercise over the hearts of others.

(23 January 1945) **[45]**

The believers, as we all know, should endeavour to set such an example in their personal lives and conduct that others will feel impelled to embrace a Faith which reforms human character. However, unfortunately, not everyone achieves easily and rapidly the victory over self. What every believer, new or old, should realize is that the Cause *has* the spiritual power to re-create us if we make the effort to let that power influence us, and the greatest help in this respect is prayer. We must supplicate Bahá'u'lláh to assist us to overcome the failings in our own characters, and also exert our own will-power in mastering ourselves.

(27 January 1945) **[46]**

His constant hope is that the believers will conduct themselves, individually and in their Bahá'í Community life, in such a manner as to attract the attention of others to the Cause. The world is not only starving for lofty principles and ideals, it is, above all, starving for a shining example which the Bahá'ís can and must provide.

(22 February 1945) **[47]**

...the young Bahá'ís in every city should make a point of keeping in touch with local youth activities and clubs, and endeavouring to make their views known to as many young people in as many ways as possible. Above all they should set a high example to them; chastity, politeness, friendliness, hospitality, joyous optimism about the ultimate future happiness and well-being of mankind, should distinguish them and win over to them the love and admiration of their fellow youth. The thing which is most conspicuously lacking in modern life is a high standard of conduct and good character; the young Bahá'ís must demonstrate both, if they hope to seriously win over to the Faith members of their own generation, so sorely disillusioned and so contaminated by the laxity war gives rise to.

(20 October 1945 to the National Youth Committee of the United States and Canada) **[48]**

We must be patient with each other's shortcomings, and always strive to create love and unity among the believers, who, after all, are still immature in many ways and far from perfect. The Faith itself is the great thing, and the Bahá'ís must strive to become ever more perfect instruments for Bahá'u'lláh to use and to accomplish His purpose through.

(26 May 1946) **[49]**

The Guardian has urged, over and over again, the paramount necessity for Bahá'í Youth to exemplify the Teachings, most particularly the *moral* aspect of them. If they are not distinguished for their high conduct they cannot expect other young people to take the Cause very seriously.

(6 September 1946) **[50]**

He feels that the youth, in particular, must constantly and determinedly strive to exemplify a Bahá'í life. In the world around us we see moral decay, promiscuity, indecency, vulgarity, bad manners—the Bahá'í young people must be the opposite of these things, and, by their chastity, their uprightness, their decency, their consideration and good manners, attract others, old and young, to the Faith. The world is tired of words; it wants example, and it is up to the Bahá'í youth to furnish it.

(19 September 1946 to the Bahá'í youth attending the Green Acre Summer School) **[51]**

...The eyes of the people of the world are beginning to be focused on us; and, as humanity's plight goes from bad to worse, we will be watched ever more intently by non-Bahá'ís, to see whether we do uphold our own institutions whole-heartedly; whether we are the people of the new creation or not; whether we live up to our beliefs, principles and laws in deed as well as word. We cannot be too careful. We cannot be too exemplary.

(5 August 1955 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'í Community of the British Isles" (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 350) **[52]**

Notes

1 From previously unpublished Tablets unless otherwise noted. ↩
2 From previously unpublished Tablets unless otherwise noted. ↩
3 The students were visiting the tomb of the Báb. ↩
4 To individual believers unless otherwise noted. ↩

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