

Bahais in Business

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BAHA'IS IN BUSINESS & PROFESSIONS

Roles & Responsibilities

A Selection of Quotations from the Baha'i Writings

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WORK AND LEARNING

O MY SERVANTS!

[6] 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.

—The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah

ENGAGEMENT IN PROFESSIONS

The twelfth Glad-Tidings

It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation, such as crafts, trades and the like. We have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship unto God, the True One. Ponder ye in your hearts the grace and the blessings of God and render thanks unto Him at eventide and at dawn. Waste not your time in idleness and sloth. Occupy yourselves with that which profiteth yourselves and others. Thus hath it been decreed in this Tablet from whose horizon the day-star of wisdom and utterance shineth resplendent.

The most despised of men in the sight of God are those who sit idly and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of material means, placing your whole trust in God, the Provider of all means. When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship; and this is naught but a token of His infinite and all-pervasive bounty.

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 26)

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 [7] 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.

(Baha'u'llah, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian and Arabic—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 335)

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, cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low....
(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 138)

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.
(Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words)

If a person is unable to earn his own living, it is incumbent upon the House of Justice and the wealthy to provide for him.
(Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 63)

WORK AS SERVICE

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.
(Baha'u'llah, from a newly translated Tablet—Social and Economic Development, page 17)

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 [8] 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-Baha, sec. 102, page 129)

The employment that the Baha'is accept, the tasks and duties that they perform, should be of a kind whose benefits accrue to the nation as a whole and not such as are a means of profit to a small circle of high officials and a few select individuals.

(Shoghi Effendi, 30 October 1924 to a Local Spiritual Assembly—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 346)

With reference to Baha'u'llah'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, Baha'u'llah further states that mendacity 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, specially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Baha'u'llah a form of worship. It has not only a utilitarian purpose, but has a value in itself, because it draws us nearer to 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.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, March 22, 1937, Lights of Guidance)

The people of Baha, under the jurisdiction of whatsoever state or government they may be residing, should conduct themselves with honesty and sincerity, trustworthiness and rectitude. They should concern themselves with men's hearts, and [9] hold themselves aloof from the fluctuations and limitations of the contingent world. They are neither thirsty for prominence, nor acquisitive of power; they are neither adept at dissimulation and hypocrisy, nor are they seekers after wealth and influence; they neither crave for the pomp and circumstance of high office, nor do they lust after the glory of titles and ranks. They are averse to affectation and ostentation, and shrink from the use of coercive force; they have closed their eyes to all but God, and set their hearts on the firm and incontrovertible promises of their Lord; they have severed the bonds of earthly expectations and attachments, and connected their lives to the One Peerless Beloved. Oblivious to themselves, they have occupied their energies in working towards the good of society; and, steadfastly adhering to the sound and wholesome principles of God's Faith, they have turned their backs on the morbid imaginings, the incoherent theories, and pernicious ideas of the victims of caprice and folly. While vigilantly refusing to accept political posts, they should whole-heartedly welcome the chance to assume administrative positions; for the primary purpose of the people of Baha is to advance the interests and promote the welfare of the nation, not to further the devious ends and designs of the profligate and shameless. Such is the method of the Baha'is; such is the conduct of all spiritually illumined souls; and aught else is manifest error.

(Shoghi Effendi. February 1927 to the believers throughout the

East—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 349)

EXCELLENCE

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.

(Baha'u'llah. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian—"Excellence in All Things", Compilation of Compilations)

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-Baha, sec. 127, page 145)

[10] 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-Baha, sec. 102, page 128)

RETIREMENT

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.

('Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, pages 275-276)

As to the question of retirement from work for individuals who have reached a certain age, this is a matter on which the International House of Justice will have to legislate as there are no provisions in the Aqdas concerning it.

(Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Baha'i Administration, page 12)

STRIKE

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.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, pages 275-276)

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.

[11] While thousands are considering these questions, we have more essential purposes. 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 Baha'i teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized. The Baha'is will bring about this improvement and betterment but not through sedition and appeal to physical force....

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 238-239)

TRADE UNIONS

Regarding your question about trade unions: The Guardian considers that this is a matter for each National Spiritual Assembly to advise the believers on. As long as the trade unions are not members of any particular political party, there does not seem to be any objection to the Baha'is belonging to them.

(From the Guardian's secretary on his behalf in a letter dated 2 February 1951, *Lights of Guidance*)

KNOWLEDGE AND THE PROFESSIONS

[12] The third Tajalli is concerning arts, crafts and sciences. 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. Thus hath the Tongue of Grandeur spoken in this Most Great Prison.

(Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, pages 51-52)

The sixth Taraz

Knowledge is one of the wondrous gifts of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to acquire it. Such arts and material means as are now manifest have been achieved by virtue of His knowledge and wisdom which have been revealed in Epistles and Tablets through His Most Exalted Pen—a Pen out of whose treasury pearls of wisdom and utterance and the arts and crafts of the world are brought to light.

(Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, page 39)

The fifth Taraz 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 Baha should not deny any soul the reward due to him, should treat craftsmen with deference, and, unlike the people aforesaid, should not defile their tongues with abuse.

In this Day the sun of craftsmanship shineth above the horizon of the occident and the river of arts is flowing out of the sea of that region. One must speak with fairness and appreciate such bounty. By the life of God! The word 'Equity' shineth bright and resplendent even as the sun. We pray God to graciously shed its radiance upon everyone.

[13] He is in truth powerful over all things, He Who is wont to answer the prayers of all men...

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, pages 38-39)

O ye recipients of the favours of God! In this new and wondrous Age, the unshakeable 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.

It followeth that whatever soul shall offer his aid to bring this about will assuredly be accepted at the heavenly Threshold, and extolled by the Company on high.

(Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pages 134-135)

Therefore, you should put forward your most earnest efforts toward the acquisition of science and arts. The greater your attainment, the higher your standard in the divine purpose. The man of science is perceiving and endowed with vision, whereas he who is ignorant and neglectful of this development is blind. The investigating mind is attentive, alive; the callous and indifferent mind is deaf and dead. A scientific man is a true index and representative of humanity, for through processes of inductive reasoning and research he is informed of all that appertains to humanity, its status, conditions and happenings. He studies the human body politic, understands social problems and weaves the web and texture of civilization. In fact, science may be likened to a mirror wherein the infinite forms and images of existing things are revealed and reflected. It is the very foundation of all individual and national development. Without this basis of investigation, development is impossible. Therefore, seek with diligent endeavour the knowledge and attainment of all that lies within the power of this wonderful bestowal.

('Abdu'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 50)

The world of politics is like the world of man; he is seed at first, and then passes by degrees to the condition of embryo and foetus, acquiring a bone structure, being clothed with flesh, taking on his own special form, until at last he reaches the plane where he can befittingly fulfill the words: "the most

excellent of Makers." (Quran 23:14) Just as this is a requirement of creation and is based on the universal Wisdom, the political world in the same way cannot instantaneously evolve from the nadir of defectiveness to the zenith of rightness and perfection. Rather, qualified individuals must strive by day and by night, using all those means which will conduce to progress, until the government and the people develop along every line from day to day and even from moment to moment.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, Secret of Divine Civilization, pages 107-108)

PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

[14] It [rectitude of conduct] 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...

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 25 December 1938 to the believers throughout North America, published as The Advent of Divine Justice, page 26—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 350)

LIVING THE LIFE

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.

(Baha'u'llah, Cited in Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 133)

If it should happen that one of the friends be called upon to serve his country and people in some capacity, he should apply himself to his work with heart and soul, and discharge his duties with perfect honesty, trustworthiness and godliness.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 345)

In their homes,.... in the daily contact of business transactions, the community of the followers of Baha'u'llah should satisfy themselves that in the eyes of the world at large and in the sight of their vigilant Master they are the living witnesses of those truths which He fondly cherished and tirelessly championed to the very end of His days....

(Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932, page 130—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 349)

[15] Not all of us are capable of serving in the same way, but the one way every Baha'i can spread the Faith is by example. This moves the hearts of people far more deeply than words ever can.

The love we show others, the hospitality and understanding, the willingness to help them, these are the very best advertisements of the Faith. They will want to hear about it when they see these things in our lives.

(From a letter dated 14 October 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer—"Living the Life", Compilation of Compilations, page 10)

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 Baha'i; 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. (From a letter written by Shoghi Effendi, 5 April 1942 to an individual believer—"Excellence in All Things", *Compilation of Compilations*, page 381)

A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behaviour and conduct of all Baha'is, 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 Baha'u'llah. 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. (From a letter written by Shoghi Effendi, 25 December 1938, published in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pages 29-30)

TRUSTWORTHINESS

The fourth Taraz concerneth trustworthiness. Verily it 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.

[16] 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. (Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, page 37)

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 true God to enable all mankind to attain to this most noble and lofty station. (Baha'u'llah. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian and Arabic—"Trustworthiness", *Compilation of Compilations*, pages 335-336)

We send our greetings to the friends and exhort them to conduct themselves with rectitude, trustworthiness, piety, virtue and loving-kindness—with all those qualities, in fine, that will serve to bring forth man's true station in the world of being. He Who is the Eternal Truth, exalted be His glory, hath ever

loved faithfulness. Well is it with him who adorneth his temple with its raiment, and is honoured by this greatest of distinctions.

(Baha'u'llah. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 333)

O friends of God in every land! This Wronged One adjureth you by the Best-Beloved of the world, Who is calling aloud in the Kingdom of Utterance, that ye deal not faithlessly with the substance of your fellow men. Be ye the trustees of God in His dominions and the embodiments of truthfulness throughout His realms. Blessed the man that heedeth the counsels of God and observeth His precepts.

(Baha'u'llah. From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 335)

You have written on the question of how the friends should proceed in their business dealings with one another. This is a question of the greatest importance and a matter that deserveth the liveliest concern. In relations of this kind, the friends of God should act with the utmost trustworthiness and integrity. To be remiss in this area would be to turn one's face away from the counsels of the Blessed Beauty and the holy precepts of God. If a man in his own home doth not treat his relations and friends with entire trustworthiness and integrity, his dealings with the outside world—no matter how much trustworthiness and honesty he may bring to them—will [17] prove barren and unproductive. First one should order one's own domestic affairs, then attend to one's business with the public. One should certainly not argue that the friends need not be treated with undue care, or that it is unnecessary for them to attach too great importance to the practice of trustworthiness in their dealings with one another, but that it is in their relations with strangers that correct behaviour is essential. Talk like this is sheer fantasy and will lead to detriment and loss. Blessed be the soul that shineth with the light of trustworthiness among the people and becometh a sign of perfection amidst all men.

('Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 340)

If a man were to perform every good work, yet fail in the least scruple to be entirely trustworthy and honest, his good works would become as dry timber and his failure as a soul-consuming fire. If, on the other hand, he should fall short in all his affairs, yet act with trustworthiness and honesty, all his defects would ultimately be righted, all injuries remedied, and all infirmities healed. Our meaning is that, 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? Wherefore Abdu'l-Baha counselleth the friends—nay, rather, fervently imploreth them—so vigilantly to guard the sanctity of the Cause of God and preserve their own dignity as individuals that all nations shall come to know and honour them for their trustworthiness and

integrity. They can render no greater service than this today. To act otherwise would be to take an axe to the root of the Cause of God—we take refuge with God from this heinous transgression and pray that He will protect His loved ones from committing so flagrant a wrong.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 340)

In discharging the functions of the office to which thou has been appointed, thy conduct and actions should attest to the highest standard of trustworthiness and honesty, to a degree of sincerity that is altogether above suspicion, and to an integrity that is immune to the promptings of self-interest. Thus shall all know that the Baha'is are the embodiments of probity, and the very essence of spotless virtue.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 342)

[18] If they accept office, their motive is to render service to the whole of humanity, not to seek their own self-interest; and their object is to vindicate the cause of truth, not to give themselves over to self-indulgence and base ingratitude.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 342)

May I, in closing, also express his satisfaction at the improvement in Mr. ...'s business conditions. He will continue to pray that the high standard of integrity he has so well maintained in his business transactions may not only serve to draw upon him the confirmations and blessings of God, but in addition prove an effective means for the attraction of many souls to the Faith.

(Extract from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 4 November 1940—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 352)

TRUTHFULNESS

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 any one. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the emblems of His generosity amidst His people. They that follow their lusts and corrupt inclinations, have erred and dissipated their efforts. They, indeed, are of the lost. Strive, O people, that your eyes may be directed towards the mercy of God, that your hearts may be attuned to His wondrous remembrance, that your souls may rest confidently upon His grace and bounty, that your feet may tread the path of His good-pleasure. Such are the counsels which I bequeath unto you. Would that ye might follow My counsels!

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, pages 297)

Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired.

('Abdu'l-Baha, Cited in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 26—Trustworthiness, *Compilation of Compilations*, page 338)

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 [19] through true religious faith.

('Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilisation*, page 96)

FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE

One day the Bab asked that some honey be purchased for Him. The price at which it had been bought seemed to Him exorbitant. He refused it and said: "Honey of a superior quality could no doubt have been purchased at a lower price. I who am your example have been a merchant by profession. It behoves you in all your transactions to follow in My way. You must neither defraud your neighbour nor allow him to defraud you. Such was the way of your Master. The shrewdest and ablest of men were unable to deceive Him, nor did He on His part choose to act ungenerously towards the meanest and most helpless of creatures." He insisted that the attendant who had made that purchase should return and bring back to Him a honey superior in quality and cheaper in price.

(Cited in *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation*, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1974, p. 303—"Trustworthiness", *Compilation of Compilations*, pages 337-338)

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 some Persians in New York, 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 Baha'i 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.

(Extract from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 31 October 1938—"Trustworthiness", *Compilation of Compilations*, page 352)

CORRUPT PRACTICES

Let them perform their services with complete sanctity and detachment, and on no account defile themselves by receiving bribes, harbouring unseemly motives, or engaging in noxious practices. Let them be content with their wages, and seek distinction [20] in truthfulness, straightforwardness, and the pursuit of virtue and excellence; for vanity in riches is worthy of none but the base, and pride in possessions besemeth only the foolish. To attain to true glory and

honour, man should exercise justice and equity, forbear to act in an oppressive manner, render service to his government, and work for the good of his fellow-citizens. Were he to seek after aught else but this he would indeed be in manifest loss.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 345)

How foolish and ignorant must a man be, how base his nature, and how vile the clay of which he is fashioned, if he would defile himself with the contamination of bribery, corruption and perfidy towards the state! Truly, the vermin of the earth are to be preferred to such people!

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 345)

The Guardian feels that your attitude towards the corrupt practice of accepting commissions from fellow physicians and pharmacists is most admirable. The more upright and noble the Baha'is are in their conduct, the more they will impress the public with the spiritual vitality of the Faith they believe in.

(Extract from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 20 October 1953—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 353)

Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them.

(Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Baha'u'llah—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 350)

DEBT

In connection with the demands for payment of which thou hast written in thy letter, it is manifestly clear that anyone who hath the ability to settle his debts, and yet neglecteth to do so, hath not acted in accordance with the good pleasure of the one true God. Those who incur debts should strive to settle them with all diligence and application. God's binding commandments with respect to trustworthiness, uprightness and the honouring of rights have been recorded in clear and perspicuous [21] language in all the sacred Books, Tablets, Scriptures and holy Writings. Well is it with him whom the fleeting vanities of the world have not deprived of a lasting adornment, and whom avarice and negligence have not shut out from the illumination of the sun of trustworthiness. These matters, however, depend on the existence of ability, for the making of a demand is contingent upon ability to meet it. By the Lord of the Book, the former is not permissible in the absence of the latter. To this testifieth the Verse: 'Respite thy debtor till he findeth means to pay' (Quran 2: 280).

(Baha'u'llah. From a Tablet—translated from the Arabic—"Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 336)

SERVICE TO THE CAUSE

Commerce, agriculture and industry should not, in truth, be a bar to service of the one true God. Indeed, such occupations are most potent instruments and clear proofs for the manifestation of the evidences of one's piety, of one's trustworthiness and of the virtues of the All-Merciful Lord.

(Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 341)

The advice that Shoghi Effendi gave you regarding the division of your time between serving the Cause and attending to your other duties was also given to many other friends both by Baha'u'llah and the Master. It is a compromise between the two verses of the "Aqdas", one making it incumbent upon every Baha'i to serve the promotion of the Faith and the other that every soul should be occupied in some form of occupation that will benefit society. In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah says that the highest form of detachment in this day is to be occupied with some profession and be self-supporting. A good Baha'i, 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.

(From a letter dated 26 February 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer—"Living the Life", Compilation of Compilations, pages 5-6)

It is our duty and privilege to translate the love and devotion we have for our beloved Cause into deeds and actions that will be conducive to the highest good of mankind.

(From a letter dated 20 November 1924 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer—"Living the Life", Compilation of Compilations, page 2)

SERVICE TO THE GOVERNMENT

[22] If any of the friends should enter into the service of the government, they should make their occupation a means of drawing nearer to the divine Threshold: they should act with probity and uprightness, rigorously shun all forms of venality and corruption, and content themselves with the salaries they are receiving, taking pride, rather, in the degree of sagacity, competence and judgement that they can bring to their work. If a person content himself with a single loaf of bread, and perform his duties with as much justice and fair-mindedness as lieth within his power, he will be the prince of mortals, and the most praiseworthy of men. Noble and distinguished will he be, despite his empty purse! Pre-eminent will he rank among the free, although his garb be old and worn! For man, praise and glory reside in virtuous and noble qualities; honour and distinction in nearness to the divine Threshold. The world's wealth is, by contrast, the stuff of illusion. Those who lust after it are the followers of evil and, ere long, they shall be plunged into confusion and despair. Which is better—that a man should be thus, or that he should comport himself with consecration and sanctity of purpose and stand out conspicuously for his integrity, uprightness and honesty? Nay, such qualities are better than the riches of Korah, and dearer than all the treasures of existence.

(Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, pages 343-344)

Those persons who are selected to serve the public, or are appointed to administrative positions, should perform their duties in a spirit of true servitude and ready compliance. That is to say, they should be distinguished by their goodly disposition and virtuous character, content themselves with their allotted remuneration, and act with trustworthiness in all their doings. They should keep themselves aloof from unworthy motives, and be far removed above covetous designs; for rectitude, probity and righteousness are among the most potent means for attracting the grace of God and securing both the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people. Glory and honour for man are not to be found in fortunes and riches, least of all in those which have been unlawfully amassed through extortion, embezzlement and corruption practised at the expense of an exploited populace. Supreme honour, nobility and greatness in the human world, and true felicity in this life and the life to come—all consist in equity and uprightness, sanctity and detachment. If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision, seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fair-mindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win [23] imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, pages 342-343)

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

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 344)

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

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, pages 341-342)

As for those who are engaged in government service, they should perform their duties with the utmost fidelity, trustworthiness, rectitude, uprightness, integrity and high-mindedness. Let them not tarnish their good repute by pursuing personal interests, nor, for the sake of transient worldly benefits,

make themselves objects of public odium and outcasts of the Threshold of Grandeur.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 342)

If one of the friends ... be appointed to a high administrative office, he should strive diligently to perform the duties committed to his charge with perfect honesty, integrity, sincerity, rectitude and uprightness. If, however, he abuse his position through corrupt or mercenary behaviour, he will be held in detestation at the Threshold of Grandeur and incur the wrath of the Abha Beauty—nay, he shall be forsaken by the [24] one true God and all who adore Him. So far from acting thus, he should content himself with his salary and allowances, seek out the way of righteousness, and dedicate his life to the service of state and people. Such must be the conduct and bearing of the Baha'is. Whoso transgresseth these bounds shall fall at length into manifest loss.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 343)

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

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 344)

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD MANAGEMENT

[25] Every business company should be established on divine principles. Its foundations should be trustworthiness, piety and truthfulness in order to protect the rights of the people.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—Translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 341)

Since the orderly running of your association dependeth upon the devotion, integrity, fair-mindedness and sanctity of purpose manifested by the friends of God, they should show forth in their management of its affairs such purity, nobility and farsighted wisdom that they will become a model for other societies, and all people may be edified and enlightened by their example. In this way the Baha'is will become known to all as people who are dependable and honest, virtuous and enlightened, pure and refined; who are industrious and high-principled, liberal-minded and promoters of freedom; whose concern is to

serve the common good, not to advance their own interests, and whose aim is to further the welfare and prosperity of the people, not to foster their own well-being.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 341)

The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action. Unless these three conditions are forthcoming there is no execution or accomplishment.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity, page 101)

The permanence and stability achieved by any association, group or nation is a result of—and dependent upon—the soundness and worth of the principles upon which it bases the running of its affairs and the direction of its activities.

The guiding principles of the Baha'is are: honesty, love, charity and trustworthiness; the setting of the common good above private interest; and the practice of godliness, virtue and moderation. Ultimately, then, their preservation and happiness are assured. Whatever [26] misfortunes they may encounter, wrought by the wiles of the schemer and ill-wisher, shall all pass away like waves, and hardship shall be succeeded by joy.

(Extract from a letter dated 18 December 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly—translated from the Persian)

FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

Your criterion should be to pursue your commercial activities with such fairness and equity as to be a cause of guidance to others. The friends of God should, through the instrumentality of their business, lead the people to God's path, and make them so astonished as to exclaim: "How great is their truthfulness, how high their trustworthiness, and how true is their good will!" (‘Abdu'l-Baha. From a Tablet—translated from the Persian, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 341)

He feels you should both consider the competent running of your business not only a moral obligation to any creditors outstanding, but also the wise and proper thing to do.

(Extract from a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 6 June 1954, "Trustworthiness", Compilation of Compilations, page 353)

HARMONY AND LOVE

In short, whatever 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.

(Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, page 88)

CO-OPERATION AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

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 co-operation, 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. ... Hence it was stated that co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties [27] which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness....

And thus when contemplating the human world thou behodest this wondrous phenomenon shining resplendent from all sides with the utmost perfection, inasmuch as in this station acts of co-operation, 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 inter-relationship 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.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, Compilation on Huququ'llah, pages 14-15)

The more the world aspires to civilisation, the more this most important matter of co-operation 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....

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, "Star of the West", Vol. 6, No. 17, page 139)

FIRMNESS

...Firmness is essential, for if small affairs can not be accomplished without firmness and steadfastness, how much more are these qualities needed for the undertakings of great matters!...

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, "The Star of the West", Vol. 1, No. 5, page 4)

CONSULTATION

The Greatest Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with 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.

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 168)

[28] Let us also bear in mind that the keystone 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 Baha'i 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, candour and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi, Compilation of Compilations, "Consultation", No. 188, page 101)

RELIGION AND PROSPERITY

[29] Unveiled and unconcealed, this Wronged One hath, at all times, proclaimed before the face of all the peoples of the world that which will serve as the key for unlocking the doors of sciences, of arts, of knowledge, of well-being, of prosperity and wealth.

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, page 96)

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose.

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, page 141)

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 afflictions 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, soretried 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.

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, page 213)

[30] The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind.

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, pages 129-130)

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-Baha, The Secret of Divine Civilisation, pages 73-74)

The Baha'i Cause covers all economic and social questions under the heading and ruling of its laws. The essence of the Baha'i 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.

(‘Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 238)

BAHA'I TEACHINGS AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

He was very happy to hear from you, and to see with what keen appreciation and interest you are studying the teachings of Baha'u'llah. One could truly say that the longer one studies them, the more one finds in them. They are the very essence from which thinkers and scientists and humanitarians of the future will derive inspiration and guidance for their work.

(From a letter dated 10 December 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a Baha'i summer school—Baha'i Scholarship, page 5)

Between the truth which comes from God through His prophets, and the glimmerings, often misunderstood and misinterpreted, of truth which come from the philosophers and thinkers, there is an immense difference. We must never, under any circumstances, confuse the two.

Baha'u'llah has said that learning can be the veil between the soul of man and the [31] eternal truth; in other words, between man and the knowledge of God.

(From a letter dated 22 April 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer—Baha'i Scholarship, page 7)

A Baha'i must develop the ability to learn everything from those around him, showing proper humility before his teachers, but always relating what he hears to the Baha'i teachings, for they will enable him to sort out the gold from the dross of human error.

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

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL SOLUTION

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 harmonises with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an

attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them. (Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, page 13)

BAHA'I COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONALS

The House of Justice recognises that the questions you raised, concerning the offer of newly enrolled professionals to share their views with the Baha'i community, are of vital and timely importance, especially as the Faith emerges from obscurity and increasing numbers of professionals from all walks of life are attracted to its teachings. The process of integrating these experts into Baha'i communities as well grounded believers and tapping their potential as promoters and supporters of the Cause will require patient and loving guidance by Baha'i institutions....

Scholars and professionals are well accustomed to encountering new facts in the course of their research which require them to adjust previous thinking on various aspects of their discipline. In the case of their deepening in the Teachings of the Faith it naturally takes time for them to absorb so many new concepts. They must be assisted to acquire, as quickly as possible, profound knowledge of the Teachings. Gradually this knowledge will shed new light on their previous views. At the same time, [32] Baha'i communities will need to develop greater tolerance toward ideas that may not coincide with their current understanding and remain open to new insights....

In the event that a professional has withdrawn from community life or become discouraged, an Assembly might consider asking another Baha'i professional, well grounded in the Writings, to contact him to extend friendship and share his experiences of integrating the various aspects of the Baha'i teachings with past concepts. In circumstances where there is no appropriate Baha'i professional available in a particular region or country, the Assembly could approach the Counsellors for help in locating candidates from other countries who might fill this role through correspondence. Newly enrolled professionals and other experts provide a great resource for the development of Baha'i scholarship. It is hoped that, as they attain a deeper grasp of the teachings and their significance, they will be able to assist Baha'i communities in correlating the beliefs of the Faith with current thoughts and problems of the world.

In some instances Baha'is of a particular profession have come together in special conferences or organised themselves into an association for this purpose. This also allows them to support one another as Baha'is and to take advantage of their professional status to promote the interests of the Faith....

... Special encouragement should therefore be given to believers of unusual capacity to consecrate their abilities to the service of the Cause through the unique contribution they can make to this rapidly developing field of Baha'i

endeavor.

(From a letter dated 18 April 1989 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly—Baha'i Scholarship, pages 39-40)

As the Baha'i communities grow it will acquire experts in numerous fields—both by Baha'is becoming experts and by experts becoming Baha'is. 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. In such developments they should strive to make the utmost use of non-Baha'is who are working in the same fields. Such collaboration will, in the long run, be of far more benefit than any attempt now to treat such scientific endeavours as specifically Baha'i projects operating under Baha'i institutions and financed by investment of Baha'i funds.

Paralleling this process, Baha'i institutional life will also be developing, and as it does so the Assemblies will draw increasingly upon scientific and expert knowledge—whether of Baha'is or of non-Baha'is—to assist in solving the problems of their communities.

(From a letter dated 21 August 1977 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer—Baha'i Scholarship, page 10)

WEALTH

[33] Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation, and be numbered among the extravagant.

(Baha'u'llah, Baha'i World Faith, page 40)

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....

(Baha'u'llah, Hidden Words)

The first Taraz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples....

(Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, pages 34-35)

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 [34] 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-Baha, *Secret of Divine Civilization*, pages 24-25)

To state the matter briefly, the Teachings of Baha’u’llah advocate voluntary sharing, and this is a greater thing than the equalisation of wealth. For equalisation 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.

(Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, page 115)

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