

A Twofold Moral Purpose

To attend to one's own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society

1. This is the day to make mention of God, to celebrate His praise, and to serve Him; deprive not yourselves thereof. Ye are the letters of the words, and the words of the Book. Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish. He hath protected you from the mighty winds of misbelief, and the tempestuous gales of impiety, and nurtured you with the hands of His loving providence. Now is the time for you to put forth your leaves, and yield your fruit. The fruits of the tree of man have ever been and are goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. Withhold not these fruits from the heedless. If they be accepted, your end is attained, and the purpose of life achieved. If not, leave them in their pastime of vain disputes. Strive, O people of God, that haply the hearts of the divers kindreds of the earth may, through the waters of your forbearance and loving-kindness, be cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred, and be made worthy and befitting recipients of the splendors of the Sun of Truth.

Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

2. The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindliness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh: CXXXVII

3. We have counselled all people, in the most clear and eloquent language, to adorn their characters with trustworthiness and godliness, and with such qualities as are conducive to the elevation of man's station in the world of being. This Wronged One testifieth that the purpose for which mortal men have, from utter

nothingness, stepped into the realm of being, is that they may work for the betterment of the world and live together in concord and harmony. Dissension and strife have always been, and shall remain, rejected by God. The Books, the Scriptures and Holy Writings of previous ages have all proclaimed the joyful tidings that the purpose underlying this most mighty Revelation is none other than the rehabilitation of the world and its nations; that perchance the power of utterance may prevail over the power of arms, and the world's affairs be administered through the potency of love. We ask God, the True One, to invest all with the mantle of trustworthiness, for that is the world's comeliest garment.

*Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet translated from the Persian
(Compilation: Trustworthiness: A Cardinal
Bahá'í Virtue, #20)*

4. O people of God! Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a goodly behavior. Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of this Cause, and a saintly character will reinforce its power. Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá! This, verily, is the commandment which this Wronged One hath given unto you, and the first choice of His unrestrained Will for every one of you.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh / 7. Tablet of the World

5. They who are the people of God have no ambition except to revive the world, to ennoble its life, and regenerate its peoples. Truthfulness and goodwill have, at all times, marked their relations with all men. Their outward conduct is but a reflection of their inward life, and their inward life a mirror of their outward conduct. No veil hideth or obscureth the verities on which their Faith is established. Before the eyes of all men these verities have been laid bare,

and can be unmistakably recognized. Their very acts attest the truth of these words.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh: CXXVI

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

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh / 9. Tablet of the Wisdom

7. A race of men, incomparable in character, shall be raised up which, with the feet of detachment, will tread under all who are in heaven and on earth, and will cast the sleeve of holiness over all that hath been created from water and clay.

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.... Within the very breath of such souls as are pure and sanctified far-reaching potentialities are hidden. So great are these potentialities that they exercise their influence upon all created things.

Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi in *The Advent of Divine Justice*

8. And the honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*

9. O ye friends of God! Make ye a mighty effort that all the peoples and kindreds of the world, even the enemies, should put their trust, confidence and hope in you. Should a soul commit a hundred thousand misdeeds, yet may he hope for forgiveness and may not become despondent or grieved. Such is the conduct and behavior of the people of Baha. Such is the foundation of the path of loftiness. Let your conduct and manners conform to the counsels of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas.

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas, New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1915, 1940 printing, vol. 2 p. 436
(authorized translated cited in Ruhi 6 Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth)

10. These are the days for rendering the divine Cause victorious and effective aid! The victory of God's Faith is dependent upon teaching; and teaching is conditional upon righteous actions and goodly deeds and conduct. The foundation-stone of a life lived in the way of God is the pursuit of moral excellence and the acquisition of a character endowed with qualities that are well-pleasing in His sight. The Bahá'ís should adorn themselves with this holy raiment; with this mighty sword they should conquer the citadels of men's hearts. People have grown weary and impatient of rhetoric and discourse, of preaching and sermonizing. In this day, the one thing that can deliver the world from its travail and attract the hearts of its peoples is deeds, not words; example, not precept...

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 8 December 1923 to the Bahá'ís of Bombay-translated from the Persian
(Compilation: A Chaste and Holy Life, #48)

11. We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.

Shoghi Effendi, from a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer dated 17 February 1933
(Compilation: Social Action #90)

12. The concept of a two-fold moral purpose—to develop one’s inherent potentialities and to contribute to the transformation of society—provides an important axis of the educational process. As one examines the influences shaping the minds of youth and adolescents, it becomes readily apparent that many forces breed passivity and a desire to be entertained. Such forces contribute to the formation of entire generations willing to be led by those who skillfully appeal to superficial emotions. Many educational programs perceive young people as mere receptacles of information. To challenge these trends, the worldwide Baha’i community has endeavored to develop a culture which promotes an independent way of thinking, studying and acting, in which the students see themselves as united by a desire to work towards the common good, supporting one another and advancing together, respectful of the knowledge that each one possesses.

Baha’i International Community, “Youth and Adolescents Education in Service of Community” / contribution to the 45th Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development, NEW YORK—16 February 2012

13. He is God.

O Thou kind Lord! Illumine the hearts with the light of Thy most great guidance. Revive the souls through Thy most joyful glad-tidings. Illumine the eyes by granting them to behold Thy lights. Make the ears attentive by causing them to hear Thy call. Enable us to enter the Kingdom of Thy holiness and quicken us with the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Give us everlasting life and grant us heavenly perfections. O Lord! Make our lives to be a ransom for Thy sake and bestow upon us a new spirit. Confer upon us heavenly power and bestow upon us everlasting joy. Confirm us in service to the world of humanity. Make us instruments of concord, binding together the hearts. O Lord! Awaken us from our slumber and grant us wisdom and understanding, that we may unravel the secrets of Thy Book and discover the mysteries that lie hid in Thy

Words. Thou art the Almighty. Thou art the Giver. Thou art the Ever-Loving.

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Personal Prayers

Reflections on the Text

Discussion

- What is our twofold moral purpose?
- In what ways do we attend to our own spiritual and intellectual growth?
- In what ways do we contribute to the transformation of society?