

E Pluribus Unum: CITY UPON A HILL

This Wronged One (Bahá'u'lláh) enjoineeth on you honesty and piety. Blessed the city that shineth by their light.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. ~Matthew 5:14 KJV

1. These are indeed days the like of which no mortal eye hath ever seen. Blessed is he that attaineth thereunto and realizeth their full worth. "We had sent Moses with Our signs, saying unto him: 'Bring forth thy people from darkness into light and remind them of the days of God.'" And these are in truth the days of God, could ye but know it.

Bahá'u'lláh, Gems of Divine Mysteries

2. We ask thee to reflect upon that which hath been revealed, and to be fair and just in thy speech, that perchance the splendors of the daystar of truthfulness and sincerity may shine forth, and may deliver thee from the darkness of ignorance, and illumine the world with the light of knowledge.

Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

3. God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.

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

4. O ye friends of God in His cities and His loved ones in His lands! This Wronged One enjoineeth on you honesty and piety. Blessed the city that shineth by their light. Through them man is exalted, and the door of security is unlocked before the face of all creation. Happy the man that cleaveth fast unto them, and recognizeth their virtue, and woe betide him that denieth their station.

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

5. The first sign of faith is love. The message of the holy, divine Manifestations is love; the phenomena of creation are based upon love; the radiance of the world is due to love; the well-being and happiness of the world depend upon it. Therefore, I admonish you that you must strive throughout the human world to diffuse the light of love. The people of this world are thinking of warfare; you must be peacemakers. The nations are self-centered; you must be thoughtful of others rather than yourselves. They are neglectful; you must be mindful. They are asleep; you should be awake and alert. May each one of you be as a shining star in the horizon of eternal glory. This is my wish for you and my highest hope. I have come long distances that you may attain these attributes and divine favors. Praise be to God! I have attended this meeting which has for its purpose the commemoration of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace / Talks in Denver, 24-25 September 1912: 107

Children of the city

6. Work ye for the guidance of the women in that land, teach the young girls and the children, so that the mothers may educate their little ones from their earliest days, thoroughly train them, rear them to have a goodly character and good morals, guide them to all the virtues of humankind, prevent the development of any behaviour that would be worthy of blame, and foster them in the embrace of Bahá'í education. Thus shall these tender infants be nurtured at the breast of the knowledge of God and

His love. Thus shall they grow and flourish, and be taught righteousness and the dignity of humankind, resolution and the will to strive and to endure. Thus shall they learn perseverance in all things, the will to advance, high mindedness and high resolve, chastity and purity of life. Thus shall they be enabled to carry to a successful conclusion whatsoever they undertake.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 95

Youth of the city

7. Make this youth radiant, and confer Thy bounty upon this poor creature. Bestow upon him knowledge, grant him added strength at the break of every morn and guard him within the shelter of Thy protection so that he may be freed from error, may devote himself to the service of Thy Cause, may guide the wayward, lead the hapless, free the captives and awaken the heedless, that all may be blessed with Thy remembrance and praise.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Prayers

Devotional character of the city

8. O brother, we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God, that perchance we may be warned by the unmistakable counsels of the Book, and give heed to the admonitions recorded in the holy Tablets; that we may not cavil at the Revealer of the verses, that we may resign ourselves wholly to His Cause, and embrace wholeheartedly His law, that haply we may enter the court of His mercy, and dwell upon the shore of His grace. He, verily, is merciful, and forgiving towards His servants.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* / Part Two

Justice in the city

9. Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

Bahá'u'lláh, From a Tablet - translated from the Persian

10. In all things it is necessary to consult. This matter should be forcibly stressed by thee, so that consultation may be observed by all. The intent of what hath been revealed from the Pen of the Most High is that consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.

Bahá'u'lláh, From a Tablet - translated from the Persian

Characteristics of the city

11. I am greatly pleased with the city of New York. Its harbor entrance, its piers, buildings and broad avenues are magnificent and beautiful. Truly, it is a wonderful city. As New York has made such progress in material civilization, I hope that it may also advance spiritually in the Kingdom and Covenant of God so that the friends here may become the cause of the illumination of America, that this city may become the city of love and that the fragrances of God may be spread from this place to all parts of the world. I have come for this. I pray that you may be manifestations of the love of Bahá'u'lláh, that each one of you may become like a clear lamp of crystal from which the rays of

the bounties of the Blessed Perfection may shine forth to all nations and peoples. This is my highest aspiration.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* / Talks in New York and Brooklyn, 11-19 April 1912: 1

12. Each of the meetings ye have organized, wherein ye feel heavenly emotions and comprehend realities and significances, is like unto the firmament, and those souls are as resplendent stars shining with the light of guidance.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 18

Prayers for the City

13. Thou art He, O my God, Who hath unlocked the gate of heaven with the key of Thy Name, the Ever-Blessed, the All-Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Most Great, and hast summoned all mankind to the ocean of Thy presence. No sooner had Thy most sweet voice been raised, than all the inmates of the Kingdom of Names and the Concourse on high were stirred up. By Thy call the fragrance of the raiment of Thy Revelation was wafted over such of Thy creatures as have loved Thee, and such of Thy people as have yearned towards Thee. They rose up and rushed forth to attain the Ocean of Thy meeting, and the Horizon of Thy beauty, and the Tabernacle of Thy Revelation and Thy majesty, and the Sanctuary of Thy Presence and Thy glory. They were so inebriated with the wine of their reunion with Thee, that they rid themselves of all attachment to whatever they themselves and others possessed.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations: CLXXVI*

14. I know not, O my God, how long will Thy creatures continue to slumber on the bed of forgetfulness and evil desires, and remain far removed from Thee and shut out

from Thy presence. Draw them nearer, O my God, unto the scene of Thine effulgent glory, and enrapture their hearts with the sweet savors of Thine inspiration, through which they who adore Thy unity have soared on the wings of desire towards Thee, and they who are devoted to Thee have reached unto Him Who is the Dawning-Place of the Day-Star of Thy creation.

Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations: CXVIII*

Your personal prayers

Reflection on the Text

Discussion:

Meaningful change can advance in unassuming settings at the grassroots. Where people are explicitly putting into practice the principle of the oneness of humanity, we have seen that contributors from different religious, racial, ethnic, political, cultural, and economic backgrounds can pursue shared goals. Under such conditions, they consult to bridge differences, reconcile perspectives, and make collective decisions. They are able to take action and learn their way forward. They do not have all the answers, but they are working on questions that are crucial to our common endeavor, such as...

- How do we strengthen the fundamental institutions of our society, such as families, schools, and other civic entities, to serve our collective hopes?

*A Common Endeavor
The Bahá'is of the United States*