

E Pluribus Unum: OUR BETTER ANGELS

Ye are the angels, if your feet be firm, your spirits rejoiced, your secret thoughts pure, your eyes consoled, your ears opened, your breasts dilated with joy, and your souls gladdened.

~Abdu'l-Bahá

1. Care for the stranger as for one of your own; show to alien souls the same loving kindness ye bestow upon your faithful friends.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá / 16.

2. All over the world one hears beautiful sayings extolled and noble precepts admired. All men say they love what is good, and hate everything that is evil! Sincerity is to be admired, whilst lying is despicable. Faith is a virtue, and treachery is a disgrace to humanity. It is a blessed thing to gladden the hearts of men, and wrong to be the cause of pain. To be kind and merciful is right, while to hate is sinful. Justice is a noble quality and injustice an iniquity. That it is one's duty to be pitiful and harm no one, and to avoid jealousy and malice at all costs. Wisdom is the glory of man, not ignorance; light, not darkness! It is a good thing to turn one's face toward God, and foolishness to ignore Him. That it is our duty to guide man upward, and not to mislead him and be the cause of his downfall.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks / Part One: 26.

3. 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-Bahá, 79.

4. In the world of being, the meeting is blessed when the white and colored races meet together with infinite spiritual love and heavenly harmony. When such meetings are established, and the participants associate with each other with perfect love, unity and kindness, the angels of the Kingdom praise them, and the Beauty of Bahá'u'lláh addresseth them, 'Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye!'

5. When a gathering of these two races is brought about, that assemblage will become the magnet of the Concourse on high, and the confirmation of the Blessed Beauty will surround it.

Strive earnestly, and put forth your greatest endeavor toward the accomplishment of this fellowship and the cementing of this bond of brotherhood between you. Such an attainment is not possible without will and effort on the part of each; from one, expressions of gratitude and appreciation; from the other, kindness and recognition of equality. Each one should endeavor to develop and assist the other toward mutual advancement.... Love and unity will be fostered between you, thereby bringing about the oneness of mankind. For the accomplishment of unity between the colored and white will be an assurance of the world's peace.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in The Advent of Divine Justice

6. As for you, O ye lovers of God, make firm your steps in His Cause, with such resolve that ye shall not be shaken though the direst of calamities assail the world. By nothing, under no conditions, be ye perturbed. Be ye anchored fast as the high mountains, be stars that dawn over the horizon of life, be bright lamps in the gatherings of unity, be souls humble and lowly in the presence of the friends, be innocent in

heart. Be ye symbols of guidance and lights of godliness, severed from the world, clinging to the handhold that is sure and strong, spreading abroad the spirit of life, riding the Ark of salvation. Be ye daysprings of generosity, dawning-points of the mysteries of existence, sites where inspiration alighteth, rising-places of splendours, souls that are sustained by the Holy Spirit, enamoured of the Lord, detached from all save Him, holy above the characteristics of humankind, clothed in the attributes of the angels of heaven, that ye may win for yourselves the highest bestowal of all, in this new time, this wondrous age.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 199.

7. Therefore, let your faces be more radiant with hope and heavenly determination to serve the Cause of God, to spread the pure fragrances of the divine rose garden of unity, to awaken spiritual susceptibilities in the hearts of mankind, to kindle anew the spirit of humanity with divine fires and to reflect the glory of heaven to this gloomy world of materialism. When you possess these divine susceptibilities, you will be able to awaken and develop them in others. We cannot give of our wealth to the poor unless we possess it. How can the poor give to the poor? How can the soul that is deprived of the heavenly bounties develop in other souls capacity to receive those bounties?

8. Array yourselves in the perfection of divine virtues. I hope you may be quickened and vivified by the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Then shall ye indeed become the angels of heaven whom Christ promised would appear in this Day to gather the harvest of divine planting. This is my hope. This is my prayer for you.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace: 2.

9. Man is in the ultimate degree of materiality and the beginning of spirituality; that is, he is at the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the furthestmost degree of darkness and the beginning of the light. That is why the station of man is said to be the end of

night and the beginning of day, meaning that he encompasses all the degrees of imperfection and that he potentially possesses all the degrees of perfection. He has both an animal side and an angelic side, and the role of the educator is to so train human souls that the angelic side may overcome the animal. Thus, should the divine powers, which are identical with perfection, overcome in man the satanic powers, which are absolute imperfection, he becomes the noblest of all creatures, but should the converse take place, he becomes the vilest of all beings. That is why he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, Part 4

10. Arise with every power to assist the Covenant of God and serve in His vineyard. Be confident that a confirmation will be granted unto you and a success on His part is given unto you. Verily, He shall support you by the angels of His holiness and reinforce you with the breaths of the Spirit that ye may mount the Ark of Safety, set forth the evident signs, impart the spirit of life, declare the essence of His commands and precepts, guide the sheep who are straying from the fold in all directions, and give the blessings. Ye have to use every effort in your power and strive earnestly and wisely in this new century. By God, verily the Lord of Hosts is your support, the angels of heaven your assistance, the Holy Spirit your companion and the Center of the Covenant your helper. Be not idle, but active and fear not...

'Abdu'l-Bahá / Compilation The Power of Divine Assistance: 38.

11. Strive ye by day and night to cultivate your unity to the fullest degree. Let your thoughts dwell on your own spiritual development, and close your eyes to the deficiencies of other souls. Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility, that ye will cause others to be awakened.

Never is it the wish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to see any being hurt, nor will He make anyone to grieve;

for man can receive no greater gift than this, that he rejoice another's heart. I beg of God that ye will be bringers of joy, even as are the angels in Heaven.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 174.

12. The hearts that yearn after Thee, O my God, are burnt up with the fire of their longing for Thee, and the eyes of them that love Thee weep sore by reason of their crushing separation from Thy court, and the voice of the lamentation of such as have set their hopes on Thee hath gone forth throughout Thy dominions.

Thou hast Thyself, O my God, protected them, by Thy sovereign might, from both extremities. But for the burning of their souls and the sighing of their hearts, they would be drowned in the midst of their tears, and but for the flood of their tears they would be burnt up by the fire of their hearts and the heat of their souls.

13. Methinks, they are like the angels which Thou hast created of snow and of fire. Wilt Thou, despite such vehement longing, O my God, debar them from Thy presence, or drive them away, notwithstanding such fervor, from the door of Thy mercy? All hope is ready to be extinguished in the hearts of Thy chosen ones, O my God! Where are the breezes of Thy grace? They are hemmed in on all sides by their enemies; where are the ensigns of Thy triumph which Thou didst promise in Thy Tablets?

. . . Make steadfast Thou, O my God, Thy servant who hath believed in Thee to help Thy Cause, and keep him safe from all dangers in the stronghold of Thy care and Thy protection, both in this life and in the life which is to come. Thou, verily, rulest as Thou pleasest. No God is there save Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.

Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah: XCIV.

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 can educational programs nurture a new kind of social actor, one who can see their own wellbeing in the prosperity of the whole society?

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

Your personal prayers
