

When we consider life in all its aspects, we see that, invariably, there is need for an educator. If a man is left alone in the wilderness, he will take on the ways of the animal. If he is educated, he can reach the greatest heights of accomplishment. Were it not for educators, there would be no civilization.

Education is of three kinds: material, human and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the development of the body. Human education is about civilization and progress. It deals with government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries. Spiritual education consists in acquiring divine perfections. This is true education, for by its aid the spiritual, the higher nature of the human being is developed.

In order to progress, humanity needs an educator who has clear authority as a material, human and spiritual educator. If someone should say, "I possess perfect intelligence, and I have no need of such an educator," he would be denying that which is clear and evident. It would be like a child saying, "I have no need of education; I will act according to my reason and intelligence, and will reach perfection by myself."

Humanity has always been in need of such a perfect educator, one who can help it organize matters related to the nourishment and health of the body, inspire it to advance in knowledge, invention and discovery, and, most importantly, breathe into it the real life of the spirit. No ordinary human being can achieve these formidable tasks. Only the Manifestations of God have the power to accomplish them. These are chosen Souls who are sent by God from time to time to be the Universal Educators of humanity.

"All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization."

"The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves."

"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 tranquility of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established."

"Men at all times and under all conditions stand in need of one to exhort them, guide them and to instruct and teach them."

We must be lovers of light no matter from what lamp it appears. We must be lovers of the rose no matter in what garden it blooms. We must be seekers of truth no matter from what source it comes. Attachment to one lamp can prevent us from appreciating the light when it shines in another. Attachment to the outer forms and practices of religion can deprive us from understanding the truth of all religions. We must abandon prejudice and outmoded traditions if we are to succeed in finding the truth. There is a difference between dogma, superstition and prejudice on the one hand, and truth on the other. If we understand this, we will be able to see that the Divine Light of Truth shone in all the Manifestations of God—in Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh.

In seeking the truth, we must free ourselves of all our opinions and preconceived ideas. We must give up our prejudices and trivial notions. An open receptive mind is needed. If our cup is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. The fact that we think we are right and everyone else wrong is the greatest obstacle in the path to unity. And unity is necessary if we are to reach the truth, for truth is one.

“There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God.”

“Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.”

“The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race . . .”

“The religion of God is for love and unity; make it not the cause of enmity or dissension.”

Consider the infinite universe. Is it possible that it could have been created without a Creator? Or that the Creator of this infinite world should be without intelligence? Materialists say that man has been brought forth by nature itself. But nature has no intelligence. Is it possible that it can create a human being, who has intelligence?

If we observe the entire creation, we see that whatever is lower is unable to comprehend the power of that which is higher. So the stone, the tree, the animal, however much they may evolve, cannot comprehend the reality of man and cannot imagine his power. Therefore how can man, the created, understand the reality of the Creator?

Although man's understanding can never reach God, he is not deprived of knowing Him. From time to time a Human Being appears on earth who is the Manifestation of God. All the perfection, the bounty, and the splendor that come from God are visible in the Holy Manifestation, like the sun which is resplendent in a clear polished mirror. To say that these Mirrors are the Manifestation of the Sun of Truth does not mean that the Sun has descended from Its heights of glory and become incorporated into the Mirror. What is meant is this: All that humanity knows, discovers, and understands of the names and attributes and perfections of God refers to His Holy Manifestations.

“The knowledge of Him, Who is the Origin of all things, and attainment unto Him, are impossible save through knowledge of, and attainment unto, these luminous Beings who proceed from the Sun of Truth.”

“No man, however acute his perception, can ever hope to reach the heights which the wisdom and understanding of the Divine Physician have attained.”

“The Person of the Manifestation hath ever been the representative and mouthpiece of God. He, in truth, is the Day Spring of God's most excellent Titles, and the Dawning-Place of His exalted Attributes.”

“Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose.”

About 150 years ago, Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia and devoted Himself to the upliftment and education of the people. He proclaimed the oneness of the world of humanity and taught that all are created and nourished by the one loving and merciful God. He promoted principles such as the equality of men and women, the abolition of prejudices, the agreement between science and religion, and the need for universal education.

The kings of the East and the priesthood of Persia arose against Him, for they did not find their personal interests advanced by His Teachings. He was persecuted, mocked and put in chains. In Persia, His properties and possessions were taken away. First, there was banishment from Persia to Baghdád, then to Constantinople, then to Adrianople, finally to the prison-fortress of 'Akká.

Throughout all these ordeals, He was cheerful. His enemies made every effort to lessen His greatness, but His fame grew day by day. Surrounded by enemies, He did nothing to protect Himself; on the contrary, in His spiritual might and power He was at all times visible before the faces of men.

During His lifetime He was intensely active. His energy was unlimited. Scarcely one night was passed in restful sleep. He suffered in order that selflessness and service should be made manifest in the world of humanity, that the Most Great Peace should be established, that human faith should be strengthened, that the human mind might be developed to its fullest capacity, and that man might become the reflection and likeness of God. Bahá'u'lláh was truly a Manifestation of God and a Universal Educator of humanity.

“The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation.”

“He it is Who is the Manifestation of Him Who is the Unknowable, the Invisible of the Invisibles, could ye but perceive it.”

“This is the Day whereon the All-Merciful hath come down in the clouds of knowledge, clothed with manifest sovereignty.”

From the beginning to the end of its life, every living thing in this world passes through different stages. Each stage has its own conditions and presents its own requirements. In the life of the human being, the conditions and requirements of infancy, of childhood, of adolescence, of youth and maturity are not the same. Each stage prepares us for the next, sharpening our faculties and training our intelligence.

Similarly there are periods and stages in the life of humanity as a whole. Humanity is now leaving behind its childhood and entering the long-awaited period of maturity. That which could meet the needs of its early history does not satisfy the demands of this day. The playthings of infancy and childhood no longer satisfy the adult mind.

From every standpoint the world of humanity is undergoing revolutionary change, whether in government or law, in science or industry. Old standards of ethics, moral codes and methods of living in the past are not adequate for the present age of advancement and progress.

This is the time of maturity and reformation in religion as well. Bigotry and dogmatic imitations of ancient beliefs have become the source of animosity. They must pass and give way to heavenly teachings which have been revealed for the advancement of humanity in this age. This reformation and renewal of the fundamental reality of religion constitute the true spirit of modernism, the unmistakable light of the world, and the divine remedy for all the ills of humanity.

“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.”

“A new life is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth; and yet none hath discovered its cause or perceived its motive.”

Today there is no greater challenge to humanity than the establishment of peace. Peace is light; war is darkness. Peace is life; war is death. More than a century ago, Bahá'u'lláh declared the cause of universal peace. He brought a number of Teachings that, together, make the establishment of peace possible.

Among these Teachings is the independent investigation of reality. If people are allowed to investigate truth, they will come to see the oneness of humanity. Truth is one and by its means the unity of the world can be realized. Prejudices of all kinds—race, class, color, creed, nation, sex and degree of material civilization—are causes of strife. If we accept to investigate reality rather than blindly imitate the beliefs of the past, we will arise to abolish every form of prejudice.

Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings on religion make a clear distinction between true religion and superstition. True religion must be in harmony with science and reason. Religion must be the cause of fellowship and love. If it becomes the cause of discord and hatred, then it is better to be without it. Also among Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings is the equality of men and women. We may think of the world of humanity as a bird—one wing is women and the other men. Both wings have to be equally developed for the bird to fly. Other Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh shed light on the importance of universal education, the benefits of adopting a universal language, and the necessity of seeking spiritual solutions to economic problems.

Humanity must be freed from the captivity of the world of nature. It was created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. But there are two aspects of civilization—material and spiritual—and unless they become combined, human happiness will not be attained. Until justice is allowed to govern human affairs, all things will be in disorder and remain imperfect.

“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 is verily the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world and of tranquillity amongst its peoples,”

“The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.”

A garden in which all the plants are of the same shape and color lacks in beauty; it is dull and monotonous. The garden that is pleasing to the eye is one in which flowers of every color and fragrance grow side by side. It is the joyous contrast of color that gives the garden its beauty and charm. And though different, each flower is refreshed by the same rain and receives the warmth of the one sun. This is also true of humanity. It is made up of many races and colors. But all come from the same God, and all have the same origin. The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music; different notes blend together to make a perfect chord.

Unity is necessary to existence. Love is the very cause of life. In the material world, all things owe their existence to unity. Their elements are held together by the law of attraction. The law of attraction brings together certain elements in the form of a beautiful flower. But when that attraction is taken away, the flower will decompose and cease to exist. So it is with humanity. Attraction, harmony, and unity are the forces that hold humanity together.

Bahá'u'lláh has made a design for the uniting of all the peoples of the world. We should make every effort to draw them into this circle of unity. When we meet people of different races, nationalities, religions, and opinions, we should not allow these differences to become barriers between us. We should think of them as different colored roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and be glad to be among them.

“The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.”

“So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.”

“Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you.”

“It behooveth man to adhere tenaciously unto that which will promote fellowship, kindness and unity.” “

Difference of capacity in individuals is fundamental to human existence. It is not possible for all to be alike, for all to be equal. Yet human affairs, in their entirety, should be governed by the principle of justice.

Justice is not limited; it is a universal quality. It must operate at all levels of society. Justice must be sacred, and the rights of all people must be guarded. The laws of society must be formulated and enforced in such a way that it is not possible for a few to amass wealth and for others to be destitute. Among the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty.

Each member of society should enjoy the benefits of civilization, because every individual is a member of the body of humanity. If one member of this body is in anguish or distress, all the other members must necessarily suffer. How can one member be afflicted and the others be at ease? Yet today because of the lack of harmonious relations, some members of society are satisfied, living in the utmost comfort and luxury, while others are in want of food and shelter. Today's society lacks the necessary reciprocity and symmetry; it is not well arranged. Laws and principles are needed that will ensure the well-being and happiness of all the members of the human family.

Justice is established on the pillars of reward and punishment. People are motivated to be just by the hope for reward and the fear of punishment. These two sentiments are necessary if oppression is to be prevented. The legislators and administrators of the laws must be aware of the spiritual consequences of their decisions. When an official knows that he will be held responsible for his actions beyond this earthly life, he will be inspired to act with justice. The ruler who knows his judgments will be weighed in the balance of Divine Justice will surely avoid oppression.

“The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.”

“No radiance can compare with that of justice. The organization of the world and the tranquillity of mankind depend upon it.”

“That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world.”

The physical sun, through its light and heat, reveals the reality of all things on earth. Without its rays, these realities would be shrouded in darkness. Likewise, the Sun of Bahá'u'lláh, shining in full splendor in the spiritual sky, has made manifest realities that were not apparent in the past. One such reality is the equality of men and women. Through the rays of the Sun of Truth, the capacities of women have been so illumined that the equality of men and women is now an established fact.

Bahá'u'lláh has stated in the dearest terms that in the sight of God there is no distinction between men and women. The condition of inequality that has existed throughout the ages is not the result of the superiority of men; it is simply that women have not been given the same opportunity to develop all their potentialities. In spite of the prejudice against them, however, history records the lives of numerous women who have achieved the greatest of accomplishments.

The first woman to accept the Truth of God's new Revelation was the Persian poetess, Ṭáhirih. As she witnessed the dawn of a new Day, she became fully aware of the reality of the equality of men and women and dedicated her energies to proclaiming this truth. Her knowledge and eloquence baffled the most learned men of her time. Although all the forces of an oppressive king and an ignorant and proud clergy were against her, not for a moment did she hesitate to speak the truth. And in the end, she gave her life for the new Faith she had so firmly embraced.

To believe in that which God has not intended is ignorance and superstition. Today women should be allowed every opportunity to become educated and to assume a position of equality with men in all fields of human endeavor. Until the equality of men and women becomes a reality in this world, as it is in the spiritual realm, the real progress of humankind is not possible.

“Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.”

“Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other.”

“In this Day the Hand of divine grace hath removed all distinctions. The servants of God and His handmaidens are regarded on the same plane.”

One of the principles that Bahá'u'lláh has emphasized in His Teachings is universal education. The promotion of education is a most urgent requirement of our time. No nation can achieve prosperity unless it makes education one of its central concerns. The primary reason for the decline of peoples is ignorance. Education brings honor, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people.

Education must begin at infancy. It is the duty of the father and mother to strive with every means to educate their children, refine their characters according to spiritual and moral laws, and train them in the arts and sciences. Mothers are the first educators of humankind; they watch over the child in the cradle and nurse him at the breast of knowledge. Every child must be educated; this is not a matter that can be neglected. If the parents are able to take care of the expense, they must do so. Otherwise the community must provide the means for the education of the child.

Education should develop in every human being the desire to achieve excellence. Man should become enamored of human perfection and pursue it with passion. He should aspire to spiritual distinction, to become known for the virtues of the human world—for sincerity, loyalty, service to humanity, love and justice. He must seek to be distinguished by his efforts to promote peace and unity and to foster learning. To guide people on such a path is the real task of education.

“It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree.”

“Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the Earth....”

“Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man’s life, and a ladder for his ascent.”

“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.”