

Becoming A Brilliant Star Citizenship: Work and Career

Everyone Must Work

1. 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.

Bahá'u'lláh
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 26

2. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion; at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls, and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. But the energies of the heart must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source.

'Abdu'l-Bahá
Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 182

3. 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 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. He of a truth is the All-Bountiful, the Gracious.

Bahá'u'lláh
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 355

4. 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.

Bahá'u'lláh
The Hidden Words, Persian #82

5. Concerning the means of livelihood, thou shouldst, while placing thy whole trust in God, engage in some occupation. He will assuredly send down upon thee from the heaven of His favour that which is destined for thee. He is in truth the God of might and power.

Bahá'u'lláh
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 268

Engaging In An Art Or Profession (Work) Is An Act Of Worship

6. In this great dispensation, art (or a profession) is identical with an act of worship and this is a clear text of the Blessed Perfection. Therefore, extreme effort should be made in art and this will not prevent the teaching of the people in that region. Nay, rather, each should assist the other in art and guidance. For instance, when the studying of art is with the intention of obeying the command of God this study will certainly be done easily and great progress will soon be made therein; and when others discover this fragrance of spirituality in the action itself, this same will cause their awakening. Likewise, managing art with propriety will become the means of sociability and affinity; and sociability and affinity themselves tend to guide others to the Truth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Bahá’í World Faith, p. 377

7. It is obligatory for men and women to engage in a trade or profession. Bahá'u'lláh exalts "engagement in such work" to the "rank of worship" of God. The spiritual and practical significance of this law, and the mutual responsibility of the individual and society for its implementation are explained in a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi:

With reference to Bahá'u'lláh'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 *Áqdas* 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, Bahá'u'lláh further states that mendicity 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, especially when performed in the spirit of service, is according to Bahá'u'lláh 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.

Shoghi Effendi
Áqdas: Notes, p. 192

Work Reduces Dwelling On The Unpleasant Aspects Of Life

8. Concerning thine own affairs, if thou wouldst content thyself with whatever might come to pass it would be praiseworthy. To engage in some profession is highly commendable, for when occupied with work one is less likely to dwell on the unpleasant aspects of life. God willing thou

mayest experience joy and radiance, gladness and exultation in any city or land where thou mayest happen to sojourn. This lowly servant will never forget that distinguished and kind friend. He hath remembered and will continue to remember thee. The decree lieth with God, the Lord of all worlds. I fain would hope He may vouchsafe divine assistance and grant confirmation in that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Him.

Bahá'u'lláh
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 175

Everyone Must Bear Fruit

9. 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.

Bahá'u'lláh
The Hidden Words, Persian #81

True Reliance Is For The Servant To Pursue His Profession

10. True reliance is for the servant to pursue his profession and calling in this world, to hold fast unto the Lord, to seek naught but His grace, inasmuch as in His Hands is the destiny of all His servants.

Bahá'u'lláh
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 155

The Secret Of Wealth Is Engaging In Crafts And Professions

11. O MY SERVANT!

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.

Bahá'u'lláh
The Hidden Words, Persian #80

Everyone Must Acquire A Craft

12. 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.

'Abdu'l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 134-135

13. He must study every day from morning till noon, so that he may learn how to read and write. From noon till about sunset he should acquire a craft. The children must both learn to read and acquire an art or skill.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
The Arts, p. 3

14. The education of each child is compulsory.... In addition to this wide-spread education each child must be taught a profession, art, or trade, so that every member of the community will be enabled to earn his own livelihood. Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship....

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Education, p. 313; *Women*, pp. 376-377; *‘Abdu’l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy*, p. 83

Study Such Sciences And Arts As Are Useful

15. The eleventh Glad-Tidings

It is permissible to study sciences and arts, but such sciences as are useful and would redound to the progress and advancement of the people. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

Bahá’u’lláh
Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 26

Everyone Does Not Require Advanced Study

16. In this way, over a short period--that is, three years--the children will, as a result of writing the words down, become fully proficient in a number of languages, and will be able to translate a passage from one language to another. Once they have become skilled in these fundamentals, let them go on to learning the elements of the other branches of knowledge, and once they have completed this study, let each one who is able and hath a keen desire for it, enrol in higher institutions of learning and study advanced courses in the sciences and arts.

Not all, however, will be able to engage in these advanced studies. Therefore, such children must be sent to industrial schools where they can also acquire technical skills, and once the child becomes proficient in such a skill, then let consideration be given to the child’s own preference and inclinations. If a child hath a liking for commerce, then let him choose commerce; if industry, then industry; if for higher education, then the advancement of knowledge; if for some other of the responsibilities of humankind, then that. Let him be placed in the field for which he hath an inclination, a desire, and a talent.

But the indispensable basis of all is that he should develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration. If a person be unlettered, and yet clothed with divine excellence, and alive in the breaths of the Spirit, that individual will contribute to the welfare of society, and his inability to read and write will do him no harm. And if a person be versed in the arts and every branch of knowledge, and not live a religious life, and not take on the characteristics of God, and not be directed by a pure intent, and be engrossed in the life of the flesh--then he is harm personified, and nothing will come of all his learning and intellectual accomplishments but scandal and torment.

If, however, an individual hath spiritual characteristics, and virtues that shine out, and his purpose in life be spiritual and his inclinations be directed toward God, and he also study other branches of knowledge--then we have light upon light:¹ his outer being luminous, his private character radiant, his heart sound, his thought elevated, his understanding swift, his rank noble.

Blessed is he who attaineth this exalted station.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Education, pp. 281-282

There Must Be Equality Of Women And Men In Educational Opportunity

17. In proclaiming the oneness of mankind He taught that men and women are equal in the sight of God and that there is no distinction to be made between them. The only difference between them now is due to lack of education and training. If woman is given equal opportunity of education, distinction and estimate of inferiority will disappear. The world of humanity has two wings, as it were: One is the female; the other is the male. If one wing be defective, the strong perfect wing will not be capable of flight. The world of humanity has two hands. If one be imperfect, the capable hand is restricted and unable to perform its duties. God is the Creator of mankind. He has endowed both sexes with perfections and intelligence, given them physical members and organs of sense, without differentiation or distinction as to superiority; therefore, why should woman be considered inferior? This is not according to the plan and justice of God. He has created them equal; in His estimate there is no question of sex. The one whose heart is purest, whose deeds are most perfect, is acceptable to God, male or female. Often in history women have been the pride of humanity--for example, Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was the glory of mankind. Mary Magdalene, Asiyih, daughter of Pharaoh, Sarah, wife of Abraham, and innumerable others have glorified the human race by their excellences. In this day there are women among the Bahá’ís who far outshine men. They are wise, talented, well-informed, progressive, most intelligent and the light of men. They surpass men in courage. When they speak in meetings, the men listen with great respect. Furthermore, the education of women is of greater importance than the education of men, for they are the mothers of the race, and mothers rear the children. The first teachers of children are the mothers. Therefore, they must be capably trained in order to educate both sons and daughters. There are many provisions in the words of Bahá’u’lláh in regard to this.

He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes. When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never be willing to sanction it. Mothers will not give their sons as sacrifices upon the battlefield after twenty years of anxiety and loving devotion in rearing them from infancy, no matter what cause they are called upon to defend. There is no doubt that when women obtain equality of rights, war will entirely cease among mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 174-175

¹ Qur’án 24:35.

18. I hope for a like degree of progress among the women of Europe--that each may shine like unto a lamp; that they may cry out the proclamation of the kingdom; that they may truly assist the men; nay, that they may be even superior to the men, versed in sciences and yet detached, so that the whole world may bear witness to the fact that men and women have absolutely the same rights. It would be a cause of great joy for me to see such women. This is useful work; by it woman will enter into the kingdom. Otherwise, there will be no results.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Women, pp. 368-369

Bend Your Energies To Whatever May Foster The Education Of Men

19. Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savor of such deeds as are performed in His path, and partake of the sweetness of such humility and submissiveness as are shown for His sake. Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds. Ponder it in your hearts, and be ye of them that observe its precepts.

Bahá’u’lláh
Gleanings, p. 9

Parenting Is A Valued Occupation

20. Today it is obligatory for the loved ones of God, and their imperative duty, to educate the children in reading, writing, the various branches of knowledge, and the expansion of consciousness, that on all levels they may go forward day by day.

The mother is the first teacher of the child. For children, at the beginning of life, are fresh and tender as a young twig, and can be trained in any fashion you desire. If you rear the child to be straight, he will grow straight, in perfect symmetry. It is clear that the mother is the first teacher and that it is she who establisheth the character and conduct of the child.

Wherefore, O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God’s sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined.²

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Education, pp. 288-289

Teaching Is A Recommended Profession

21. Blessed is that teacher who shall arise to instruct the children, and to guide the people into the pathways of God, the Bestower, the Well-Beloved....

² Cf. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 139.

Blessed is that teacher who remaineth faithful to the Covenant of God, and occupieth himself with the education of children. For him hath the Supreme Pen inscribed that reward which is revealed in the Most Holy Book.

Blessed, blessed is he!

Bahá'u'lláh

Compilation of Compilations, Vol I (Bahá'í Education), p. 251

22. 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.

O ye friends of God! Because, in this most momentous of ages, the Sun of Truth hath risen at the highest point of the spring equinox, and cast its rays on every clime, it shall kindle such tremulous excitement, it shall release such vibrations in the world of being, it shall stimulate such growth and development, it shall stream out with such a glory of light, and clouds of grace shall pour down such plentiful waters, and fields and plains shall teem with such a galaxy of sweet-smelling plants and blooms, that this lowly earth will become the Abhá Kingdom, and this nether world the world above. Then will this fleck of dust be as the vast circle of the skies, this human place the palace-court of God, this spot of clay the dayspring of the endless favours of the Lord of Lords.

Wherefore, O loved ones of God! Make ye a mighty effort till you yourselves betoken this advancement and 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 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.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 128-129

23. The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favour of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory. If a child be trained from his infancy, he will, through the loving care of the Holy Gardener, drink in the crystal waters of the spirit and of knowledge, like a young tree amid the rilling brooks. And certainly he will gather to himself the bright rays of the Sun of Truth, and through its light and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden of life.

Therefore must the mentor be a doctor as well: that is, he must, in instructing the child, remedy its faults; must give him learning, and at the same time rear him to have a spiritual nature. Let the teacher be a doctor to the character of the child, thus will he heal the spiritual ailments of the children of men.

If, in this momentous task, a mighty effort be exerted, the world of humanity will shine out with other adornings, and shed the fairest light. Then will this darksome place grow luminous, and this abode of earth turn into Heaven. The very demons will change to angels then, and wolves to shepherds of the flock, and the wild-dog pack to gazelles that pasture on the plains of oneness, and ravening beasts to peaceful herds, and birds of prey, with talons sharp as knives, to songsters warbling their sweet native notes.

For the inner reality of man is a demarcation line between the shadow and the light, a place where the two seas meet,³ it is the lowest point on the arc of descent,⁴ and therefore is it capable of gaining all the grades above. With education it can achieve all excellence; devoid of education it will stay on, at the lowest point of imperfection.

Every child is potentially the light of the world--and at the same time its darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance. From his infancy, the child must be nursed at the breast of God's love, and nurtured in the embrace of His knowledge, that he may radiate light, grow in spirituality, be filled with wisdom and learning, and take on the characteristics of the angelic host.

Since ye have been assigned to this holy task, ye must therefore exert every effort to make that school famed in all respects throughout the world; to make it the cause of exalting the Word of the Lord.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pp. 129-131

24. O thou who gazest upon the Kingdom of God! Thy letter was received and we note that thou art engaged in teaching the children of the believers, that these tender little ones have been learning The Hidden Words and the prayers and what it meaneth to be a Bahá'í.

The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious. There is no doubt that it will yield the desired results; especially is this true of instruction as to Bahá'í obligations and Bahá'í conduct, for the little children must needs be made aware in their very heart and soul that ‘Bahá'í’ is not just a name but a truth. Every child must be trained in the things of the spirit, so that he may embody all the virtues and become a source of glory to the Cause of God. Otherwise, the mere word ‘Bahá'í’, if it yield no fruit, will come to nothing.

Strive then to the best of thine ability to let these children know that a Bahá'í is one who embodyeth all the perfections, that he must shine out like a lighted taper--not be darkness upon darkness and yet bear the name ‘Bahá'í’.

Name thou this school the Bahá'í Sunday School.⁵

³ Qur’án 25:55, 35:13, 55:19-25. See also Marriage Prayer revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá beginning ‘He is God! O peerless Lord! In Thine almighty wisdom Thou hast enjoined marriage upon the peoples...’

⁴ See *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 328-9 for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comments on the arc of descent and ascent.

⁵ A Bahá'í children's class in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 143; Education, pp. 266-267

Medicine Is A Recommended Profession

25. Thou shouldst endeavour to study the science of medicine. It is extremely useful and serveth as the greatest instrument for the dissemination of the Cause. It is absolutely imperative that thou acquire this bounty. Strive day and night that thou mayest become highly qualified in this science. And when thou wishest to dispense treatment set thy heart toward the Abhá Kingdom, entreating divine confirmations.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol I, (Health and Healing), p. 461

Making Music Is A Recommended Occupation

26. We have made it lawful for you to listen to music and singing. Take heed, however, lest listening thereto should cause you to overstep the bounds of propriety and dignity. Let your joy be the joy born of My Most Great Name, a Name that bringeth rapture to the heart, and filleth with ecstasy the minds of all who have drawn nigh unto God. We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion. Truly, We are loath to see you numbered with the foolish.

Bahá’u’lláh
The Kitáb-i-Áqdas, p. 38

27. O thou attracted one of the Kingdom! Complete thou the study of the art of music and sacrifice thyself more or less to the Lord of the Kingdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Compilation of Compilation, Vol II (Music), p. 75

28. Thank thou God that thou art instructed in music and melody, singing with pleasant voice the glorification and praise of the Eternal, the Living. I pray to God that thou mayest employ this talent in prayer and supplication, in order that the souls may become quickened, the hearts may become attracted and all may become inflamed with the fire of the love of God!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Music), p. 74

Agriculture Is A Recommended Occupation

29. Fifth: Special regard must be paid to agriculture. Although it hath been mentioned in the fifth place, unquestionably it precedeth the others. Agriculture is highly developed in foreign lands, however in Persia it hath so far been grievously neglected. It is hoped that His Majesty the Shah--may God assist him by His grace--will turn his attention to this vital and important matter.

Bahá’u’lláh
Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 90

Commerce And Business Is A Recommended Activity

30. 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.

Bahá'u'lláh
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 341

31. His means of livelihood was his business partnership with me. That is, I provided him with a capital of three kran;⁶ with it he bought needles, and this was his stock-in-trade. The women of Nazareth gave him eggs in exchange for his needles and in this way he would obtain thirty or forty eggs a day: three needles per egg. Then he would sell the eggs and live on the proceeds. Since there was a daily caravan between 'Akká and Nazareth, he would refer to Aqa Rida each day, for more needles. Glory be to God! He survived two years on that initial outlay of capital; and he returned thanks at all times. You can tell how detached he was from worldly things by this one fact: the Nazarenes used to say it was plain to see from the old man's manner and behavior that he was very rich, and that if he lived so modestly it was only because he was a stranger in a strange place--hiding his wealth by setting up as a peddler of needles.

'Abdu'l-Bahá
Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 52-53

Writing Is A Recommended Profession

32. Regarding the advice you asked him for, he feels that to devote all one's studies with the object of becoming a Bahá'í author, is rather risky. We need Bahá'í authors badly, but you have to be assured that you have the talent to earn your living in that field, and also serve the Faith in it.

He feels that the best thing for you to do is to devote your studies to acquiring a sound education, if you like along literary lines, and then see what develops.

Shoghi Effendi
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Writers and Writing), p. 413

⁶ The kran was 20 shahis, or almost 8 cents. Cf. *Webster*, op. cit.

33. There is no objection to your being a journalist as long as you try to keep off political issues; especially the big East-West issue. You have a talent for writing, and it might be of help to you financially and in making contacts for the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi

Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Writers and Writing), p. 413

34. What you could do, and should do, is to use your stories to become a source of inspiration and guidance for those who read them. With such a means at your disposal you can spread the spirit and teachings of the Cause; you can show the evils that exist in society, as well as the way they can be remedied. If you possess a real talent in writing you should consider it as given by God and exert your efforts to use it for the betterment of society.⁷

Shoghi Effendi

Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Writers and Writing), p. 411

35. Such stories regarding the life of different prophets together with their sayings will also be useful to better understand the literature of the Cause for there is constant reference to them. It is however the work of experienced people to bring together such materials and make of them interesting text books for the children.

The Cause will gradually produce people who would answer these needs. It is only a question of time. What we should strive to do is to stimulate different individuals who have the talent to attempt the task.

Shoghi Effendi

Compilation of Compilations, Vol I (Bahá'í Education), p. 299

Recommendations For Those Employed In Government Service

36. 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.⁸ 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,

⁷ This advice was given to a believer who asked whether such skills as shorthand and typing, and the writing of stories dealing with human experience, would be classified among those sciences that "begin and end in words", as mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh.

⁸ Cf. Qur'án 3:185 and 57:20

uprightness and honesty? Nay, such qualities are better than the riches of Korah,⁹ and dearer than all the treasures of existence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 343

37. 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-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 344

38. 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 Bahá’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-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 344

39. 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-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 345

40. 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 Abhá Beauty--nay, he shall be forsaken by the 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-Bahá
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⁹ Name synonymous with great wealth, mentioned (in the form ‘Qar’un’) in the Qur’án 28:76

41. 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 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 beseemeth 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-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 345

42. 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-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), p. 345

Different Types Of Work Must Be Performed For Society To Function Properly

43. But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us, and there is no answer to our prayer. His wisdom does not sanction what we wish. We pray, “O God! Make me wealthy!” If this prayer were universally answered, human affairs would be at a standstill. There would be none left to work in the streets, none to till the soil, none to build, none to run the trains. Therefore, it is evident that it would not be well for us if all prayers were answered. The affairs of the world would be interfered with, energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for which is in accord with divine wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly!

Thou shouldst continue thy profession and at the same time try to serve the Kingdom of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Health and Healing, p. 5

44. Consider the human world. See how nations have come and gone. They have been of all minds and purposes. Some were mere captives of self and desire, engulfed in the passions of the lower nature. They attained to wealth, to the comforts of life, to fame. And what was the final outcome? Utter evanescence and oblivion. Reflect upon this. Look upon it with the eye of admonition. No trace of them remains, no fruit, no result, no benefit; they have gone utterly--complete effacement.

Souls have appeared in the world who were pure and undefiled, who have directed their attention toward God, seeking the reward of God, attaining nearness to the threshold of God, acceptable in the good pleasure of God. They have been the lights of guidance and stars of the Supreme Concourse. Consider these souls, shining like stars in the horizon of sanctity forevermore.

It must not be implied that one should give up avocation and attainment to livelihood. On the contrary, in the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh monasticism and asceticism are not sanctioned. In this great Cause the light of guidance is shining and radiant. Bahá’u’lláh has even said that occupation and labor are devotion. All humanity must obtain a livelihood by sweat of the brow

and bodily exertion, at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. Bahá'u'lláh has thereby encouraged action and stimulated service. But the energies of the heart must not be attached to these things; the soul must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy, the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 186-187

Justice Must Be Served In Distributing The Benefits Of Work

45. You have questioned me about strikes. This question is and will be for a long time the subject of great difficulties. Strikes are due to two causes. One is the extreme greed and rapacity of the manufacturers and industrialists; the other, the excesses, the avidity and intransigence of the workmen and artisans. It is, therefore, necessary to remedy these two causes.

But the principal cause of these difficulties lies in the laws of the present civilization; for they lead to a small number of individuals accumulating incomparable fortunes, beyond their needs, while the greater number remain destitute, stripped and in the greatest misery. This is contrary to justice, to humanity, to equity; it is the height of iniquity, the opposite to what causes divine satisfaction.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Some Answered Questions, p. 273

The Benefits Of Work Must Be Voluntarily Shared

46. O respected personage! I have read your work, *The Gospel of Wealth*,¹⁰ and noted therein truly apposite and sound recommendations for easing the lot of humankind.

To state the matter briefly, the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh advocate voluntary sharing, and this is a greater thing than the equalization of wealth. For equalization 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.

I have seen the good effects of your own philanthropy in America, in various universities, peace gatherings, and associations for the promotion of learning, as I travelled from city to city. Wherefore do I pray on your behalf that you shall ever be encompassed by the bounties and blessings of heaven, and shall perform many philanthropic deeds in East and West. Thus may

10 An article from Andrew Carnegie's book *The Gospel of Wealth* was published in England in the *Pall Mall Budget* and called "The Gospel of Wealth," cf. Andrew Carnegie's *Autobiography* 255n.

you gleam as a lighted taper in the Kingdom of God, may attain honour and everlasting life, and shine out as a bright star on the horizon of eternity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pp. 114-115

Volunteer Work Is Highly Praised

47. Those souls who during the war have served the poor and have been in the Red Cross Mission work, their services are accepted at the Kingdom of God and are the cause of their everlasting life. Convey to them these glad tidings.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 116

The True Work Is Building The Kingdom

48. You have observed that while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the utmost bodily weakness and feebleness, while he was indisposed, and had not the power to move--notwithstanding this physical state he traveled through many countries, in Europe and America, and in churches, meetings and conventions was occupied with the promotion of the divine principles and summoned the people to the manifestation of the Kingdom of Abhá. You have also observed how the confirmations of the Blessed Perfection encompassed all. What result is forthcoming from material rest, tranquillity, luxury and attachment to this corporeal world? It is evident that the man who pursues these things will in the end become afflicted with regret and loss.

Consequently, one must close his eyes wholly to these thoughts, long for eternal life, the sublimity of the world of humanity, the celestial developments, the Holy Spirit, the promotion of the Word of God, the guidance of the inhabitants of the globe, the promulgation of universal peace and the proclamation of the oneness of the world of humanity! This is the work! Otherwise like unto other animals and birds one must occupy himself with the requirements of this physical life, the satisfaction of which is the highest aspiration of the animal kingdom, and one must stalk across the earth like unto the quadrupeds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Tablets of the Divine Plan, pp. 44-45

49. It is your duty to be exceedingly kind to every human being, and to wish him well; to work for the upliftment of society; to blow the breath of life into the dead; to act in accordance with the instructions of Bahá’u’lláh and walk His path--until ye change the world of man into the world of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 90

50. Oh, peoples and nations! Arise and work and be happy! Gather together under the tent of the unity of mankind!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Paris Talks, p. 109

Trustworthiness And Honesty More Important Than Accomplishments

51. 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 tinder 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-Bahá 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-Bahá
Compilation of Compilations, Vol II (Trustworthiness), pp. 339-340

Source: Huitt, W. (2011). *Becoming a Brilliant Star: Citizenship: Work*. Valdosta, GA. Available online at <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/religion/bahai/brilstar/12citizen3-work.pdf>