

Principles of Knowledge Into Action

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1. SON OF BEING!

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Arabic Hidden Words*, p. 31

2. Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life. Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 236; *Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 51; quoted in *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 39, pp. 60-61; *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 177

3. Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. Your own acts testify to this truth.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 149

4. The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action. Unless these three conditions are forthcoming there is no execution or accomplishment. In the erection of a house it is first necessary to know the ground and design the house suitable for it; second, to obtain the means or funds necessary for the construction; third, to actually build it. Therefore a power is needed to carry out and execute what is known and admitted to be the remedy for human conditions; namely, the unification of mankind. Furthermore, it is evident that this cannot be realized through material process and means. The accomplishment of this unification cannot be through racial power, for races are different and diverse in tendencies. It cannot be through patriotic power, for nationalities are unlike. Nor can it be effected through political power since the policies of governments and nations are various. That is to say, any effort toward unification through these material means would benefit one and injure another because of unequal and individual interests. Some may believe this great remedy can be found in dogmatic insistence upon imitations and interpretations. This would likewise be without foundation and result. Therefore it is evident that no means but an ideal means, a spiritual power, divine bestowals and the breaths of the Holy Spirit will heal this world sickness of war, dissension and discord. Nothing else is possible; nothing can be conceived of. But through spiritual means and the divine power it is possible and practicable.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 101; *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 157-158

5. Mere knowledge of principles is not sufficient. We all know and admit that justice is good, but there is need of volition and action to carry out and manifest it. For example, we might think it good to build a church, but simply thinking of it as a good thing will not help its erection. The ways and means must be provided; we must will to build it and then proceed with the construction. All of us

know that international peace is good, that it is conducive to human welfare and the glory of man, but volition and action are necessary before it can be established. Action is essential. Inasmuch as this century is a century of light, capacity for action is assured to mankind. Necessarily the divine principles will be spread among men until the time of action arrives. Surely this has been so, and truly the time and conditions are ripe for action now.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 121

6. Bahá'u'lláh not only proclaimed this unity and love; He established it. As a heavenly Physician He not only gave prescriptions for these ailments of discord and hatred but accomplished the actual healing. We may read in a medical book that a certain form of illness requires such and such a remedy. While this may be absolutely true, the remedy is useless unless there be volition and executive force to apply it. Every man in the king's army can give a command; but when the king speaks, it is carried out. This one, that one, may say, "Go conquer a country"; but when the king says, "Go!", the army advances. Therefore, it is evident that the confirmation of the Holy Spirit and impelling influence of a heavenly power are needed to accomplish the divine purpose in human hearts and conditions. Jesus Christ, single, solitary and alone, accomplished what all the kings of the earth could not have carried out. If all the kingdoms and nations of the world had combined to effect it, they would have failed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 249-250

7. 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

8. It is evident therefore that man is ruler over nature's sphere and province. Nature is inert, man is progressive. Nature has no consciousness, man is endowed with it. Nature is without volition and acts perforce whereas man possesses a mighty will. Nature is incapable of discovering mysteries or realities whereas man is especially fitted to do so. Nature is not in touch with the realm of God, man is attuned to its evidences. Nature is uninformed of God, man is conscious of Him. Man acquires divine virtues, nature is denied them. Man can voluntarily discontinue vices, nature has no power to modify the influence of its instincts. Altogether it is evident that man is more noble and superior; that in him there is an ideal power surpassing nature. He has consciousness, volition, memory, intelligent power, divine attributes and virtues of which nature is completely deprived, bereft and minus; therefore man is higher and nobler by reason of the ideal and heavenly force latent and manifest in him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 236-237; *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 70; *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 178

9. Man possesses conscious intelligence and reflection; nature is minus. This is an established fundamental among philosophers. Man is endowed with volition and memory; nature has neither. Man can seek out the mysteries latent in nature whereas nature is not conscious of her own hidden phenomena. Man is progressive; nature is stationary, without the power of progression or

retrogression. Man is endowed with ideal virtues, for example intellection, volition,—among them faith, confession and acknowledgment of God, while nature is devoid of all these. The ideal faculties of man, including the capacity of scientific acquisition are beyond nature's ken. These are powers whereby man is differentiated and distinguished from all other forms of life. This is the bestowal of divine idealism, the crown adorning human heads. Notwithstanding the gift of this supernatural power, it is most amazing that materialists still consider themselves within the [p. 62] bounds and captivity of nature. The truth is that God has endowed man with virtues, powers and ideal faculties of which nature is entirely bereft and by which man is elevated, distinguished and superior. We must thank God for these bestowals, for these powers He has given us, for this crown He has placed upon our heads.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 61-62; *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 51

10. Man possesses certain virtues of which nature is deprived. He exercises volition; nature is without will. For instance, an exigency of the sun is the giving of light. It is controlled—it cannot do otherwise than radiate light—but it is not volitional. An exigency of the phenomenon of electricity is that it is revealed in sparks and flashes under certain conditions, but it cannot voluntarily furnish illumination. An exigency or property of water is humidity; it cannot separate itself from this property by its own will. Likewise, all the properties of nature are inherent and obedient, not volitional; therefore, it is philosophically predicated that nature is without volition and innate perception. In this statement and principle we agree with the materialists. But the question which presents food for reflection is this: How is it that man, who is a part of the universal plan, is possessed of certain qualities whereof nature is devoid? Is it conceivable that a drop should be imbued with qualities of which the ocean is completely deprived? The drop is a part; the ocean is the whole. Could there be a phenomenon of combustion or illumination which the great luminary the sun itself did not manifest? Is it possible for a stone to possess inherent properties of which the aggregate mineral kingdom is lacking? For example, could the fingernail which is a part of human anatomy be endowed with cellular properties of which the brain is deprived?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 80-81

11. The phenomenal world is entirely subject to the rule and control of natural law. These myriad suns, satellites and heavenly bodies throughout endless space are all captives of nature. They cannot transgress in a single point or particular the fixed laws which govern the physical universe. The sun in its immensity, the ocean in its vastness are incapable of violating these universal laws. All phenomenal beings—the plants in their kingdom, even the animals with their intelligence—are nature's subjects and captives. All live within the bounds of natural law, and nature is the ruler of all except man. Man is not the captive of nature, for although according to natural law he is a being of the earth, yet he guides ships over the ocean, flies through the air in airplanes, descends in submarines; therefore, he has overcome natural law and made it subservient to his wishes. For instance, he imprisons in an incandescent lamp the illimitable natural energy called electricity—a material force which can cleave mountains—and bids it give him light. He takes the human voice and confines it in the phonograph for his benefit and amusement. According to his natural power man should be able to communicate a limited distance, but by overcoming the restrictions of nature he can annihilate space and send telephone messages thousands of miles. All the sciences, arts and discoveries were mysteries of nature, and according to natural law these mysteries should remain latent, hidden; but man has proceeded to break this law, free himself from this rule and bring them forth into the realm of the visible. Therefore, he is the ruler and commander of nature. Man has intelligence; nature has not. Man has volition; nature has none. Man has memory; nature is without

it. Man has the reasoning faculty; nature is deprived. Man has the perceptive faculty; nature cannot perceive. It is therefore proved and evident that man is nobler than nature.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 17

12. ...a father and mother endure the greatest troubles and hardships for their children; and often when the children have reached the age of maturity, the parents pass on to the other world. Rarely does it happen that a father and mother in this world see the reward of the care and trouble they have undergone for their children. Therefore children, in return for this care and trouble, must show forth charity and beneficence, and must implore pardon and forgiveness for their parents. So you ought, in return for the love and kindness shown you by your father, to give to the poor for his sake, with greatest submission and humility implore pardon and remission of sins, and ask for the supreme mercy.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 329-330

13. In these days, the most important of all things is the guidance of the nations and peoples of the world. Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance for it is the head corner-stone of the foundation itself. This wronged servant has spent his days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service. He rested not a moment, till the fame of the Cause of God was noised abroad in the world and the celestial strains from the Abhá Kingdom roused the East and the West. The beloved of God must also follow the same example. This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Bahá!

The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the Divine Guidance, till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 242

14. Therefore I say that man must travel in the way of God. Day by day he must endeavor to become better, his belief must increase and become firmer, his good qualities and his turning to God must be greater, the fire of his love must flame more brightly; then day by day he will make progress, for to stop advancing is the means of going back. The bird when he flies soars ever higher and higher, for as soon as he stops flying he will come down. Every day, in the morning when arising you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Compilations, Vol I*, (Excellence in All Things), p. 376

15. "A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of capital and labour definitely recognized; in which the clamour of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding

consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.”

The implementation of these far-reaching measures was indicated by Bahá'u'lláh: “The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world’s Great Peace amongst men.” [p. 12]

The courage, the resolution, the pure motive, the selfless love of one people for another—all the spiritual and moral qualities required for effecting this momentous step towards peace are focused on the will to act. And it is towards arousing the necessary volition that earnest consideration must be given to the reality of man, namely, his thought. To understand the relevance of this potent reality is also to appreciate the social necessity of actualizing its unique value through candid, dispassionate and cordial consultation, and of acting upon the results of this process. Bahá'u'lláh insistently drew attention to the virtues and indispensability of consultation for ordering human affairs. He said: “Consultation bestows greater awareness and transmutes conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leads the way and guides. 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.” The very attempt to achieve peace through the consultative action he proposed can release such a salutary spirit among the peoples of the earth that no power could resist the final, triumphal outcome.

The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, pp. 11-12