

To Study Such Arts and Sciences as Benefits Mankind

Bahau'llah

Translated



To Study Such Arts and Sciences as Benefits Mankind

*"O people of Bahá! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation—such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God. Reflect, O people, on the grace and blessings of your Lord, and yield Him thanks at eventide and dawn. Waste not your hours in idleness and sloth, but occupy yourselves with what will profit you and others. Thus hath it been decreed in this Tablet from whose horizon hath shone the daystar of wisdom and utterance. The most despised of men in the sight of God are they who sit and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of means and place your trust in God, the Provider of all means."*¹

*"God hath relieved you of the ordinance laid down in the Bayán concerning the destruction of books. We have permitted you to read such sciences as are profitable unto you, not such as end in idle disputation; better is this for you, if ye be of them that comprehend."*²

"The	tenth	Glad-Tidings
<i>As a token of grace from God, the Revealer of this Most Great Announcement, We have removed from the Holy Scriptures and Tablets the law prescribing the destruction of books.</i>		

The	eleventh	Glad-Tidings
<i>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.</i>		

The	twelfth	Glad-Tidings
<i>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 daystar of wisdom and utterance shineth resplendent.</i>		

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

1. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 33

2. Baha'u'llah, The Most Holy Book, para 77



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.

...

The

fifteenth

Glad-Tidings

Although a republican form of government profiteth all the peoples of the world, yet the majesty of kingship is one of the signs of God. We do not wish that the countries of the world should remain deprived thereof. If the sagacious combine the two forms into one, great will be their reward in the presence of God.

In former religions such ordinances as holy war, destruction of books, the ban on association and companionship with other peoples or on reading certain books had been laid down and affirmed according to the exigencies of the time; however, in this mighty Revelation, in this momentous Announcement, the manifold bestowals and favors of God have overshadowed all men, and from the horizon of the Will of the Ever-Abiding Lord, His infallible decree hath prescribed that which We have set forth above.”³

“The sixth Ṭaráz *Knowledge is one of the wondrous gifts of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to acquire it. Such arts and material means as are now manifest have been achieved by virtue of His knowledge and wisdom which have been revealed in Epistles and Tablets through His Most Exalted Pen—a Pen out of whose treasury pearls of wisdom and utterance and the arts and crafts of the world are brought to light.”⁴*

“The third Tajallí *is concerning arts, crafts and sciences. Knowledge is as wings to man’s life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book on the day of His return. Happy are those possessed of a hearing ear. 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. Thus hath the Tongue of Grandeur spoken in this Most Great Prison.”⁵*

“The Great Being saith: The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth. The majority of Persia’s learned doctors devote all their lives to the study of a philosophy the ultimate yield of which is nothing but words.”⁶

³. Baha’u’llah, Glad Tidings

⁴. Baha’u’llah, Ornaments

⁵. Baha’u’llah, Effulgences (Tajalliyat)

⁶. Baha’u’llah, Lawh-i-Maqsud

“to engage in some occupation

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 Aqdas 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.

In one of His Tablets, 'Abdu'lBahá states that “if a person is incapable of earning a living, is stricken by dire poverty or becometh helpless, then it is incumbent on the wealthy or the Deputies to provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence.... By ‘Deputies’ is meant the representatives of the people, that is to say the members of the House of Justice.” (See also note 162 on mendicancy.)

In response to a question concerning whether Bahá'u'lláh's injunction requires a wife and mother, as well as her husband, to work for a livelihood, the Universal House of Justice has explained that Bahá'u'lláh's directive is for the friends to be engaged in an occupation which will profit themselves and others, and that homemaking is a highly honorable and responsible work of fundamental importance to society.

Concerning the retirement from work for individuals who have reached a certain age, Shoghi Effendi in a letter written on his behalf stated that “this is a matter on which the International House of Justice will have to legislate as there are no provisions in the Aqdas concerning it.””⁷

“We have permitted you to read such sciences as are profitable unto you, not such as end in idle disputation

The Bahá'í Writings enjoin the acquisition of knowledge and the study of the arts and sciences. Bahá'ís are admonished to respect people of learning and accomplishment, and are warned against the pursuit of studies that are productive only of futile wrangling.

In His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh counsels the believers to study such sciences and arts as are *“useful”* and would further *“the progress and advancement”* of society, and He cautions against sciences which *“begin with words and end with words,”* the pursuit of which leads

⁷. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 56

to “*idle disputation*.” Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, likened sciences that begin with words and end with words to “fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-splittings,” and, in another letter, he explained that what Bahá’u’lláh primarily intended by such “sciences” are “those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it to attain the truth.”” ⁸



⁸. Notes to Kitab-i-Aqdas no. 110