

O loved ones of God and handmaids of the Merciful!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Original English



— 104 —

O loved ones of God and handmaids of the Merciful! A large body of scholars is of the opinion that variations among minds and differing degrees of perception are due to differences in education, training and culture. That is, they believe that minds are equal to begin with, but that training and education will result in mental variations and differing levels of intelligence, and that such variations are not an inherent component of the individuality but are the result of education: that no one hath any inborn superiority over another....

The Manifestations of God are likewise in agreement with the view that education exerteth the strongest possible influence on humankind. They affirm, however, that differences in the level of intelligence are innate; and this fact is obvious, and not worth debating. For we see that children of the same age, the same country, the same race, indeed of the same family, and trained by the same individual, still are different as to the degree of their comprehension and intelligence. One will make rapid progress, one will receive instruction only gradually, one will remain at the lowest stage of all. For no matter how much you may polish a shell, it will not turn into a gleaming pearl, nor can you change a dull pebble into a gem whose pure rays will light the world. Never, through training and cultivation, will the colocynth and the bitter tree^[1] change into the Tree of Blessedness.^[2] That is to say, education cannot alter the inner essence of a man, but it doth exert tremendous influence, and with this power it can bring forth from the individual whatever perfections and capacities are deposited within him. A grain of wheat, when cultivated by the farmer, will yield a whole harvest, and a seed, through the gardener's care, will grow into a great tree. Thanks to a teacher's loving efforts, the children of the primary school may reach the highest levels of achievement; indeed, his benefactions may lift some child of small account to an exalted throne. Thus is it clearly demonstrated that by their essential nature, minds vary as to their capacity, while education also playeth a great role and exerteth a powerful effect on their development. {id="o3" type="par" language="en"} [1]: cf. Qur'án 37:60 (The Tree of Zaqqúm) [2]: cf. Qur'án 24:35.



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