

Bahá'í Sacred Writings, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, #348

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Committee from Persian



The first attribute of perfection is learning and the cultural attainments of the mind, and this eminent station is achieved when the individual combines in himself a thorough knowledge of those complex and transcendental realities pertaining to God ... and of those regulations and procedures which would contribute to the progress and civilization of this distinguished country. He should in addition be informed as to the laws and principles, the customs, conditions and manners, and the material and moral virtues characterizing the statecraft of other nations, and should be well versed in all the useful branches of learning of the day, and study the historical records of bygone governments and peoples. For if a learned individual has no knowledge of the sacred Scriptures and the entire field of divine and natural science, of religious jurisprudence and the arts of government and the varied learning of the time and the great events of history, he might prove unequal to an emergency, and this is inconsistent with the necessary qualification of comprehensive knowledge....

The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

The third requirement of perfection is to arise with complete sincerity and purity of purpose to educate the masses: to exert the utmost effort to instruct them in the various branches of learning and useful sciences, to encourage the development of modern progress, to widen the scope of commerce, industry and the arts, to further such measures as will increase the people's wealth. For the mass of the population is uninformed as to these vital agencies which would constitute an immediate remedy for society's chronic ills.

It is essential that scholars and the spiritually learned should undertake in all sincerity and purity of intent, and for the sake of God alone, to counsel and exhort the masses and clarify their vision with that collyrium which is knowledge. For today the people out of the depths of their superstition, imagine that any individual who believes in God and His signs, and in the Prophets and divine Revelations and laws, and is a devout and God-fearing person, must of necessity remain idle and spend his days in sloth, so as to be considered in the sight of God as one who has forsaken the world and its vanities, set his heart on the life to come, and isolated himself from human beings in order to draw nearer to God. Since this theme will be developed elsewhere in the present text, We shall leave it for the moment.



TRANSLATION



AUDIO

Other attributes of perfection are to fear God, to love God by loving His servants, to exercise mildness and forbearance and calm; to be sincere, amenable, clement and compassionate; to have resolution and courage, trustworthiness and energy; to strive and struggle, to be generous, loyal, without malice; to have zeal and a sense of honour, to be high-minded and magnanimous, and to have regard for the rights of others. Whoever is lacking in these excellent human qualities is defective.