



GREEN LAKE BAHÁ'Í SCHOOL

Selected Quotations:

Advancing conversations through deepening and nurturing spiritual qualities

"In all of my many opportunities of meeting, of listening to and talking with 'Abdu'l-Bahá I was impressed, and constantly more deeply impressed, with His method of teaching souls. . . . He never argued, of course. Nor did He press a point. He left one free. There was never an assumption of authority, rather He was ever the personification of humility. He taught "as if offering a gift to a king." He never told me what I should do, beyond suggesting that what I was doing was right. Nor did He ever tell me what I should believe. He made Truth and Love so beautiful and royal that the heart perforce did reverence. He showed me by His voice, manner, bearing, smile, how I should be, knowing that out of the pure soil of being the good fruit of deeds and words would surely spring."—Annamarie Honnold, *Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

Gathering in a posture of consultation

"The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden."
(Selections from the Writings of 'Abdul-Bahá)

"The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them."
("Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932",).

"They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost *devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation* to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honored members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority. It is again not permitted that any one of the honored members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced. In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is

light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness." (*Abdul-Bahá, Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932*, pp. 22-23)

Affirming "Emotions of the Kingdom"

"If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth." (*Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá*)

"In man there are two natures; his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his Divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature. Every good habit, every noble quality belongs to man's spiritual nature, whereas all his imperfections and sinful actions are born of his material nature. If a man's Divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint. Man has the power both to do good and to do evil; if his power for good predominates and his inclinations to do wrong are conquered, then man in truth may be called a saint. But if, on the contrary, he rejects the things of God and allows his evil passions to conquer him, then he is no better than a mere animal... Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world, and beacons of light to disclose the mysteries of the Kingdom to those with understanding hearts." (*Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks*)

"Jealousy consumeth the body and anger doth burn the liver: avoid these two as you would a lion." (*Bahá'u'llah, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, p. 460*)

"You ask how to deal with anger. The House of Justice suggests that you call to mind the admonitions found in our Writings on the need to overlook the shortcomings of others; to forgive and conceal their misdeeds, not to expose their bad qualities, but to search for and affirm their praiseworthy ones, and to endeavour to be always forbearing, patient, and merciful." (*Universal House of Justice, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 454-455*).

"When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 29*)

"As a devoted believer you are urged to strive to develop forgiveness in your heart toward your parents who have abused you in so disgraceful a manner, and to attain a level of insight which sees them as captives of their lower nature, whose actions can only lead them deeper into unhappiness and separation from God. By this means, you can liberate yourself from the anger to which you refer in your letter, and foster your own spiritual development." (*The Universal House of Justice, 1985 Dec 02, Child Abuse, Psychology and Knowledge of Self*)

"Then what Christ meant by forgiveness and pardon is not that, when nations attack you, burn your homes, plunder your goods, assault your wives, children and relatives, and violate your honour, you should be submissive in the presence of these tyrannical foes and allow them to perform all their cruelties and oppressions. No, the words of Christ refer to the conduct of two individuals toward each other. If one person assaults another, the injured one should forgive him. But the communities must protect the rights of man." (*Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pp.270-271*)

"We hear thy cry and supplication at thy remoteness from the Dawning-Place of Light. Be patient and do not bewail thy plight. Be content with that which God hath ordained for thee. He verily, payeth the due recompense of those who are patient. Hast thou not seen My incarceration, My affliction, My injury, My suffering? Follow, then, the ways of thy Lord, and among His methods is the suffering of His well-favoured servants. Let nothing grieve thee. Put thy trust in thy Lord. He shall verily confirm thee, draw thee nigh unto Him and grant thee victory. Should affliction overtake thee in My path and abasement in My name, rejoice and be of the thankful. Thus have We imparted unto thee the word of truth so that when calamities descend upon thee, thy feet may not slip and thou shalt be as firm and steadfast as a mountain in the Cause of thy Lord." (Bahá'u'lláh, Portion of Tablet to Haji Mirza Haydar-Ali)

Transformation through storytelling

There are many examples of how so many devoted souls moved through their emotions during difficult situations and came back to love and faith. In many of the stories you'll read below, you will elucidate ways in which the Holy Ones and the beloved of God were able to affirm the qualities of love and contentment:

- *Consider what tools they used to help them move through the human emotions that assailed them.*
- *What did they do to ensure that their tests and difficulties became stepping stones?*
- *What can we learn about transformation in these stories?*

"Bahá'u'lláh could trust 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the most difficult of tasks as He knew He would never waver. One such task was that of building a Shrine for the Báb on Mount Carmel, above what was then the small town of Haifa, facing the Mediterranean Sea. One of many obstacles which developed was the owner of the plot, influenced by scheming Covenant-breakers, would not readily consent to sell the land. "Every stone of that building, every stone of the road leading to it," He, many a time was heard to remark, "I have with infinite tears and at tremendous cost, raised and placed in position." "One night," He, according to an eye-witness, once observed, "I was so hemmed in by My anxieties that I had no other recourse than to recite and repeat over and over again a prayer of the Báb which I had in My possession, the recital of which greatly calmed Me. The next morning the owner of the plot himself came to Me, apologized and begged Me to purchase his property." (Honnold, Annamarie, Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá)

"Months before His leaving for Isfahan, the Báb had changed the title of His house to the name of His mother and wife, and also gave the prayer of Remover of Difficulties to His wife, so that any time she became grief stricken, she should chant it, and He would appear in her dream and comfort her." (Shahrokh, Darius K., TAHIRIH & KHADIJIH BAGUM, A transcript for audio-cassette from series WINDOWS TO THE PAST, p. 22)

"A companion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on His journey in America recorded a moment when the Master expressed His anxiety for the future: 'I am bearing these hardships of traveling so that the cause of God may push on unconstrained. For I am anxious about what is going to happen after Me. Had I had ease of mind on this score I would have sat comfortably in one corner. I would not have come out of [the] Holy Land... I fear after Me self-seeking persons may disturb again the love and unity of the friends.' The Master talked in sorrowful tones until the automobile stopped at a hotel in Chicago. (Honnold, Annamarie, Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá)

"Again, in *God Passes By*, he tells us of the anxieties of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, called upon to undertake a succession of colossal tasks throughout the entire period of His Ministry. Most recently, *The Priceless Pearl* has drawn aside the curtain on the life of the Guardian, and revealed to us the anxieties and agonies of the solitary and heroic figure who charted our course in service to the Cause for centuries to come. Yet who can doubt that all the central Figures demonstrated to the whole of mankind an assured and happy way of life? Here is where their example seems particularly precious. To rise above the disappointments, obstacles, and pain which we experience in serving the Cause is difficult enough, but to be called on, in doing so, to be happy and confident is perhaps the keenest spiritual test any of us can meet. The lives of the Founders of our Faith clearly show that to be fundamentally assured does not mean that we live without anxieties, nor does being happy mean that there are not periods of deep grief when, like the Guardian, we wrap ourselves in a blanket, pray and supplicate, and give ourselves time for healing in preparation for the next great effort." (Universal House of Justice, *Quickeners of Mankind*, p. 116)

"He himself, having undertaken at such a disturbed time to raise at least the first story or arcade of the new part of the Báb's Shrine, finds himself beset with worries, problems and complications which have not only doubled his work, but exhaust and harass him all the time. So at least, let the British friends know that when they struggle and feel hard beset, they are not struggling and worrying alone! Far from it!!" (Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*, p. 225)

"Looking back upon those sullen days of my retirement, bitter with feelings of anxiety and gloom, I can recall with appreciation and gratitude those unmistakable evidences of your affection and steadfast zeal which I have received from time to time, and which have served to relieve in no small measure the burden that weighed so heavily upon my heart." (Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 66)

"Soon after Clara's encounter with Hyde Dunn and Ward Fitzgerald, Clara was the lone Baha'i in Seattle. She told everyone about her new Faith, but no one responded, so, in addition to her worry about her son, she suffered agonies of self-doubt. Finally, she had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized. When she came out of the hospital, she had no job and no money. A friend offered attic space. This friend, Clara said, "loved me as much as she could love her own daughter." But, at the same time, the friend warned everyone that Clara was insane and wanted to convert the world to some crazy religion. In the meantime, an erstwhile suitor pressed Clara to marry him. While living in that lonely attic, Clara received a telegram from a Baha'i in San Francisco saying 'Abdu'l-Baha was about to arrive. She decided she must go and see Him. She borrowed money for the road trip from the man who wanted to marry her - although she had rejected him, he was magnanimous. On October 24, the last night of 'Abdu'l-Baha's stay in San Francisco, Clara arrived in the city. With no idea where 'Abdu'l-Baha was staying, other than that it was on Market Street, she boarded a trolley and asked the conductor if he knew where there were some Persians. He took her right to the house. Lara felt her deepest prayers had been answered as she hurried up the path and knocked on the door. But the door remained shut. She rang the bell. No one came. She knocked again. Still, no one came. She knocked and rang, rang and knocked - nothing. She was tired and hungry, and she began to weep. Then she got mad. She gave the door a shove, and it opened. It hadn't been locked at all. Clara went inside and 'Abdu'l-Baha greeted her, but He was exhausted, for He had just concluded a press conference. He asked her to wait, and He went off to rest. Twenty minutes later He reappeared, jovial and serene, and asked Clara to join the guests at His dinner table." (Janet Ruhe-Schoen, *A Love Which Does Not Wait*)

"Doris McKay continues to lose her self-consciousness as she observes how her Baha'i teachers

have no fear of simply being themselves, and when Louis Gregory comes to visit, Doris is happy to rejoice in her new freedom from prejudice and get to know him, her first African-American friend. Of course, she's afraid of doing or saying something offensive. She's awed by his height, and even more by his radiance and his aura of genuine inner oneness, his wholeness and balance. Like his fellow veteran Baha'is, he takes a nurturing interest in the new Baha'is of Geneva, so, finding Doris sitting before the fire in the dining room, he sits down with her and asks how they're all doing. "I want to talk to you about this, Louis," Doris says. "There's one of us who doesn't seem to be quite as on fire as the rest of us. She's not quite as loving and she doesn't want to work as hard as the rest of us. What would you do in a case like that?" Louis jumps up from his chair, snaps his fingers and leaves the room. Doris would later explain, "I was backbiting. I was so virtuous about it. Just wanted a little advice. Louis' advice was 'shut up', although of course he was too elegant to put it that way." She added that his action, if observed by someone deaf to the conversation, would have simply looked as if he'd forgotten something. But the lesson had the power to make her blush even when she was in her eighties. Later in the day, she encounters Louis again when, not seeing him as she crosses a dimly lit room, she almost steps on him as he lies prostrate in prayer on a Turkish carpet. He rises "with agility and grace," smiles, and says, "There's a little of the oriental in me, I think." He doesn't, then or ever, refer to their "first little talk." (Janet Ruhe-Schoen, *Champions of Oneness*)

Taking great care of ourselves

"He was very sad to hear that you have not been well, for it undoubtedly caused much anxiety to the members of your family and also kept you from your work. The Cause cannot afford seeing its fine servants ill and handicapped. Please take great care of yourself that the attack may not recur." (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 77)

"In the treasuries of the knowledge of God there lieth concealed a knowledge which, when applied, will largely, though not wholly, eliminate fear. This knowledge, however, should be taught from childhood, as it will greatly aid in its elimination.... Whatever decreaseth fear increaseth courage." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 32)

"O my God! O my God! Thou seest me drowned in the sea of ordeals, seized upon by the fire of infidelity, with tears flowing in the dark night rolling in the bed of sleeplessness, mine eyes expectant to see the dawn of the lights of Faith. And when I am anxious, as the fish whose bowels are inflamed upon the dust, I anticipate the manifestation of Thy bounties from all sides!" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2*, p. 381)

"People who looked anxious yesterday, today have faces shining with gladness."
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 74)

"Thou hast written concerning the Tablet of Baka Ya Ali—Baka Ya Vafi (Tablet of Protection). This Tablet is for the healing of ailments. Whenever one is anxious about the recovery of an ill one, he may read this prayer with a melodious voice while in a state of the utmost attention and concentration." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2*, p. 469)

"In His Name, the Exalted, the All-Highest, the Most Sublime! Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! O Thou Who art my God, and my Master, and my Lord, and my Support, and my Hope, and my Refuge, and my Light. I ask of Thee, by Thine Hidden and Treasured Name, that none knoweth save Thine own Self, to protect the bearer of this Tablet from every calamity and pestilence, and from every wicked man and woman; from the evil of the evil-doers, and from

the scheming of the unbelievers. Preserve him, moreover, O my God, from every pain and vexation, O Thou Who holdest in Thy hand the empire of all things. Thou, truly, art powerful over all things. Thou doest as Thou wilt, and ordainest as Thou pleasest. O Thou King of Kings! O Thou kind Lord! O Thou Source of ancient bounty, of grace, of generosity and bestowal! O Thou Healer of sicknesses! O Thou Sufficer of needs! O Thou Light of Light! O Thou Light above all Lights! O Thou Revealer of every Manifestation! O Thou the Compassionate! O Thou the Merciful! Do Thou have mercy upon the bearer of this Tablet, through Thy most great mercy and Thine abundant grace, O Thou the Gracious, Thou the Bounteous. Guard him, moreover, through Thy protection, from whatsoever his heart and mind may find repugnant. Of those endued with power, Thou, verily, art the most powerful. The Glory of God rest upon thee, O thou rising sun! Do thou testify unto that which God hath testified of His own Self, that there is none other God besides Him, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved." (Bahá'u'lláh, from a recently translated tablet from Arabic at the Bahá'í World Centre)

"To be required to be happy and assured, while busily serving the Cause, can raise in us more than a little anxiety. The Faith brings each one of us crises as well as victories. Our own lives and even the lives of the central Figures of the Faith have been fraught with agony as well as blessing, with failure and frustration and grief, as frequently as with progress. This is the nature of life." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Quickeners of Mankind, p. 117)

"When you have doubts and concerns about your own plans, confide in the Counsellors; when something they do causes you worry, talk to them in the proper spirit of Bahá'í consultation. Remember that they, like yourselves, are burdened with the work of the Cause and are beset with many concerns in its service, and they need your sympathetic understanding of the challenges they face. Open your hearts and your minds to them; regard them as your confidants, your loving friends. And be ever ready to extend to them your hand in support." (The Universal House of Justice, 1994 May 19, response to US NSA)