

Consultation

1. In all things it is necessary to consult. This matter should be forcibly stressed by thee, so that consultation may be observed by all. The intent of what hath been revealed from the Pen of the Most High is that consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.

(Bahá'u'lláh, From a Tablet - translated from the Persian; cited in *The Compilation of Compilations vol. I*, p. 93.)

2. The principle of consultation, which constitutes one of the basic laws of the Administration, should be applied to all Bahá'í activities which affect the collective interests of the Faith, for it is through co-operation and continual exchange of thoughts and views that the Cause can best safeguard and foster its interests. Individual initiative, personal ability and resourcefulness, though indispensable, are, unless supported and enriched by the collective experiences and wisdom of the group, utterly incapable of achieving such a tremendous task.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 30 August 1933; *Bahá'í News*, No. 79, pp. 3-4, November 1933; cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 43.)

3. Association and consultation, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá so repeatedly emphasized, have a great effect on the friends, and enable them to see the work of the Cause as a whole, rather than as a small local enterprise in which their personalities and other people's personalities often conflict; and challenge them to arise and go forth into new fields, in order to spread the Faith far and wide.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 2 August 1955; cited in *Light of Divine Guidance v I*, p. 233.)

4. The steps to be taken must necessarily begin in the Bahá'í Community itself, with the friends endeavoring, through their application of spiritual principles, their rectitude of conduct and the practice of the art of consultation, to uplift themselves and thus become self-sufficient and self-reliant. Moreover, these exertions will conduce to the preservation of human honor, so desired by Bahá'u'lláh. In the process and as a consequence, the friends will undoubtedly extend the benefits of their efforts to society as a whole, until all mankind achieves the progress intended by the Lord of the Age.

(The Universal House of Justice, *A Wider Horizon- Selected Letters 1983-1992*, p. 7.)

5. One of the unique features of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh is that He has attached great importance to consultation in every sphere of human activity. Bahá'í communities and institutions, whether local, national or international, function through Bahá'í consultation. These bodies not only consult on community affairs, but are empowered also to deal with personal matters affecting the lives of individual believers. However,

Bahá'u'lláh has not limited consultation to the institutions of His Faith. He has stressed the importance of consultation on personal matters with friends and experts. These are some of the words of Bahá'u'lláh gleaned from His Writings on this subject:

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh v 3*, p. 316.)

6. The Great Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding. Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 126.)

7. For instance, when a man hath a project to accomplish, should he consult with some of his brethren, that which is agreeable will of course be investigated and unveiled to his eyes, and the truth will be disclosed. Likewise on a higher level, should the people of a village consult one another about their affairs, the right solution will certainly be revealed. In like manner, the members of each profession, such as in industry, should consult, and those in commerce should similarly consult on business affairs. In short, consultation is desirable and acceptable in all things and on all issues.

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh v 3*, p. 318.)

8. It is evident that human personality appears in two aspects, -- the image or likeness of God and the aspect of Satan. The human reality stands between these two, -- the divine and the satanic. It is manifest that beyond this material body, man is endowed with another reality which is the world of exemplars constituting the heavenly body of man. In speaking, man says, "I saw," "I spoke," "I went." Who is this "I"? It is obvious that this "I" is different from this body. It is clear that when man is thinking, it is as though he were consulting with some other person. With whom is he consulting? It is evident that it is another reality or one aside from this body with whom he enters into consultation when he thinks, "Shall I do this work or not?" "What will be the result of my doing this?" Or when he questions the other reality, "What is the objection to this work if I do it?" And then that reality in man communicates its opinion to him concerning the point at issue. Therefore that reality in man is clearly and obviously other than his body, an ego with which man enters into consultation and whose opinion man seeks.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 463.)

9. The Great Being saith: O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path,

the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure. Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation, administer to a diseased and sorely-afflicted world the remedy it requireth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 168.)

10. The Great Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 126.)

'Abdu'l-Bahá too has written a great deal on this subject. These are a few passages:

11. Settle all things, both great and small, by consultation. Without prior consultation, take no important step in your own personal affairs. Concern yourselves with one another. Help along one another's projects and plans. Grieve over one another. Let none in the whole country go in need. Befriend one another until ye become as a single body, one and all...

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 128-29; cited also in *The Compilation of Compilations vol. I*, p. 98.)

12. The purpose of consultation is to show that the views of several individuals are assuredly preferable to one man, even as the power of a number of men is of course greater than the power of one man. Thus consultation is acceptable in the presence of the Almighty, and hath been enjoined upon the believers, so that they may confer upon ordinary and personal matters, as well as on affairs which are general in nature and universal.

('Abdu'l-Bahá; cited in a letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia, 15 February 1922; also cited in *The Compilation of Compilations vol. I*, p. 97.)