



The Advent of Divine Justice  
A Practical Application of a Spiritual Process

***Creating a New Mind by Paul Lample***

***Chapter 2, Humility***

***The Individual: The Promoter of Human Honor***

During His travels to America in 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá offered, in a Tablet to an early believer, the following assessment of meetings He addressed:

I visited Philadelphia, for a few days, at the invitation of two ministers and at the request of the friends of God. Two large congregations gathered in the two churches, and I spoke within the measure of my incapacity. But the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom, as evident as the sun, descended and enfolded us. Although we are powerless He is Mighty. Although we are poor He is All-Sufficient. [\[1\]](#)

Thus, with such extreme humility did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—the Master, the Interpreter of the Word of God, the Center of the Covenant—refer to His own service to His Lord.

Throughout the ages, humanity has been afflicted by struggles among individuals, families, groups and nations. Driven by the demands of the animal nature, self-seeking individuals strive to exalt themselves over their neighbors. Impelled by prejudice and a sense of superiority, competing groups attempt to serve their own selfish interests and endeavor to impose their will on others. Aggression and conflict characterize the daily interactions of a humanity trapped in an endless struggle for dominance. Bahá’u’lláh states:

Ever since the seeking of preference and distinction came into play, the world hath been laid waste. It has become desolate. . . . [\[2\]](#)

He admonishes His followers in these unequivocal terms:



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O Son of Dust! Verily I say unto thee: Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother.<sup>[3]</sup>

It behoveth not, therefore, him who was created from dust, who will return unto it, and will again be brought forth out of it, to swell with pride before God, and before His loved ones, to proudly scorn them, and be filled with disdainful arrogance.<sup>[4]</sup>

The desire to advance oneself over others as a motivating force in one's life is a defect of human character that, unfortunately, is being promoted by certain social theories as a praiseworthy trait. Aggression and unbridled competition are considered inherent to the human condition. It is even believed that society is best served if each individual pursues his or her own self-interest; the euphemism "enlightened self-interest" is used to cover up the inadequacies of social relationships built on competition. 'Abdu'l-Bahá observes:

Glory be to God! What an extraordinary situation now obtains, when no one, hearing a claim advanced, asks himself what the speaker's real motive might be, and what selfish purpose he might not have hidden behind the mask of words. You

find, for example, that an individual seeking to further his own petty and personal concerns, will block the advancement of an entire people. To turn his own water mill, he will let the farms and fields of all the others parch and wither. To maintain his own leadership, he will everlastingly direct the masses toward that prejudice and fanaticism which subvert the very base of civilization.<sup>[5]</sup>

Through the divine teachings, the urge to indulge the self through dominance over others is subdued by spiritual competition to serve the well-being of all. It is only in the acquisition of divine virtues<sup>[6]</sup> and in service to God and His



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Cause<sup>[7]</sup> that individuals vie with one another. “Happy the soul that shall forget his own good, and like the chosen ones of God, vie with his fellows in service to the good of all. . . .”<sup>[8]</sup> Honor lies not in ephemeral positions of power, but in one’s efforts to promote the welfare of humanity. The individual who wishes to contribute to the progress of the Cause and the advancement of civilization must strive to be free from arrogance and preoccupation with self. “Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power,” Bahá’u’lláh proclaims, “while pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.”<sup>[9]</sup> And He exhorts humanity:

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savor of such deeds as are performed in His path, and partake of the sweetness of such humility and submissiveness as are shown for His sake. Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbor. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you.<sup>[10]</sup>

The humility that Bahá’u’lláh requires of us is not a sense of inferiority before others who are deemed more competent. It is not feigned modesty that is akin to hypocrisy. Rather, true humility arises from the recognition that God is the All-Powerful and Self-Subsisting, while all others are weak and in need of perfecting. The glorification of self, the exaltation of one’s limited knowledge, the lust for power, and the compulsion to force matters in the direction of one’s personal choosing, are exposed for what they truly are: expressions of a child’s whims and desires.

Acquiring humility calls for the rejection of both guilt—the paralyzing, harsh judgment of the failure to live up to the standard—and complacency—the reinterpretation of the standard, lowering it to suit personal comfort and preferences. The Guardian’s words that “our past is not the thing that matters so much in this world as what we intend to do with our future”<sup>[11]</sup> help us to

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overcome feelings of guilt. And we can avoid complacency by always acknowledging the truth of the divine standard raised by Bahá'u'lláh, upholding it under all circumstances, and refusing compromise it with the commonly accepted standards of our time.<sup>[12]</sup>

The seed of humility is planted in the act of recognition of God: “I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.”<sup>[13]</sup> It germinates in the effort to adhere to divine teachings, since “that which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief-maker.”<sup>[14]</sup> It grows through the belief that “In the estimation of God all men are equal” and that “there is no distinction or preferment for any soul, in the realm of His justice and equity.”<sup>[15]</sup> It is cultivated by an honest appraisal of one’s own faults and tolerance for the shortcomings of others: “Let your thoughts dwell on your own spiritual development, and close your eyes to the deficiencies of other souls.”<sup>[16]</sup> It matures in action as one “preferreth his brother before himself.”<sup>[17]</sup> It bears fruit as one becomes weary of self. Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendors; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things.<sup>[18]</sup>

The individual who arises to promote human honor needs to be capable of establishing proper relationships with others, with the community, and with the legitimate institutions of society. One must begin with humility before God, become aware of the divine will and purpose and, discovering in others a reflection of the Divine Essence, stand humbly before them. The soul that walks humbly with God, Bahá'u'lláh explains, will be invested with the honor and glory of all goodly names and stations.<sup>[19]</sup> It is instructive that ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Whom Shoghi Effendi described as the embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal, chose for Himself the title “Servant of Bahá.” Servitude is the highest station to



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achieve and through it one becomes the promoter of human honor.  
'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

Is there any greater blessing conceivable for a man, than that he should become the cause of the education, the development, the prosperity and honor of his fellow-creatures? No, by the Lord God! The highest righteousness of all is for blessed souls to take hold of the hands of the helpless and deliver them out of their ignorance and abasement and poverty, and with pure motives, and only for the sake of God, to arise and energetically devote themselves to the service of the masses, forgetting their own worldly advantage and working only to serve the general good.<sup>[20]</sup>

When individuals who have chosen the path of servitude come together in a community for the sake of the Cause, they can readily assume a posture of learning that is indispensable for collective endeavor. A systematic process is set in motion within the community "in which the friends review their successes and difficulties, adjust and improve their methods accordingly, and learn, and move forward unhesitatingly."<sup>[21]</sup> Cooperation becomes the norm, and service the motivating force that impels progress.

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