

A Compilation of Use to Writers

The Báb

It is the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit that causes words such as these (lines from Hafiz) to stream from the tongue of poets, the significance of which they themselves are oftentimes unable to apprehend.

The Dawnbreakers, p. 258

Treasures lie hidden beneath the throne of God; the key to those treasures is the tongue of poets.

The Dawnbreakers, pp. 258-259

Bahá'u'lláh

Thou hast written that one of the friends hath composed a treatise. This was mentioned in the Holy Presence, and this is what was revealed in response: "Great care should be exercised that whatever is written in these days doth not cause dissension and invite the objection of the people. Whatever the friends of the one true God say in these days is listened to by the people of the world. It hath been revealed in the Lawh-i-Hikmat: 'The unbelievers have inclined their ears towards us in order to hear that which might enable them to cavil against God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.' Whatever is written should not transgress the bounds of tact and wisdom, and in the words used there should lie hid the property of milk, so that the children of the world may be nurtured therewith and attain maturity. We have said in the past that one word hath the influence of spring and causeth hearts to become fresh and verdant, while another is like unto blight which causeth the blossoms and flowers to wither. God grant that authors among the friends will write in such a way as would be acceptable to fair-minded souls and not lead to cavilling by the people."

- to an individual believer, *Extracts on Writing and Writers, p. 1*

If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honored in the world to come that the Concourse on High would envy his glory.

Gleanings, p. 330

In this Day the secrets of the earth are laid bare before the eyes of men. The pages of swiftly-appearing newspapers are indeed the mirror of the world. They reflect the deeds and the pursuits of divers peoples and kindreds. They both reflect them and make them known. They are a mirror endowed with hearing, sight and speech. This is an amazing and potent phenomenon. However it behoveth the writers thereof to be purged from the promptings of evil passions and desires and to be attired with the raiment of justice and equity. They should enquire into situations as much as possible and ascertain the facts, then set them down in writing.

Tarázát, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 39-40

Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets. Meditate upon that which hath streamed forth from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, He Who is the Source of all grace, that thou mayest grasp the intended meaning which is enshrined in the sacred depth of the Holy Writings.

Lawh-i-Hikmat, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 143

Every word of thy poetry is indeed like unto a mirror in which the evidences of the devotion and love thou cherishest for God and His chosen ones are reflected. Well is it with thee who hast quaffed the choice wine of utterance and partaken of the soft flowing stream of true knowledge. Happy is he who

hath drunk his fill and attained unto Him and woe betide the heedless. Its perusal hath truly proved highly impressive, for it was indicative of both the light of reunion and the fire of separation.
Lawh-i-Maqsud, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 175-176

The source of crafts, sciences and arts is the power of reflection. Make ye every effort that out of this ideal mine there may gleam forth such pearls of wisdom and utterance as will promote the well being and harmony of all the kindreds of the earth.
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 72

O thou dear one! Impoverish thyself, that thou mayest enter the high court of riches; and humble thy body, that thou mayest drink from the river of glory and attain to the full meaning of the poems whereof thou hast asked.
The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys, p. 38

O Son of Man!
Write all that We have revealed unto thee with the ink of light upon the tablet of the spirit. Should this not be in thy power, then make thine ink of the essence of thy heart. If this thou canst not do, then write with that crimson ink that hath been shed in My path. Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure forever.
The Hidden Words, From the Arabic, #71

O Son of My Handmaiden!
Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Everyone must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise we counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet.
The Hidden Words, From the Persian, #76

The light which these souls (the Prophets and Messengers of God) radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its people. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon man and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse in the world of being.
Gleanings, p. 157

Every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. Through the mere revelation of the word "Fashioner," issuing forth from His lips and proclaiming His attributes to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce. This, verily, is a certain truth. No sooner is this resplendent Word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequence of the Revelation of this Name. In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before.
Gleanings, p. 141-142

'Abdu'l-Bahá

It is my hope that thou mayest succeed in writing thy book. However, the language should be moderate, tempered, and infinitely courteous. Look not at the language used by that hostile writer, for he was prejudiced and unrefined. Any person with the slightest degree of fairness will understand that his

writing is totally biased and inspired by enmity. This is enough proof that what he hath written is spurious.

Extracts on Writing and Writers, p. 3

Pure souls, such as Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl, upon him be the Glory of God, spend their nights and days in demonstrating the truth of the Revelation, by adducing conclusive and brilliant proofs and expanding the verities of the Faith, by lifting the veils, promoting the religion of God and spreading His fragrances.

Extracts on Writing and Writers, p. 3

Great care should be exercised in preparing this translation. Mr. _____ should make a supreme effort so that the language will be most exquisite, eloquent and lucid, even if the translated text is to be submitted to, and made dependent upon, the opinions of experts in language.

- to an individual believer, *Extracts on Writing and Writers, p. 3*

It is therefore urgent that beneficial articles and books be written, clearly and definitely establishing what the present-day requirements of the people are and what will conduce to the happiness and advancement of society.

Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 109

In order to write a man must exist; one who does not exist cannot write. Writing is, in itself, a sign of the writer's soul and intelligence. The Sacred Writings prove the continuity of the spirit.

Paris Talks, p. 91

All poems will be forgotten in the course of time save those that are extraordinary; thy poem shall be chanted with melody and best voices in the Center of Worship for ever more.

- to Louise (Shahnaz) Waite, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 1, p. 58*

You must therefore put forth a mighty effort, striving by night and day and resting not for a moment, to acquire an abundant share of all the sciences and arts, that the Divine Image, which shineth out from the Sun of Truth, may illuminate the mirror of the hearts of men.

Selected Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 140

These heavenly susceptibilities of thine form a magnet which attracts the confirmations of the Kingdom of God, and so the doors of realities and meanings will be open unto thee, and the confirmation of the Kingdom of God will envelop thee.

- to George Townshend, *'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Master, p. 12*

The function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of human hearts. The heart is like unto a box, and language is the key. Only by using the key can we open the box and observe the gems it contains.

Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 60

Verily, I chanted thy poem. Its significance was beautiful, its composition eloquent and its words excellent. It was like the melody of the birds of holiness in the paradise of El-Abhá. The breasts of the friends were dilated, and the hearts of the maid-servants of the Merciful were exhilarated by its chanting. Blessed art thou for uttering forth such an excellent poem and brilliant pearl.

- to Louise (Shahnaz) Waite, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 1, pp. 57-58*

Thy little book of poems (Hymns of Peace and Praise), which were very sweet, was read. It was a source of joy, for it was a spiritual anthem and a melody of the love of God.

- to Louise (Shahnaz) Waite, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 1, p. 59*

Endeavor your utmost to compose beautiful poems to be chanted with heavenly music; thus may their beauty affect the minds and impress the hearts of those who listen.

- to Louise (Shahnaz) Waite, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, vol. 1, p. 59*

Our actions will help in the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause arts to develop. Without action, nothing in the material world can be accomplished, neither can words unaided advance a man in the spiritual Kingdom. It is not through lip service only that the elect of God have attained to holiness, but by patient lives of active service they have brought light into the world.
Paris Talks, pp. 80-81

Today, however, there exist many kinds of writing. That which is more necessary and is assisted by divine confirmations is the propagation of the heavenly Call. It is this which energizes the world of existence. It is this which bestoweth life unto the dead souls, which refresheth the dried tree and ornamenteth it with leaves, blossoms and fruits. Concentrate all thine energy in this that thou mayest make heavenly progress, that thou mayest attain to the light of the Sun of Reality, that thou mayest become the cause that the dead body of Japan may attain to heavenly life, may be endowed with solar illumination and like unto the moon and star it may shine forth!
Japan Will Turn Ablaze, pp. 30-31

Shoghí Effendí

What Bahá'u'lláh mean primarily with 'sciences that begin and end in words' are those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it attain the truth. The students would devote their life to their study but still attain no-where. Bahá'u'lláh surely never meant to include story writing under such a category, and shorthand and typewriting are both most useful talents very necessary in our present society and economic life. What you could do, and should do, is to use your stories to become a source of inspiration and guidance for those who read them. With such a means at your disposal, you can spread the spirit and teachings of the Cause, you can show the evils that exist in society, as well as the way they can be remedied. If you possess a real talent in writing you should consider it as given by God and exert your efforts to use it for the betterment of society.
- to an individual, 30 Nov 1932

On Behalf of Shoghí Effendí

What the Faith needs even more than teachers is books that expound the true significance of its principles in the light of modern thought and social problems.
Unfolding Destiny, p. 431

Meanwhile you could write, for the Cause is in great need of first class literature, and you are gifted along that line.
Unfolding Destiny, p. 428

It is certain that with the spread of the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh, a new era will dawn in art and literature. Whereas before the form was perfect but the spirit was lacking, now there will be a glorious spirit embodied in a form immeasurably improved by the quickened genius of the world.
- to Willard Hatch, "Poetry and Self-Transformation", *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, vo. 2, p. 66

He sincerely hopes that the translation of Dr. Esslemont's book will proceed at a rapid pace, because no real advance can be made in the teaching work without proper literature, and this book is undoubtedly the most comprehensive exposition of the teachings yet written. The language should, however, be worthy of the theme, otherwise it would not make the necessary appeal to the educated classes.
Japan Will Turn Ablaze, pp. 49-50

It is through such presentations (the "Pageant of Nations") that we can arouse the interest of the greatest number of people in the spirit of the Cause. That day will the Cause spread like wildfire when its

spirit and teachings are presented on the stage or in art and literature as a whole. Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing, especially among the masses of the people.
Bahá'í News, May 1933, p. 7

Shoghi Effendi wishes...to encourage those who are talented to give expression to the wonderful spirit that animates them. We need poets and writers for the Cause...
Unfolding Destiny, p. 429

Some of the poems are written by very youthful persons, yet they ring so true and give expression to such thoughts that one should halt and admire. In Persia the Cause has given birth to poets that even non-Bahá'ís consider them as great. We hope before long we will have similar persons arise in the West.
Unfolding Destiny, p. 429

With regard to your question concerning the use of music in the Nineteen Day Feasts, he wishes you to assure all the friends that not only he approves of such a practice but thinks it even advisable that the believers should make use, in their meetings, of hymns composed by Bahá'ís themselves and, also, of such hymns, poems and chants as are based on the Holy Words.
Bahá'í Meetings and the Nineteen Day Feast, p. 25

Universal House of Justice

It is hoped that Bahá'í authors will provide a constant stream of new works. Introductory books, commentaries, dissertations on various aspects of the Revelation, text books, histories, reviews, audio-visual material, are all needed to stimulate study of the Faith and to promote the vital teaching work.
Memorandum on Bahá'í Publishing, Ridván, 1971

It is an obligation of all Bahá'ís to present the Faith in a dignified manner, and therefore, when writing articles about the Faith, they should take into consideration the type of magazine or other publication in which the article is to appear. Should there be any question about its character, they should consult with the National Spiritual Assembly. In addition, all authors should bear in mind that anything written about the Faith for publication is subject to review before submission to the publishers.
- to National Spiritual Assembly of US, 15 Sep 1968

There is no objection to Bahá'ís writing novels portraying historical events and figures of the Faith. However, in view of the impossibility of ever portraying adequately the Manifestation of God as a character in a novel, and of the disrespect implicit in such an attempt, the House of Justice feels that such portrayals should not be attempted. Of course, His sayings and the events of His life may be recounted, but in this case care should be taken to quote His exact words as we have them in authorized translations, and events in Bahá'í history should not be distorted.

Generally speaking, works of fiction, which the writers hope will help promote knowledge of the Cause of God, will fulfill this purpose better if they are set against the background of particular events or developing processes in the Cause of God and not used to portray the actual historical events themselves and the figures taking part in them. The reality of the actual events and the actual personages is so much more convincing than any fictional account. In this connection, the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf: "He would not recommend fiction as a means of teaching; the condition of the world is too acute to permit delay in giving them the direct teachings, associated with the Name of Bahá'u'lláh. But any suitable approach to the Faith, which appeals to this or that group, is certainly worthy of effort, as we wish to bring the Cause to all men, in all walks of life, of all mentalities."
- to an individual, 23 Sep 1980

It has been decided that doctoral theses and similar treatises submitted to institutions of learning for the obtaining of a degree are not subject to Bahá'í review unless they are to be published more widely than is required for the degree in question.

- to an individual, 11 May 1982

The Universal House of Justice has been concerned of late to note an apparently growing impression among Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers in many parts of the world that they must obtain copyright clearance before they may quote from the Sacred Texts of the Faith in any publication. It has now instructed us to make it clear that the Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers are free to quote in their publications from any of the Writings of the three Central Figures of the Faith or from the writings of the beloved Guardian, whether in the original language or in translation, without obtaining clearance from the copyright holder, unless the copyright holder in the case of a translation is an individual or is a non-Bahá'í institution. It is recognized that this ruling may endanger copyrights, but we feel that this is a risk that must be taken.

The ruling is made to ensure that the Sacred Scriptures of our Faith and the writings of the beloved Guardian may be free used by the believers; it does not change the existing requirements for individual believers to submit their works on the Faith for review before publication, neither does it relieve Spiritual Assemblies of their responsibility to protect the dignity of the Faith and uphold the proper standard of reverence in the use of its Sacred Scriptures. Thus, if any Assembly sees that one of the friends is making use of any of the Holy Texts in an unbecoming manner, it should remonstrate with him, and, if necessary, require him to stop doing so.

- to National Spiritual Assembly of US, 4 Sep 1981

Even music, art and literature, which are to represent and inspire the noblest sentiments and highest aspirations and should be a source of comfort and tranquillity for troubled souls, have strayed...

10 Feb 1980, quoted in Bahá'í National Review, Jan 1982, p. 1

The Universal House of Justice, in response to your letter of 20 April concerning translations into French or Creole using simpler words than the original text, has requested us to send the following three quotations. These make it clear that a quotation in English may be rendered into simple English in order to facilitate its translation into another language or dialect. However, it is not permissible to publish simplifications and paraphrased extracts of Bahá'í Writings as Bahá'í Scripture.

We have noticed a tendency in a number of countries to attempt to translate Bahá'í literature into the current, easy, everyday language of the country. This, however, should not be an overriding consideration. Many of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are in exalted and highly poetic language in the original Persian and Arabic and you will see, for example, that when translating Bahá'u'lláh's Writings into English, the beloved Guardian did not use present-day, colloquial English but evolved a highly poetic and beautiful style, using numbers of archaic expressions reminiscent of the translations of the Bible.

- to an individual, 7 Oct 1973

Obviously teaching literature and books about the Faith can be written in simple English. However, we feel that when the Sacred Writings are published the standard English translation should be used, but there would be no objection to printing alongside it the translation into simple English which should be described as a paraphrase of the Holy Word. Thus, for the people of _____ who have difficulty in comprehending standard English, the simple English version would be in the nature of an explanation of the Writings which they could understand. In the case of teaching literature in which quotations from the Writings appear, these could either be paraphrased or a simple English version could be used with the standard version printed as a footnote.

- to a National Spiritual Assembly, 20 Sep 1973

It is, of course, permissible to translate Bahá'í Writings into other languages and dialects of languages. It is also possible to simplify or paraphrase the Bahá'í Writings in order to facilitate their translation into

languages and dialects having small vocabularies. However, it is not permissible to publish simplifications and paraphrases of Bahá'í Writings as Bahá'í Scripture.

- to a National Spiritual Assembly, 13 Mar 1969

- on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Spiritual Assembly, 13 May 1986

Review The function of reviewing is, essentially, to check the author's exposition of the Bahá'í Faith and its teachings, which may include verification of any quotations from Bahá'í Writings. This function should not be confused with evaluation of the literary merit of a work or of its value as a publication, which are normally the prerogative of the publisher...

Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assembly of British Isles, 11 Mar 1965

In general, the function of a reviewing committee is to say whether the work submitted gives an acceptable presentation of the Cause or not. Reviewers may win the gratitude and goodwill of the authors by calling attention to such things as grammatical or spelling errors, but approval should not be refused on such grounds; all such details are editorial matters for agreement between author and publisher.

Universal House of Justice - Memorandum on Bahá'í Publishing, Ridván 1971

Bahá'í authors may submit their work for review to any National Spiritual Assembly and may send their works, once approved, to any publisher they like, Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í, at home or abroad. It should be remembered, however, that the approval should be given by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where the work is to be first published. And in the case of a non-Bahá'í publisher, the author should insist on use of the system of transliteration at present used by the Faith for languages employing the Roman alphabet.

Universal House of Justice - Memorandum on Bahá'í Publishing, Ridván 1971

Note: reformatted with obvious typographical errors corrected by **Cary Enoch Reinstein**

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