

Principles of the Bahá'í Faith

Enduring Flowers of Wisdom



Passages from the Bahá'í Writings

Photography by Dr. Gregory T. Lawton

Bahá'u'lláh

“This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892) is the most recent in what has been a progressive series of divine teachers sent by a loving God as educators of all mankind. Bahá'u'lláh taught that there is one God, that humankind comprises one family, and that all of the divine religions have originated from the same source and share the same spiritual impulse and teachings. Throughout the course of human history, God has revealed Himself to humanity through a progressive series of divine Messengers, each of whom has founded a great religion. These Messengers have included Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Christ, and Muhammad. Bahá'u'lláh is the latest of these divine messengers.

One God

One Eternal Faith

One Human Family

Bahá'u'lláh taught that unity is the greatest need of humankind and the age and times during which we now live. The knowledge that there is one loving God guiding and educating all of humanity through a progressive series of divine messengers is not only supremely comforting, but also serves to remove the manmade and dogmatic barriers that have separated men and women, cultures and nations, and the world's religions. If there is one God, with one spiritual message, then the world's religions one after another are simply chapters in the holy Book of God.

Bahá'u'lláh, a title that means "the Glory of God" in Arabic, was born on November 12th, 1817 in Tehran, Iran the son of a wealthy government minister. Bahá'u'lláh suffered and endured torture, imprisonment, and exile over a span of more than four decades. In spite of His sufferings and the persecution directed against Him and His family He never wavered in delivering His message of love, oneness, peace and unity to humankind. Bahá'u'lláh announced His mission

to the world in 1863. To add historical perspective to the message and mission of Bahá'u'lláh it is helpful to understand that He was teaching the oneness of God, religion, and all mankind; an end to war; the establishment of a world government; the independent investigation of truth; the essential harmony of science and religion; the equality of men and women; an end to slavery, prejudice and racism; universal education; a spiritual solution to the economic problems of the world and an end to the extremes of poverty and wealth; as well as, the adoption of a common world language - at the time of the American Civil War. A war fought to end the institution of slavery in the United States and the beginning of a long and difficult battle to address the disease of racism.

When distilled down to its essence the message of Bahá'u'lláh to all humanity is a message of universal love, complete oneness and essential unity. The divine energy of spiritual renewal and the vital social teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the remedy and the solution for our troubled age. This is stated best in the words of Bahá'u'lláh spoken to Professor E.G. Browne of Cambridge University in 1890.

“We desire but the good of the world and happiness of the nations... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the "Most Great Peace" shall come... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...”

The central principles of the Bahá'í Faith:

Unity - All mankind comprises one human family.

Universal Peace - An end to war and strife.

Independent Investigation of Truth - Every man and woman has the right and responsibility to investigate reality.

There is One God the Source of all Divine Religions - All divine religions have a common source and radiate the same spiritual light and truth.

The Essential Harmony of Science and Religion.

The Divine Light of God is the Source of all Knowledge - Both material and spiritual knowledge.

The Equality of Men and Women - The establishment of equal rights, respect and recognition for both men and women.

The Elimination of all Forms of Prejudice and Racism - Prejudice, no matter what kind, is destructive to the wellbeing, peace and security of mankind.

Universal Education - A lack of education creates barriers between peoples, spreads poverty, and robs mankind of its potential.

There are Spiritual Solutions to the Economic Problems of the World - The elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty.

The Need for a Common Universal Language - Differences in language fosters separation and misunderstanding amongst the people of the world.

Bahá'í Principle Number One:

Unity

All mankind comprises one human family...



“The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.
Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship.
He Who is the Daystar of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.
The One true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

“A fundamental teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing mankind, He says: "Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch." By this it is meant that the world of humanity is like a tree, the nations or peoples are the different limbs or branches of that tree and the individual human creatures are as the fruits and blossoms thereof. In this way His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh expressed the oneness of humankind whereas in all religious teachings of the past, the human world has been represented as divided into two parts, one known as the people of the Book of God or the pure tree and the other the people of infidelity and error or the evil tree. The former were considered as belonging to the faithful and the others to the hosts of the irreligious and infidel; one part of humanity the recipients of divine mercy and the other the object of the wrath of their Creator. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh removed this by proclaiming the oneness of the world of humanity and this principle is specialized in His teachings for He has submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity. Some are asleep; they need to be awakened. Some are ailing; they need to be healed. Some are immature as children; they need to be trained. But all are recipients of the bounty and bestowals of God.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Baha'i World Faith

Bahá'í Principle Number Two:

Universal Peace

An end to war and strife...



"... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled — what harm is there in this? ... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."

Bahá'u'lláh, The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh

“The world is in greatest need of international peace. Until it is established, mankind will not attain composure and tranquility. It is necessary that the nations and governments organize an international tribunal to which all their disputes and differences shall be referred. The decision of that tribunal shall be final. Individual controversy will be adjudged by a local tribunal. International questions will come before the universal tribunal, and so the cause of warfare will be taken away.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace

Bahá'í Principle Number Three:

Independent Investigation of Truth

**Every man and woman has the right and
responsibility to investigate reality...**



“... By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor.”

Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words

“God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain. Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God. Therefore depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation; otherwise you will be utterly submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the bounties of God. Turn to God; supplicate humbly at His threshold, seeking assistance and confirmation, that God may rend asunder the veils that obscure your vision. Then will your eyes be filled with illumination, face to face you will behold the reality of God and your heart become completely purified from the dross of ignorance, reflecting the glories and bounties of the Kingdom.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations of World Unity

Bahá'í Principle Number Four:

There is One God,

the Source of all Divine Religions

**All divine religions have a common source and
radiate the same spiritual light and truth...**



“There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

“I hope that the lights of the Sun of Reality will illumine the whole world so that no strife and warfare, no battles and bloodshed remain. May fanaticism and religious bigotry be unknown, all humanity enter the bond of brotherhood, souls consort in perfect agreement, the nations of earth at last hoist the banner of truth and the religions of the world enter the divine temple of oneness, for the foundations of the heavenly religions are one reality. Reality is not divisible; it does not admit multiplicity. All the holy Manifestations of God have proclaimed and promulgated the same reality. They have summoned mankind to reality itself and reality is one. The clouds and mists of imitations have obscured the Sun of Truth. We must forsake these imitations, dispel these clouds and mists and free the Sun from the darkness of superstition. Then will the Sun of Truth shine most gloriously; then all the inhabitants of the world will be united, the religions will be one, sects and denominations will reconcile, all nationalities will flow together in the recognition of one Fatherhood and all degrees of humankind gather in the shelter of the same tabernacle, under the same banner.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Baha'i World Faith

Bahá'í Principle Number Five:
The Essential Harmony of
Science and Religion

**The divine light of God is the source of all knowledge,
both material and spiritual..**



“The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh

“Furthermore, the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh announce that religion must be in conformity with science and reason; otherwise, it is superstition; for science and reason are realities, and religion itself is the Divine Reality unto which true science and reason must conform. God has bestowed the gift of mind upon man in order that he may weigh every fact or truth presented to him and adjudge whether it be reasonable. That which conforms to his reason he may accept as true, while that which reason and science cannot sanction may be discarded as imagination and superstition, as a phantom and not reality. Inasmuch as the blind imitations or dogmatic interpretations current among men do not coincide with the postulates of reason, and the mind and scientific investigation cannot acquiesce thereto, many souls in the human world today shun and deny religion. That is to say, imitations, when weighed in the scales of reason, will not conform to its standard and requirement. Therefore, these souls deny religion and become irreligious, whereas if the reality of the divine religions becomes manifest to them and the foundation of the heavenly teachings is revealed coinciding with facts and evident truths, reconciling with scientific knowledge and reasonable proof, all may acknowledge them, and irreligion will cease to exist. In this way all mankind may be brought to the foundation of religion, for reality is true reason and science, while all that is not conformable thereto is mere superstition.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace

Bahá'í Principle Number Six:

The Equality of Men and Women

**The establishment of equal rights, respect and
recognition for both men and women..**



“Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God. The Dawning-Place of the Light of God sheddeth its radiance upon all with the same effulgence. Verily God created women for men, and men for women. The most beloved of people before God are the most steadfast and those who have surpassed others in their love for God, exalted be His glory...”

Bahá'u'lláh, From a Tablet in Arabic and Persian

“The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. Therefore, woman must receive the same education as man and all inequality be adjusted. Thus, imbued with the same virtues as man, rising through all the degrees of human attainment, women will become the peers of men, and until this equality is established, true progress and attainment for the human race will not be facilitated.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation of Universal Peace

**Bahá'í Principle Number Seven:
The Elimination of all Forms
of Prejudice and Racism**

**Prejudice, no matter what kind, is destructive to the
wellbeing, peace and security of mankind...**



“Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest.”

Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words

“Prejudices of all kinds -- whether religious, racial, patriotic or political -- are destructive of divine foundations in man. All the warfare and bloodshed in human history have been the outcome of prejudice. This earth is one home and native land. God has created mankind with equal endowment and right to live upon the earth. As a city is the home of all its inhabitants although each may have his individual place of residence therein, so the earth's surface is one wide native land or home for all races of humankind. Racial prejudice or separation into nations such as French, German, American and so on is unnatural and proceeds from human motive and ignorance. All are the children and servants of God. Why should we be separated by artificial and imaginary boundaries? In the animal kingdom the doves flock together in harmony and agreement. They have no prejudices. We are human and superior in intelligence. Is it befitting that lower creatures should manifest virtues which lack expression in man?”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace

**Bahá'í Principle Number Eight:
Universal Education**

**A lack of education creates barriers between peoples,
spreads poverty, and robs mankind of its potential...**



“Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

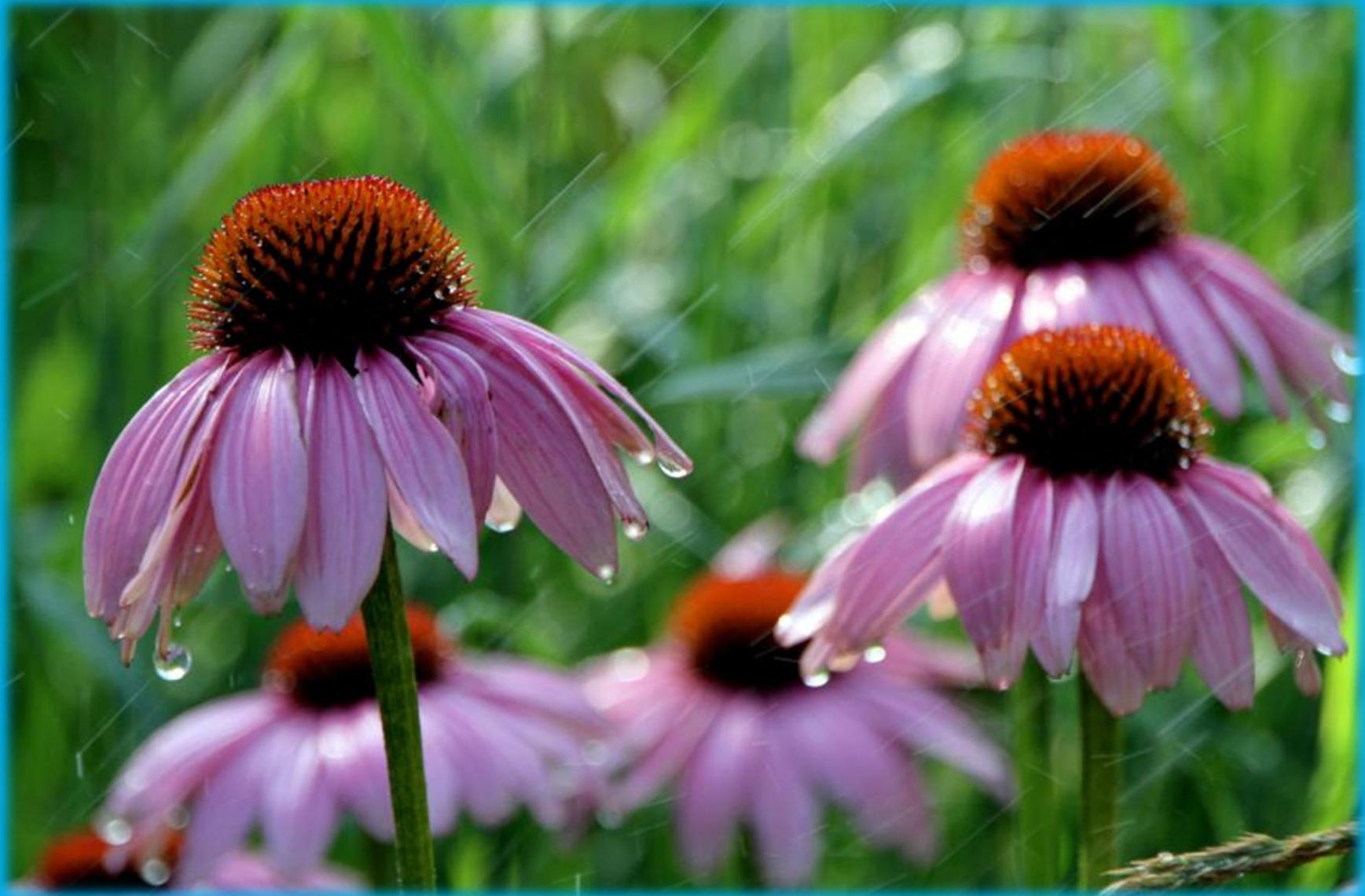
“Bahá'u'lláh has announced that inasmuch as ignorance and lack of education are barriers of separation among mankind, all must receive training and instruction. Through this provision the lack of mutual understanding will be remedied and the unity of mankind furthered and advanced. Universal education is a universal law. It is, therefore, incumbent upon every father to teach and instruct his children according to his possibilities. If he is unable to educate them, the body politic, the representative of the people, must provide the means for their education.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace

Bahá'í Principle Number Nine:

**There are Spiritual Solutions to the
Economic Problems of the World**

**The elimination of the extremes
of wealth and poverty...**



“They who are possessed of riches, however, must have the utmost regard for the poor, for great is the honor destined by God for those poor who are steadfast in patience. By My life! There is no honor, except what God may please to bestow, that can compare to this honor. Great is the blessedness awaiting the poor that endure patiently and conceal their sufferings, and well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves.”

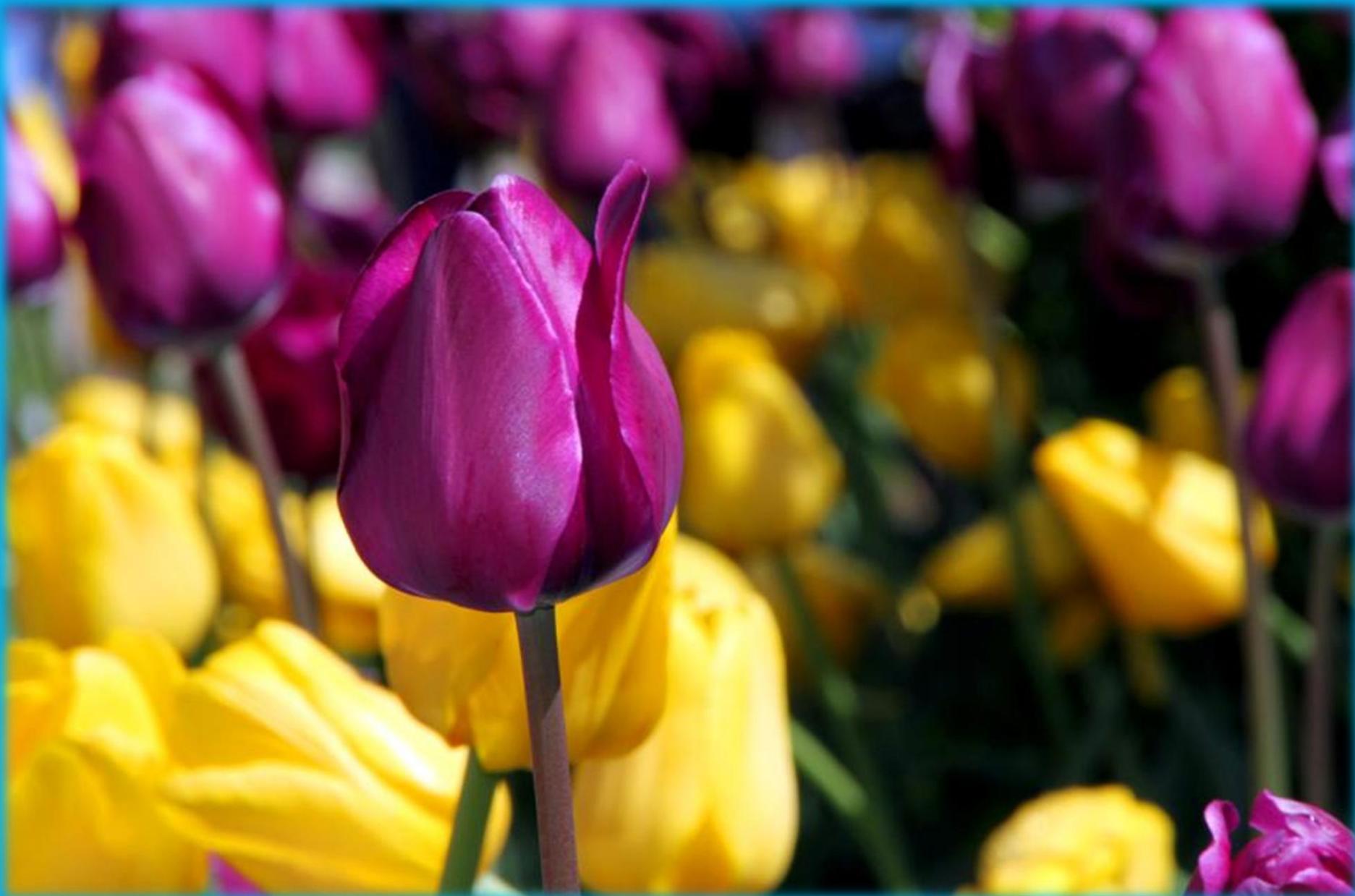
Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

“Among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form, the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs, and human equality will be universally established. The poor will receive a great bestowal, and the rich attain eternal happiness. For although at the present time the rich enjoy the greatest luxury and comfort, they are nevertheless deprived of eternal happiness; for eternal happiness is contingent upon giving, and the poor are everywhere in the state of abject need. Through the manifestation of God's great equity the poor of the world will be rewarded and assisted fully, and there will be a readjustment in the economic conditions of mankind so that in the future there will not be the abnormally rich nor the abject poor. The rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic condition as well as the poor, for owing to certain provisions and restrictions they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress of want and misery.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*

**Bahá'í Principle Number Ten:
The Need for a Common
Universal Language**

**Differences in language fosters separation and
misunderstanding amongst the people of the world...**



“...The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

“Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the adoption of a universal language. A language shall be agreed upon by which unity will be established in the world. Each person will require training in two languages: his native tongue and the universal auxiliary form of speech. This will facilitate intercommunication and dispel the misunderstandings which the barriers of language have occasioned in the world. All people worship the same God and are alike His servants. When they are able to communicate freely, they will associate in friendship and concord, entertain the greatest love and fellowship for each other, and in reality the Orient and Occident will embrace in unity and agreement.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace



The Bahá'í Temple in Wilmette, Illinois

*Enduring Flowers of Wisdom,
Principles of the Bahá'í Faith*

Quotes and Writings:

From the Bahá'í Writings as cited in this booklet.

Photography:

Dr. Gregory T. Lawton