

THE ETERNAL EXAMPLE

# *Vision*

QUOTATIONS | STORIES | REFLECTIONS  
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QUOTATIONS

*I*t is through the power of the soul that the mind comprehendeth, imagineth and exerteth its influence, whilst the soul is a power that is free. The mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete, but the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless. It is by the aid of such senses as those of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, that the mind comprehendeth, whereas the soul is free from all agencies. The soul as thou observest, whether it be in sleep or waking, is in motion and ever active. Possibly it may, whilst in a dream, unravel an intricate problem, incapable of solution in the waking state.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel*

*Y*ou must endeavor to understand the mysteries of God, attain the ideal knowledge and arrive at the station of vision, acquiring directly from the Sun of Reality and receiving a destined portion from the ancient bestowal of God.

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

*M*editation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see.

*Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks*

*T*he bestowals of God which are manifest in all phenomenal life are sometimes hidden by intervening veils of mental and mortal vision which render man spiritually blind and incapable, but when those scales are removed and the veils rent asunder, then the great signs of God will become visible, and he will witness the eternal light filling the world...material blessings as compared with spiritual bounties are as nothing. The spiritual blessings of God are greatest.

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

*B*reathe the air of purity. May you each and all share in the Divine Bounties of the Kingdom of Heaven. May the world be for you no obstacle hiding the truth from your sight...May you receive the clear vision of the Holy Spirit, so that your hearts may be illumined and able to recognize the Sun of Truth shining through all material clouds, His splendor flooding the universe.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks*

*M*ake firm our steps, O Lord, in Thy path and strengthen Thou our hearts in Thine obedience. Turn our faces toward the beauty of Thy oneness, and gladden our bosoms with the signs of Thy divine unity. Adorn our bodies with the robe of Thy bounty, and remove from our eyes the veil of sinfulness, and give us the chalice of Thy grace; that the essence of all beings may sing Thy praise before the vision of Thy grandeur. Reveal then Thyself, O Lord, by Thy merciful utterance and the mystery of Thy divine being, that the holy ecstasy of prayer may fill our souls—a prayer that shall rise above words and letters and transcend the murmur of syllables and sounds—that all things may be merged into nothingness before the revelation of Thy splendor.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayers*



One must see in every human being only that which is worthy of praise. When this is done, one can be a friend to the whole human race. If, however, we look at people from the standpoint of their faults, then being a friend to them is a formidable task.

It happened one day in the time of Christ—may the life of the world be a sacrifice unto Him—that He passed by the dead body of a dog, a carcass reeking, hideous, the limbs rotting away. One of those present said: ‘How foul its stench!’ And another said: ‘How sickening! How loathsome!’ To be brief, each one of them had something to add to the list.

But then Christ Himself spoke, and He told them: ‘Look at that dog’s teeth! How gleaming white!’

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The Messiah's sin-covering gaze did not for a moment dwell upon the repulsiveness of that carrion. The one element of that dead dog's carcass which was not abomination was the teeth: and Jesus looked upon their brightness.

Thus is it incumbent upon us, when we direct our gaze toward other people, to see where they excel, not where they fail.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

*O* Thou the Compassionate God. Bestow upon me a heart which, like unto a glass, may be illumined with the light of Thy love, and confer upon me thoughts which may change this world into a rose garden through the outpourings of heavenly grace.

Thou art the Compassionate, the Merciful. Thou art the Great Beneficent God.

*Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Prayers*

*H*ow often do we see a man, poor, sick, miserably clad, and with no means of support, yet spiritually strong. Whatever his body has to suffer, his spirit is free and well! Again, how often do we see a rich man, physically strong and healthy, but with a soul sick unto death.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks*

O ye lovers of this wronged one! Cleanse ye your eyes, so that ye behold no man as different from yourselves. See ye no strangers; rather see all men as friends, for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness. And in this new and wondrous age, the Holy Writings say that we must be at one with every people; that we must see neither harshness nor injustice, neither malevolence, nor hostility, nor hate, but rather turn our eyes toward the heaven of ancient glory. For each of the creatures is a sign of God, and it was by the grace of the Lord and His power that each did step into the world; therefore they are not strangers, but in the family; not aliens, but friends, and to be treated as such...

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If others hurl their darts against you, offer them milk and honey in return; if they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; if they injure you, teach them how to be comforted; if they inflict a wound upon you, be a balm to their sores; if they sting you, hold to their lips a refreshing cup.

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

*D*o ye not look upon the beginning of the affairs; attach your hearts to the ends and results. The present period is like unto the sowing time. Undoubtedly it is impregnated with perils and difficulties, but in the future many a harvest shall be gathered and benefits and results will become apparent. When one considers the issue and the end, exhaustless joy and happiness will dawn.

*Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*

... *T*hose who journey in the garden land of true knowledge, since they see the end in the beginning, behold peace in war and conciliation in enmity.

*Bahá'u'lláh, The Seven Valleys*



*T*he discerning man rejoiceth at the day of trials, his breast becometh dilated at the time of severe storms, his eyes become brightened when seeing the showers of rain and gusts of wind, whereby trees are uprooted; because he foreseeth the result and the end (of these trials), the leaves, blossoms and fruits (which follow this wintry storm); while the ignorant (short-sighted) person becometh troubled when he seeth a storm, is saddened when it raineth severely, is terrified by the thunder and trembleth at the surging of the waves which storm the shores.

*Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*

*L*ife is a load which must be carried on while we are on earth, but the cares of the lower things of life should not be allowed to monopolize all the thoughts and aspirations of a human being. The heart's ambitions should ascend to a more glorious goal, mental activity should rise to higher levels!...Let your ambition be the achievement on earth of a Heavenly civilization! I ask for you the supreme blessing, that you may be so filled with the vitality of the Heavenly Spirit that you may be the cause of life to the world.

*Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks*



STORIES

**W**hen Abdul-Baha laid the cornerstone of the Baha'i House of Worship in Chicago in 1912, He stated to the diverse crowd assembled on that historic occasion, "The Temple has already been built". The physical structure of that iconic building would in fact take decades to complete - but something about the community working for its construction, the love they would show, and the sacrifices they would make, enabled Him to see, with His matchless spiritual vision, an entire temple standing where only a stone had been laid.

Nettie Tobin was a Baha'i living in Chicago at the time that plans were being made to build a House of Worship in that city. She was widowed and struggled to support her two sons on the money she earned from her job as a seamstress - her wages from each day would often be completely spent on the groceries for that evening's meal.

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Many Baha'is were contributing to the cost of purchasing land and constructing the first Baha'i House of Worship in the West, but this wasn't something that Nettie was able to do..

On the first of May 1912, Nettie heard that Abdul-Baha was to visit the Temple site the next day, and realising that a stone would be needed to mark the location of the future temple, she went to a construction site near her home and asked the foreman if she could have a piece of limestone. He directed her to a pile of rejected stones which were unsuitable for use. Nettie chose one, and discovering it was too heavy to drag, went back to her house and returned with an old baby carriage, loaded the stone onto it, and took it home.

The next morning Nettie, recognising that this was not a mission that she could carry out alone, pushed the baby carriage together with a friend to the nearest public tram station. The two friends pushed the stone onto the first streetcar, off again and onto a second, off again,

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and finally onto a third and last streetcar - which would take them to the closest stop to the temple site. They began to walk the rest of the way, but as they pushed the baby carriage over the broken pavement it collapsed. The streetcars had been delayed, the conductors had questioned them and protested over the stone, and now they were late for the dedication of the Temple - and they had no way to get the stone there.

As they stood despairing, two boys with a toy wagon walked past. The friends persuaded them to help, and together they pushed and pulled the stone the rest of the way.

Many Baha'is from around the world, including Abdul-Baha himself, had sent stones to the temple site to be used as the ceremonial cornerstone - but not one ever arrived.

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The one and only stone available on the day that Abdul-Baha broke the ground with His own hands and dedicated the site of the future Temple was a stone that Nettie Tobin had painstakingly delivered.

This ordinary rock, moved by ordinary means, created the spiritual vision of a Temple completed, already welcoming all people, from all races and religions, into its structure - and for Nettie, as she herself pointed out in her retelling of her journey with the stone, harkened back to the Biblical verse: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone.”

*Adapted from The Dawning Place, Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,  
and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst*

The image features a dark, textured background with a central orange-bordered square. The background has a mottled appearance with shades of dark blue, black, and brown, suggesting a rough or weathered surface. The central square is a solid, vibrant orange color. Inside this square, the word "REFLECTIONS" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and vertically.

REFLECTIONS



*What do you think 'Abdu'l-Bahá meant when he said  
"The Temple is already built"?*

*What are some “veils” that affect our vision?  
How can we tear down these veils?*

*What habits can we form to improve our spiritual vision?  
How can we support one another in building these habits?*

*For more resources please visit [elevateworld.org](http://elevateworld.org)*