

The Bahá'ís of Florence Inter-Faith Devotional Service



Social Justice

Hinduism

The earth is upheld by the veracity of those who have subdued their passions, and, following righteous practices, are never contaminated by desire, covetousness, and wrath.

Vishnu Purana 3.12

They that are desirous of victory do not conquer by might and energy so much as by truth, compassion, righteousness, and spiritual discipline. Discriminating then between righteousness and unrighteousness, and understanding what is meant by covetousness, when there is recourse to exertion, fight without arrogance, for victory is there where righteousness is. Under these conditions know, O king, that to us victory is certain in this battle. Indeed, where Krishna is, there is victory.

Mahabharata, Bhishma Parva 21

The Creator...projected that excellent form, justice (dharma). This justice is the controller of the ruler. Therefore there is nothing higher than justice. So even a weak man hopes to defeat a stronger man through justice, as one does with the help of a king.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.14

The highest duty of a ruler is to protect his subjects; the ruler who enjoys the rewards of his position is bound to that duty.

Laws of Manu 7.144

Judaism

When the righteous man is in the town, he is its luster, its majesty, and its glory. When he leaves it, its luster, its majesty, and its glory depart.

Midrash, Genesis Rabbah 68.6

He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

Isaiah 42.2-3

He who renders true judgments is a co-worker with God.

Mekilta, Exodus 18.13

God weeps...over a leader who domineers over the community.

Talmud, Hagiga 5b

Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not

healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts...Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.

Ezekiel 34.2~10

By justice a king gives stability to the land, but one who exacts gifts ruins it.

Proverbs 29.4

Zoroastrianism

But thus, O souls desirous of hearing, I will utter those things worthy to be remembered by the expert-knower, the praises for Ahura¹, and hymns worthy of Good Disposition, and things well remembered with the aid of Justice, and the propitious omens beheld through the lights of the stars, or of the alter-flames. Listen with your ears to the best information; behold with your sight, and with your mind; man by man, each for his own person, distinguishing between both confessions, before this great crisis. Consider again! At the beginning both these Mentalities became conscious of each other, the one being a Mentality better in thought, and word, and deed, than the Mentality who is bad. Now let the just man discriminate

¹ generic title for the benevolence of God

between these two, and choose the benevolent one, not the bad one....

And may we be those who shall make life progressive or purposeful! Assemble together, along with Justice, O Ahura Mazda², and come hither so that here where our thought formerly developed separately, they may now mature together, fuse and become wisdom.

The Gathas

Do Thou give O Right, that bliss, that gift of Good Mind. Do thou give, O Devotion, power to Vishtaspa³ and my disciples. Do thou give, O Wise Ruler, whereby Thy Prophet may command a hearing!

Avesta, Yasna 28.7

Those are the future saviours of the peoples who through Good Mind strive in their deeds to carry out the judgment which Thou hast decreed, O Wise One, as righteousness. For they were created the foes of Fury.

Avesta, Yasna 48.12

Buddhism

The perfume of flowers blows not against the wind, nor does the fragrance of sandalwood, tagara, and jasmine, but the fragrance of the virtuous blows against the wind; the virtuous man pervades every direction.

Dhammapada 54

A king who does what is not righteous and not suitable is mostly praised by his subjects, for it is hard to know what he will or will not tolerate;

² Supreme creative deity

³ early Zoroastrian king

therefore it is hard to know what is useful or not to say. If useful but unpleasant words are hard to speak to someone else, what could I, a monk, say to a king who is lord of the great earth? But because of my affection for you and through my compassion for all beings, that which is useful but unpleasant...O steadfast one, if true words are spoken without anger, one should take them as fit to be heard, like water fit for bathing. Realize that I am telling you what is useful here and later. Act on it so as to help yourself and also others.

Nagarjuna, Precious Garland 301~6

He is not thereby just because he hastily arbitrates cases. The wise man should investigate both right and wrong. The intelligent person who leads others not falsely but lawfully and impartially, who is a guardian of the law, is called one who abides by righteousness.

Dhammapada 256~57

Christianity

Jesus called to them and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20.25~28

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

For what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 7.6~12

Though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

2 Corinthians 10.3~5

Islam

Every nation has its messenger. Once their messenger comes, judgment will be passed upon them in all fairness and they will not be wronged. They will say, "When will this promise be, if you have been telling the truth?" Say, "I possess no harm nor any advantage by myself, except concerning whatever God may wish. Every nation has a term; whenever their term comes, they will not postpone it for an hour nor advance it."

Qur'an 10.47~49

No individual is lost and no nation is refused prosperity and success if foundations of their thoughts and actions rest upon piety and godliness, and upon truth and justice.

Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 21

Let those fight in the way of God who sell the life of this world for the next. Whoso fights in the way of God, be he slain or be he victorious, on him We shall bestow a vast reward.

How should you not fight for the cause of God and of the feeble among men and women and children who are crying, "Our Lord! Bring us forth from out of this town whose people are oppressors! Oh, give us from Thy presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender!"

Those who believe do battle for the cause of God; and those who disbelieve do battle for the cause of idols. So fight the minions of the devil. Lo! The devil's strategy is ever weak.

Qur'án 4.74-76

Whenever you judge between people, you should do so with justice. How superbly God instructs you to do so; God is Alert, Observant!

Qur'án 4.58

If (a ruler) enjoins fear of God, the Exalted and Glorious, and dispenses justice, there will be great reward for him; and if he enjoins otherwise, it redounds on him.

.....The government is the guardian of those who have no guardian.

Hadith

Bábí Faith

When God sent forth His Prophet Muhammad, on that day the termination of the prophetic cycle was foreordained in the knowledge of God. Yea, that promise hath indeed come true and the decree of God hath been accomplished as He hath ordained. Assuredly we are today living in the Days of God. These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people in bygone times eagerly expected. What hath then befallen you that ye are fast asleep? These are the days wherein God hath caused the Day-Star of Truth to shine resplendent. What hath then caused you to keep your silence? These are the appointed days which ye have been yearningly awaiting in the past - the days of the advent of divine justice. Render ye thanks unto God, O ye concourse of believers.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 161

Strengthen my heart, O my God, in Thine obedience and in Thy love and grant that I may be clear of the entire company of Thine adversaries. Verily I swear by Thy glory that I yearn for naught besides Thyself, nor do I desire anything except Thy mercy, nor am I apprehensive of aught save Thy justice. I beg Thee to forgive me as well as those whom Thou lovest, howsoever Thou pleasest. Verily Thou art the Almighty, the Bountiful.

Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 215

Bahá'í Faith

...that which hath streamed forth from the Most Exalted Pen is conducive to the glory, the advancement and education of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Indeed it is the sovereign remedy for every disease, could they but comprehend and perceive it.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p.73

Thou must show forth that which will ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and the downtrodden. Gird up the loins of thine endeavour, that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty.

Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples. Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p.84

God has given us eyes, that we may look about us at the world, and lay hold of whatsoever will further civilization and the arts of living. He has given us ears, that we may hear and profit by the wisdom of scholars and philosophers and arise to promote and practice it. Senses and faculties have been bestowed upon us, to be devoted to the service of the general good; so that we, distinguished above all other forms of life for perceptiveness and reason,

should labor at all times and along all lines, whether the occasion be great or small, ordinary or extraordinary, until all mankind are safely gathered into the impregnable stronghold of knowledge.

We should continually be establishing new bases for human happiness and creating and promoting new instrumentalities toward this end. How excellent, how honorable is man if he arises to fulfil his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man's, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilization and justice.

The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 3~4

Prayer

Thou beholdest, O my God, the Day-Star of Thy Word shining above the horizon of Thy prison-city, inasmuch as within its walls He who is the Manifestation of Thy Self and the Day-Spring of the light of Thy unity hath raised His voice and uttered Thy praise. The fragrances of Thy love have thereby been wafted over Thy cities and have encompassed all the dwellers of Thy realm.

Since Thou hast revealed Thy grace, O my God, deter not Thy servants from directing their eyes towards it. Consider not, O my God, their estate, and their concerns and their works. Consider the greatness of Thy glory, and the plenteousness of Thy gifts, and the power of Thy might, and the excellence of Thy favors. I swear by Thy glory!

Wert Thou to look upon them with the eye of justice, all would deserve Thy wrath and the rod of Thine anger. Hold Thou Thy creatures, O my God, with the hands of Thy grace, and make Thou known unto them what is best for them of all the things that have been created in the kingdom of Thine invention.

We testify, O my God, that Thou art God, and that there is no God besides Thee. From eternity Thou hast existed with none to equal or rival Thee, and wilt abide for ever the same. I beseech Thee, by the eyes which see Thee

established upon the throne of unity and the seat of oneness, to aid all them that love Thee by Thy Most Great Name, and to lift them up into such heights that they will testify with their own beings and with their tongues that Thou art God alone, the Incomparable, the One, the Ever-Abiding. Thou hast had at no time any peer or partner. Thou, in truth, art the All-Glorious, the Almighty, Whose help is implored by all men.

—Bahá'u'lláh

PRAYER FOR AMERICA

O Thou kind Lord! This gathering is turning to Thee. These hearts are radiant with Thy love. These minds and spirits are exhilarated by the message of Thy glad-tidings. O God! Let this American democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees even as it has aspired to material degrees, and render this just government victorious. Confirm this revered nation to upraise the standard of the oneness of humanity, to promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world. O God! This American nation is worthy of Thy favors and is deserving of Thy mercy. Make it precious and near to Thee through Thy bounty and bestowal.



'Abdu'l-Bahá

