

## The Bahá'ís of Florence Inter-Faith Devotional Service



# The True Servant

## Hinduism

At the beginning, mankind and the obligation of selfless service were created together. “Through selfless service, you will always be fruitful and find the fulfillment of your desires”: this is the promise of the Creator...

Every selfless act, Arjuna<sup>1</sup>, is born from the eternal, infinite Godhead. God is present in every act of service. All life turns on this law, O Arjuna. Whoever violates it, indulging his senses for his own pleasure and ignoring the needs of others, has wasted his life. But those who realize the God within are always satisfied. Having found the source of joy and fulfillment, they no longer seek happiness from the external world. They have nothing to gain or lose by any action; neither people nor things can affect their security.

What the outstanding person does, others will try to do. The standards such people set will be followed by the whole world. There is nothing in the three worlds for Me to gain, Arjuna, nor is there anything I do not have; I continue to act, but I am not driven by any need of my own. If I ever refrained from continuous work, everyone would

immediately follow my example. If I stopped working I would be the cause of cosmic chaos, and finally the destruction of this world and these people.

Strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world; by devotion to selfless work one attains the supreme goal in life. Do your work with the welfare of others always in mind. It was by such work that Janaka<sup>2</sup> attained perfection; others, too, have followed this path.

The ignorant work for their own profit, Arjuna; the wise work for the welfare of the world, without thought to themselves. By abstaining from work you will confuse the ignorant, who are engrossed in their actions. Perform all work carefully, guided by compassion.

*Bhagavad Gita 3.10~26*

## Judaism

Hillel said, “Be of the disciples of Aaron—one that loves peace, that loves mankind, and bring them nigh to the Law.”

*Mishnah, Abot 112*



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<sup>1</sup> one of five brothers noted for his pure character

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<sup>2</sup> A king of ancient times who was both an effective ruler and a holy sage.

“Ye shall walk after the Lord your God”. But how can a man walk after God who is a devouring fire? It means, walk after His attributes: clothe the naked, visit the sick, comfort the mourner, bury the dead.

*Talmud, Sota 14a*

When the Holy One loves a man, He sends him a present in the shape of a poor man, so that he should perform some good deed to him, through the merit of which he may draw a cord of grace.

*Zohar, Genesis 104a*

Even a poor man who himself subsists on charity, should give charity.

*Talmud, Gittin 7b*

The world stands upon three things: upon the Law, upon worship and upon showing kindness.

*Mishnah, Abot 1.2*

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

*Isaiah 1.16~20*



## Zoroastrianism

In this world may obedience triumph over disobedience; may peace triumph over discord; may generosity triumph over niggardliness; may love triumph over contempt; may the true-spoken word triumph over the false-spoken word; may truth triumph over falsehood.

*Avesta, Yasna 60.5*

Then that do we choose, O Lord of Wisdom, O beautiful Truth, that do we think, do we speak, and do we practice, which shall be best of the actions of living ones for both worlds.

*Avesta, Yasna 35.3*

Do you keep your feet, hands, intellect ready, O Mazdayasni Zoroastrians, in order to practice lawful, timely, well-done deeds, in order to undo unlawful, untimely, bad-done deeds. Let one practice here good industry; let one make the needy prosperous.

*Avesta, Visparad 15.1*

Holy is the man of devotion, through thoughts and words and deeds; and through his conscience he increases Righteousness; the Wise Lord as Good Mind gives the dominion. For this good reward I pray. I know that my greatest good is to worship the Wise Lord and those that have been and are. By their names will I worship them and come before them with praise.

*Avesta, Yasna 50.21~22*



## **Buddhism**

The Buddha said, “When you see someone practicing the Way of giving, aid him joyously, and you will obtain vast and great blessings.” A shramana<sup>3</sup> asked: “Is there an end to those blessings?” The Buddha said, “Consider the flame of a single lamp. Though a hundred thousand people come and light their own lamps from it so that they can cook their food and ward off the darkness, the first lamp remains the same as before. Blessings are like this, too.”

*Sutra of Forty-two Sections 10*

Enlightened beings are magnanimous givers, bestowing whatever they have with equanimity, without regret, without hoping for reward, without seeking honor, without coveting material benefits, but only to rescue and safeguard all living beings.

*Garland Sutra 21*

He who is skilled in welfare, who wishes to attain that calm state, should act thus: He should be able, upright, perfectly upright, of noble speech, gentle, and humble. Contented, easily supported, with few wants and simple tastes, with senses calmed, discreet, not impudent, not greedily attached to families...

(He should always hold this thought,) “May all beings be happy and secure, may their hearts be wholesome! Whatever living beings there be: feeble or strong, tall, stout or medium, short, small or large, without exception; seen or unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born and those yet unborn—may all beings be happy!”

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<sup>3</sup> a monk or ascetic

Let none deceive another, nor despise any person whatsoever in any place. Let him not wish any harm to another out of anger or ill-will. Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings. Let his thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world; above, below, and across without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity. Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake, he should develop his mindfulness. This, they say, is the noblest living here.

*Sutta Nipata 143~151, Metta Sutta*

## **Christianity**

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me.



Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungered and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

*Matthew 25.31~46*

Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

*Hebrews 13.1~2*

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, he that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

*Luke 3.10~11*

## **Islam**

Believers, be God's helpers. When Jesus the son of Mary said to the disciples, "Who will help me on the way to God?" they replied, "We are God's helpers."

*Qur'an 61.14*

O you who believe, spend of the good things which you have earned, and of that which We bring forth from the earth for you, and seek not the bad with intent to spend it in charity when you would not take it for yourselves save with disdain; and know that God is Absolute Owner of Praise...Whatever alms you

spend, or vow you vow, lo! God knows it. Wrongdoers have not helpers.

If you publish your almsgiving, it is well, but if you hide it and give it to the poor, it will be better for you and will atone for some of your ill-deeds. God is Informed of what you do...

And whatever good thing you spend, it is for yourselves, when you spend it not save in search of God's countenance; and whatever good thing you spend it will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged.

(Alms are) for the poor who are straitened for the cause of God, who cannot travel in the land (for trade). The unthinking man accounts them wealthy because of their restraint. You shall know them by their mark: they do not beg of men with importunity. And whatever good thing you spend, lo! God knows it.

Those who spend their wealth by night and day, by stealth and openly, verily their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.

*Qur'an 2.267~74*

Be mindful of your duty (to God), and do good works; and again, be mindful of your duty, and believe; and once again: be mindful of your duty and do right. God loves the doers of good.

*Qur'an 5.93*

And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they establish worship and pay the poor-due, and they obey God and His Messenger.

*Qur'an 9.71*

Anas and `Abdullah reported God's Messenger as saying, "All (human) creatures are God's children, and those dearest to God are those who treat His children kindly."

*Hadith of Baihaqi*

No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.

*Forty Hadith of an-Nawai 13*

That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 167*

The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the third leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: O son of man! If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou chooseth for thyself. Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.

*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 64*

Briefly, all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. A

physician ministering to the sick, gently, tenderly, free from prejudice and believing in the solidarity of the human race, he is giving praise.

*Paris Talks, pp. 176-77*

If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual; but if enmity and hatred exist within it, destruction and dispersion are inevitable. This is, likewise, true of a city. If those who dwell within it manifest a spirit of accord and fellowship, it will progress steadily and human conditions become brighter, whereas through enmity and strife it will be degraded and its inhabitants scattered. In the same way, the people of a nation develop and advance toward civilization and enlightenment through love and accord and are disintegrated by war and strife. Finally, this is true of humanity itself in the aggregate. When love is realized and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men, the whole human race will be uplifted, the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant and the happiness and tranquillity of mankind be immeasurably increased. Warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreement and dissension pass away and universal peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree. This is the happiness and felicity of humankind. This is the illumination of man, the eternal glory and everlasting life; this is the divine bestowal.

*Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp.144-45*

## 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

