

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



# TRUE WEALTH

### Hinduism

Longing, I came this morning to the pious, the son of sacrifice, with care wealth-laden. Give him to drink juice of the stalk that gladdens; prosper with pleasant hymns the Lord of Heroes. Health-bringing streams, as milk-cows, flow to profit him who hath worshipped, him who now will worship. To him who freely gives and fills on all sides full streams of fatness flow and make him famous. On the high ridge of heaven he stands exalted, yea, to the Gods he goes, the liberal giver. The streams, the waters flow for him with fatness: to him this garden ever yields abundance. For those who give rich meeds<sup>1</sup> are all these splendors, for those who give rich meeds suns shine in heaven...Let not the liberal sink to sin and sorrow, never decay the pious chiefs who worship!

*Rig Veda 1.125.3~7*

You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work. You should never engage in action for the sake of reward, nor should you long for inaction. Perform work in this world, Arjuna<sup>2</sup>, as a man established within himself – without selfish attachments, and alike in

<sup>1</sup> rewards or recompense

<sup>2</sup> one of five brothers noted for his pure character

success and defeat. For discipline is perfect evenness of mind.

Seek refuge in the attitude of detachment and you will amass the wealth of spiritual awareness. Those who are motivated only by desire for the fruits of action are miserable, for they are constantly anxious about the results of what they do. When consciousness is unified, however, all vain anxiety is left behind. There is no cause for worry, whether things go well or ill.

*Bhagavad Gita 1.47~50*

### Judaism

You shall faithfully observe all the instruction that I enjoin upon you today, that you may thrive and increase and be able to possess the land that the Lord promised on oath to your fathers...

Take care lest you forget the Lord your God and fail to keep His commandments, His rules, and His laws, which I enjoin upon you today. When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in, and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered, beware lest your heart grow haughty and you forget the Lord your God – who freed you from the land of Egypt, the

house of bondage; who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers have never known, in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end – and you say to yourselves, "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me." Remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers, as is still the case.

*Deuteronomy 8.1.11~19*

A lover of money never has his fill of money, nor a lover of wealth his fill of income. That too is futile. As his substance increases, so do those who consume it; what, then, does the success of its owner amount to but feasting his eyes? A worker's sleep is sweet, whether he has much or little to eat; but the rich man's abundance doesn't let him sleep.

Here is a grave evil I have observed under the sun: riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune, in that those riches are lost in some unlucky venture; and if he begets a son, he has nothing in hand.

Another grave evil is this: He must depart just as he came. As he came out of his mother's womb, so must he depart at last, naked as he came. He can take nothing of his wealth to carry with him. So what is the good of his toiling for the wind? Besides, all his days he eats in darkness, with much vexation and grief and anger.

Only this, I have found, is a real good: that one should eat and drink and get pleasure with all the gains he makes under the sun, during the numbered days of life that God has given him; for that is his portion. Also, whenever a man is given riches and property by God, and is also permitted by Him to enjoy them and to take his portion and get pleasure for his gains – that is a gift of God. For (such a man) will not brood much over the days of his life, because God keeps him busy enjoying himself.

*Ecclesiastes 5.9~19*

## **Zoroastrianism**

And thus spake Mithra<sup>3</sup>, the Ahura<sup>4</sup> of Light: If I were invoked by My name, then would I come to the faithful at the appointed time; then would I come in the appointed time, with My beautiful, immortal life.

Grant us, O powerful God; in accordance with the revealed Word, riches, strength, good conscience and bliss, good fame and a good soul; wisdom and the knowledge that giveth happiness, the victorious strength given by the Ahuras, the ascendant of ASHA,<sup>5</sup> and conversation with Mazda, on the Holy Word.

We invoke Mithra, the Ahura of Light, the Ever-awake! Who taketh possession of the beautiful Wide-expanding Law, greatly and powerfully, and Whose Face looketh over all the seven kingdoms of the earth; Who is

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<sup>3</sup> God of light and truth

<sup>4</sup> benevolent deity

<sup>5</sup> cosmic law of order, justice, righteousness and truth

swift amongst the swift, bountiful amongst the bounteous, a Chief of assembly amongst the chiefs of assemblies, the giver of increase, the giver of sovereignty, the giver of sons, the giver of cheerfulness and the giver of bliss.

*Yasts 2, Mihir 20~22*

To obtain the treasures of the material world, O Zarathustra, forego not the World of ASHA. For he who, O Zarathustra, to obtain the treasures of the material world destroyeth the World of ASHA, such an one shall possess neither force of life nor ASHA, neither the Celestial Light. All these things ASHA obtaineth, O, Zarathustra! He obtaineth everything good.

*Nasks 2, Thamura 3*

## **Buddhism**

Even well-decked royal chariots wear away; and the body too falls into decay. But the dhamma<sup>6</sup> of the good ones goes not to decay, for the good speak (of it) with the good...

Not having lived the higher life, nor having acquired wealth in youth, they wither away like old herons in a lake without fish. Not having lived the higher life, nor having acquired wealth in youth, like (arrows) discharged from a bow they lie brooding over the things of yore.

*Dhammapada 131.155~56*

The gift of dhamma prevails over every gift, the flavor of dhamma prevails over every flavor, the delight of dhamma prevails over every delight, the dissolution of craving subdues all

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<sup>6</sup> righteousness or duty; "law" in the broadest sense

suffering. Possessions strike down one deficient in wisdom, but not those seeking the beyond. Through craving for possessions, one deficient in wisdom strikes oneself down as one would the others.

*Dhammapada 354~55*

## **Christianity**

And Jesus said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

*Matthew 19.28~30*

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, this I will do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

*Luke 12.16~21*

## **Islam**

O believers, give in charity what is good of the things you have earned, and of what you produce from the earth; and do not choose to give what is bad as alms, that is, things you would not like to accept yourself except with some condescension. Remember that God is affluent and praiseworthy. Satan threatens you with want, and orders you (to commit) shameful acts. But God promises pardon and grace, for God is bounteous and all-knowing. He gives wisdom whomsoever He please; and those who are bestowed wisdom get good abundance. Yet none remembers this save men of wisdom. Whatsoever you give away in alms or vow as offering, is all known to God; but the wicked will have none to help them. If you give alms openly, it is well; but if you do it secretly and give to the poor, that is better. This will absolve you of some of your sins; and God is cognizant of all you do. It is not for you to guide them: God guides whom He will. Whatever you spend you will do so for yourself, for you will do so to seek the way that leads to God; and what you spend in charity you will get back in full, and no wrong will be done to you. (Give to) the needy who are engaged in the service of God who are not able to move about in the land, whom the ignorant consider to be affluent as they refrain from asking. You can know them from their faces for they do not ask of men importunately. God is surely cognizant of good things that you spend.

Those who spend of their wealth in the way of God, day and night, in secret or openly, have their reward with their Lord, and have nothing to fear or regret.

*Qur'an 2.267-74*

Present to them the example of the life of this world so like the water We send down from the skies that mingles with the earth to nourish its vegetation, which then on the morrow turns to stubble and is blown away by the wind. God has power over every thing. Wealth and children are only the gloss of this world, but good deeds that abide are better with your Lord for recompense, and better for expectation.

*Qur'an 18.45-46*

## **Bábí Faith**

From the first day that I cautioned thee not to wax proud before God until the present time, four years have elapsed, and during this space naught have I witnessed, either from thee or from thy soldiers, except dire oppression and disdainful arrogance. Methinks thou dost imagine that I wish to gain some paltry substance from this earthly life. Nay, by the righteousness of My Lord! In the estimation of them that have fixed their eyes upon the merciful Lord, the riches of the world and its trappings are worth as much as the eye of a dead body, nay even less. Far from His glory be what they associate with Him!... I seek patience only in God. Verily He is the best protector and the best helper. No refuge do I seek save God. Verily He is the guardian and the best supporter...

Glory be unto Thee, O Lord! Although Thou mayest cause a person to be destitute of all earthly possessions, and from the beginning of his life until his ascension unto Thee he may be reduced to poverty through the operation of Thy decree, yet wert Thou to have brought him forth from the Tree of Thy love, such a bounty would indeed be far better for him than all the things

Thou hast created in heaven and earth and whatsoever lieth between them; inasmuch as he will inherit the heavenly home, through the revelation of Thy favours, and will partake of the goodly gifts Thou hast provided therein; for the things which are with Thee are inexhaustible. This indeed is Thy blessing which according to the good-pleasure of Thy Will Thou dost bestow on those who tread the path of Thy love.

*Selections from the Writings of the Báb, pp. 20~21, 189*

### **Bahá'í Faith**

...it is related that on a certain day, one of the companions of Sadiq<sup>7</sup> complained of his poverty before him. Whereupon, Sadiq, that immortal beauty, made reply:

“Verily thou art rich, and hast drunk the draught of wealth.” That poverty-stricken soul was perplexed at the words uttered by that luminous countenance, and said: “Where are my riches, I who stand in need of a single coin?” Sadiq thereupon observed: “Dost thou not possess our love?” He replied: “Yea, I possess it, O thou scion of the Prophet of God!” And Sadiq asked him saying: “Exchangest thou this love for one thousand dinars?” He answered: “Nay, never will I exchange it, though the world and all that is therein be given me!” Then Sadiq remarked: “How can he who possesses such a treasure be called poor?”

This poverty and these riches, this abasement and glory, this dominion, power, and the like, upon which the eyes and hearts of these vain and foolish souls are set, - all these things fade into utter nothingness in that Court! Even as He hath said: “O men! Ye are

but paupers in need of God; but God is the Rich, the Self-Sufficing.” By ‘riches’ therefore is meant independence of all else but God, and by ‘poverty’ the lack of things that are of God.

*The Kitáb-i-Íqán pp 131~32*

O Son of Man! Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?

O Son of My Handmaid! Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, “In truth ye are the poor,” and the holy words, “God is the all-possessing,” shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover's heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.

*The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*

### **Prayer**

Lord! Pitiful are we, grant us Thy favor; poor, bestow upon us a share from the ocean of Thy wealth; needy, do Thou satisfy us; abased, give us Thy glory. The fowls of the air and the beasts of the field receive their meat each day from Thee, and all beings partake of Thy care and loving-kindness. Deprive not this feeble one of Thy wondrous grace and vouchsafe by Thy might unto this helpless soul Thy bounty.

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<sup>7</sup> sixth of the Shih'áh Imáms

Give us our daily bread, and grant Thine increase in the necessities of life, that we may be dependent on none other but Thee, may commune wholly with Thee, may walk in Thy ways and declare Thy

mysteries. Thou art the Almighty and the Loving and the Provider of all mankind.

~ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

## 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

