



Divine Law: Source of Human Rights

A Bahá'í View

"The primary purpose, the basic objective, in laying down powerful laws and setting up great principles and institutions dealing with every aspect of civilization, is human happiness; and human happiness consists only in drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race; and the supreme agencies for accomplishing these two objectives are the excellent qualities with which humanity has been endowed."

—From the Bahá'í Writings

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“God’s purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.”

From the Bahá’í Writings

“It is clear from what has already been said that man’s glory and greatness do not consist in his being avid for blood and sharp of claw, in tearing down cities and spreading havoc, in butchering armed forces and civilians. What would mean a bright future for him would be his reputation for justice, his kindness to the entire population whether high or low, his building up countries and cities, villages and districts, his making life easy, peaceful and happy for his fellow beings, his laying down fundamental principles for progress, his raising the standards and increasing the wealth of the entire population.”

Divine Law: Education for Human Happiness



The cornerstone of human rights—justice—is a central concern of the Bahá’í Faith. Bahá’í communities around the world live by the conviction that justice is the expression of love and unity in the life of society; and Bahá’ís have accepted Bahá’u’lláh, the Prophet-Founder of their faith, as the standard of justice for our age and the source of divine law.

Bahá’u’lláh, Who was born in 1817 and died in 1892, dedicated His life—in spite of exile, persecution, and imprisonment—to revealing the knowledge that would allow each human being to manifest his true nature through becoming the servant of God and of humanity.

A new world could only be built, Bahá’u’lláh taught, by a new race of men and women; a world order and a world civilization could only be established by people whose actions reflected values of love, unity, and justice that applied equally to all races, creeds, nationalities, and classes.

From the Bahá’í viewpoint the establishment of universal human rights is directly dependent on mankind’s response to this divine gift for human transformation. Lasting world peace and a world civilization can only be achieved if each person, through the teachings and laws of God, develops his innate spiritual qualities. The capacity for unity, justice, love, compassion, mercy, trustworthiness, honesty—all potential within us—must grow under the wise direction and power of the Divine Educator until we become social beings with a fully developed spiritual nature guiding us to fulfill our destiny and that of the world.

For it is the will of God for this age, Bahá’ís

believe, that unity—the spiritual law brought by Bahá’u’lláh for the fulfillment of civilization on this planet—should so encompass the creation that nothing will remain unaffected. As humanity has evolved, the Prophet-Founders of religion, those Educators who reflect the divine will and attributes, have led mankind to establish successively the unity of family, clan, tribe, city-state, and nation. Today we must bring about the unity of mankind.

The world is ready for this new oneness—for the obligations and rights that will make it possible; and Bahá’u’lláh has provided the source of power for this total and lasting unity of all peoples on earth.

Although humanity is only beginning its planetary stage of evolution, Bahá’í communities can today be found in 165 independent nations and 44 dependent territories. More than 2,000 tribes and ethnic groups are represented in such communities. In this unity in diversity the Bahá’í world already offers evidence of the change that is taking place in human beings who find their standards for obligations and rights in the Bahá’í writings and laws.



From the Bahá'í Writings On Justice

“Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation.”

“The first attribute of perfection is learning and the cultural attainments of the mind. . . . The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest. . . . The third requirement of perfection is to arise with complete sincerity and purity of purpose to educate the masses. . . .”



From the Bahá'í Writings On Unity

“The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until . . . its unity is firmly established.”

“It is certain that the greatest of instrumentalities for achieving the advancement and the glory of man, the supreme agency for the enlightenment and redemption of the world, is love and fellowship and unity among all the members of the human race. Nothing can be effected in the world, not even conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion. ‘Hadst Thou spent all the riches of the earth, Thou couldst not have united their hearts; but God hath united them. . . .’”

“O CHILDREN OF MEN!

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. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.”

The Bahá'í Community and the United Nations

For over one hundred years Bahá'ís have striven for the elimination of all prejudice and discrimination and have sought to bring about the unity of mankind, world peace, and world order.

As part of this commitment the Bahá'í International Community, in its consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and its association with the Department of Public Information, has cooperated wholeheartedly with the United Nations programs in the field of human rights. The Bahá'í world community has promoted awareness and understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the numerous instruments which the United Nations has brought into existence for the protection of the rights of all peoples.

Annual worldwide observances of Human Rights Day; human rights conferences, seminars, and awards; programs and publications for special anniversaries of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—all are expressions of Bahá'í cooperation. In addition the Bahá'í International Community works closely with the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and has taken part in varied United Nations seminars on human rights.

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