



Programme — Justice

August 2002

‘Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.’

— *Helen Keller*

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The Best Beloved of All Things...

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

— *Bahá'u'lláh*

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The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.

Thus have We instructed thee, manifested unto thee Words of Wisdom, that thou mayest be thankful unto the Lord, The God, and glory therein amidst all peoples.

— *The Bahá'í Writings*

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A man finds no justice if he carries a dispute to violence. No, he who knows right from wrong, who is learned and guides others – not by violence, but by the same law, being a guardian of the law, who shows intelligence: he is called just.

— *The Dhammapada: Buddhist Scripture*

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In the name of God! The Compassionate, the Merciful.

Say: In whatsoever Books God hath sent down do I believe: I am commanded to decide justly between you: God is your Lord, and our Lord: we have our works and you have your works: between us and you let there be no strife: God will make us all one: and to him shall we return.

— *The Qu'rán; Muslim Scripture*

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My object is none other than the betterment of the world and the tranquillity of its peoples. The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity

is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.

Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illuminated with the light of unity, and the remembrance of His Name is able to set on fire the hearts of all men, and burn away the veils that intervene between them and His glory. One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens. It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished...

— *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*

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Excerpt from 'Who is Writing the Future'

In the sight of God, justice is the "best beloved of all things".

Intimately related to the issue of unity is a second moral challenge that the past century has posed with ever increasing urgency. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh insists, justice is the "best beloved of all things". It enables the individual to see reality through his or her own eyes rather than those of others and endows collective decision making with the authority that alone can ensure unity of thought and action. However gratifying is the system of international order that has emerged from the harrowing experiences of the twentieth century, its enduring influence will depend on acceptance of the moral principle implicit in it. If the body of humankind is indeed one and indivisible, then the authority exercised by its governing institutions represents essentially a trusteeship. Each individual person comes into the world as a trust of the whole, and it is this feature of human existence that constitutes the real foundation of the social, economic and cultural rights that the United Nations Charter and its related documents articulate. Justice and unity are reciprocal in their effect. "The purpose of justice," Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance."

As society commits itself – however hesitantly and fearfully – to these and related moral principles, the most meaningful role it will offer the individual will be that of service. One of the paradoxes of human life is that development of the self that comes primarily through commitment to larger undertakings in which the self – even if only temporarily – is forgotten. In an age that opens up to people of every condition an opportunity to participate effectively in the shaping of the social order itself, the ideal of service to others assumes entirely new significance. To exalt such goals as acquisition and self-assertion as the purpose of life is to promote chiefly the animal side of human nature. Nor can simplistic messages of personal salvation any longer address the yearnings of generations who have come to know, with deep certainty, that true fulfilment is as much a matter of this world as it is of the next. "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in," is Bahá'u'lláh's counsel, "and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements."

Such perspectives have profound implications for the conduct of human affairs. It is obvious, for example, that, whatever its past contributions, the longer the nation state persists as the dominant influence in determining the fate of human kind, the longer will the achievement of

world peace be delayed and the greater will be the suffering inflicted on the earth's

population. In humanity's economic life, no matter how great the blessings brought by globalisation, it is apparent that this process has also created unparalleled concentrations of autocratic power that must be brought under international democratic control if they are not to produce poverty and despair for countless millions. Similarly, the historic breakthrough in information and communication technology, which represents so potent a means to promote social development and the deepening of people's sense of their common humanity, can, with equal force, divert and coarsen impulses vital to the service of this very process.

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The Golden Rule

The Golden rule, the teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, is an ethic variously repeated in all the great religions:

Buddhism: 'Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.'
— *Udana-Varqa, 5:18*

Zoroastrianism: 'That nature is only good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.'
— *Dadistan-I Dinik, 94:5*

Judaism: 'What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire Law, all the rest is commentary.'
— *The Talmud, Shabbat, 31s*

Hinduism: 'This is the sum of all true righteousness: deal with others as thou wouldst thyself be dealt by. Do nothing to thy neighbour which thou wouldst not have him do to thee after.'
— *The Mahabharata*

Christianity: 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.'
— Luke 6:31

Islam: 'No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.'
— *Sunnah*

Taoism: 'The good man "ought to pity the malignant tendencies of others; to regard their gains as if they were his own, and their losses in the same way".'
— *The Thi-Shang*

Confucianism: 'Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.'
— *Analects, XV, 23*

Bahá'í Faith: 'He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil.'
— *Gleanings*

Cosmic Justice

When humanity is in chaos like it is now, the simplest teaching given by the Aboriginals is to respect each other. Nobody is better than anybody else. Love one another. Especially in these times of chaos. And I don't just mean the love between husband and wife. I mean the

humanity love as well. And just the caring towards each other. No discrimination. No racism. Everybody is equal. And that is what God wants us to do.

You see, we believe there is a God in heaven, just like everybody else. But we believe that God is the pure illuminating light of love. It's a Being. God's not a man or a woman. It's a Beautiful Being of love. And all humanity should know that and love each other. That's the ultimate aim of the above and the below. That's the ultimate aim of humanity.

— *Senior Aboriginal elder: Lorraine Mafi Williams*

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Reality Check

The socially institutionalised way humanity has of interacting with 'physical reality' (i.e. the monetary accounting system which is fundamental to so much human activity) is not consistent with the way nature relates to physical reality. Nature has its own accounting system for physical reality – and humans are operating a different system to it. This is why the economy is often at odds with the ecology. This is why humanity is out of step with nature. The two systems are incompatible.

The problem arose as a function of perception. Humans have free will yet limited perception and conception. If our perception and conception are inconsistent with what's 'out there', it follows that our behaviour will be inconsistent with what's 'out there'. For example, on simple observation, the sun appears to move overhead, however, we know, upon deeper examination and consideration, that it is actually the Earth that is moving.

The foundations and axioms of the Western economic system were established thousands of years ago when human perception and conception of physical reality was not close to actual reality. When the foundations and axioms of our economic system were established it was thought that Earth was the centre of the universe and the basic elements of reality were water, fire, air and earth. That conception of reality was severely limited. Over time, however, humans developed a much better conception of physical reality.

— *From Cosmic Accounting by Malcolm J Greenstuart*

Fifty-to-One

Driving in my car all alone I am one.
Entangled on the pick-up truck sit another twenty one.

Inside it's air-conditioned, sanitised, the music sounds so sweet.
Other's taste the dust, feel the heat, engine groans and misses a beat.

At home in the cool, we are only four. A room for everyone one of us, and more.
Eight are elsewhere sitting all around.
They are by their single room that sleeps them on the ground.

The refrigerator is open revealing supermarket food inside.
Each day a new taste sensation, scraps tossed aside.
Others eating from the garden, only once the rains have come.
The same food daily, only less with each new sun.

The gap is wide, getting wider every day.

It makes me think, it makes me wonder, but can I say.

It's fifty-to-one, fifty-to-one.

That's the difference between us, it's not just a sum.

— *From Malawi Times. Publishers Ian and Wendy Dicks, May 2002*

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A Woman's Reckoning:

I am awake in a glistening morning ready to write. From the window, the lush green grass, thick with autumn dew, leads to the empty beach. The sea and sky beyond – both blue and unpolluted – are washed clear and clean by the sun. The only sounds are the early dawn chorus and the roaring of the waves. I sit, as writers and artists have for centuries, labouring unpaid. Yet I am sure this will work. I am sure it is productive, and I hope it will be of value. But as far as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is concerned, on this late summer day in 1986, it is none of the above.

I consider the hills rising directly from the sea. They were once covered in thick native bush, which must have been non-productive, for it was burned and cleared off. Now thousands of pine trees inch their way to a harvest at twenty years. That will make them “productive”. If the mineral prospecting licences on the hills reveal minerals in quantity, the hills, too, will be productive. As they are – untouched, unscathed – they have no value. That's what the international economic system says.

My tenancy of this house is unproductive. While its owner will have a market rental value of the house imputed for the sake of the national accounts, I contribute nothing, as I am a guest here. I consume a little water and electricity. Now that has value! If modern plumbing

conveniences were not providing water and I walked with my bucket to the foothills four hundred metres away to collect it from the streams there, it would be worthless. That's what the international economic system says.

If I were to take commercially-prepared, pre-packaged food from the fridge, I would be economically consumptive. But I choose to eat feijoas, tamarillos and apples from the domestic garden, items of no value. All in all, I seem to be having a very worthless sort of day – like the beach, the birds, and the clear and unpolluted skies.

— *From Counting for Nothing by Marilyn Waring*

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What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasures, on the diversity and the cost of ornaments with which ye deck yourselves? If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty. In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye possess. From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches. Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory! Would that ye could perceive it!

Nay! By Him Who holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of the entire creation! Nowhere doth your true and abiding glory reside except in your firm adherence unto the precepts of God,

your wholehearted observance of His laws, your resolution to see that they do not remain unenforced, and to pursue steadfastly the right course.

— *Bahá'u'lláh*

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Injustice No More

The world of existence is progressive. It is subject to development and growth. Consider how great has been the progress in this radiant century. Civilisation has unfolded. Nations have developed. Industrialism and jurisprudence have expanded. Sciences, inventions and discoveries have increased. All of these show that the world of existence is continually progressing and developing; and therefore, assuredly, the virtues characterising the maturity of man must, likewise, expand and grow.

— *'Abdu'l-Bahá*

A small minded man weighs
what can hinder him
and fearful, dares not set to work.

Difficulties cause the
average man
to leave of
what he has begun.

A truly great man
does not slacken
in carrying out
what he has begun,
although obstacles
tower
thousand-fold
until he has succeeded.

— *Indian Wisdom*

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It Makes a Difference

As the old man walked
the beach at dawn
he noticed a young man
ahead of him picking up
starfish and flinging them
into the sea.
Catching up with the youth
he asked him
why he was doing this.
The answer was that
the stranded starfish
would die if left until the morning sun.
But the beach goes on

for miles and there
are millions of starfish
countered the other.
How can your effort make any difference?
The young man looked
at the starfish in his hand
and threw it to the safety
of the waves.

It makes a difference to this one.
Compassion is not simply a sense
of sympathy or caring for the
person suffering, not simply a
warmth of heart toward the person
before you, or a sharp clarity of
recognition of their needs and pain
it is also a sustained and practical
determination to do whatever is
possible and necessary to help
alleviate their suffering.
— *Sogyal Rinpoche*

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Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side. Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature: look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord, the light of Whose grace hath embosomed the whole earth and all who do well thereon, and in the plenitude of Whose bounty are immersed both the wise and the ignorant. Stranger and friend alike are seated at the table of His favour. Even as the believer, the denier who turneth away from God doth at the same time cup his hands and drink from the sea of His bestowals.
— *'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*