



## The Beautiful Baha'i Promise of a Poverty-Free Future

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The Baha'i teachings bring a beautiful vision and promise of a poverty-free future to humanity. That promise, though, begins with a call for justice.

When Baha'u'llah wrote his Tablets to the Kings and Rulers of the world from exile in Adrianople in the mid-1800's, he told those leaders that God held them primarily responsible for the lamentable conditions of their societies; he censured and condemned their greed, warfare and oppression; and instructed those with civil authority and power to institute a reign of justice, to reduce their armaments, to cease fighting wars and to stop laying the economic burdens of their excessive militarism on the impoverished people they ruled:

God hath committed into your hands the reins of the government of the people, that ye may rule with justice over them, safeguard the rights of the downtrodden, and punish the wrongdoers. If ye neglect the duty prescribed unto you by God in His Book, your names shall be numbered with those of the unjust in His sight. Grievous, indeed, will be your error. – *Baha'u'llah, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 191.*

This serious counsel and warning—the first ever from a prophet of God and founder of a major world religion directed to world leaders—then posed a profound question to the kings and rulers:

If ye stay not the hand of the oppressor, if ye fail to safeguard the rights of the downtrodden, what right have ye then to vaunt yourselves among men? 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 treasuries, on the diversity and the cost of the 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! – *Ibid., p. 191.*

That essential question preceded Baha'u'llah's uncompromising commands to the world's rulers:

O Kings of the earth! We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples. Do not rob them to rear palaces for yourselves; nay rather choose for them that which ye choose for yourselves...

O Rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions. Beware lest ye disregard the counsel of the All-Knowing, the Faithful...

Be united, O Kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your people find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. – *Ibid., pp. 92-94.*

When this occurs—and the Baha'i teachings view it as an inevitable, absolute global necessity, as the final stage in the ongoing maturation of the human race—it will dramatically reduce the world's current level of military spending. Estimated in 2014 at \$1.8 trillion US dollars, that enormous expenditure, by itself, could completely eradicate the world's hunger and poverty.

The Baha'i teachings describe the wonderful promise of that divine civilization this way:

This is the time for man to strive and put forth his greatest efforts in spiritual directions. Material civilization has reached an advanced plane, but now there is need of spiritual civilization. Material civilization alone will not satisfy; it cannot meet the conditions and requirements of the present age; its benefits are limited to the world of matter. There is no limitation to the spirit of man, for spirit in itself is progressive, and if the divine civilization be established, the spirit of man will advance. Every developed susceptibility will increase the effectiveness of man. Discoveries of the real will become more and more possible, and the influence of divine guidance will be increasingly recognized. All this is conducive to the divine form of civilization. This is what is meant in the Bible by the descent of the New Jerusalem. The heavenly Jerusalem is none other than divine civilization, and it is now ready. It is to be and shall be organized, and the oneness of humankind will be a visible fact. Humanity will then be brought together as one. The various religions will be united, and different races will be known as one kind. The Orient and Occident will be conjoined, and the banner of international peace will be unfurled. The world shall at last find peace, and the equalities and rights of men shall be established. The capacity of humankind will be tested, and a degree shall be attained where equality is a reality.

All the peoples of the world will enjoy like interests, and the poor shall possess a portion of the comforts of life. Just as the rich are surrounded by their luxuries in palaces, the poor will have at least their comfortable and pleasant places of abode; and just as the wealthy enjoy a variety of food, the needy shall have their necessities and no longer live in poverty. In short, a readjustment of the economic order will come about, the divine Sonship will attract, the Sun of Reality will shine forth, and all phenomenal being will attain a portion. – *Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 101-102.*

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