

**TEXTS THAT PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR INTERFAITH RELATIONS**

***BAHA'I FAITH:***

Excerpts from the *Proclamation of Baha'u'llah*

At one time We address the people of the Torah and summon them unto Him Who is the Revealer of verses, Who hath come from Him Who layeth low the necks of men.... At another, We address the people of the Evangel and say: 'The All-Glorious is come in this Name whereby the Breeze of God hath wafted over all regions.'... At still another, We address the people of the Qur'an saying: 'Fear the All-Merciful, and cavil not at Him through Whom all religions were founded.'... Know thou, moreover, that We have addressed to the Magians Our Tablets, and adorned them with Our Law.... We have revealed in them the essence of all the hints and allusions contained in their Books. The Lord, verily, is the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

O concourse of Christians! We have, on a previous occasion, revealed Ourselves unto you, and ye recognized Me not. This is yet another occasion vouchsafed unto you. This is the Day of God; turn ye unto Him... Verily, He (Jesus) said: 'Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.' In this day, however, We say: Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become quickeners of mankind.

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Excerpt of Baha'u'llah's writings in *Advent of Divine Justice*

O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny.... Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll.

O people of Bahá! Ye are the breezes of spring that are wafted over the world. Through you We have adorned the world of being with the ornament of the knowledge of the Most Merciful. Through you the countenance of the world hath been wreathed in smiles, and the brightness of His light shone forth.

O people of Bahá! The river that is Life indeed hath flowed for your sakes. Quaff ye in My name, despite them that have disbelieved in God, the Lord of Revelation. We have made you to be the hands of Our Cause.

## **JUDAISM:**

Excerpts from the *Hebrew Scriptures*

In the third month after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the Sinai desert. Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the Sinai desert and encamped in the wilderness. Israel encamped there in front of the mountain, and Moses went up to God. The ETERNAL called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My exceptional treasure from among all the peoples. For all the earth is Mine, and you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy people.'" (Exodus 19: 1-6)

And the ETERNAL said to Moses and Aaron: "This is the law of the Passover offering: no foreigner [*ben-neichar*] shall eat of it. But any slave a man has bought may eat of it once he has been circumcised. No bound or hired laborer shall eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house; nor shall you break a bone of it. The whole community of Israel shall offer it. If a stranger [*ger*] who dwells with you would offer the Passover to the ETERNAL, all his males must be circumcised; then he shall be admitted to offer it; he shall then be as a native-born person. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. One Torah [law] shall be for the native and for the stranger who dwells among you [resident alien]. And all the children of Israel did so; as the ETERNAL commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. (Exodus 12: 42-50)

Excerpts from the *Aleinu* prayer concluding each worship service:

It is our duty to praise the Master of all, to exalt the Creator of the universe, Who has not made us like the (other) peoples of the world, nor has placed us like the (other) families of the earth; Who has not made our portion like theirs, nor our destiny like that of all their multitude. *For they worship vanity and emptiness, and pray to a god who can not save.* [N.B.: This last sentence, in italics, is not found in all prayer books today]. Therefore we bow in worship and thank the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, Who extends the heavens and establishes the earth...He is our God, there is none else...

We hope, therefore, the ETERNAL our God, soon to behold Your majestic glory, when the abominations shall be removed from the earth, and the idols utterly destroyed, when the world shall be perfected under the sovereignty of the Almighty, when all humanity will call on Your name, and all the wicked of the earth will turn to You. May all the inhabitants of the world realize and know that to You every knee must bend and every tongue swear loyalty...

For the kingdom is Yours, and to all eternity You will reign in glory, as it is written in Your Torah (Exodus 15:18): "The ETERNAL shall reign forever and ever." And it is said (Zechariah 14:9): "The ETERNAL shall be King over all the earth; on that day the ETERNAL shall be One, and His name One."

## **CHRISTIANITY:**

### Excerpts from the *New Testament*

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified." (Matthew 27: 15-26)

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen Him." (John 14: 1-7)

Therefore, brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling, consider that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses also "was faithful in all God's house." Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken later. Christ, however, was faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope. (Hebrews 3:1-6)

## **ISLAM:**

Excerpts from the *Holy Qur'an*

And We have sent you with the truth to give glad tidings and to warn. You will not be questioned about those who are inmates of Hell. The Jews and Christians will never be pleased with you until you follow their way. Say: "God's guidance alone is true guidance"; for if you give in to their wishes after having received the (Book of) knowledge from God, then none will you have as friend or helper to save you. Those to whom We have sent down the Book, and who read it as it should be read, believe in it truly; but those who deny it will be losers. (Sura 2, *Al-Baqarah*, 119-121)

Neither was Abraham a Jew nor a Christian, but upright and obedient, and not an idolater. Of all men the nearest to Abraham are those who follow him, and then this Prophet and the faithful; and God is the protector of all believers. Some among the people of the Book wish to lead you astray, yet they lead none astray but themselves, though they do not realize. O people of the Book, why do you disbelieve the signs of God having witnessed them yourselves? O people of the Book, why do you mix the false with the true, and hide the truth knowingly? (Sura 3, *Al-Imran*, 67-71)

Fight those people of the Book who do not believe in God and the Last Day, who do not prohibit what God and His Messenger have forbidden, nor accept divine law, until all of them pay protective tax [*jaziyah*] in submission. The Jews say: "Ezra is the son of God"; the Christians say: "Christ is the son of God." That is what they say with their tongues following assertions made by unbelievers before them. May they be damned by God; how perverse are they! They consider their rabbis and monks and the Christ, son of Mary, to be gods apart from God, even though they had been enjoined to worship only one God, for there is no god but He. Too holy is He for what they ascribe to Him! They wish to extinguish the light of God by uttering blasphemies; but God will not have it so, for He wills to perfect His light, however the unbelievers be averse. It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the true faith in order to make it superior to other systems of belief, even though the idolaters may not like it. O believers, many rabbis and priests devour the possessions of others wrongfully, and keep men away from the path of God. (Sura 9, *At-Tawbeh*, 29-34)

O believers, do not hold Jews and Christians as your allies. They are allies of one another; and anyone who makes them his friends is surely one of them... Your only friends are God and His Messenger, and those who believe and are steadfast in devotion, who pay the zakat and bow in homage (before God). And those who take God and His Prophet and the faithful as their friends are indeed men of God, who will surely be victorious. (Sura 5, *Al-Ma'idah*, 51, 55-56)