

ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE (Shoghi Effendi -1938)

A RECTITUDE OF CONDUCT

1 *How great, therefore, how staggering the responsibility that must*
2 *weigh upon the present generation of the American believers, at this*
3 *early stage in their spiritual and administrative evolution, **to weed out,***
4 ***by every means in their power, those faults, habits, and tendencies***
5 ***which they have inherited from their own nation,** and to cultivate,*
6 *patiently and prayerfully, those distinctive qualities and characteristics*
7 *that are so indispensable to their effective participation in the great*
8 *redemptive work of their Faith.*

9 Incapable as yet, in view of the restricted size of their community and the limited
10 influence it now wields, of producing any marked effect on the great mass of their
11 countrymen, let them focus their attention, for the present,

- 12 • ***on their own selves,***
- 13 • ***their own individual needs,***
- 14 • ***their own personal deficiencies and weaknesses,***

15 ever mindful that every intensification of effort on their part will better equip them for
16 the time when they will be called upon to eradicate in their turn such evil tendencies
17 from the lives and the hearts of the entire body of their fellow-citizens.

18
19 Nor must they overlook the fact that the World Order, whose basis they, as the advance-
20 guard of the future Bahá'í generations of their countrymen, are now laboring to
21 establish, can never be reared unless and until the generality of the people to which they
22 belong has been already purged from the divers ills, whether social or political, that now
23 so severely afflict it.

24
25 Surveying as a whole the most pressing needs of this community, attempting to estimate
26 the more serious deficiencies by which it is being handicapped in the discharge of its
27 task, and ever bearing in mind the nature of that still greater task with which it will be
28 forced to wrestle in the future, **I feel it my duty to lay special stress upon, and draw**
29 **the special and urgent attention of**

- 30 • *the entire body of the American believers,*
- 31 • *be they young or old,*
- 32 • *white or colored,*
- 33 • *teachers or administrators,*
- 34 • *veterans or newcomers,*

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35 to what I firmly believe are the **essential requirements for the success** of the tasks
36 which are now claiming their undivided attention.

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38 Great as is the importance of fashioning the outward instruments, and *of perfecting the*
39 *administrative agencies*, which they can utilize for the prosecution of their dual task
40 under the Seven Year Plan; *vital and urgent as are the campaigns which they are*
41 *initiating, the schemes and projects which they are devising, and the funds which they are*
42 *raising, for the efficient conduct of both the Teaching and Temple work,*

43

44 **the imponderable, the spiritual, factors, which are bound up with their own**
45 **individual and inner lives, and with which are associated their human and social**
46 **relationships,**

- 47 • *are no less urgent and vital, and*
- 48 • *demand constant scrutiny,*
- 49 • *continual self-examination and*
- 50 • *heart-searching on their part,*
- 51 • *lest their value be impaired or their vital necessity be obscured or forgotten.*

52 *Of these spiritual prerequisites of success, which constitute the bedrock*
53 *on which the security of all teaching plans, Temple projects, and*
54 *financial schemes, must ultimately rest, **the following stand out as***
55 ***preeminent and vital, which the members of the American Bahá'í***
56 ***community will do well to ponder.***

57 Upon the extent to which these **basic requirements are met**, and **the manner in**
58 **which the American believers fulfill them in their**

- 59 1. *individual lives,*
- 60 2. *administrative activities, and*
- 61 3. *social relationships,*

62 **must depend the measure of the manifold blessings which the All-Bountiful**
63 **Possessor can vouchsafe to them all.**

64 ***These requirements are none other than a high sense of moral rectitude***
65 ***in their social and administrative activities, absolute chastity in their***
66 ***individual lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their dealings***
67 ***with peoples of a different race, class, creed, or color.***

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- 68 1. The first is specially, though not exclusively, directed to their **elected**
69 **representatives**, whether local, regional, or national, who, in their capacity as the
70 custodians and members of the nascent institutions of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, are
71 shouldering the chief responsibility in laying an unassailable foundation for that
72 Universal House of Justice which, as its title implies, is to be the exponent and
73 guardian of that Divine Justice which can alone insure the security of, and
74 establish the reign of law and order in, a strangely disordered world.
75
- 76 2. The **second is mainly and directly concerned with the Bahá'í youth**, who can
77 contribute so decisively to the virility, the purity, and the driving force of the life
78 of the Bahá'í community, and upon whom must depend the future orientation of
79 its destiny, and the complete unfoldment of the potentialities with which God has
80 endowed it.
- 81 **3. The third should be the immediate, the universal, and the chief concern of**
82 **all and sundry members of the Bahá'í community**, of whatever age, rank,
83 experience, class, or color, as all, **with no exception**, must face its challenging
84 implications, and **none can claim, however much he may have progressed**
85 **along this line, to have completely discharged the stern responsibilities**
86 **which it inculcates.**
- 87 • ***A rectitude of conduct, an abiding sense of undeviating justice***, unobscured by
88 the demoralizing influences which a corruption-ridden political life so strikingly
89 manifests;
 - 90 • ***a chaste, pure, and holy life***, unsullied and unclouded by the indecencies, the
91 vices, the false standards, which an inherently deficient moral code tolerates,
92 perpetuates, and fosters;
 - 93 • ***a fraternity freed from that cancerous growth of racial prejudice***, which is
94 eating into the vitals of an already debilitated society—

95 these are the ideals which the American believers must, from now on, individually
96 and through concerted action, strive to promote, in both their private and public
97 lives, ideals which are the chief propelling forces that can most effectively accelerate
98 the march of their institutions, plans, and enterprises, that can guard the honor and
99 integrity of their Faith, and subdue any obstacles that may confront it in the future.

THIS RECTITUDE OF CONDUCT, WITH ITS IMPLICATIONS OF

- 100
- 101 • *justice,*
 - 102 • *equity,*
 - 103 • *truthfulness,*
 - 104 • *honesty,*
 - 105 • *fair-mindedness,*
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- 107 • *reliability, and*
108 • *trustworthiness,*
109 *must distinguish every phase of the life of the Bahá'í community.*
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110 “The companions of God,” Bahá'u'lláh Himself has declared, “are, in
111 this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They
112 must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and
113 perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit
114 by their example.” “I swear by Him Who is the Most Great Ocean!”

115 *He again affirms,*

116 “Within the very breath of such souls as are pure and sanctified
117 far-reaching potentialities are hidden. So great are these
118 potentialities that they exercise their influence upon all created
119 things.” “He is the true servant of God,”

120 *He, in another passage has written,*

121 “who, in this day, were he to pass through cities of silver and gold,
122 would not deign to look upon them, and whose heart would remain
123 pure and undefiled from whatever things can be seen in this world,
124 be they its goods or its treasures. I swear by the Sun of Truth! The
125 breath of such a man is endowed with potency, and his words with
126 attraction.”

127 *“By Him Who shineth above the Dayspring of sanctity!”* He, still more emphatically, has
128 revealed, *“If the whole earth were to be converted into silver and gold, no man who can be*
129 *said to have truly ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude would deign to regard it,*
130 *much less to seize and keep it. ...*

131
132 *They who dwell within the Tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of*
133 *everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands, and seize*
134 *unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be.*

135 *The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to*
136 *truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to*

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137 *the will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to*
138 *array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament*
139 *of holy and goodly deeds.”*

140

141 *“We have admonished all the loved ones of God,”* He insists, *“to take heed lest the hem of*
142 *Our sacred vesture be smirched with the mire of unlawful deeds, or be stained with the*
143 *dust of reprehensible conduct.”*

144

145 *“Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá,”* He thus exhorts them, *“This, verily, is the*
146 *commandment which this wronged One hath given unto you, and the first choice of His*
147 *unrestrained will for every one of you.”*

148

149 *“A good character,”* He explains, *“is, verily, the best mantle for men from God. With it He*
150 *adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By My life! The light of a good character surpasseth*
151 *the light of the sun and the radiance thereof.”*

152

153 *“One righteous act,”* He, again, has written, *“is endowed with a potency that can so elevate*
154 *the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens. It can tear every bond*
155 *asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished.... Be*
156 *pure, O people of God, be pure; be righteous, be righteous.... Say: O people of God! That*
157 *which can insure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on*
158 *earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as clear and*
159 *manifest as the sun. These hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as*
160 *are acceptable in His sight. Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to*
161 *his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence*
162 *from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.”*

163

164 *“The betterment of the world,”* is yet another statement, *“can be accomplished through*
165 *pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct.”* *“Be fair to yourselves*
166 *and to others,”* He thus counseleth them, *“that the evidences of justice may be revealed*
167 *through your deeds among Our faithful servants.”*

168

169 *“Equity,”* He also has written, *“is the most fundamental among human virtues. The*
170 *evaluation of all things must needs depend upon it.”* And again, *“Observe equity in your*
171 *judgment, ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of*
172 *the characteristics that distinguish man’s station.”*

173 *“Beautify your tongues, O people,”* He further admonishes them, *“with truthfulness, and*
174 *adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not*
175 *treacherously with anyone. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the*
176 *emblems of His generosity amidst His people.”*

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178 *“Let your eye be chaste,”* is yet another counsel, *“your hand faithful, your tongue truthful,*
179 *and your heart enlightened.”*

180

181 *“Be an ornament to the countenance of truth,”* is yet another admonition, *“a crown to the*
182 *brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of*
183 *mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue.”*

184

185 *“Let truthfulness and courtesy be your adorning,”* is still another admonition; *“suffer not*
186 *yourselves to be deprived of the robe of forbearance and justice, that the sweet savors of*
187 *holiness may be wafted from your hearts upon all created things. Say: Beware, O people of*
188 *Bahá, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds. Strive that ye*
189 *may be enabled to manifest to the peoples of the earth the signs of God, and to mirror forth*
190 *His commandments. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most*
191 *men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can*
192 *distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed*
193 *upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts*
194 *prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.”*

195
196 *“O army of God!”* writes ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *“Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the*
197 *Blessed Beauty—may my life be a sacrifice to His loved ones—ye must conduct yourselves*
198 *in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other*
199 *souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a center of attraction by reason*
200 *of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and*
201 *loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry*
202 *out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behavior, his*
203 *conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá’ís.’ Not*
204 *until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and*
205 *Testament of God.”*

207 *“The most vital duty, in this day,” He, moreover, has written, “is to*
208 *purify your characters, to correct your manners, and improve your*
209 *conduct. The beloved of the Merciful must show forth such character*
210 *and conduct among His creatures, that the fragrance of their holiness*
211 *may be shed upon the whole world, and may quicken the dead,*
212 *inasmuch as the purpose of the Manifestation of God and the dawning*
213 *of the limitless lights of the Invisible is to educate the souls of men,*
214 *and refine the character of every living man....”*

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215 *“Truthfulness,”* He asserts, *“is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness*
216 *progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy*
217 *attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired.”*

218

219 **Such a rectitude of conduct**

220 1. **must manifest itself**, with ever-increasing potency,

- 221 • in every verdict which the elected representatives of the Bahá'í community,
222 • in whatever capacity they may find themselves, may be called upon to
223 pronounce.

224 2. It **must be constantly reflected**

- 225 • in the business dealings of all its members,
226 • in their domestic lives,
227 • in all manner of employment, and in any service they may, in the future,
228 render their government or people

229 3. **It must be exemplified**

- 230 • in the conduct of all Bahá'í electors,
231 • when exercising their sacred rights and functions.

232 4. **It must characterize** the attitude of every loyal believer towards

- 233 • nonacceptance of political posts,
234 • nonidentification with political parties,
235 • nonparticipation in political controversies, and
236 • nonmembership in political organizations and ecclesiastical institutions.

237 5. **It must reveal itself** in the uncompromising adherence of all, whether young or
238 old, to the clearly enunciated and fundamental principles laid down by
239 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His addresses, and to the laws and ordinances revealed by
240 Bahá'u'lláh in His Most Holy Book.

241 6. **It must be demonstrated** in the impartiality of every defender of the Faith
242 against its enemies, in his fair-mindedness in recognizing any merits that enemy
243 may possess, and in his honesty in discharging any obligations he may have
244 towards him.

245 7. **It must constitute the brightest ornament of the life**, the pursuits, the exertions,
246 and the utterances of every Bahá'í teacher, whether laboring at home or abroad,
247 whether in the front ranks of the teaching force, or occupying a less active and
248 responsible position.

249 8. **It must be made the hallmark** of that numerically small, yet intensely dynamic
250 and highly responsible body of the elected national representatives of every
251 Bahá'í community, which constitutes the sustaining pillar, and the sole
252 instrument for the election, in every community, of that Universal House whose

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253 very name and title, as ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, symbolizes that rectitude of
254 conduct which is its highest mission to safeguard and enforce.

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256 So great and transcendental is this principle of Divine justice, a principle that must be
257 regarded as the crowning distinction of all Local and National Assemblies, in their
258 capacity as forerunners of the Universal House of Justice, that Bahá'u'lláh Himself
259 subordinates His personal inclination and wish to the all-compelling force of its
260 demands and implications.

261
262 *"God is My witness!"* He thus explains, *"were it not contrary to the Law of God, I would*
263 *have kissed the hand of My would-be murderer, and would cause him to inherit My earthly*
264 *goods. I am restrained, however, by the binding Law laid down in the Book, and am Myself*
265 *bereft of all worldly possessions."*

266
267 *"Know thou, of a truth,"* He significantly affirms, *"these great oppressions that have*
268 *befallen the world are preparing it for the advent of the Most Great Justice."*

269
270 *"Say,"* He again asserts, *"He hath appeared with that Justice wherewith mankind hath*
271 *been adorned, and yet the people are, for the most part, asleep."*

272
273 *"The light of men is Justice,"* He moreover states, *"Quench it not with the contrary winds of*
274 *oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men."*

275
276 *"No radiance,"* He declares, *"can compare with that of justice. The organization of the*
277 *world and the tranquillity of mankind depend upon it."*

278 *"O people of God!"* He exclaims, *"That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by*
279 *two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world."*

280
281 *"Justice and equity,"* is yet another assertion, *"are two guardians for the protection of*
282 *man. They have appeared arrayed in their mighty and sacred names to maintain the world*
283 *in uprightness and protect the nations."*

284
285 *"Bestir yourselves, O people,"* is His emphatic warning, *"in anticipation of the days of*
286 *Divine justice, for the promised hour is now come. Beware lest ye fail to apprehend its*
287 *import, and be accounted among the erring."*

288 *"The day is approaching,"* He similarly has written, *"when the faithful will behold the*
289 *daystar of justice shining in its full splendor from the dayspring of glory."*

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291 *"The shame I was made to bear,"* He significantly remarks, *"hath uncovered the glory with*
292 *which the whole of creation had been invested, and through the cruelties I have endured,*
293 *the daystar of justice hath manifested itself, and shed its splendor upon men."*

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295 *“The world,”* He again has written, *“is in great turmoil, and the minds of its people are in a*
296 *state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them*
297 *with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto*
298 *them at all times and under all conditions.”*

299

300 And again, *“There can be no doubt whatever that if the daystar of justice, which the clouds*
301 *of tyranny have obscured, were to shed its light upon men, the face of the earth would be*
302 *completely transformed.”*

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“God be praised!” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in His turn, exclaims, “The sun of justice hath risen above the horizon of Bahá’u’lláh. For in His Tablets the foundations of such a justice have been laid as no mind hath, from the beginning of creation, conceived.”

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“The canopy of existence,” He further explains, “resteth upon the pole of justice, and not of forgiveness, and the life of mankind dependeth on justice and not on forgiveness.”

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Small wonder, therefore, that the Author of the Bahá’í Revelation should have chosen to associate the name and title of that House, which is to be the crowning glory of His administrative institutions, not with forgiveness but with justice, to have made justice the only basis and the permanent foundation of His Most Great Peace, and to have proclaimed it in His Hidden Words as *“the best beloved of all things”* in His sight.

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It is to the American believers, particularly, that I feel urged to direct this fervent plea to ponder in their hearts the implications of this moral rectitude, and to uphold, with heart and soul and uncompromisingly, both individually and collectively, this sublime standard—a standard of which justice is so essential and potent an element.