



MESSAGE *of* HOPE

*Prayers and Inspiration
from The Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders*



■ HOPE – The Common Denominator

What can the great religions agree upon? Is there a common message that they can give to humanity? The reflections and prayers that follow in this booklet, representing six major religious traditions, share one key theme as a common denominator of all religions - **Hope**.

Hope is required because the potential for despair and lack of meaning is an intrinsic feature of life. We require teaching, vision and a good dose of optimism to orient our lives towards higher purpose, to guide us through the challenges and difficulties of life and to protect us from the many evils that humans are capable of enacting.

Our traditions share an optimistic view of life. Life has purpose. The human person can live in a way that is noble, elevating and that allows him or her to rise above the despair that the daily encounter with the outward appearance of 'reality' can generate. One can find meaning and **hope** through deeper understanding and a teaching of proper living.

What is equally constant is the recognition that we, humans, must take charge of our lives and live them according to the highest ideals in order for hope to be maintained. The key to **hope** is thus in our hands. Even as we rely on providence and God's plans for the present and the future, our ultimate happiness stands in direct proportion to the lives we lead and the values we practise.



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■ Messages of Hope

from the **Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders**

The following reflections on **hope** and the accompanying prayers suggest profound commonalities, even between religions that have very different understandings of reality. We point to the following commonalities as lessons that are common to our traditions which are prerequisites for hope:



A. We must remember we are not alone. For most traditions this is a recollection of God. But it is also a recollection of our fellow human beings and of all creation. The insight that we are all interconnected, part of a larger being, or vision or plan, is a fundamental insight that our religions share. That is a source of **hope**.

B. Greed and selfishness are the great vices, detaching us from the vision of wholeness. Their fruit is isolation and despair. We suffer from these today as great illnesses of our society.

C. Hatred and intolerance will increase our isolation, causing us to lose sight of the All.

D. The great positive commandment is to love or have compassion. Practising it is a source of joy, meaning and **hope**.

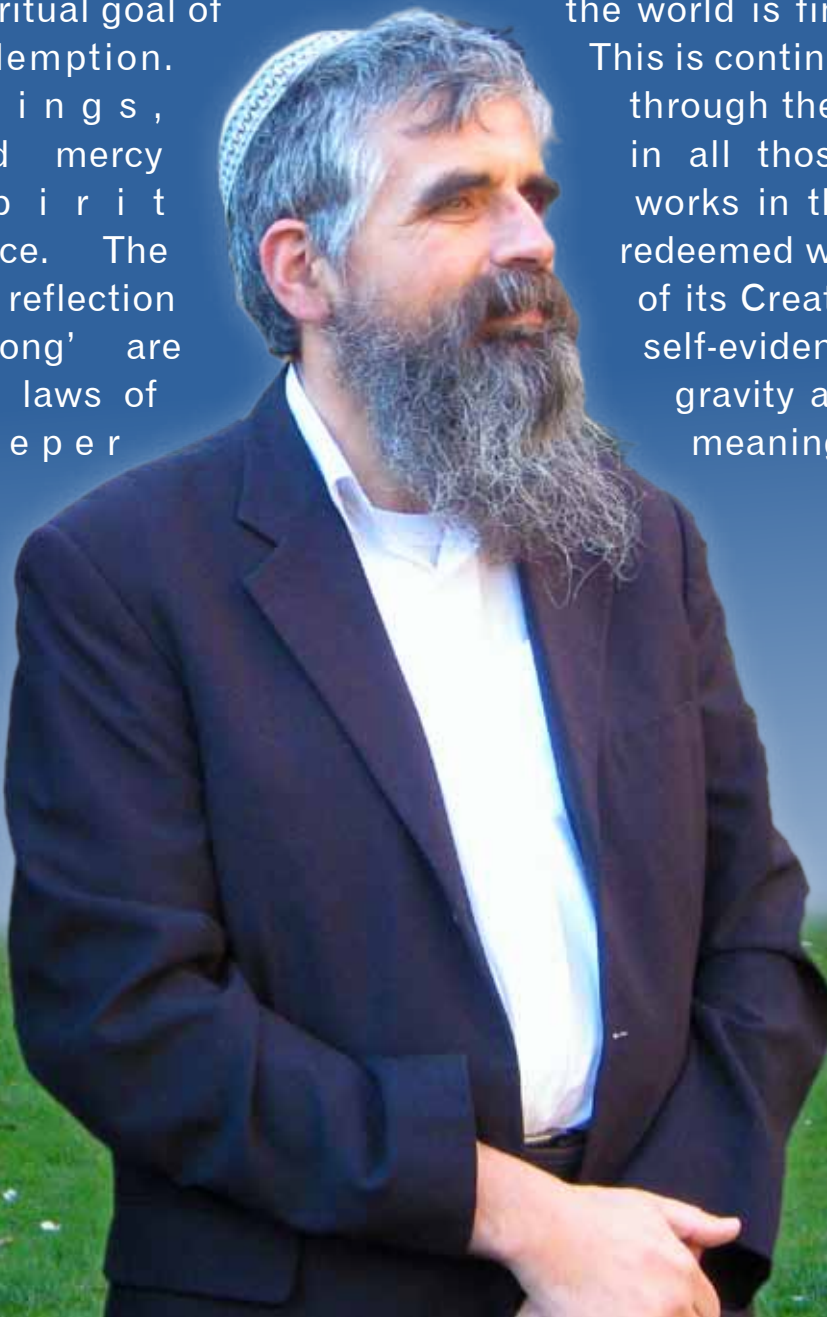
Today's humanity needs **hope** as much and even more so than previous eras. Rapid changes in lifestyle lead to destabilisation and require us to discover new balances and to retrieve sources of meaning. In the spirit of a globalized world, religions too need to offer their deepest wisdom for the well being of all of humanity. Specific moments of concern about the stability and continued existence of our planet are moments to recall that while all life is transitory, its transitory nature must be appreciated from a higher context that endows it with purpose and meaning. We must all live our changing and transient lives with a hope that redefines our life, providing it with meaning, direction and a healthy orientation for the good of All.

■ A Jewish Message of Hope

Contributed by Rabbi Yuval Cherlow

Rabbi Yuval Cherlow is head of the Hesder Yeshiva of Petach Tikvah. He is a graduate of Yeshivat Har Etzion and was ordained as a Rabbi by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Rabbi Cherlow is one of the founders and leaders of the Tzohar Institute, set up after the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin to bridge the secular and religious sectors of Israeli society. Tzohar set itself the goal of returning the figure of the Rabbi to the centre of Israeli discourse, and making the Rabbi the one to whom anyone can turn; bringing him 'out of the Beit Midrash and making him available to the mainstream of Israeli society'. He currently serves as the head of the Religious and Ethics Centre in Jerusalem.

The belief in the coming of the messiah inspires great optimism about the future destiny of the world. As difficult as the path may be, we believe in a positive outcome, a light at the end of the tunnel, and human history is measured by our progress towards this end, which we call 'redemption'. The spiritual goal of redemption. The world is finding the light and reaching beings, and mercy spirit place. This is contingent on the actions of human a reflection 'wrong' are the laws of deeper through the application of moral justice in all those areas where the human works in the world, making it a better redeemed world will be a world set right, of its Creator, a world where 'right' and self-evident truths, as self-evident as gravity and mathematics. This is the meaning of Redemption.



In picture: Rabbi Yuval Cherlow (Israel)



Prayer for Peace

Lord of Peace, Divine Ruler, to whom peace belongs!

Master of Peace, Creator of all things!

May it be thy will to put an end to war and bloodshed on earth, and to spread a great and wonderful peace over the whole world, so that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Help us and save us all, and let us cling tightly to the virtue of peace. Let there be a truly great peace between every person and their fellow, and between husband and wife, and let there be no discord between people even in their hearts.

Let us never shame any person on earth, great or small. May it be granted unto us to fulfill Thy Commandment to "Love thy neighbor as thy-self," with all our hearts and souls and bodies and possessions.

And let it come to pass in our time as it is writ-ten, "And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid. I will drive the wild beasts from the land, and neither shall the sword go through your land.

God who is peace, bless us with peace !!!

(Rabbi Nathan of Breslov, 1780-1844)

■ A Christian Message of Hope

Contributed by Metropolitan Nikitas Lulias

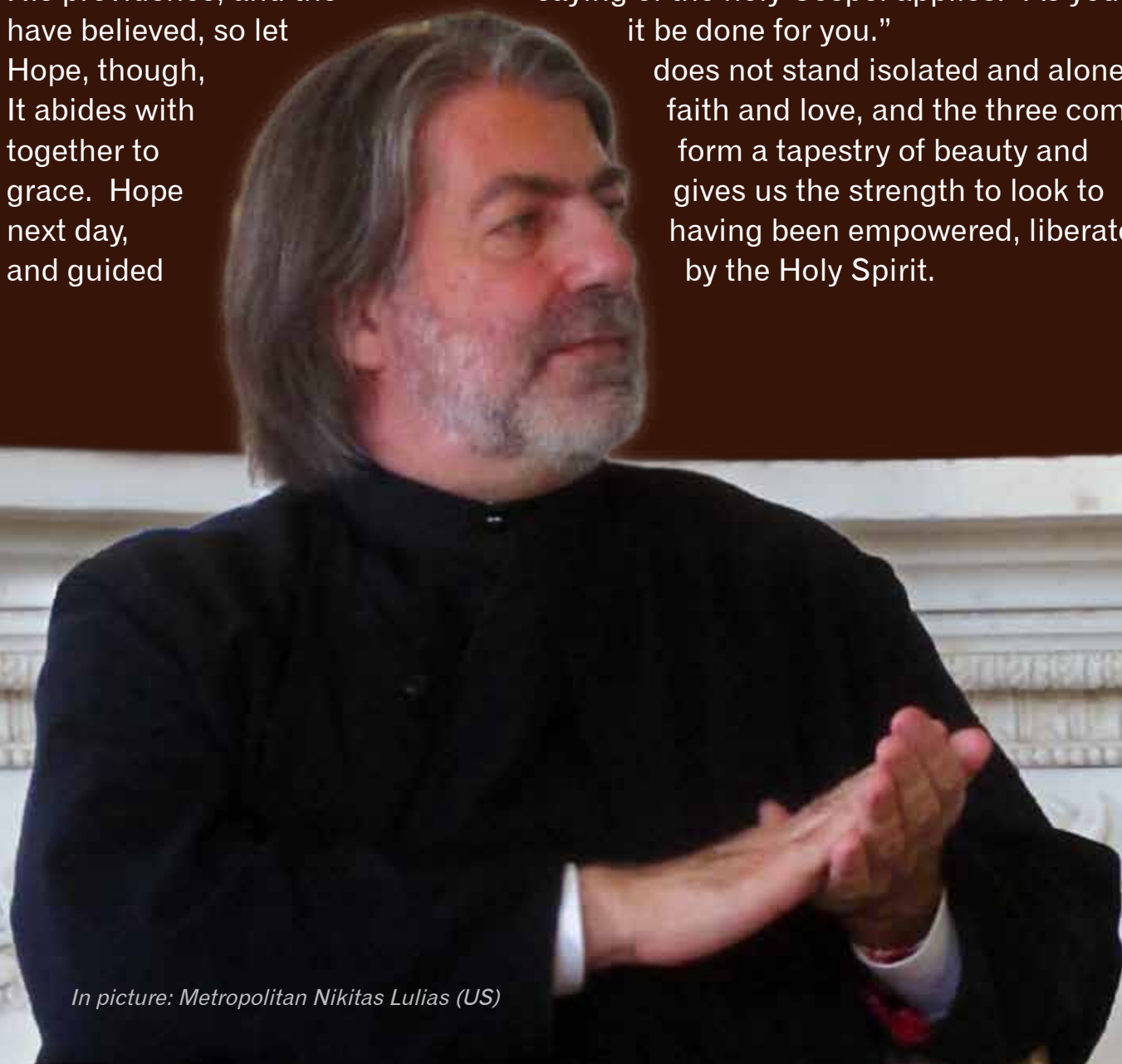
His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas (Lulias) of Dardanellia was the inaugural Metropolitan of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia and is now serving as Director of the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute. Metropolitan Nikitas Lulias is the permanent representative of Patriarch Bartholomew to the Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders.

Christianity often defines itself as a faith tradition of hope, exemplified when St. Paul reminds the faithful, “You shall not be as those who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It is a message and a theme that guides, directs and inspires people to look to each and every day in a positive manner. Hope inspires courage to abide in our hearts and it dispels the fears that cast dark shadows in our minds.

A wise elder once said: “Blessed is the man who has a living hope in God; he shows faith. Trust, glory, and honor to Him. God is then obliged to keep him as His providence, and the saying of the holy Gospel applies: “As you have believed, so let it be done for you.”

Hope, though,
It abides with
together to
grace. Hope
next day,
and guided

does not stand isolated and alone.
faith and love, and the three come
form a tapestry of beauty and
gives us the strength to look to
having been empowered, liberated,
by the Holy Spirit.



In picture: Metropolitan Nikitas Lulias (US)



O God of hope, You are the one who has shown us the light of day, affirming Your promise that You will not leave us in darkness, in isolation, and alone. You are the God Who sent Your messengers throughout the ages to remind us that Your word is true. We now call upon You and ask that You show Your love us, as we have placed our trust and hope in You.

It was You Who saved Noah from the flood because of his obedience to Your command and You liberated the children of Israel from the bondage of slavery. In each generation You anointed with grace all those who called upon Your name. To those who reached out to You, You responded and answered the silent prayers of their hearts. We know that hope and faith healed the lame and the blind in days of old, as they appealed to You the only true physician of souls and bodies. We, too, now reach out to You in the same way and ask that because of our own faith, hope and love we are empowered by You, so we walk a new path. Allow Your strength become ours so we can meet the challenges of life that so often leave us hopeless and empty.

You affirmed to us, through the Apostle Paul, that as we mature in faith, we learn to trust and hope only in You and not in the vanity of this world. Grant that Your Spirit of Truth will abide in our hearts, so we may live according to Your will. Liberate those who are troubled by unclean spirits; sail with those at sea; accompany the wayfarers; plead for the widow; shield the orphans; free the captives; heal the afflicted. O God, look after those who are on trial, or condemned to the mines, or to exile and bitter slavery, or in any way hard pressed, in want, in extremity, and all those who stand in need of Your boundless compassion; those who love us as well as those who hate us, and those who have empowered us, to pray on their behalf. Be mindful, Lord our God, of all Your people, and lavish on all Your rich mercy, for we have no other hope but You.

■ A Muslim Message of Hope

Contributed by Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric

Dr. Mustafa Ceric is the outgoing Reis-ul-Ulema - President of the Council of Ulema - in Bosnia-Herzegovina, making him the Grand Mufti.

“Hope (raja’) for Heaven is the core of Islamic eschatology as against Fear (khawf) from Hell. But the idea of hope and fear in Islam has its wordly meaning as well. It is here on earth that humanity hope for and fear from, and it is now that we as human beings should say what is our hope for and what is our fear from. Speaking from my personal experience as a survivor of genocide in Bosnia by the end of the twentieth century of Europe, I want to say that my Muslim hope is for the Art of Peace against the Art of War, my Muslim hope is for a the Just Peace against the Just War, and my Muslim hope is for the Holy Peace against the Holy War. Thus, if the Message of Hope project is to promote these three values of hope: the Art of Peace, the Just Peace, and the Holy Peace, I will participate with all my capacity!”



In picture: Grand Mufti Mustafa Ceric (Bosnia-Herzegovina)



Oh, God

Do not let success deceive us
Nor failure takes us to despair!
Always remind us that failure is a temptation
That precedes success!

Oh, God

Teach us that tolerance
Is the highest degree of power
And the desire for revenge
The first sign of weakness!

Oh, God

If you deprive us of our property,
Give us hope!
If you grant us with success,
Give us also the will to overcome defeat!
If you take from us the blessing of health,
Provide us with the blessing of faith!

Oh, God

If we sin against people,
Give us the strength of apology!
And if people sin against us,
Give us the strength of forgiveness!

Oh, God

If we forget Thee,
Do not forget us!

Oh, God

May grief become hope!
May revenge become justice!
May mother's tears become prayers!
That Srebrenica* never happens again!
To anyone, anywhere!

*The Srebrenica massacre, also known as the Srebrenica genocide, refers to the July 1995 killing, during the Bosnian War, of more than 8,000 Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), mainly men and boys, in and around the town of Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by units of the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) under the command of General Ratko Mladić. The mass murder was described by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as the worst crime on European soil since the Second World War.

■ A Buddhist Message of Hope

Contributed by Ven. Prof. Jinwol Sunim

The Venerable Jinwol Sunim is the President of United Religions Initiative of Korea, Dean of Gwanyeong Buddhist College in Cheongju, Korea, an Executive Council Member of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, and Professor of Buddhist Studies at the Seoul Graduate School of Buddhism.

Buddhism offers a vision that is full of hope, a hope based in the fundamental goodness of human being. It teaches us to fully appreciate life and to live more vividly and consciously. Buddhism reminds us that all things are in reality impermanent, interdependent and empty of Self. It teaches us that we all have the potential to grow in wisdom and the ability to love and it gives us the tools to do so. It invites all of us--Buddhist and non-Buddhist-- to make each day a new start and to become more wise, compassionate and humane in the way we live in this world. The message of hope in Buddhism is that human beings have the ability to overcome greed and to come to be content.



In picture: Ven. Prof. Jinwol Sunim (Korea)



***In Buddhist prayers,
we may call upon ourselves to reach our own potential:***

Let none deceive another,
Or despise any being in any state.
Let none through anger or ill-will
Wish harm upon another.
Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings;
Radiating kindness over the entire world:
Spreading upwards to the skies,
And downwards to the depths;
Outwards and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.

(Metta Sutta, trans. by the Amaravati Sangha)

■ A Hindu Message of Hope

Contributed by Swami Amarananda

Swami Amarananda is the President of the Centre Védantique in Geneva. Shortly after receiving a Civil Engineering degree, he joined the Order of Ramakrishna in 1966. He sat on the Committee of World Faiths Development Dialogue (1998-2000), and the Interreligious Platform, Geneva since its inception. Swami Amarananda participated in European peace meetings under the auspices of Sant'Egidio and the Third and Fourth Parliaments of World's Religions. His printed works include Stories from Vedanta, Views from the Vedantic Window (in press), drama texts for use by children, and Biographie de Ramakrishna (co-author). He participated in the Fourth & Fifth Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders Meeting in Haifa and Galilee (2009 & 2012).

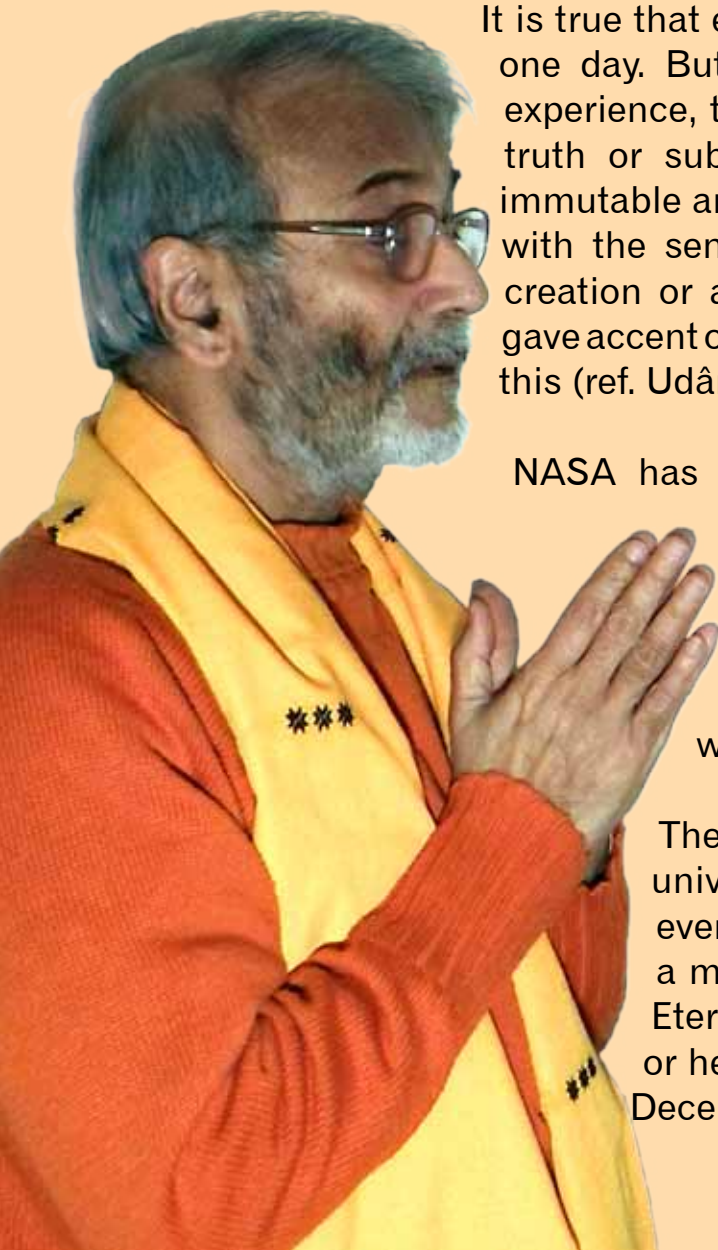
There have been numerous prophecies of doomsday across traditions in the last few thousand of years. All of them, as interpreted by most theologians, have been proved wrong.

It is true that everything formed or created will disintegrate one day. But Vedanta asserts, on the basis of mystical experience, that the essence of everything is the ultimate truth or substance which is eternal, uncomposed and immutable and which defies all attempts of being grasped with the senses and the mind. So there is no absolute creation or absolute annihilation. Even the Buddha who gave accent on the continual becoming of things proclaimed this (ref. Udâna-Sutta 8.3, pronounced at Jetavana).

NASA has published the reasons which clearly show that the doomsday prophecy regarding the 21st December 2012 is baseless and born of superstition. Even Mayan scholars agree that there is nothing in Mayan literature which speaks of an immediate destruction of the world.

The Eternal has created or projected this universe. Its destruction (for the purpose of eventual restructuring) will be accomplished in a manner known only to the cosmic mind or the Eternal. No authentic mystic has yet declared his or her intuition about the end of the world on 21st December 2012.

In picture: Swami Amarananda (Switzerland)





But human beings themselves are slowly destroying this beautiful world through three things—through hyper-pollution associated with hyper-industrialisation, through unbridled ‘affluenza’ contaminating millions of human beings who are totally selfish and refractory to the situation of the hungry and the undernourished, and through hyper-breeding. So we should get away from the psychosis of the doomsday and address ourselves, with hope, courage, and energy, to the task of combating hyper-pollution, ‘hyper-affluenza’, and the population boom.

We give our vision by slightly adapting a poem of Poet Tagore from his Gitanjali, which brought him the Nobel Prize 99 years ago:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where the world has not been fragmented by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the stream of reason has not lost its way into the desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, Father, let all countries awake!

Vedic Prayers:

SAMGACCHADHVAM SAMVADADHVAM SAM VO MANAAMSI JAANATAAM
DEVAA BHAAGAM YATHAA PUURVE SAMJAANAANAA UPAASATE

--RGVEDA 10.191.2

SAMAANII VA AKUUTIH SAMAANAA HRDAYAANI VAH
SAMAANAM ASTU VO MANO YATHAA VAH SUSAHAASATI

--RGVEDA 10.191.4

Translation:

Let us assemble, let us speak with one voice,
Let us come to know our minds together,
Let us share together, like holy beings of the past, material
things,

Unite our intentions, let our hearts be inseparable,
Let our minds be as one mind,
So that a grand unity becomes accomplished.

■ A Sikh Message of Hope

Contributed by Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh

A civil engineer by profession, Mohinder Singh is the chairman of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha in Birmingham, England. A strong proponent of interreligious dialogue, Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh is a member of the European Council of Religious Leaders and an advisor to the Sikh Heritage Trust. Bhai Sahib is featured in the picture below.

Ideals / Vision of Hope

In the Sikh Dharam we believe that making Prophecies is not wise, because God, the Doer of all and Creator of everything, possesses the ability and prerogative to change His Will at any moment.

In the Sikh Dharam, each supplication ends with the prayer: *‘Nanak naam chardi kala, tere bhane sarbat da bhallā’*.

‘Nanak nam chardi kala...’. Nanak is the first Sikh Guru (1469- 1530) who emphasised the living of a worthy life based on attuning oneself to *naam*, a manifestation of God’s presence, which dwells within and interconnects all creation. By fostering the habit of repeating, contemplating and acting upon *naam* or ‘God’s name’, the universal spark of the Divine within us is kindled, aligning mind and body to serve the world in a state of *‘chardi kala’* – optimism and ascending spirit which transcends the meagre triumph of selfish gain, and which leads us to accept God’s Will happily, no matter what lies ahead.

‘Tere bhane sarbat da bhallā...’ This is the seeking, through God’s grace, for the universal wellbeing of all and the common good. When every individual is made to consider him or herself as part of the whole of humanity, no-one is left behind to receive divine blessings.

NB – Translations are a very poor substitute for the original. At best they dilute the essence, at worst they distort the meaning.





Merciful, most Merciful, is my master God.

He bestows His divine blessings upon all beings. ||Pause||

Do not waver, O mortal being. The Creator God Himself shall protect you.

He who created you, will also look after you. ||1||

The One who created the world, also takes care of it.

He dwells in every heart and mind, He is the True protector. ||2||

His creative power and capacity is infinite and incomprehensible; He is
as Great as He is carefree.

O mortal being, meditate upon Him, as long as there is breath in your
body. ||3||

Almighty God, You are all-powerful, indescribable and incomprehensible;
my soul, body and mind are all yours.

It is only through Your Mercy and compassion that there can be happiness
and peace – so prays Nanak. ||4||3||

Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.724

The Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders is unique in mission and scope, bringing together some of the world's most prominent religious figures from Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and the Religions of India, in an exchange of ideas that leads to transformation within religions and their teachings. It provides a platform and an opportunity for religious leaders to collectively address today's problems from within the resources of their own traditions. The wisdom of multiple traditions is shared as a collective voice that at the same time respects diversity and difference.

The Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders provides leadership and direction for **the Elijah Interfaith Institute**. Elijah is a multinational organization dedicated to fostering peace between the world's diverse faith communities through interfaith dialogue, education, research and dissemination. Our unique programming generates interfaith dialogue at the highest levels, bringing together world religious leaders and renowned scholars the world over, together with local religious communities, through research projects, public conferences and community-based initiatives.

The Elijah Interfaith Institute is committed to the vision of **the Center of Hope**, to transform Jerusalem and help her reach her destiny, as described by the Prophets.

There is not a single institution in all of Jerusalem in which its religions share and come together. There is no interreligious centre that is frequented by members of all religions and there is absolutely no sense of the possibility of sharing a site or a place of worship, as a means of seeking to express and deepen the quest for peace and harmony between Jerusalem's religions. This is the vision of **the Center of Hope**, acronym for 'House of Prayer and Education', inspired by the prophecy of God's house being a house of prayer for all people. Underlying this vision is the recognition that there is no other city in the world that draws as much attention to itself, from a religious and interreligious perspective, as Jerusalem. Were the Center of Hope to be created, it would provide a powerful symbol of the potential that Jerusalem has to be a city of meeting, rather than only of tension. It would inspire people outside Jerusalem, worldwide, to both support the collaborative spiritual vision of Jerusalem and to seek to emulate it and to extend it to their local communities, fulfilling the prophecy that the 'Word of the Lord' will emanate from Jerusalem.

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The Elijah Interfaith Institute –

dedicated to fostering peace between the world's diverse faith communities through dialogue and learning

The Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders –

bringing together some of the world's premier religious leaders in an exchange of ideas that addresses global challenges and leads to transformation within religions.

The Center of HOPE in Jerusalem –

a vision for the future, fulfilling an ancient dream, a house of prayer and a center of education, a common heritage of all religions.

Read more: www.elijah-interfaith.org/hope.html



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