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Bahá'í Publishing

Press Release

International Human Rights Law Specialist
Offers "*Hope For A Global Ethic*"

New Book Focuses On What The World's Communities Have In Common

Wilmette, IL, December '05: In a groundbreaking book which imperatively calls on the world's religions to immediately look at what they have in common, noted author and scholar Brian Lepard offers hope to a world community that has become dangerously fractionalized by economic, social, religious, and political differences. In ***HOPE FOR A GLOBAL ETHIC*** (Bahá'í Publishing, December '05, \$14.00), Lepard cogently argues that different societies have much more in common than they might otherwise think, beginning with a profound historic and lasting belief in religion, and that our fearful and often suspicious view of other people may be overcome by exploring what is shared in these religions. ***HOPE FOR A GLOBAL ETHIC*** moves significantly beyond ideology to discuss the values that all people have shared through the faiths of the world. It is these values that offer hope in our fearful, disordered, and terrorized world.

In language that is accessible and very easy to understand, ***HOPE FOR A GLOBAL ETHIC*** provides guidance that we can all relate to. While it offers solutions, it more importantly promotes critical discussion by demystifying religion and simplifying intellectual thought and complicated political and social matters to levels of common understanding. The book is an essential call to action for citizens of the world.

Brian Lepard begins his book with these types of questions and observations:

“Can there possibly be any hope for a global ethic, particularly in a world that is traumatized by terrorism, war, gross human rights violations, and religious division and hatred?”

“Many claims are being made that our primary allegiance, morally, ought to be to our own ethnic or religious group, or to our own country. In the United States we are taught the virtues of patriotism, especially after the attacks of September 11, 2001. But are these moral claims legitimate? Or, for example, should we instead morally consider ourselves as members of one human family first, and Americans only second?”

“Is military intervention for humanitarian purposes morally justified? Is it ever morally required?”

“Numerous scholars have concluded that the prospects for a global ethic are slim indeed ... I suggest that there is indeed a possibility for the development of a global ethic – and that the scriptures of the various religions that are so often viewed as the source of ethical disagreement and discord may provide the foundation for such an ethic.”

Lepard identifies many areas of agreement in religious scriptures, pointing out that *all* scriptures promote a vision of one human family that transcends nationality or ethnicity. His inspiration for ***HOPE FOR A GLOBAL ETHIC*** was an outgrowth of his research for a previous book on the legal problems of military intervention, which led him to search for common ethical principles to help resolve these legal issues. “It seemed to me that the world’s religions were potent sources of ethical inspiration for most people and governments around the world,” notes Lepard. “I soon discovered that some of the shared ethical principles that I mined from scriptures supported similar principles in contemporary international law.”

While ***HOPE FOR A GLOBAL ETHIC*** may be optimistic, it is not naïve. It is rooted in a discussion of the world’s religions but derives its strength from the author’s practical background and involvement in international law, human rights, and the community of scholars of law and religion. It is not dogmatic, nor does it seek to advance one point of view over another. Brian Lepard takes no sides, and views *all* religions equally. Reviewing selections from the sacred texts of seven world religions – Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá’í Faith – Lepard identifies numerous common threads, such as:

kindness; generosity; unselfishness; peaceful resolution of disputes; freedom of religion and conscience; the right to life, physical security, and subsistence ...

These are just a few of the basic principles that all religions share and which can lead us to a global ethic. History shows that human beings desire faith. Lepard's careful reading and close analysis of scripture conveys that all religious belief systems have similar roots, goals, and values. Instead of living in fear and ignorance, why not look to these systems as a source of dialogue and understanding? Lepard offers a practical and affirming view of how this might be done.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Brian D. Lepard is Professor of Law at the University of Nebraska and a specialist in international human rights law. A graduate of Princeton University and the Yale Law School, he is the author of the internationally acclaimed *Rethinking Humanitarian Intervention*. He has also served at the United Nations Office of the Bahá'í International Community, where he worked on human rights issues. He lives with his wife and two sons in Lincoln, Nebraska.

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