

obvious to take their place. There is still no focal point for unity. Twin Forces

There are at present two apparently opposing forces at work in the world. On the one hand, the disintegration of society as a unit, and the morals on which society is based, seem to signal despair. When individuals think only of themselves and their own needs, no-one is happy. Greed, corruption, dishonesty, lack of family responsibility, all lead to unhappiness for all involved. The reality is that there is a lack of unity and order in the world. On a global scale this shows itself in many ways: in civil wars, terrorism, political rivalry, widespread poverty, homelessness and starvation, global warming and in disruption in the financial world. On the other hand, there has been movement towards world civilisation. There is no longer ignorance of the suffering of people in distant parts of the world and it is understood that problems in one country can affect the world as a whole. Many people see the effects of poverty, injustice and war, and wish for genuine peace and for the resources of the world to be shared more equally.

World Peace

In recent years, there have been signs of an increasing agreement among the peoples of the world about the rights of minorities, and in the application of human rights in general. In conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Europe, other countries have felt that by virtue of their common humanity, they have the right to apply force from outside. The old idea that no one has the right to intervene in the affairs of a sovereign state is rapidly disappearing. We are increasingly seeing mankind as one family. Over 100 years ago, Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, urged the world leaders to convene a world peace conference, which would fix boundaries, limit armaments, and lay down rules to govern international relationships. Any government breaking the resulting agreement should be toppled by the united action of all the other countries of the world. Bahá'ís understand that this political peace will be introduced early in the new millennium, and it

will coincide with the time when the elected Bahá'í institutions are successfully evolving into examples of a new method of administration. These Bahá'í bodies are working to develop a system of consultation, following the guidance of Bahá'u'lláh, where many decisions are made at a local level but where the good of the world as a whole is seen as paramount and everyone's voice can be heard. During this new millennium, Bahá'ís believe that mankind will evolve towards a Golden Age of world civilisation, united in a world guided by the principles of justice and compassion. Before humanity can take the next step on this path, peace needs to be established throughout the world. It is this vision of the Golden Age which poets and philosophers have dreamt of for centuries, which religions have promised and humanity as a whole hopes for, but has never before seen a practical way to achieve. The Bahá'í Faith offers a solution to this. The Bahá'í Principles

The Bahá'í Faith began in the mid-nineteenth century and became a worldwide community during the twentieth, but it has clearly been designed for the new millennium. The list of Bahá'í principles, although 150 years old, is an agenda for the coming years. Among them are the following:

All religions should be seen as part of one universal truth. We should look for the points of agreement, and build on them. All human beings should be seen as part of one human race.

Irrespective of language, level of education, colour, gender, creed or background, all should be accepted as part of one family. A world language should be chosen, to be used for international communication. Everyone should be educated so that prejudice will disappear and people can make judgements for themselves. A more just economic system should be introduced, based on a world currency and free trade. Science and religion should be seen as different aspects of the same reality. Neither religion nor science can explain everything we see or experience.

The Meaning of the Millennium

Two thousand years after the birth of Christ, we have come to a turning point

in the future of the world. It is time to look again for the meaning of life and our purpose on this earth. We can decide to work together to bring justice and peace to the world, or we can face the consequences of continuing strife and injustice. Bahá'ís believe that humanity is now coming of age and has the ability to make the new millennium a happier one for everyone on earth. What we need at this stage in our development is one religion to bind us together. The Bahá'í Faith is designed to do just this. All the religions of the past have promised a great World Teacher who would bring an Age of Peace. Bahá'ís believe that Bahá'u'lláh was that Teacher and that His teachings provide the guiding light for the new millennium. If you wish to investigate this claim, Bahá'ís will be happy to assist.

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