

human consciousness, the borders of truth and understanding are continually being pushed back. Truth can never be the property of any one person or group. This becomes more apparent as change becomes more rapid.

Oneness and Wholeness of Life

Our life affects, and is linked to, the life of all our fellow beings, human and otherwise. Our actions must therefore be considered as to their effects on all life. This belief has profound implications for the development of suitable lifestyles. According to the Bahá'í writings, the eating of meat will gradually be replaced by a diet based on fruits and grains. Respect for the Earth, respect for our fellow creatures, restoration of the ecosystem and the need for moderation are important Bahá'í principles following naturally from the recognition of the interdependence of life.

A Holistic Approach to Healing

It is becoming daily more obvious that many diseases occur when the natural balance of human life is upset. Treatment of disease will develop, as medical science itself develops. A major key to the successful cure of illness is the treatment of the patient as a whole. As our understanding of nutrition grows, so our treatment of illness will become more effective.

The Essence of All Religions

"Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute."

All of the major religions, and many other lesser-known ones, such as the aboriginal, Native American and other tribal beliefs, can be seen as expressions of the same divine purpose. Each was given to humankind at a particular time and place and therefore there are differences in certain social aspects of their teaching. Over the centuries, people have emphasised the differences. We need to look again at the religions with spiritual eyes, to look at their inner reality and not their outward form, and see that their essential features show their unity of purpose:

"Truth is one in all religions, and by means of it the unity of the world can be realized If only men would search out truth, they would find themselves united."

The Spirit of the New Age

Each religion begins with a Founder who brings a Revelation or Message from God to mankind. Whenever such a Messenger appears, the divine energy which is released causes great changes to appear and a great civilisation to develop.

The source of all new ideas is the spirit of the age, and this spirit is the Holy Spirit. Bahá'ís believe that the channel for the Spirit in this age is Bahá'u'lláh, and that the time we are living in now is of particular importance, because this is the climax of previous ages, and the beginning of a whole new era. Now is the time for a world civilisation based on spiritual values.

Oneness of the Human Race

In this age we are beginning to outgrow the old ideas of racism and extreme

nationalism. In this age we will achieve the unity of the entire planet.

Bahá'u'lláh said:

"The Earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

This implies an organic union of all human cultures. Every nation and tribal group will take its rightful place in the human family, and every part of the human race will be nurtured and encouraged. This universal human body will only function harmoniously if every limb and every organ is respected, and if all the constituent parts are working together.

The Power of Unity

A major perplexity for people who have recognised the new age is that there seem to be so many differing groups which often do not manage to work together. Different people have discovered different aspects of the new age but few see a cohesive whole. If we can feel the fundamental force underlying all the ideas of the new age we will be able to understand what is happening in the world today and how we can achieve unity. We must realise the necessity of working together in unity if we are to release the positive powers which can change the world.

The Need for Consultation

Everyone has talents and faculties which can contribute to the well-being of the community. Through consultation these ideas can be brought forward and shared for the good of all. The purpose of the Bahá'í Faith is to develop a united world community. Its challenge is to transform the basic principles of consultation into a powerful force which can channel individual ideas and contributions into a harmonious collective creativity.

The Bahá'í Faith has an administration which is spiritually-based. Because this is a dynamic whole developed from the individual characteristics of its constituent parts, it does not suffer from problems such as centralisation and over-organisation, which affect many other movements. As the universe is ordered, yet infinitely varied, so the Bahá'í community is ordered yet varied, with freedom of initiative and self-expression as its very basis. As it continues to organically develop, it welcomes and encourages people of different temperaments and lifestyles. There are already many Bahá'ís who are from the minority peoples such as the Romanies, Australian aborigines, and Native American tribes. This variety is cherished. The lack of competing groups or parties within the Bahá'í community means that old-fashioned conflict politics are no longer necessary. Rather, an organically-evolving unit, reflecting the oneness and wholeness of humanity, is the conscious goal of the Bahá'í community. It is this which is the distinguishing feature of the Bahá'í Faith as the religion for the new age.

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