

people of His time that someone from another tribe was to be considered as a neighbour. Now Bahá'u'lláh has made it quite clear that every person in the world is our neighbour, saying, “The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.”

In another example, Moses taught “an eye for an eye”, then Jesus advised us to “turn the other cheek”. Now Bahá'u'lláh says “it is better to be killed than to kill”.

It is as though humanity has been going through a school. In each class, the teacher only teaches what the children are capable of understanding, but what they learn in each class enables them to progress to the next class.

Bahá'ís believe that humanity, as a whole, is now coming out of adolescence into maturity – its coming of age, the fruit of which will be a world civilisation.

Bahá'u'lláh, writing in the 19th century, brought spiritual and practical teachings which are designed to produce this world civilisation, underpinned by a world faith. These include:

The recognition of the oneness of the whole human race

The equality of the sexes

The choice of a shared language for the whole world

The right to free speech, balanced by courtesy and respect for others

A universal and permanent peace treaty

The formation of a federated world administration

Economic principles such as profit-sharing and a world currency, designed to bring about a fairer distribution of income throughout the world.

The Power of Religion

It is widely accepted that the teachings of true religion influence people's behaviour in a positive way. Differentiation of right from wrong has traditionally come from religion. It is religion, therefore, which provides society with a moral code. Bahá'u'lláh said:

“Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine.”

Religion provides this moral code through both the example and the recorded words of the Founders. The Buddha, for instance, gave up His riches and His pampered life as a prince, to live as an example of moderation, in what is known as the Middle Way. Generations of Buddhists have modelled their lives on His Noble Eightfold Path and His wisdom:

“He in whom there is truth, virtue, pity, restraint, moderation, he who is free from impurity and is wise, he is called an elder.” [Dhammapada, v.261]

Jesus Christ encouraged His followers to behave in a noble and selfless manner:

“Happy are those who are merciful to others;

God will be merciful to them!...

Happy are those who work for peace;

God will call them His children!” [Matthew 5; 7,9]

The Prophet Muhammad suffered years of persecution in silence, and never retaliated. In common with the other Founders of great religions, He set out teachings on how both the individual and the community should behave:

“Take not life, which God hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law.” [Qur’an 6:151]

Bahá’u’lláh said:

“The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God’s holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife.”

The Bahá’í Writings also say that if religion just causes trouble, we would be better off without it.

God the Creator

The Founders of religions have all made great sacrifices to bring us their messages. They gave up their own concerns for the sake of humanity and they explained that they received their inspiration from God. Bahá’u’lláh, for example, endured forty years of exile, torture and imprisonment in order to establish a religion dedicated to peace and to the oneness of mankind.

If there is a creative force, a divine essence, then by definition we, as its creatures, will be unable to properly comprehend it, in the same way that a painting cannot understand the painter who created it, nor a table understand the carpenter who made it. Is it possible for an ant to comprehend what it is like to be human?

Some people believe that the universe suddenly came into existence, and then proceeded to evolve for no apparent reason or purpose. Doesn’t it make more sense that it is evolving following a plan whose elements were all potentially there from the beginning?

Religion as the Solution

If people believe someone to be a Messenger of God, then that person’s words are taken as if they were the words of God Himself, and therefore to be acted upon. This has a more powerful effect than the words of any philosopher. The only thing which has the unfailing power to change the minds of those who believe that their religion encourages strife and bloodshed, is the recognition that a new Messenger has appeared from God with new, peaceful laws to be followed.

Bahá'ís believe that the Bahá'í Faith is the fulfilment of the religions of the past, that Bahá'u'lláh is the Messenger of God for this age and that He has come to bring peace to the world. Bahá'ís see religion is the only force on earth capable of achieving a united and peaceful world.

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