

Oneness of Religion

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One of the advantages of living in the 21st century is our ability to have a perspective on the thousands of years of religious history. “Peerless is this Day, for it is as the eye to past ages and centuries, and as a light unto the darkness of the times,” Baha’i writings say.

From this perspective we can see that at various points in human history God has intervened in the lives of his creation by sending his Messengers – among them Krishna, Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and Baha’u’llah – and that through the successive teachings of these founders of the world’s religions, humanity’s spiritual, intellectual, and moral capacities have been cultivated. Thus, arts and sciences have advanced, and new civilizations have flourished.

This perspective is also a tremendous source of joy because we see that God has never left us alone; that his guidance was never just a one-time outpouring of love, which then suddenly stopped; that like a good parent, as humanity has collectively developed, he has continued to provide his age-appropriate guidance.

Baha’i writings ask, “Can one ever seriously imagine that the portal of God’s infinite guidance can ever be closed in the face of men? Can he ever conceive for these Divine Luminaries [Messengers of God], these resplendent Lights either a beginning or an end? What outpouring flood can compare with the stream of His all-embracing grace, and what blessing can excel the evidences of so great and pervasive a mercy? There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God’s method continued from everlasting to everlasting.”

Many centuries have separated the coming of these Messengers, but God always wants us to be prepared for their coming. Therefore, in sacred texts, like the Bible, he warns us that “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,” and then assures us of his never-ending guidance by saying, “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice ...” and “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.”

Religious intolerance has caused countless conflicts in the world. As the third decade of the 21st century begins, first let us view the world’s great religious systems as one unfolding religion that has been renewed from age to age, guiding humanity, and evolving as humanity has collectively developed. Then let us go beyond tolerance, and associate with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.