

Preserving Unity in Decision Making

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November 27, 2020

“Reflect ye as to other than human forms of life and be ye admonished thereby: those clouds that drift apart cannot produce the bounty of the rain, and are soon lost; a flock of sheep, once scattered, falleth prey to the wolf, and birds that fly alone will be caught fast in the claws of the hawk. What greater demonstration could there be that unity leadeth to flourishing life, while dissension and withdrawing from the others, will lead only to misery.” – Baha’i Writings

The central teaching of the Baha’i Faith is the proclamation of the oneness of humanity and the indispensable need for its unity, despite its vast diversity. The divisiveness in our political discourse, however, makes that unity seem utopian.

And yet, the Baha’i writings say, “The supreme need of humanity is cooperation and reciprocity. The stronger the ties of fellowship and solidarity amongst men, the greater will be the power of constructiveness and accomplishment in all the planes of human activity.”

Furthermore, these writings emphasize that “no power can exist except through unity,” and “no welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.”

The consultative process described in the Baha’i writings makes it “possible for decision making to benefit from a diversity of perspectives.” Understood as “the collective investigation of reality,” this process “promotes detachment from personal views, gives due importance to valid empirical information, does not raise mere opinion to the status of fact or define truth as the compromise between opposing interest groups.”

According to these writings, “consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together. Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views, he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others. If he finds that a previously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully hold to an opinion of his own. By this method he endeavors to arrive at unity and truth.”

This consultative process is followed by action and then reflection on the outcome. By repeating this sequence, the best solution to the problem being discussed is gradually discovered. With the emphasis on learning, and no room for fixed opinions, unity is maintained.

Let us work in our communities “with heart and soul,” as the Baha’i writings say, “and put forth a mighty effort, until the ramparts of dissension are toppled down and the glories of the oneness of humanity lead all to unity.”