

# Truthfulness

Hamed Eshraghian

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While dealing with a pandemic, our nation has also been afflicted by a spiritual crisis: lack of respect for truth.

When we do not have respect for truth, we are not inclined to tell the truth or search for it.

Truthfulness has been praised in all Sacred Texts, and our justice system depends on it: Witnesses are sworn in to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help them God, or face punishment.

And yet, not telling the truth has become so prevalent that news and social media organizations have had to deploy fact checkers—consisting of both humans and computers—to detect falsehood, whether seen on the internet or spoken by a prominent person.

The Baha'i writings regard truthfulness as "the foundation of all human virtues," and say that "when this holy attribute is established in man, all the other divine qualities will also become realized."

Truth has a reciprocal relationship with unity: Because reality is one, when we are focused on finding the truth, conflict ceases, and fixed opinions and opposing interests give way to unity. At the same time, "unity is necessary if we would reach truth, for truth is one," the Baha'i writings say; but warn that "the fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity."

When we are genuine seekers of truth, we have open and receptive minds free from preconceived ideas and ulterior motives, and hearts free from prejudice.

"Prejudice—whether it be religious, racial, patriotic or political in its origin and aspect—is the destroyer of human foundations and opposed to the commands of God," the Baha'i writings say. "By this division and separation into groups and branches of mankind, prejudice is engendered which becomes a fruitful source of war and strife."

The teachings of religion play a vital role in the development of moral and spiritual qualities—such as honesty and love—in individuals. "Fostering unity, by harmonizing disparate elements and nurturing in every heart a selfless love for humankind, is the task of religion," the Baha'i writings point out. "God has sent forth His Prophets for the sole purpose of creating love and unity in the world of human hearts. All the heavenly Books are the written word of love. Consider how all the Prophets of God were persecuted and what hardships They experienced. Jesus Christ endured affliction and accepted martyrdom upon the cross in order to summon mankind to unity and love. What sacrifice could be greater?"

Therefore, "should the lamp of religion be obscured," these writings warn, "chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquility and peace cease to shine."

Lack of respect for truth has led to a spiritual crisis. Great possibilities to promote moral and ethical principles and to cultivate fellowship and concord are open to religious leaders. But let us all engage in this vital effort by taking to heart this counsel from the Baha'i writings: "Shed the light of a boundless love on every human being whom you meet, whether of your country, your race, your political party, or of any other nation, color, or shade of political opinion. Heaven will support you..."