

Can Globalization and Diversify Co-exist

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History has evidenced endless disruptive forces, dislocating peoples of every origin to places far from their ancient homelands.

Because of that historical pattern, there is no nation in which only two racial distinctions are at work. Even today in nations where internal conflicts have exacerbated specific differences, there are always other “others,” other minorities, other migrants overlooked in the mix.

The forces of history, both negative and positive, have uprooted and moved people around the world, mixing us together, producing the relatively recent social phenomenon of many peoples living in one land, creating together a nation highly diversified internally. If we cling to our differences, not just as a joy, but as the very definition of our identity, then we will never be able to cohere as a single nation.

Our new homeland enables us to bring our differences into the common good. Baha’u’llah could see that our nobility depends on our recognition of this reality:

Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land ... that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. – Baha’u’llah, *The Hidden Words*, p. 20.

Distinctive National Contributions

So inspiring is the world commonwealth foretold in Baha’i writings that we are at times tempted to forget there is a continuing place for nation states to make their distinctive contributions to that whole. The Guardian of the Baha’i Faith, Shoghi Effendi, characterized the world order envisioned by Baha’u’llah in the following way:

Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men’s hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty ... It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. – Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha’u’llah*, pp. 41-42.

Just as immigrants bring their diverse resources into a wider loyalty toward their new homeland of many peoples, so nations are destined to bring their diverse identities into a wider loyalty toward their common planet of many nations.

Abdu’l-Baha praised the Arabian Peninsula for “**a superlative degree of civilization**” following the influence of Muhammad; Canada for “**souls who have unusual capability and the power of spiritual**

advancement;” and the United States where **“the flag of freedom and banner of liberty have been unfurled;”** warning that **“the happiness and greatness of a country depend upon its hearing and obeying the call of God.”** – Ibid., p. 104.

Shoghi Effendi praised the entire region of Europe:

... so rich and eventful in its history; so diversified in its culture; from whose soil sprang both the Hellenic and Roman civilizations; the mainspring of a civilization to some of whose features Baha’u’llah Himself paid tribute” – Messages to the Baha’i World 1950-1957, p. 161.

He equally lauded the entire continent of Africa for remaining:

... uncontaminated by the evils of a gross, a rampant and cancerous materialism undermining the fabric of human society alike in the East and in the West. – Shoghi Effendi, Message to the African Intercontinental Conference, Kampala, Uganda, 12 February 1953, Ibid., p. 136.

It is evident that in our Eastern Hemisphere, Australasia’s relative freedom from religious orthodoxy is balanced by Asia’s deep commitment to the wisdom of ancient religious traditions; and Asia’s practice of social cooperation and collective action is balanced by the initiative of individualism in Australasia.

A set of positive qualities can complement another set of positive qualities, if we learn to hold these seeming opposites in creative tension to find our way into a future spiritual culture, the like of which the world has never seen.

Since Roman times, it has been broadly recognized that the distinctive features of a location contain a unique gift of perspective that is the “genius loci” the spirit of the place. Baha’u’llah foresaw that the gift of insight unique to one place can form a gift of understanding to the peoples of the world, enriching each and all, promoting their cooperation and benefit:

National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease, and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and cooperation. – Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha’u’llah*, p. 204.

The Baha’i teachings urge each nation to respond to the opportunities of this propitious time in history, to render its unique contribution to the good of all, and thus attain to its share of divine good pleasure:

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. Haste ye to win your share of God’s good grace and mercy in this Day that eclipseth all other created days. – Baha’u’llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha’u’llah*, p. 214.

To the degree that a nation engages in contributing its very best principles and energies to the world community, to that degree we can gauge its spiritual force.

You’ll find much more on this topic in “The National Family,” a chapter of Elaine McCreary’s new book Our Seven Families, published by GR Books, available at Amazon.com.