

## UNITY: THE CREATIVE FOUNDATION OF PEACE

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Given the turbulence and tension which has come to characterise the modern Middle East, Iran seems an unlikely place to hold any association with global harmony. Yet, Iranian-born psychiatrist Dr H.B. Danesh's latest book *Unity: The Creative Foundation of Peace* is a lucid application of Bahá'í principles toward clarifying some of the issues behind the failure of humankind to eradicate war and establish lasting peace. The book begins with a focus on the present condition of mankind—its quest for peace and dependence on war—and addresses the fundamental concept that peace cannot be pursued in and of itself. The basic premise is that a sense of unity (able to exist between all nations irrespective of diversity of language, culture and religious ideology) is the prerequisite to peace. Since peace is a state achieved when certain conditions are met, it is therefore unity which must be pursued.

First, Dr Danesh examines humankind's time-honoured quest for peace. The conclusions he draws are ones of hope for the future, which is partly linked to Dr Danesh's analysis of historical patterns. In a chapter entitled 'The Eternal Quest For Peace' Danesh, after noting that while the history of the nations of the world tends to be written according to the precepts of competition, supremacy and dominance, points to the paradox that whereas nations focus upon the triumphs and defeats of wars the deeply-felt quest of people (as depicted in their literature, poetry, art and music) is toward peace and unity.

Danesh from here proceeds to establish a concept of a 'unity paradigm' into which he draws a wide range of sources (anthropological, sociological and economic). Collectively, these sources imply that all strivings of humankind indicate a growing maturity, with maturity being the main prerequisite for making the 'unity paradigm' a reality.

One such source is the writings of the anthropologist Richard Leakey. Leakey's book *Origins* tends to support Danesh's theories, in that it denies that cultural variances between groups of nations are necessarily divisive.

First, we are one species, one people. Every individual on this earth is a member of *Homo sapiens* and the geographical variations we see among peoples are merely biological nuances on the [same] basic theme.... The often very deep differences between these cultures should not be seen as divisions between people. Instead, cultures should be interpreted for what they are: the ultimate declaration of belonging to the human species.

Also critical to Danesh's 'unity paradigm' is the refutation of the belief that ideological and philosophical concepts originating from differing sources are irreconcilable. Central to this is a notion of the 'indivisibility' of truth, in the same sense that scientific truths emanating from different sources are not seen to be inherently contradictory; diversity between them is instead seen to be due merely to differences of perspective.

This critique is valuable in terms of questioning traditional barriers erected between spiritual values (held to be inherently subjective and irrational in outlook) and the objective stand-point of the modern scientific approach.

The analysis is completed by Danesh's conclusion that the fact that humanity has perverted the nature of religion and allowed it to become a cause of separation (rather than oneness) of people is scarcely distinguishable from humanity's use of technology for the purposes of destruction and warfare rather than construction and peace.

The third aspect of this publication is a closer application of these concepts to contemporary issues. Before this application is done, Danesh undertakes an evaluation of the nature of human aggression (in a chapter entitled 'A Symptom Not A Disease: A New Perspective On Violence'). Again, the sources were primarily anthropological (Leakey, *Origins*).

The core of the aggression argument says that because we share a common heritage with the animal kingdom, we must possess and express an aggressive instinct....[This]...absolves society from attempting to rectify evil in the world....Instead we argue that the opposite is true; that humans could not have evolved in the remarkable way in which we undoubtedly have unless our ancestors were highly co-operative creatures.

A greater emergence of co-operation between diverse peoples is seen to be the inevitable result of a growing maturity among human civilisation. The increasing complexity and sophistication within international relations is but one symptom of a general progression from multiplicity and chaos toward oneness and order. This trend is embodied within the widening 'international' outlook of the ever-increasing numbers of individuals around the world who are dedicating themselves to the creation of specific prerequisites of a mature human society: the promotion of the equality of men and women, eradication of prejudice, and the creation of a more equitable socio-economic system.

Evidently, this book is largely conceptual in nature and perhaps its conclusions deserve to be viewed within a (normative) context. Either way, it is a candid and systematic approach to issues which generally elicit highly subjective and emotive responses. In the words of Marilyn Ferguson (author of *The Aquarian Conspiracy*), *Unity: The Creative Foundation Of Peace* is a clear and valuable contribution to the most important item on humanity's agenda.

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