

The image is a vertical composition. The top half shows a white, classical-style building with a large dome, resembling the Jefferson Memorial, floating above a layer of white, fluffy clouds. The building is illuminated by a bright light source from the left, creating a lens flare effect. The bottom half of the image shows a deep blue ocean with gentle ripples. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds.

Thy Kingdom Come!

*God's plan for
a kingdom on earth
as it is in heaven*

Thy Kingdom Come!

**God's Plan for a Kingdom
on Earth as it is in Heaven**

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Thy Kingdom Come!

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I

God's Plan for a New World

The Oneness of Humankind

We find two forces at work in the world: light and darkness. All around us we see war, poverty, addiction, suicide, social isolation, apathy, emptiness, prejudice, and injustice—waves of turmoil, conflict, and disorder that strain our powers to the limit, that threaten increasingly not only our civilization but our very survival. But we need not despair. For amidst all these forces of darkness, there stands a beacon of light and hope—a new world-embracing Order that is transforming the lives of millions, that is giving birth to a new society and “a new race of man.” Although not discernible by the masses of humanity, it is constantly at work, growing and expanding at an ever-increasing pace. What is this Order? Where and how did it originate? It is the purpose of this book to offer an outline of its basic elements, a brief sketch of its strength, which is steadily rising with the fall of a crumbling and chaotic old order—one that places self-interest above the welfare of the human race.

The Promise of World Unity

This is the day of “one planet and one people” promised in all sacred Scriptures:

When that time comes...I will gather all the nations together... Joel 3:2 NEB

And I...am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory...They will proclaim my glory among the nations. Isaiah 66:18-19 NIV

That shall be a day in which mankind shall be gathered together... Qur’án 11:105

This is the plan prepared for the whole earth [global order], this [is] the hand [of God] stretched out over all the nations. For the Lord of Hosts has prepared his plan [of world unity], who shall frustrate it? His is the hand stretched out, and who shall turn it back? Isaiah 14:26-27 NEB

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Psalms 133:1

Some eminent thinkers have expressed this timely hope and prediction:

An Abraham Lincoln surfaced when unity was called for in the previous century. Perhaps there will be another Lincoln in this century to assist humanity toward harmony.¹

Many are unaware that the preceding hope and prediction has already been fulfilled for over a century and a half, by the twin Messengers of our time—the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh.

Here is the essence of Bahá’u’lláh’s social Mission as spoken by Him over a century ago, while still a prisoner and an exile, to the only visitor from the west who ever saw Him and talked with Him:

We desire but the good of the world and happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment...That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this?...Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the “Most Great Peace” shall come...Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind...These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family...Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.²

Unity, oneness, harmony, and cooperation are the most distinguishing features of the Bahá’í Faith:

O CHILDREN OF MEN!

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. 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. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.³

Bahá’u’lláh

Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that...all mankind become the upholders of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City.⁴

Bahá’u’lláh

Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

For the old order of things has passed away...I am making everything new! Christ (Rev. 21:4-5 NIV)

The Interdependence of all Things

The first step toward unity is the recognition of the interdependence of all beings and all things. Science has already demonstrated this. Consider the following example, which borders on magic:

Very briefly, the hundredth monkey is a theory about how all of us within a species affect one another. A group of monkeys was being studied off the coast of Japan, and one monkey within the group began washing his sweet potatoes in a certain way in the salt water. Soon all of the monkeys began mimicking this monkey and doing the same thing. When a given number of the monkeys behaved in this fashion, the same behavior began to appear in a group of monkeys hundreds of miles away, even though the two groups had had no physical contact with each other.

The hundredth monkey symbolized what scientists call the critical mass within the species. It is theorized that once a critical mass number is reached, the same behavior begins to show up in all of the other members of the same species. It seems to be true for all species that when a given critical mass of its members begins to think or act in a certain way, so does every other member of that same species. In Ken Keyes's book, he uses the example of nuclear war and suggests that if enough of us as members of the human species believe and act as if there will ultimately be a nuclear war, then when we reach that critical mass, we will of course create our own reality as a species. On the other hand, if enough of us believe and act as if such an occurrence were

impossible, then we can create that reality for our entire species as well.

The invisible connection between all members of a species is more verifiable now than it was a few years ago. Physicists describe it as “phase transition.” Scientists report that when atoms within a molecule align in a certain way and a critical mass number is reached, the rest of the atoms spontaneously line up the same way...

Just imagine the staggering implications of...the idea that if enough of us...begin to think and act in harmonious and loving ways, we can affect the entire being called Human Being...

It is only the Human Being that has been out of harmony with the rest of totality that is God or oneness or whatever we choose to call it. When the individuals within this total being align in a certain fashion, much like the atoms within a given molecule, then they can affect all of the beings within the one Human Being.⁶

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings have influenced some of the great thinkers of our time. Sometimes, without knowing, they have promoted the Bahá'í principles. Consider the following statement from the noted author, Dr. Wayne Dyer:

The way to inner harmony is through thought. And what kind of thought? The thoughts of oneness and unity. The thoughts that all of us are connected. Though the bonds may not be visible to the naked eye, they are still there, just as they are within each individual cell in your own body.

Whenever you fail to see yourself as a part of this entire whole, related to all of us in this being that we call Human Being, then you lack inner harmony and become dis-eased. That dis-ease will manifest itself in aggressive, nonloving, and uncooperative behavior toward your neighboring cells. Thus, the problems of a lack of oneness in our world can really be traced to the individual cells that compose this body we call humanity. As we work at eliminating cancer in our

bodies by teaching a sense of oneness and harmony and positive visualization, we also can help to eliminate the carcinogens in our society the same way. Each of us as a single cell has the opportunity to affect the entire being in either a harmonious and loving way, or in a disorderly and dis-eased way...This is not a job for others, it is for each of us to be involved and help the entire body heal and stay well...

Within this context, it is constructive to take a look at how we treat those cells adjacent to us who look a little different from us, or who speak a different language, or worship uniquely. We have created a large cell that is composed of many diseased cells, and we all know that the whole cannot long survive when it is made up of cells which are dis-eased. This was Einstein's warning to all of us when he reacted to the splitting of the atom by telling us that we were now on an unparalleled course toward ultimate disaster unless we could learn a new way of thinking, an alternative to solving our disputes through aggression and war.⁷

Dr. Dyer concludes:

Certainly if enough of us begin to think in nonaggressive harmonious ways to reach a critical mass, there could be an end to war. As each being reacted harmoniously rather than with enmity toward the being adjacent to him, it would not be long before there would be no soldiers to follow the orders of the generals. Harmony would begin to reverberate in those who design the weapons of destruction...As more and more align in harmony, the pressure becomes overwhelming, and the oneness of humanity is the winner. And how does it all start? Symbolically, with that one monkey picking up that sweet potato and having the courage to behave differently, and then the next, until the critical mass is reached. One person with a conscience actually becomes a majority through this collective consciousness process.⁸

After recognizing the interdependence of all things, the next stage to unity is reaching an agreement on the solution. At this point in history we are in the state of transition from the first stage to the second. Communication specialists Adler and Towne state “Many conflicts go unresolved because the parties fail to understand their interdependence. One of the first steps toward resolving a conflict is to take the attitude that ‘we are all in this together.’”⁹

Unity the Ultimate Goal

It is the ultimate goal of the Bahá’í Faith to build a united and cohesive world society based on cooperation and justice, a society directing and dedicating its talents and resources to the enrichment of human life, and the evolution of a world civilization guided by a unique and new social order revealed by Bahá’u’lláh.

The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are
unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.¹⁰
Bahá’u’lláh

World-mindedness constitutes a most basic and emphatic theme in the Bahá’í Scriptures. Here are the words of Bahá’u’lláh unveiling the spirit of the age, the universal goal toward which every Bahá’í, every concerned individual, every society, must strive:

That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth...It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.¹¹

And again:

The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words:
Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.
Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony,
with friendliness and fellowship... So powerful is the light of
unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.¹²

The words of the Báb are in perfect harmony with those of
Bahá'u'lláh:

We have created you from one tree and have caused you to
be as the leaves and fruit of the same tree, that haply ye may
become a source of comfort to one another. Regard ye not
others save as ye regard your own selves...¹³

Three masons were asked what they were doing. The first one
said “I am laying bricks.” The second “I am building a wall.”
And the third “I am raising a castle.” The vision we all need of
our goal in life and our purpose on this planet is that of castle
builders, the founders of a global civilization. While
strengthening our souls, we need to keep an eye on the world.
Because we all stand or fall together. It is becoming
increasingly more clear that “we must either unite spiritually or
perish physically.”

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is part of the
main... Any man's death diminishes me because I am
involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for
whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. John Donne

Man is a special being, and if left to himself, in an isolated
condition, would be one of the weakest creatures; but
associated with his kind, he works wonders. Daniel Webster

It should seem obvious that building a better society inevitably
begins with building a better self. It is here that the strength of
the new Revelation lies, for it has the power to transform, to
renew and restore us, to elevate our vision, to satisfy all our
ever-changing and growing needs—not only moral and spiritual
but material and intellectual as well—to unfold our higher and
divine nature, to help us become aware that our ultimate well-

being and satisfaction lie not in selfishness but in service to mankind, that the spiritual joys transcend the physical, that we have an exalted mission to fulfill and an eternal destiny to pursue, and that our freedom lies not in following our baser instincts, the dictates of our selfish desires, but in obeying the divine Call, and abiding by the new laws revealed by the Teacher of the age.

Unity *Not Uniformity*

What is wrong with difference is not difference, but man's reluctance to allow and encourage it, and to cultivate it creatively.¹⁴

We try to be like others, to conform, so that we will be accepted. But only to the degree that one is different has he anything to offer. Every contribution is an evidence of difference, of uniqueness.¹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh's social order calls for unity—not uniformity. It seeks to harmonize the diverse elements of society into a divine symphony—to blend uniqueness with universality, and individuality with unity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá accentuates the charm of human diversity by comparing it with that of flowers:

Consider the flowers of a garden. Though differing in kind, color, form, and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central

agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men.¹⁶

The idea of “unity in diversity” proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh long ago, is being adopted by some political leaders. *Time Magazine* asked “Could these be the words of the world’s top Communists?”

What we are talking about, therefore, ***is unity in diversity***...We are not abandoning our convictions, our philosophy or traditions, nor do we urge anyone to abandon theirs. But neither do we have any intention to be hemmed in by our values. That would result in intellectual impoverishment, for it would mean rejecting a powerful source of development—the exchange of everything original that each nation has independently created.

From President Gorbachev’s U.N. address

Avenues of Action

The Bahá’ís work with many supranational institutions that show concern for the welfare of all humanity and the health of the planet that sustains them. They cooperate “closely with the United Nations to achieve the goals of world peace, universal human rights and the full economic and social development of the peoples of this planet. The Bahá’í Faith has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and UNICEF and has permanent representatives at the UN headquarters in New York and in Geneva and with the UN Environment Program (UNEP) in Nairobi. It also has offices in Vienna, Rome, Bangkok, Addis Ababa, Santiago and Noumea.”¹⁷

The Bahá'ís are also involved in many projects that promote the socioeconomic state of the world. A recent report indicated that in the span of one year they “were involved in over 1,200 development projects in almost 100 countries world-wide, often in cooperation with other non-political development agencies.”¹⁸

These are a few examples of some of the projects they pursue:

- Tutorial schools to promote literacy
- Agricultural and medical projects
- Radio stations dedicated to the education and enlightenment of the masses.

Unity is not a Utopian Dream

Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a united world is not a mere dream, a Utopia upheld by glowing words and good wishes. Less than a century after He had uttered those noble ideals, they had already encircled the globe and taken root in the hearts and minds of many people from the most primitive to the most sophisticated; they had already altered the course of history, by influencing the lives of millions.

The realization of world unity is the inevitable outcome of the spiritual evolution of humanity; it is an idea whose time has come and whose fulfillment is foretold and attested by all the Scriptures:

Our Lord! For the day of whose coming there is not a doubt, thou wilt surely gather mankind together. Verily, God will not fail the promise. Qur'án 3:7

In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor... Zechariah 3:10

How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and

will, ere long, gather together the whole of mankind beneath
its shelter.¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

To Conclude

This is the global vision the Bahá'ís promote:

The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.²⁰
Bahá'u'lláh

The Bahá'í Faith seeks to harmonize the conflicting creeds, religions, nations, and races of the world through the divine Power and Authority invested in its Founder, Bahá'u'lláh. It aims to attain its purpose through the interrelated workings of a set of complementary links:

- First, it strengthens and inspires the individual—the basic link of society—by satisfying his needs and guiding him toward noble goals and aspirations.
- Second, it connects individuals by instilling in them the attitude of world-mindedness and a sense of oneness and common destiny.
- And finally, it directs the strengthened and unified chain of humanity toward the clear goal of creating a universal civilization advancing toward a global destiny, a social purpose conducive not only to the growth of the individual's potential, the unfolding of his divine nature, but to the advancement and enrichment of society as well.

In an interdependent and closely linked world society, the diverse goals of the members must merge at one point to give rise to a single purpose, a universal ideal, and a world destiny. As we need to evolve individually, so do we need to evolve socially. For, in the words of Bahá'u'lláh: “All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.”²¹

The time is ripe for the birth of a planetary social order.

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose
under the heaven... Ecclesiastes 3:1

We need to arise and inspire humankind with a new vision of a world in peace and harmony. The borders that separate the nations, races, and religions are simply the reflections and extensions of our minds. Dr. Ervin Laszlo, an eminent authority on global peace and a planetary social system, declares:

It is hard to think of a theme more inspiring than the exploration of the possibilities open to mankind for building a world worthy of the finest attainments of civilization. Compare this theme with those which occupy the pages of the printed press and the images of the video screen: cops and robbers fighting it out...spies outwitting one another...politicians making speeches...to assure their own popularity...and the everyday scenes of living which...lack any profound commitment or sense of meaning beyond money, sex, and status...

But in the realm of positive images, we are still moving at the pace of a snail...Our societies suffer from an overdose of pragmatism combined with generalized but vague pessimism.²²

Not recognizing the needs of our age and not assisting or participating in the birth of the new world will have far-reaching consequences.

I hold the unconquerable belief that science and peace will triumph over ignorance and war, that nations will come together not to destroy but to construct, and that the future belongs to those who accomplish most for humanity.

Louis Pasteur

A human being is a part of the whole called by us "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by

widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living
creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Albert Einstein

2

The Bonds That Unify the World

And truly this, your religion, is the one religion; and I am
your Lord... Qur'án 23:54

But people have divided their religion...into sects; every
denomination rejoicing in that which is its own; wherefore
leave them till a certain time... Qur'án 23:55-56

The whole human race is separated by several boundaries. The basic boundaries of separation are: ignorance or a lack of a proper education; prejudice—national, racial, religious; inequity—the suppression of the rights of women and of the poor; and a lack of communication and understanding due to language barrier.

At present, all these boundaries serve as obstacles to the unity of mankind. The Bahá'í Faith transforms each obstacle into an opportunity, each barrier into a bond that is unfailing and unbreakable—unfailing because it is fashioned by the All-Knowing; unbreakable because it is made of love, the enduring, eternal essence.

In the following pages, each of these obstacles is discussed, and the Bahá'í solution presented. The discussions are quite brief; they reflect only the highlights. A thorough examination of their full potential would require such an elaboration as to exhaust the patience of most seekers.

Universal Education

Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army.¹

We are the noblest of all beings, the crown of creation—but only in potential. The alchemy that transforms our potential into reality is education:

The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.²

Bahá'u'lláh

The emergence of an ideal society begins with the education of the children, because the character is shaped during the early years and cannot be molded or modified as readily in adulthood as in childhood. The Bahá'í teachings confirm the necessity of early education—both spiritual and material. Further, it teaches and emphasizes accountability before God. According to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, to educate a child—to enrich its mind and to cultivate its character and conscience—is the foremost responsibility of parents, and in the court of divine Judgment no excuse for negligence is acceptable.

In the Bahá'í Faith, the education of children has the highest priority:

In God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined.³

'Abdu'l-Bahá

In the context of society, next to the home, schools play the most vital role in the education of children. For this reason, Bahá'u'lláh advocates universal and compulsory education. If parents are unable to provide for their children's schooling, then society must step in and assume the responsibility.

In the Bahá'í view, education is more than mere acquisition of knowledge. The first concern of the school must be the

cultivation of character, not the teaching of facts. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá teaches that an illiterate but noble and virtuous child far excels the one literate but ignoble, deviant, and uncultured.

Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion...but this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry.⁴

Bahá’u’lláh

Do all you can to encourage spirituality in them [children].⁵

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Not only at home but at school as well, the child should learn the virtues that endear and adorn him. He should learn courtesy, patience, perseverance, open-mindedness, tolerance, and concern for others; he should learn to love not only those of his own country, class, race, and religion, but all mankind; he should learn not only about his own religion, but all religions.

The principle of the independent search for truth should dominate and permeate the whole life of the child. The Bahá’í teachings admonish parents to teach their religious ideals, but never impose them; to instruct their children, but never indoctrinate them.

It is so natural to children to recognize God’s universal and all-encompassing love. The idea of exclusive salvation does not fit with their sense of justice. Reflecting such a basic belief, Bahá’í books designed for children cover the story of all great Teachers or Messengers, crowning them with equal respect and honor, and regarding them as the exponents of one divine and universal Truth.

Our universities often emphasize the acquisition of facts rather than the cultivation of the whole self. In a statement addressed to President Bliss of the American College of Beirut, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá indicated that the universities and colleges of the world must hold fast to three cardinal principles:

First: Whole-hearted service to the cause of education, the unfolding of the mysteries of nature, the extension of the

boundaries of pure science, the elimination of the causes of ignorance and social evils...

Second: Service to the cause of morality, raising the moral tone of the students, inspiring them with the sublimest ideals of ethical refinement, teaching them altruism, inculcating in their lives the beauty of holiness and the excellency of virtue...

Third: Service to the oneness of the world of humanity; so that each student may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of religion or race. The thoughts of universal peace must be instilled into the minds of all the scholars, in order that they may become the armies of peace, the real servants of the body politic—the world.⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Thus by coordinating the efforts of home and school, Bahá’í teachings enable education to become an effective and inspiring force in creating a new society endowed with greater wisdom and maturity, and in shaping a global conscience dedicated to universal ideals.

What would happen if the world’s educational system served this goal: the ultimate end of all education, and the aim of all learning, is to know and love God.

Prejudice Abandoned

In the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, prejudice is regarded as a perilous disease; it is utterly alien to the spirit of the new teachings, to the very aims and ideals of the New World Order. If the oneness of humanity is to be realized, every form of prejudice, whether it is religious, racial, class, national, or political, must be utterly uprooted from the conscience of the world.

What are we, and where does our distinction lie? Since we are in essence a spiritual being our distinction can lie only in our inner—not outer—qualities. In the scheme of creation, one’s color of skin counts as little as one’s clothing. The body clothes

the spirit, concealing it from the eyes of mortals. Only when the shell is cast off does one's true essence become evident, does the worth of each soul become manifest.

It is the inner qualities that constitute the true mark of human distinction. It is our character and conscience; it is our knowledge and wisdom; it is our universal ideals; it is our dedication and devotion, not only to our country but to the family of human race. These are the attributes that make us noble, not our worldly possessions or associations—our skin color, caste, class, or country. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

In the estimation of the people of Bahá man's glory lieth in his knowledge, his upright conduct, his praiseworthy character, his wisdom, and not in his nationality or rank.⁷

In His *Paris talks*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes the following statement on the true marks of human distinction, on how people differ in the divine estimation:

Concerning the prejudice of race: it is an illusion, a superstition pure and simple! For God created us all of one race...In the beginning, also, there were no limits and boundaries between the different lands; no part of the earth belonged more to one people than to another. In the sight of God there is no difference between the various races. Why should man invent such a prejudice? How can we uphold war caused by an illusion?⁸

God has not created men that they should destroy one another. All races, tribes, sects and classes share equally in the Bounty of their Heavenly Father.

The only difference lies in the degree of faithfulness, of obedience to the laws of God. There are some who are as lighted torches, there are others who shine as stars...The lovers of mankind, these are the superior men, of whatever nation, creed, or color they may be. For it is they to whom God will say these blessed words, "Well done, My good and faithful servants." In that day He will not ask, "Are you

English, French, or perhaps Persian? Do you come from the East, or from the West?”⁹

The best way to uproot prejudice is to prevent it. A Bahá’í child, raised by Bahá’í standards and ideals, need not strive to purify his conscience from prejudice. It is natural to him to be unprejudiced, and unnatural to be prejudiced. As Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order expands and His ideals dominate the hearts and minds of the masses, it will become progressively easier for a child to learn to glorify the spirit—the enduring essence—not the crust that contains it; to adore the imperishable pearl, not the shell that shields it.

The Bahá’í community provides a model that demonstrates how diversity of race and nationality, instead of dividing, enriches and enhances human culture. It shows how the peoples of various religions, traditions, castes, and cultures can find unfailing harmony under the shadow of divine teachings, how they can exchange their lesser loyalties for a greater loyalty—the love of God.

Bahá’ís are people who formerly had different and conflicting religious backgrounds. They had been Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Protestants, Catholics, or else they had no religion at all. They have found in the Bahá’ís Faith a basis of unity that makes the competition of sects and denominations seem unimportant to them...Through a common devotion...[they] work together to establish a peaceful world. They are people of different national and racial backgrounds. But the Bahá’í teachings have given them a higher loyalty—the loyalty to humanity. Bahá’ís have no “color line” or racial segregation. In this Faith, people of all races find equality with each other because they are equal before God.¹⁰

Religion Must Be the Cause of Unity

Religion is like a seed. It has life only when it is whole. If crushed, it cannot bring forth its destined fruits. Bahá'u'lláh proclaims:

The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife.¹¹

Religion is a gift from heaven, a radiance from God's Wisdom, an image from above, an honor and glory bestowed by the Creator upon His most wondrous creation—man. But alas, the honor has been diminished, the radiance has been obscured, the image has been distorted in the eyes of the people. It has become, in our day, an instrument of perpetual division and fanaticism, of petty-mindedness and prejudice, of competition and conflict. This is contrary to God's purpose, to the fundamental teachings of all great Messengers.

Some people join a religion not for fellowship with God but with their friends. They feel their beliefs must conform to their needs and expectations. If they do not like what they see, they produce a “customized” set of beliefs. This is how “God-made” turns into “man-made.” This is how the way to God has been multiplied. This is how Christianity has been divided into some 25,000 denominations and sects. This is how over 250 new Christian denominations are being born every year. As early as 1863 Bahá'u'lláh referred to this trend:

What “oppression” is greater than that which hath been recounted? What “oppression” is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? For opinions have sorely differed, and the ways unto the attainment of God have multiplied. This “oppression” is the essential feature of every Revelation.

Unless it cometh to pass, the Sun of Truth will not be made manifest.¹²

A Christian publication (*What Is the True Gospel?*) describes the extent of religious dissension in our time:

Why should there be such perplexity—such confusion—in every phase of life today? It should be the function of religion to point the way. Yet here, too, we find only confusion of tongues—hundreds of religious denominations and sects, in a Babylon of disagreement.

Even in the professing Christian religion of the Western world, we find different sects and denominations preaching a variety of different gospels! Some designate their gospel as “The Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Others call their gospel “The Gospel of Salvation.” Still others profess “The Gospel of Grace,” some “The Gospel of the Kingdom.” And some have used such terms as the “Social Gospel,” or “the Israel Message.”

Why have they lost the only true Gospel which God sent by Jesus Christ? Why?...This is an astounding, incredible situation! It ought to shake you out of passive indifference. Your eternity is at stake!¹³

Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!
Jeremiah 23:1 NIV

That people will be rescued from confusion and perplexity, that the scattered believers will be brought together and unified under one Shepherd is a prophecy confirmed in many sacred scriptures:

...I will save my flock...and they shall be ravaged no more...Then I will set over them one shepherd to take care of them.
Ezekiel 34:22-23 NEB

Bahá'u'lláh likens religion, in its pure essence, to a sovereign remedy for the afflictions and maladies of the world—an instrument to unite, to spiritualize, “to bring light and life to every soul.” But the remedy will work well only if its potency

and purity are preserved. If altered, diluted, and defiled by unskilled practitioners, as so often happens, it only serves to aggravate the disease. Such a polluted remedy is best avoided. To withdraw from a religion that cultivates fanaticism, prejudice, superstition, dogmatism and discord is a “truly religious act.” In the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Any religion which is not a cause of love and unity is no religion.”¹⁴

Every new Revelation seeks to restore religion to its divine image, to unveil its glory, to reestablish its honor and dignity in the eyes of the doubting masses. Since the middle of the 19th century, Bahá’u’lláh has raised the divine call for unity, so that humanity may once again recognize religion in its pure form—undivided, divine, radiant, flawless. What a difference between the pure pearl of faith as revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, and the distorted, divided, and demeaned image of religion as so often viewed by the masses.

Equality of Men and Women

Women throughout the ages have not received their due share in education, economic security, and in the opportunity and freedom to cultivate and unfold their potentials. The loss to human progress, to the advancement of civilization and culture, resulting from the suppression of the spiritual and mental powers of women is immeasurable. For the first time in the spiritual evolution of humanity, Bahá’u’lláh has elevated women to the station of equality with men, by advocating equal rights, opportunities, and privileges for the twin partners in the path of human progress. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

Humanity is like a bird with its two wings—the one is male, the other female. Unless both wings are strong and impelled by some common force, the bird cannot fly heavenwards. According to the spirit of this age, women must advance and fulfill their mission in all departments of life, becoming

equal to men. They must be on the same level as men and enjoy equal rights. This is my earnest prayer and it is one of the fundamental principles of Bahá'u'lláh.¹⁵

The Bahá'í teachings emphasize the education of girls to the extent of placing it above that of boys, for as future mothers and educators of children, the girls exert the profoundest influence on succeeding generations. 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisions the role of women in the new age:

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.¹⁶

Equitable Distribution of Wealth

He will...save the children of the needy...In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more...For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. Psalms 72:4, 7, 12 NIV

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse...he will judge the needy with justice... Isaiah 11:1, 4 NIV

One of the obstacles to the full realization of human potential—as well as to world peace and harmony—is the prevalence of poverty. The adoption of Bahá'í teachings will eradicate the extremes of wealth and want, for Bahá'u'lláh introduces laws and institutes agencies by which the accumulated wealth of the

world as well as its natural resources are more equitably distributed.

The Bahá'í Faith does not strive to establish a classless society, but rather one based on justice and a concern for the needs of all—not of any given group or society, but all humanity.

In His Plan for the economic security of the world, Bahá'u'lláh not only introduces binding laws and new means for the distribution of wealth (such as profit sharing), but also appeals to the sense of the spiritual responsibility of the believer before his Creator. For although the force of the law must prevail, it alone cannot establish justice, cannot replace the voice of conscience.

The Bahá'í economic system confirms the close connection between our higher and lower needs. It exemplifies how for the first time the teachings of a Manifestation touch upon not only our spiritual aspirations but physical wants as well “to spare the poor and the needy” (Psa. 72:13).

For centuries and centuries the world has been struggling to divide up economic scarcity, and for the first time we have the tools of abundance with which to meet mankind's basic economic and material needs. If we will use these tools intelligently, with a sense of social and moral responsibility, they will enable us to solve mankind's basic material needs. Then we can devote greater time and energy and effort to the facilitation of man's growth as a social and cultural and spiritual being, which is the real meaning of life on this earth.¹⁷

Universal Language

People don't get along because they fear each other. People fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they have not properly communicated with each other.

Martin Luther King

One of the barriers dividing humanity is language. It is easier to love and relate to the people whose language one can understand. For love follows fellowship, feeds on knowledge, and flourishes through interaction and communication. Those with the same language feel a special affinity for one another. The removal of the barrier of language brings mankind one step closer to unity. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

Today one of the chief causes of the differences in Europe is the diversity of languages. We say this man is a German, the other is an Italian, then we meet an Englishman and then again a Frenchman. Although they belong to the same race, yet language is the greatest barrier between them. Were a universal auxiliary language in operation they would all be considered as one.¹⁸

As a part of His global Plan for world unity, Bahá’u’lláh advocates the adoption of a universal auxiliary language and script to be taught, along with the native tongue, in all the schools in every land:

Among the things which are conducive to unity and concord and will cause the whole earth to be regarded as one country is that the divers languages be reduced to one language and in like manner the scripts used in the world be confined to a single script. It is incumbent upon all nations to appoint some men of understanding and erudition to convene a gathering and through joint consultation choose one language from among the varied existing languages, or create a new one, to be taught to the children in all the schools of the world.¹⁹

The adoption of a world language as a means of attaining world-mindedness is quite simple and the rewards are boundless compared to the efforts.

The contributions of a universal language to a sense of oneness among the diverse nations of the world, to the expansion of knowledge, arts, commerce, travel, and indeed to every aspect of civilization will prove immeasurable. It seems incredible that

necessity has not already forced the adoption of such a unifying medium, but the day is approaching when it will. As the prophet Zephaniah wrote:

For then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. Zephaniah 3:9

And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. Zechariah 14:9

Equality Before the Law

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. Thomas Jefferson

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. U.N. Declaration of Human Rights

A chief aspect of the social evolution of humanity is the realization of justice, a principle ensuring equal rights for all mankind. The Bahá'í Faith is the fulfillment of all the prophecies pointing to the advent of divine Justice and the coming of a supreme Lawgiver destined to establish the earthly Kingdom, "to carry the government on His shoulder." In His *Paris talks*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

All men are equal before the law, which must reign absolutely. The object of punishment is not vengeance, but the prevention of crime...

If a person commit a crime against you...the law must punish him in order to prevent a repetition of that same crime by others...

When perfect justice reigns in every country of the Eastern and Western World, then will the earth become a place of beauty. The dignity and equality of every servant of God will be acknowledged; the ideal of the solidarity of the human race, the true brotherhood of man, will be realized; and the

glorious light of the Sun of Truth will illumine the souls of all men.²⁰

The realization of justice is one more step toward establishing and preserving the bond of unity.

If there be a human being who is freer than I, then I shall necessarily become his slave. If I am freer than any other, then he will become my slave. Therefore equality is an absolutely necessary condition of freedom.²¹

God grant that not only the love of liberty but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface and say: "This is my country!"²²

3

God's Plan for Peace

The Promise of Peace

The promise of global peace is a covenant confirmed repeatedly in sacred Scriptures:

Though the mountains move and the hills shake...my covenant of peace shall not be shaken. Isaiah 54:10 NEB

I will make a covenant with them to ensure prosperity; I will rid the land of wild beasts, and men shall live in peace of mind on the open pastures... Ezekiel 34:25 NEB

I will break bow and sword and weapon of war and sweep them off the earth. Hosea 2:18 NEB

...the wild beasts [warlike peoples] shall be gathered together... Qur'án 81:5

The wolf and the lamb will feed together...They will neither harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain. Isaiah 65:25

Global peace will be upheld by a Kingdom under God's rule:

...the God of heaven will establish a kingdom which shall never be destroyed... Daniel 2:44 NEB

For Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! Rev. 19:6-7 NIV

On that day shall all empire [sovereignty] be...with the God of mercy... Qur'án 25:28

The kingly power, sovereignty, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High [Bahá'u'lláh]. Their kingly power is everlasting power and all sovereigns shall serve them and obey them. Daniel 7:27 NEB

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord [Bahá'u'lláh] and His Christ [the Báb]... Rev. 11:15 NIV
See also Isa. 9:6-7; 32:22; 66:8; Psa. 22:28; Dan. 7:14; Zech. 14:9; Luke 4:18-19; Micah 4:7; Qur'án 6:73

Verily it is He Himself [the Lord] Who is established upon His mighty Throne.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Peace a Necessity

Gather together, gather together...before the day of the Lord's wrath comes upon you. Zephaniah 2:1-2 NIV

Universal peace is one of the most urgent needs of the new age. We live in the most perilous time in human history:

We should turn atomic power to peace power for the glory of God. President Harry Truman

Dr. Robert Oppenheimer, who supervised the creation of the first atomic bomb, appeared before a Congressional Committee. They inquired of him if there was any defense against the weapon. "Certainly," the great physicist replied. "And that is...?" Dr. Oppenheimer looked over the hushed, expectant audience and said softly, "Peace."²

I have seen war. I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood running from the wounded. I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed. I have seen two hundred limping, exhausted men come out of the line—the survivors of a regiment of one thousand that went forward forty-eight hours before. I have seen children starving. I have seen the agony of mothers and wives. I hate war. Franklin D. Roosevelt

Lasting peace can rise out of love for God and humankind; it is mainly a spiritual question:

Military alliance, balances of power, the League of Nations—all in turn have failed. We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem, basically, is theological and involves a spiritual...improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save flesh.³

The world will never have lasting peace so long as men reserve for war the finest human qualities. Peace, no less than war, requires idealism and self-sacrifice and a righteous and dynamic faith.⁴

If there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.⁵

Dr. Ervin Laszlo, editor of the World Encyclopedia of Peace and a renowned authority in the fields of systems science and world order writes:

The Bahá'í call for peace comes at a crucial moment in the history of humanity. Peace in the contemporary world is no longer an option but a necessity. All leaders and peoples of the world must come to realize this fact, and achieve the maturity which the Bahá'í faith foresees for the coming age of humanity...

People of good will everywhere need to heed the call for world peace by the Bahá'í community and reflect on its deeper significance in light of their own perceptions, traditions, and the emerging theories of the empirical sciences...

In our times we can only survive, and our civilization can only flower, if we reorient the conventional wisdom and achieve the new insights which have been proclaimed by the Bahá'í faith and which are now also supported by the latest discoveries of the empirical sciences.^{6*}

God's Plan for Peace

Bahá'ís are peacemakers in a warring world. This passage may indeed be a prophecy:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
Christ (Matt. 5:9 NIV)

The Universal House of Justice, the governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, has prepared a statement entitled: *The Promise of World Peace*. It summarizes the Bahá'í plan for peace. The Bahá'ís have distributed this booklet widely, in virtually every country on our planet, especially amongst heads of states and leaders of thought in virtually every country on our planet.

All Bahá'u'lláh's teachings aim at fostering and founding an enduring peace. First, they offer humankind an eternal and spiritual perspective, a lasting purpose, a desire for self-fulfillment and service, a sense of hope and happiness. For a peaceful world cannot be built on hopeless hearts or warlike beings. "A harvest of peace is produced from a sense of contentment."

To discover a system for the avoidance of war is a vital need of our civilization; but no such system has a chance while men are so unhappy that mutual extermination seems to them less dreadful than continued endurance of the light of day.⁷

* Dr. Laszlo, who is not a Bahá'í, delivered the keynote address "Is Peace Possible?" at the first Bahá'í International Peace Conference in San Francisco.

Second, Bahá'u'lláh's teachings uproot all the causes of war (poverty, prejudice, ignorance, nationalism, fanaticism, provincialism, belief in holy wars); and third, they offer an effective plan for the establishment of supranational institutions with power to safeguard the peace and security of the planet, and execute justice. "Justice and power must be brought together, so that whatever is just may be powerful, and whatever is powerful may be just." As Woodrow Wilson notes "the firm basis of government is justice, not pity." Bahá'u'lláh states:

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.⁸

Bahá'u'lláh's Writings indicate that universal peace will be attained in two stages. First will come the Lesser Peace, which will stand on *political* unity, and then the Most Great Peace, which will rest on *spiritual* unity of mankind—loyalty to one God and one Faith. The first phase (political unity) springs from fear and need, the second (spiritual unity) grows out of love, trust, and faith. We are now fortunate to witness the rising of the Lesser Peace out of the ashes of thousands of years of war. In His Paris talks, 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisioned the beginning of the course of peace:

A Supreme Tribunal shall be established...composed of members elected from each country and Government. The members of this Great Council shall assemble in unity. All disputes of an international character shall be submitted to this Court, its work being to arrange by arbitration everything which otherwise would be a cause of war. The mission of this Tribunal would be to prevent war.⁹

Ours is the age in which religion (love) and government (justice) will adorn and illumine the earth together as the twin stars of heaven:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. ***The Zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.***

Isaiah 9:6-7

A World Commonwealth

In the following passages, Shoghi Effendi Rabbání (the Zeal of the Lord),[✧] the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, delineates the basic pattern of Bahá'u'lláh's new social Order—an Order that shall preserve the peace of the planet, an Order upon which the Kingdom of God, as foretold by the Prophets since the dawn of history, shall at long last be established:

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded.¹⁰

Shoghi Effendi then enumerates the basic elements of this commonwealth:

[✧] “Effendi” is a title like “Sir.” His name is Shoghi Rabbání, literally meaning “the Zeal of the Lord.”

- A world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples.
- A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth.
- A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system.
- A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvelous swiftness and perfect regularity.
- A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate.
- A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue.
- A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind.¹¹

Here are a few other features of this commonwealth as envisaged by Shoghi Effendi:

In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled... The press

will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests...The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated.¹²

Shoghi Effendi concludes his description of the future of humankind in these words:

National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease, and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and cooperation. The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed, economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear. The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war...will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life...¹³

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things, will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create...

Isaiah 65:17-18 NIV

Even as We [God] produced the first Creation, so shall we produce a new one: a promise We have undertaken.

Qur'án 21:104 Y

Behold! I am making all things new.

Christ (Rev. 21:5 NEB)

The Most Critical Time

At present, much of the efforts and energies of humanity are being directed and dedicated to war or preparation for war. The balance of civilization has been utterly disturbed—weighed down by ignorance, mistrust, pseudo-religion, materialism, apathy, fanaticism, and prejudice. If this trend continues, civilization itself shall topple and fall—to utter decay and destruction. Bahá'u'lláh urges humankind to observe moderation, to restore the balance, before “the appointed hour” has struck. He warns:

We have fixed a time for you, O people! If ye fail, at the appointed hour, to turn towards God, He, verily, will lay violent hold on you, and will cause grievous afflictions to assail you from every direction. How severe indeed is the chastisement with which your Lord will then chastise you!¹⁴

And again:

Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity is following you, and that grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not the deeds ye have committed have been blotted from My sight. By My beauty! All your doings hath My Pen graven with open characters upon tablets of chrysolite.¹⁵

The balance between the material and spiritual civilizations can be restored only through the divine Power, only “if the peoples of the world unite in pursuit of one common aim and embrace one common faith.”

As the great psychologist, William James notes:

What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible.

Bahá'u'lláh counsels and summons humankind to respond to the divine Call:

In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil. Consider the civilization of the West, how it hath agitated and alarmed the peoples of the world. An infernal engine hath been devised, and hath proved so cruel a weapon of destruction that its like none hath ever witnessed or heard. The purging of such deeply-rooted and overwhelming corruptions cannot be effected unless the peoples of the world unite in pursuit of one common aim and embrace one universal faith.¹⁶

Immediately after the preceding statement, and in contrast to “a weapon of destruction already devised” Bahá’u’lláh refers to another instrument as yet undiscovered, “hidden from the minds and the understanding of men.” Here are Bahá’u’lláh’s portentous words:

Strange and astonishing things exist in the earth but they are hidden from the minds and the understanding of men. These things are capable of changing the whole atmosphere of the earth and their contamination would prove lethal. Great God! We have observed an amazing thing. Lightning or a force similar to it is controlled by an operator and moveth at his command. Immeasurably exalted is the Lord of Power Who hath laid bare that which He purposed through the potency of His weighty and invincible command.¹⁷

Could anyone have offered a more revealing description of nuclear power, of the massive and destructive forces accumulated and stored for our sake? Is not the earth’s whole atmosphere being threatened by such lethal elements as nuclear radiation? Does not the explosion of the atomic power resemble lightning—swift, bright, and scorching? Is not such an incredibly massive and deadly power controlled and commanded by an unseen “operator” tapping a keyboard? It is worthy to note that Bahá’u’lláh uttered His prophetic words more than half a century before the dawn of the nuclear age.

Can universal peace prevail in our time? Or do we have to face another great war—much greater than all the wars waged in all history? The choice is up to us—God never imposes His Will

upon His children. He shows the way and lets us choose. In God's universal scheme, everyone carries his own measured share of responsibility. If he fails, he stands accountable to his Creator and will have to face the divine Judgment.

Bahá'ís believe that in our age God has disclosed, through His latest Mediator or Messenger, Bahá'u'lláh, a Universal Plan for peace. He has revealed everything we need to know to build a new and divine civilization. Yet He has left two things to our discretion: to accept the plan, and to implement it. In His Creative Scheme for our social and spiritual evolution, our Creator ordains that we become His partners. He bestows the Plan and promises the divine Power; we accept the Plan and provide the human power—trusting fully in His Ways and in His Wisdom. Our Creator always honors our freedom of choice, which inevitably bears its own fruits, brings forth its own deserved consequences. We can choose either to receive rewards by harmonizing our will with His Wisdom or face punishment by deviating from His Ways and disregarding His Words.

We must face the present problems because of our past failures; we shall have to face tomorrow's problems because of today's failures. If we sow love, good-will, and amity, we shall reap peace; if we sow discord, spite, and enmity, we shall reap war. If we heed the divine Call, we shall prevail; if we fail we shall “perish”—if not in the flesh, then in the spirit.

We may delay the peace, but not prevent its ultimate triumph. We stand at the dawn of a new Day. “Soon will the present order be rolled up,” Bahá'u'lláh declares, “and a new one spread out in its stead.” Universal peace will be the inevitable outcome of the realization of Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order.

That peace shall at last prevail is a promise and a prophecy spoken by the prophets since the dawn of history:

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he
breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth
the chariot in the fire.

Psalms 46:9

See also Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3; Psa. 29:11; Hag. 2:9

We should note that Bahá'u'lláh came from one of the darkest and least progressive places in the world. Not only that, He lived most of His life in imprisonment or exile. Yet He demonstrated such a deep grasp of human nature and human needs, and proclaimed such progressive principles and ideals that even after a century of immeasurable growth in science, of drastic and unprecedented expansion and enlightenment of human culture, they still remain ahead of their time. Although Bahá'u'lláh's ideals have already altered the course of history, humanity has not as yet matured spiritually to recognize their unbreakable link to the unfoldment and triumph of a divine Civilization destined to dawn in this great Day of the Lord.

A Glorious World

How glorious a world in which justice, love, and peace prevail; a world whose inhabitants worship one God, acknowledge one Faith, speak in one language, and abide by one Law. How wondrous the world in which prejudice is uprooted, fanaticism forsaken, illiteracy eradicated, poverty eliminated, work exalted, idleness despised. How blessed a world in which religion and science stand together as perfect partners in fostering human progress; a world in which the station of woman is acknowledged as man's equal. How enchanting a world from whose heart worldliness is effaced, crime cast out, enmity expelled, war banished. How splendid a world in which the love of God dominates and moves the hearts of all its inhabitants—a love from which will spring every noble act, every pure and worthy deed.

Such is the world whose advent all the prophets have foretold, such is the day for whose dawning the Bahá'ís have offered countless lives, such is the peace for whose triumph the Báb suffered and gave His youthful life, such is the kingdom for whose coming Bahá'u'lláh endured forty years of affliction, exile, and imprisonment. What a blessed gift to live in this

glorious time! What a priceless bounty to be a partner in building the City of God—a city patterned in heaven.¹⁸

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